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MAGAZINE

issue #35 • January/February Y2K

JOE STRUMMER

Clash of the Titan

THE ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE

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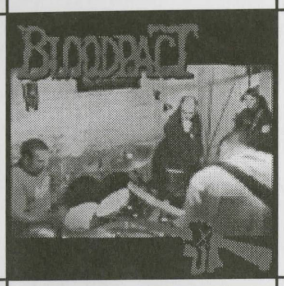

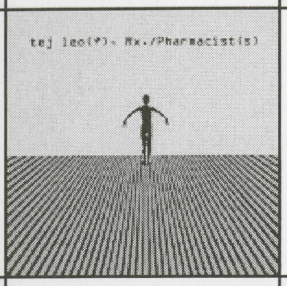

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split 12"
+/- Records

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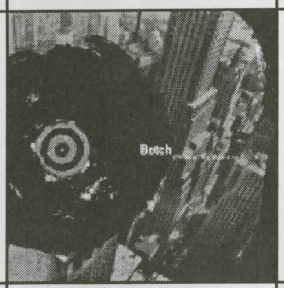
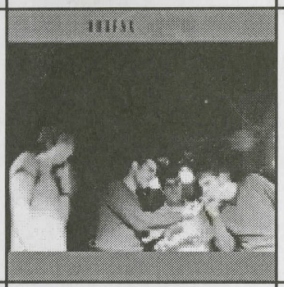
"Rx./Pharmacisits"
CD/LP
Gern Blandsten



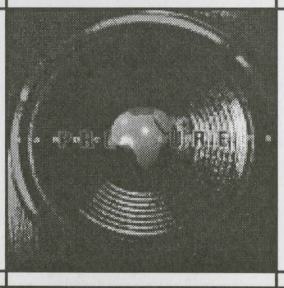
Botch
"We Are The Romans"
CD/LP
Hydra Head Records

18 Visions
"No Time For Love"
Limited 7"
Trustkill Records



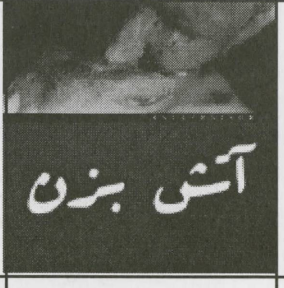
Koufax
self titled
CDep/12"
Doghouse Records

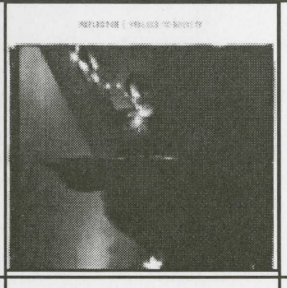
Idle Hands
"Treaty"
CDep
Trustkill Records
(featuring singer from Copper)



Pressure
"Hardcore Roots"
CD
Uprising Communications

The Trans Megetti
"Soon Be Seeing ..."
CDep
Art Monk Construction





Race Traitor
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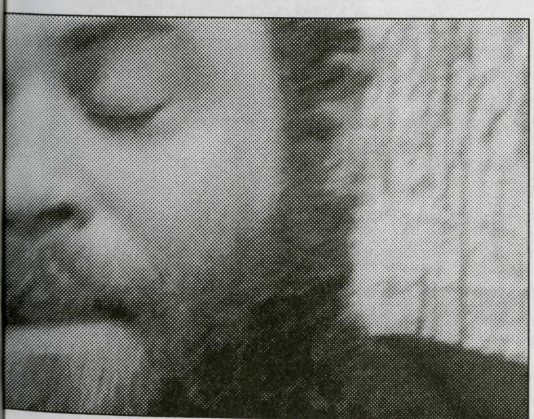

HE'S VOMITING UP A BLINKING EYE P.78

PP35

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Daniel Sinker
the hard rhymer

Joel Schalit
minister of information

Eric Action
Scott Yahtzee
the track attackers

Jennifer Ambrose
supreme master of defense

Jessica Hopper
media assasin

Dustin Mertz
retail operative

Dan Sinker
Marianna Levant
Frol Boundin
Dustin Mertz
look & feel

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Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

INTRO

I can remember sitting in homeroom when I was in fourth grade and thinking about the year 2000. It seemed so far off—such a remote, strange, almost unreal time. I painstakingly worked out the math to figure out how old I'd be when the century turned. I'd be 25; it seemed ancient. I tried to imagine what I'd be doing then—I figured it would be a toss up between an astronaut and a stunt man.

I turn 25 this week. The year 2000 is less than two months away. I'm not an astronaut *or* a stunt man—and I doubt I ever will be. Instead, I publish a punk magazine. What went wrong? Your guess is as good as mine. As recently as six years ago, I was going to be a videomaker, making a name for myself shooting experimental personal/political documentaries. But then something came up and here I am, sitting in the PP office, surrounded by computers that are crashing like flies, and writing about what I *might* have been.

Tracking those moments where *something comes up* and your life goes in a wildly divergent direction is fascinating to me. People's lives are so varied and their experiences so distinct. Perhaps that's part of the reason I like working on *Punk Planet*: it lets me learn how other people ended up where they are and where they want to be going. Learning things like that never gets old to me—I honestly don't think I'll ever get bored of hearing other people's stories.

This issue is full of other people's voices. To kick off the millennium, I thought it would be fun to do something a little different: An issue with nothing but interviews. Anyone keeping score last year would notice that articles took over *Punk Planet*'s focus in 1999. I'm proud of that fact, and don't expect that trend to slow down anytime soon, but I thought it would be a nice change of pace to just sit down and talk with people. This issue is the result of collaborating with a slew of talented writers, bands and people who agreed with that idea.

Compiled in these pages are a dozen people and bands, each relaying their opinions, their hopes, their fears, their trials and their successes. It's a varied group—men, women, old, young, gay, straight—yet there are threads that connect all of them. What are they? Sorry, part of the fun is connecting the dots on your own.

Part of the fun is the simple fact that this issue *is* fun. While there are still important things being expressed, it's not as heavy as recent issue's we've run. So have fun, have a great read and here's hoping Y2K hasn't wiped us all out (except for the credit card companies).

See you in the spring,

DAN

slave

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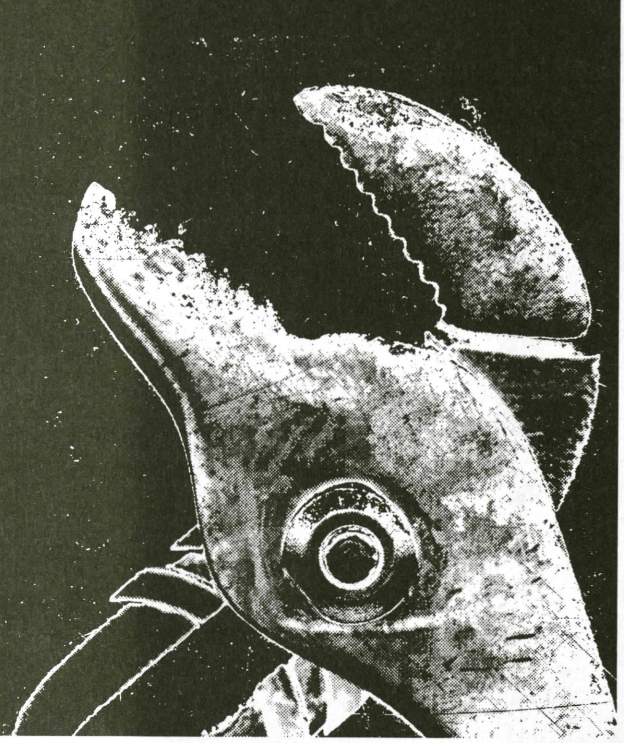

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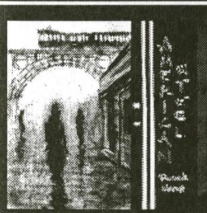

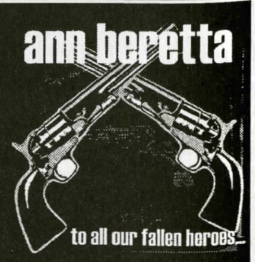

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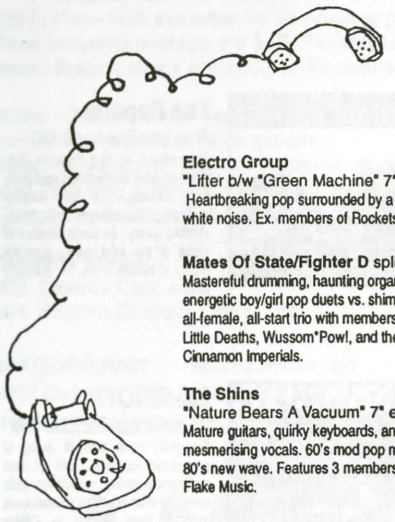

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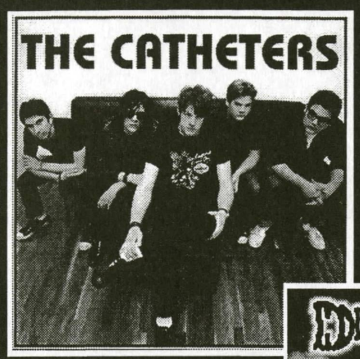

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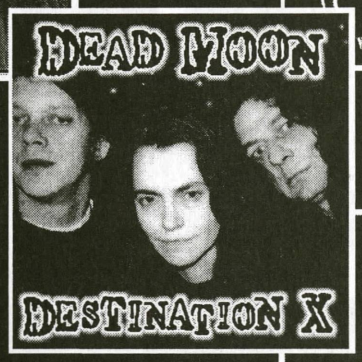

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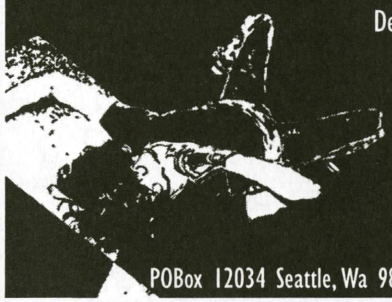

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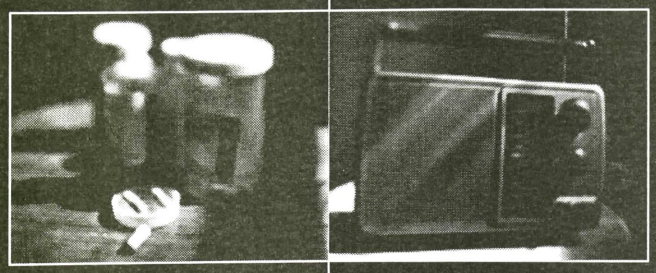

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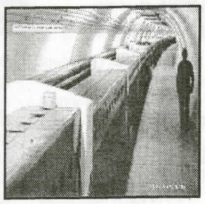

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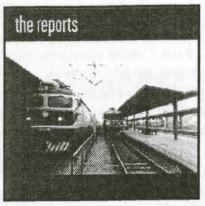

The Reports

Run Into The Night CD

This album is The Reports' fully realized work of charming post-punk pop anxiety, full of surging, sweeping melodicism and heart-tugging tunes. An amalgamation of some of the best quirky pop/rock music of recent times, yet distinctly unique.

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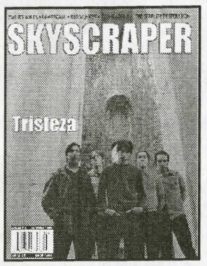
Surface

Seventimesoverfold LP

Energetic hardcore that mixes emotion and metal with the music. Harsh vocals, mid-tempo guitars, and plenty of drive and power. Circa 1996, the beginning of the metal-hardcore crossover is right here.



Skyscraper #6

204 pages, offset printing

The latest issue of this hefty fanzine includes interviews with Twenty Miles, Tristeza, godheadSilo, Lowercase, Red Monkey, the Starlite Desperation, Subpoena The Past, The Reports, Tom Lomacchio, Number Two fanzine, Alternative Radio, Insound, Treadwell, Reiziger, Pirate Times, Bent Leg Fatima, and the Rock*A*Teens. Plus music, print, film, and comic reviews and various writings.

Coming Soon: Land of the Chocolate Stars 12", the Starlite Desperation CD, Skyscraper #7.

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- Frank Coe on Billy the Kid

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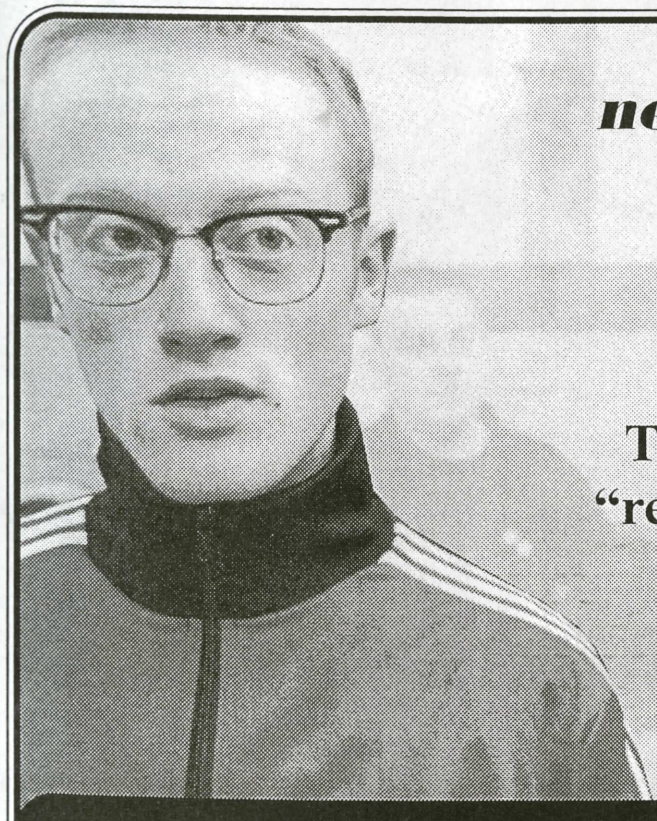

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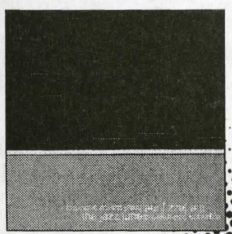
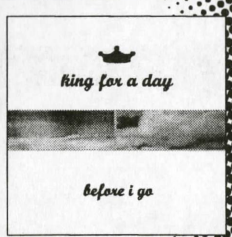
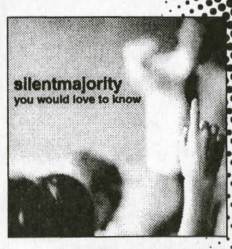


THE JAZZ JUNE
Breakdance Suburbia 10 Song CD [$10]



KING FOR A DAY
Before I Go 10 Song CD [$10]



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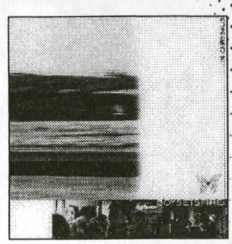

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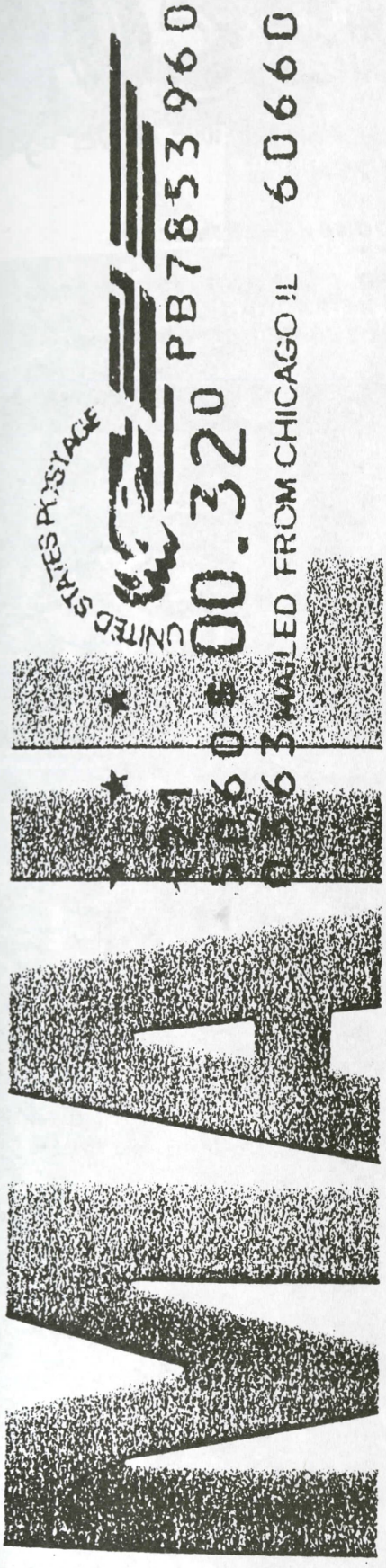

Something spooky about this...

Dear Editor,

Your article in the September/ October 99 issue [PP33] "Hacktivism, the new digital resistance," presented a relatively balanced view of hacker mentality and the motives ostensibly driving their illegal activities.

What the article failed to address accurately is the threat posed by hackers and script kiddies. In fact, insiders account for 55% of the unauthorized intrusions into network systems, while only 30% were attributable to outside hacks; this according to the Computer Security Institute. Moreover, according to the FBI, of the reported intrusions, 80% of those intrusions from insiders resulted in damage to data or systems while only 12% of outsider attacks caused a loss of data or damage to servers.

This seeming incongruity between what is reported in the media and the truth is due to reporting procedures and the targets which are attacked. Insiders have access to the servers and data maintained behind secure firewalls and password protected systems; in fact, many of the insiders arrested for unauthorized access or exceeding authorized access are themselves the programs and authors of the software running on the system they attack.

Web page hacks, on the other hand, are little more than digital graffiti and their impact on government operations and private industry has been highly overrated. Most Web servers sit outside firewalls and are meant to be freely accessible to all, hence their vulnerability. Altered Web sites are quickly replaced and the vulnerability patched.

The servers with the majority of important data are generally out of reach of all but the most sophisticated crackers and of course, insiders. While script kiddies and average crackers are indeed responsible for a large number of innocuous attacks such as port scans, ping floods and yes, Web site alterations, the majority of these attacks are nothing more than nuisances to systems administrators and information personnel. The majority of these attacks are quickly remedied through software maintenance, hardware upgrades, and information security training.

Such nuisance attacks have become so commonplace that the FBI seldom investigates them. They are often relegated to unaddressed work or passed to local law enforcement agencies for action. However, even if such a case is pursued locally, few Assistant United States Attorney's will address or prosecute such cases unless damages meet or exceed $40,000.

Instead, the FBI is turning its attention to much more lucrative issues such as Intellectual Property Rights theft involving illegal software (found on warez sites), and music piracy (such as MP3), or those activities that may genuinely affect U.S. Government and private industry security such as cyberespionage and insider theft and sabotage. The Infrastructure Protection Computer Intrusion Squad (IPCIS) in Washington, D.C., is focused almost exclusively on intellectual property issues while its newly created sister squad is pursuing intrusions of a national security nature. Meanwhile, the hype reported by the media concerning the exploits of a few digital vandals far exceeds the actual damage or importance of their activities.

Dennis Desmond
Cyberspook@bigfoot.com
ICQ– 34728221

Well, one guy likes Warped

"Punk" Planet–

I bought your fucking magazine the other day because you had a story about the Warped tour [PP34]. Fuck you. Where the fuck do you get off writing that Warp is nothing but a bunch of money-hungry corporate people. I was at Warp and I didn't see anything like that there. All I saw were cool dudes and hot chicks enjoying some punk fucking rock, something you obviously don't know much about. Like I said, I bought your magazine—past tense.

Jack Donatello
Brooklyn, NY

That's it? Just one page of mail? Is that seriously all you got?

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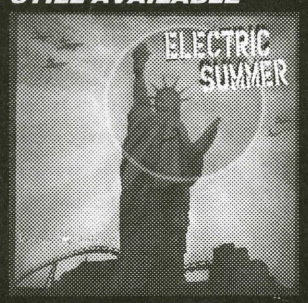

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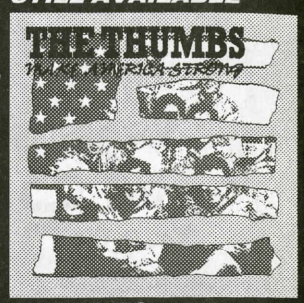

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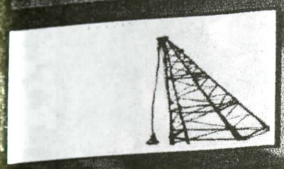

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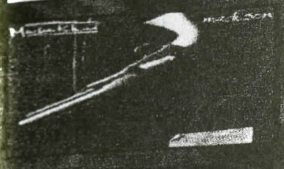
crane
CDEP



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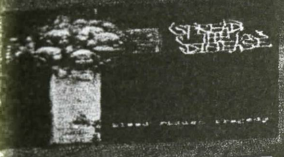
split MCD



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This blood ridden tragedy
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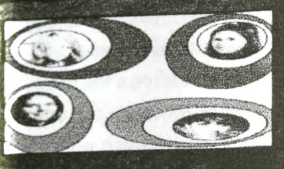

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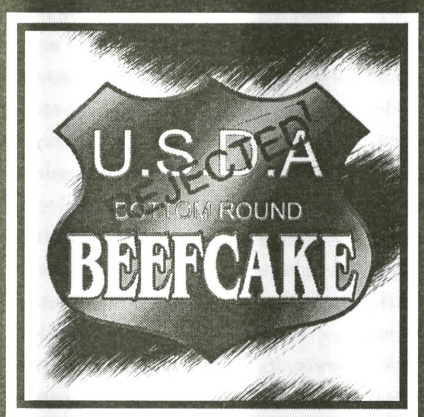
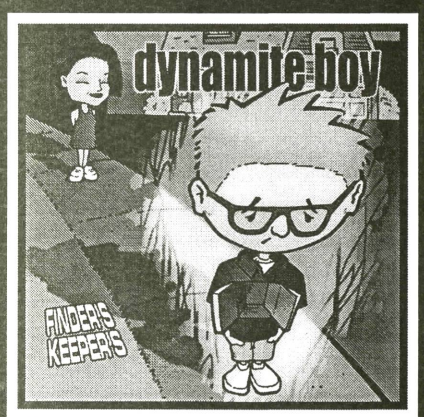


beefcake
rejected
OUT NOW!



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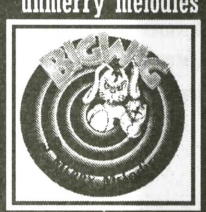

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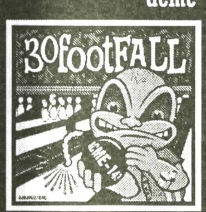
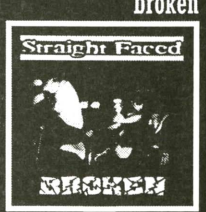


straight faced
broken



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COLUMN

In my later years of high school and first few years of college, I took pride in looking like a slob. I didn't feel comfortable unless my clothes were falling apart, stained, and ill fitting. I showered maybe once a week and never washed my hair. It would get so greasy that I could tie it in a knot on top of my head without the use of any hair accessories and it would stay that way all day, the convenience of which I loved. I kept cutting it and shaving bits off in an effort to renounce any traces of femininity still somehow lingering about me, eventually just shaving it all off. And just like that Screeching Weasel song, I didn't shave the hair on any other part of my body. Of course, I also wore no makeup. The prospect or idea that I appeared feminine in any way bothered me, almost repulsed me. Whenever I saw a woman—especially a punk woman—dressed nicely and wearing makeup I would scoff and immediately write her off as shallow. Any time the topic of conversation would turn to something girly (i.e. clothes, losing/gaining weight, etc.) I would fight the urge to roll my eyes. To say that I was harsh and critical of other females and my own femininity would be a mild statement.

I thought of femininity as weak, indicative of a lack of power or will or strength. Very few things irritated me as much as the archetypal damsel in distress, whimpering and pleading with big, strong men to help. When riot grrrl got really big I couldn't help but see it as a joke. "Strong but sexy?!" How could anyone take a chick in a mini-skirt and pigtails seriously? Somehow I thought I was better—not compromising whatsoever in terms of how I looked or acted or thought. I was a strong, independent girl that didn't take any shit goddamnit—and everybody would be able to tell just by looking at me.

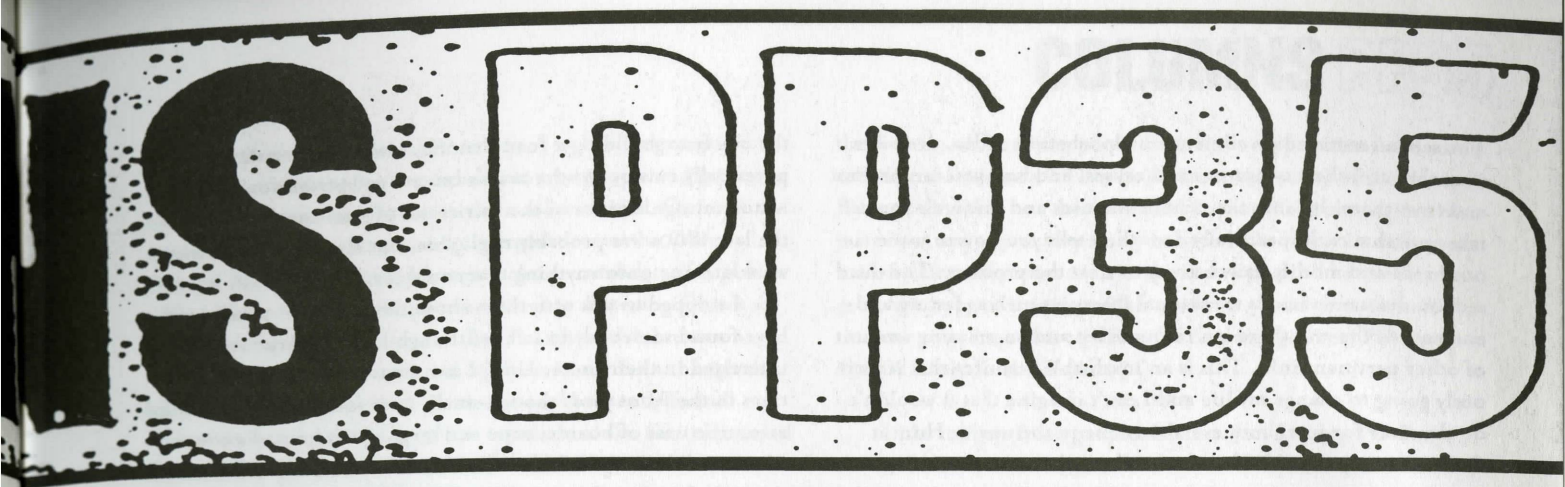
Since adolescence I've had mostly male friends. Most females seemed to me to be catty and constantly comparing themselves to each other on some kind of desirability scale. I felt more comfortable around males and could tolerate the stereotypical male flaws (competition, boasting of knowledge on any topic, etc.) more than the female ones because I saw those same characteristics in myself. The day all of this changed was a day I never could have envisioned.

Last summer I spent dozens of days wandering the streets of Rome alone. I don't quite know how it started but after a while I started noticing how tattered my clothes were, how acne-ridden my face was, how hairy my legs were, and in general how much of a dud I looked like compared to all the beautiful, impeccably dressed Italian women I passed by every day. Even the punk women were all gorgeous. Maybe I started feeling this way because I didn't have many friends and felt like an outsider in other ways, maybe it's just because I am getting older. In any case, I started feeling uncomfortable with my appearance.

Not caring how I looked before was really easy—I never bought clothes or shoes. Having barely purchased any threads at all in the previous 6 or so years I thought it was high time to visit thrift stores when I got back to the US. I donated a lot of my stuff to Salvation Army and gradually accumulated a much larger, better-looking wardrobe. I started paying attention to how I looked and noticing how other people looked at me.

A few months after my return I got a new job. The money the employees made there was based on how we looked. I had to start wearing makeup and shaving "unsightly" hair, even my bikini line—acts I would have considered unfathomable a year ago. When I first started working there, my friend Kirk remarked that after a while I would probably make enough money to get the hair permanently removed. I was taken aback. "Why the fuck would I want to do THAT?" But now I'm not so sure I would react the same way. I've slowly started to enjoy how my body feels when it's shaved, especially during the summer—sweaty, hairy armpits kind of work against you when you're trying to keep cool.

On the other hand, I just can't bring myself to wear makeup outside of work for a variety of reasons. The primary reason is that it's a royal pain in the ass but another big consideration is that, as far as I know, almost all cosmetics companies test on animals. Living in a town with no Body Shop (that is, Urbana, not Chicago) meant I had to steal all the makeup I wore which I got busted for



once. Call me an idiot but I don't really want to risk getting caught shoplifting again for something I really don't even want to use. On top of that, I think I look pretty silly with my face painted.

A lot of people have commented on how different I look now. It's not like I'm always strutting around in heels and flowery dresses (and I still don't wash my hair) but to a certain extent I feel almost embarrassed about it. I see people looking at me at shows the same way I would have a few years ago and I know what they're thinking. I can't blame them; I felt the same way. And when I'm around other women that remind me of myself a few years ago or even just women with hairy legs and fucked up clothes I feel almost envious because I wish I were still like that.

I have to admit that now sometimes I enjoy talking about clothes. I like being around other women talking about girl stuff. Another factor I can't ignore is that I definitely get a lot more attention from men, something I feel a little ambivalent about but it's certainly not a completely negative feeling. More often than not I wish I still didn't care about how I looked, mainly because it seems so shallow. But is there really a huge difference between wanting to look like shit and not wanting to? I don't look different now because I want to fit in with mainstream society or impress anybody. My tastes have changed, kind of like taste in music or something (although if my tastes go so far as to turn me into one of those slaves to San Diego fashion, please kill me). I don't think I'm fundamentally different because I look different.

In a way, it cracks me up when I'm walking down the street and some guy that is checking me out looks disgusted when I burp or fart or pick my nose. Random people I meet look at me like I'm an alien when I tell them I'm vegan or start talking about punk or squatting or politics. I feel much more at ease stealing when I'm dressed nicely. People unquestionably have certain expectations and ideas of you as a person based on how you look and I kind of enjoy not fitting those preconceptions.

So then why do I feel the need to be defensive? Why am I even writing a column about it? Why do I feel the need to write qualifiers such as "I still don't shower every day," or "I still love the smell of body odor and dirty hair," or "even though my clothes are nicer I still only buy them used?" At a time when I see myself becoming more and more political, more angry, and more fanatical about punk and hardcore, I see this side of me as the only one that is softening up. As I'm increasingly questioning and rejecting traditional lifestyles, attitudes, and roles I find this new concern, if you will, really quite bewildering. Am I crapping out as I get older? People change with the passing of years, that is incontrovertible, but I just hope this "new concern" of mine is not a sign of things to come, is not the first domino toppling over. I hate watching people drop out of punk and gradually leaving all their ideals behind. The mere hint of a possibility that my beliefs and passions will die with age really frightens me. At this point in my life I really do believe that I'm beyond the point of no return— that I will never be able to fall back in line with a career and a family. If some day I want a normal life, want to give up on my beliefs, I will surely end up a very bitter woman.

• • •

Endnotes

I'm glad to see East Timor is getting so much press these days. Even the shitty college paper of my former university is carrying stories on it weekly and actually getting some of the facts straight and exposing lies and facts that have been suppressed for the last 25 years. This brings me to my question—why now? Why are so many governments (to name a few: US, Japanese, and Australian) all of a sudden so eager to help out and send "peacekeeping forces?" I would like to think that the reason lies somewhere in grassroots organizations and pressure, but that can't be the only explanation. I could probably write another entire column on my theories and thoughts but I will spare you (this time, anyway).

My friend Jen recently turned me onto this amazing book called *Prescription for Nutritional Healing* (James F., Md. Balch and Phyllis A. Balch, Avery Pub. Group) which contains a wealth of information unmatched anywhere. (Many thanks to Nate for lifting it for me from Barnes & Noble.) The first section describes vitamins, minerals, and a plethora of other elements for good health (even water) in inexhaustible detail. It discusses their functions and sources and the authors' recommendations on usage.

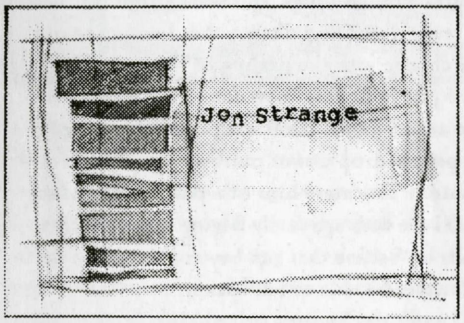
The second section lists ailments in alphabetical order, describes what they are, their symptoms and causes, and how you can prevent and treat them. It ranks the various vitamins and minerals you can take and what each specifically does then tells you how to use various herbs and modify daily activity to treat the problem. The third section discusses various traditional therapies such as fasting and enemas. At the end there is a resource list and an amazing amount of other pertinent info. This is an invaluable resource that is seriously going to change my life and I can't imagine that it wouldn't do the same for just about everybody else in the world. Hunt it down, it's only about US$20 and well worth it.

• • •

Does anybody out there know Jeff Reagan who went to junior high at Parkway Central in Chesterfield, MO and moved to St. Louis for high school? I would love to get in touch with him.

• • •

2340 W. 24th St., Chicago, IL 60608 or kimbae1@yahoo.com (that's a one, not an "I" after my name)



I trudged off of the train, my borrowed turquoise backpack weighing heavily on my shoulders. The day before, I walked for hours in the pissing rain, lingering outside stores, wishing there were something interesting enough in their windows to give me an excuse to go inside, set down my pack, and get dry. Or at least not get any wetter. Exhausted by the prior day's dreary boredom, I had decided to treat myself to a day on the train. I didn't need another lonely day in the rain trying to hitch from Bristol to Oxford.

Not that I had any reason to go to Oxford, either—but it was on the way north, and seemed as good a stopping point as any. It would serve.

As I walked down the ramp from the gleaming new station, a crumbling building stared at me from across the parking lot. The Oxford L.M.S. Station, abandoned and decaying, was draped with signs imploring the denizens of Oxford to "SAVE THE OXFORD LMS." Two disheveled figures stood outside the yard, jingling a collection can at passers-by. Their posters explained that the city council was planning to tear down the old train station to make room for six more lanes of traffic running into town. Something to do with the steel construction of the old station gave it particular historical significance that justified their attempt to preserve the building. That and they wanted to keep the city from building a road that they saw as unnecessary and potentially ruinous to the town's central pedestrian zone. The historical significance of the intricacies of steel construction in the late 1800s was probably negligible, but clearly, these activists were latching onto anything that could serve their ends.

I stopped to talk with them about the situation, pleased to have found somebody to talk to, though I wasn't particularly interested in their cause. Until I saw the treehouses. The three trees in the front yard, though small, were foundations for elaborate structures of boards, rope and tarp, which housed a couple of piles of clothing and blankets. A pair of socked feet stuck out through the tarp of the treehouse directly above me.

"We're not just squatting the trees, mate. You ought to see inside. We've got 30 people living in there, ready for the bulldozers to show up," the stubby man with a cigarette answered, when I asked about the treehouses. He gave me the once-over, to make sure that I was no more than I appeared to be—an American on vacation, however broke— and agreed to show me around, leaving his partner to drum up more petition signatures.

I spent the evening sharing dinner with the various residents of the squat, and talking with them about their plans. The usual ratio seemed to apply here—a handful of people were doing all the work, from preparing press releases to cooking and cleaning for 30-some people, while the rest lay around doing as little as possible. A bottle of wine was lazily passed around the circle, and a small pack of dogs hunted for scraps from under our feet.

Later that night, I shimmied up a rope to a massive cargo net strung from the ceiling where I would make my bed for the night. As I tried to overcome my uneasiness at being 50 feet above the ground, supported only by the coarse weave of the net, I marveled at the happy stubbornness of this old building's defenders. Most of them admitted to me that in the end, they were going to lose. The police would drag them out of the trees, herd them out of the building, and at the end of a difficult and dangerous operation, would finally cut through the U-locks holding the last diehards to the historical steel beams of the ceiling and pull them from the cargo net. The building would be bulldozed, and the city council's 6 lanes of traffic would eventually arrive. Despite this certainty, which they accepted with a simple shrug of their shoulders, they seemed cheerfully determined to put the police through the exercise. By preparing for the eviction so calmly, they were ensuring that the ordeal would be demeaning only for the police, and that any embarrassment would belong to the city council.

Now, after visiting England, I work as an organizer for a pro-choice political organization. That's my official title: Organizer. It's a title that confuses a lot of people: "So what do you do every day?" they'll ask. Sometimes I feel hard-pressed to give a straight answer. Some days, I do a lot of public education work—speaking to groups of people about the importance of comprehensive sexuality education in schools, or the need for insurance coverage for

prescription contraceptives. Other days, I work with groups of activists to strategize ways to reach out to new people and grow our base of pro-choice supporters in their communities. Our organization also advocates for pro-choice legislation in the Ohio General Assembly, and supports pro-choice candidates for public office. Next week we'll take part in testimony opposing Ohio's so-called "Partial Birth Infanticide" Ban, which would threaten a woman's right to choose safe and legal abortion. Even though this bill is patterned after a 1995 law that was subsequently found unconstitutional, a majority of the members of the Ohio House of Representatives signed on as co-sponsors of the bill.

Part of the reason it's difficult for me to describe what I do every day is because it varies so much. The harder part is figuring out how to explain the essence of organizing— motivating people to take action, and empowering them to be agents for social change. Most Americans support women's reproductive rights, but not many will act to protect these rights. I can hardly blame them. Our society is structured in so many ways that keep us alienated from each other and from our own power convinced that we can't change anything. Part of my job is to convince people that they should take action, and to offer the tools to do it effectively.

I'm not delusional. Even if you break through the barriers of social propriety and the distractions of television and computer solitaire while bored at work, even if you see through the patterns of blame that point the finger at just about everyone *but* the corporate pigs that built and maintain this rigid regulation of power, and actually communicate with people and organize for social change, the odds are still stacked heavily against you. There is no good guy in a white hat to vote for. The people who profit from the current system are not likely to give up, or even give you a chance to really threaten them. This does not mean that you can't make any difference, nor does it mean that every action has to be a loss or a victory.

I'm not motivated to do my job by the visions of end results, though I think these visions are attainable. I can imagine that within the next few years, all insurance companies in Ohio will cover prescription contraceptives. I can foresee that the work I'm doing now will contribute to that goal, and I think it's a good goal to work towards. But my motivation comes from seeing people empower themselves to learn, to communicate, to organize, and to take action.

The methods my organization uses to protect reproductive rights are considerably more mainstream than the tactics used by the folks squatting the old Oxford L.M.S. Station, but we're both doing something very radical. The fantastic, radical, inspiring thing I see in the activists I work with, and in the people putting themselves in the way of a glimmering new road isn't anyone's politics or tactics, but their resolution to act on their beliefs. By asserting that they can make real changes in people's lives, they've succeeded.

• • •

Tree Of Knowledge Press is putting together an entire book dedicated to the DIY ethic! This book will stand as evidence that regular old folks can take charge of their lives and do things themselves, while taking power back from corporations and so-called "professionals." They hope to reprint many of the Punk Planet DIY Files, but they're on the lookout for submissions on just about any topic. Any skill you have locked away in that cranium of yours, they want to hear about it – plus, all contributors get a free copy of this incredible resource. Send your contributions or your inquiries to: Tree Of Knowledge Press PO Box 251766 Little Rock AR 72225

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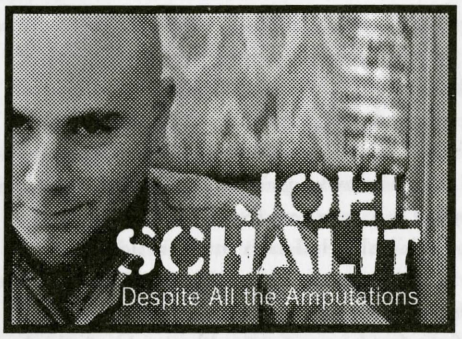
I like to hear from people, honest. Jon Strange PO Box 10013 Columbus OH 43201



It was going to be the longest trip I had ever taken home. But I knew what I was getting myself into. "No wonder they elected Mussolini" I thought as the Alitalia booking agent told me my departure had been delayed by three hours, "I'm sure he would have promised to make flights leave on time" But all I could think about was how I wanted to get back to Tel Aviv and see my family. I heaved a huge sigh and told myself that I was going to have to live my choice of airlines. Having lived sporadically in Italy as a child, I knew what I was getting myself into. Terrorist bombings and political kidnappings may be a thing of the past, I thought, but relaxed scheduling appears to have remained an integral part of Italy's post-1970s future.

I was also incredibly anxious to get home. My previous trip to Israel, almost a year to the day, had left an indelible impression on me. I wasn't necessarily traumatized by the trip as much as I was left terribly nervous about the country's political situation. There was a sense of radical instability in the air, one that I don't think I'd ever felt anywhere before. The entire country felt like it was a powder keg getting ready to explode. Give American fundamentalist Jews weapons, I worried, and the country could plunge into total civil war. Much of it seemed to originate in how utterly alienating the Netanyahu government was. It conducted itself with the utmost ruthlessness, not only with Israel's Arab neighbors, but amongst Israelis too.

Netanyahu played favorites, pitting Middle Eastern Jews against European Jews, the religious against the secular, the left against the right. He took advantage of every conceivable social schism, and worked them to a near breaking point. The sense of continuous crisis he created made for the only political situation Netanyahu and his cadre felt comfortable governing. The problem with their methodology was that it unleashed too much hatred for Israelis, with their

immense capacity for self-immolation, to deal with, so they grew exhausted, finally voting the man out of office. But it was not clear that this would ever happen, because Israelis are so used to living in crisis that one wonders what they'd do without it. Just when you think the country is going to take two steps forward, as Gang of Four once said, it takes three steps back. For example, it elected Netanyahu after Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. How symptomatic can you get?

As I stood in line waiting to board my flight, listening to Israeli software executives chattering to each other about the latest encryption technologies, I felt this weird sense of relief overcome me because they weren't talking about politics. While I'm not the sort of person who relishes an absence of such discourse, I've always craved the day when Israelis could somehow lead more normal lives, where the most profound thing they could speak of was something as mundane as their jobs. As I sat down in my seat and pulled out my crumpled copy of the day's *New York Times*, I asked myself why, after all these years of living abroad and forgetting most of my Hebrew, was I so concerned with such matters, particularly when my life is so removed from it all. All of the sudden I was interrupted by an elderly Israeli sitting beside me.

"Oy veysmere," he wearily proclaimed. "You think NATO could have chosen a better time to go to war than this?" His voice reminded me of my father's. He sounded just like an old, tired soldier, coming home from vacation. I introduced myself, shook his hand and replied that the only good thing about the war was that it happened during the Israeli election campaign. ìKinda puts everything in context, doesn't it?" I joked. My neighbor responded "As if that were its only value. Unfortunately for us, it means that its going to take that much longer to get home. Alitalia told me that all the skylanes from Milano to Tel Aviv are reserved for military traffic."

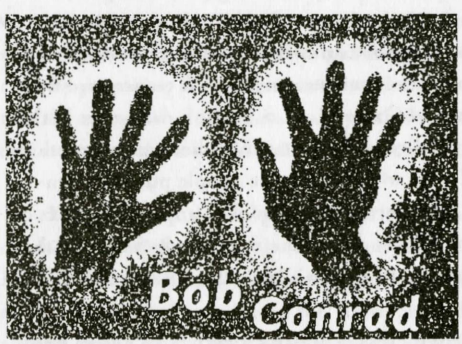
I took a deep breath, looked at my watch, and muttered "oh fuck." I was supposed to meet a connecting flight for Ben Gurion in Milano, which was scheduled to arrive at midnight. "Now my father will definitely not meet me at the airport." I sunk down into my seat, balanced my chequebook, and prepared myself to pay for a two-hour cab ride home to my parents house half-way between Tel Aviv and Haifa. Not long thereafter, overcome with exhaustion, I fell straight to sleep, only to awake upon landing in Italy. After arriving in the terminal, I looked up at the Alitalia departure board, saw no mention of my flight, and prepared for the worst. Feeling nervous, I went to the Alitalia desk and asked what the story was. Just like I remembered it as a child, no one quite knew anything except where my gate was, so I ambled off, prepared to spend the afternoon writing in my notebook, waiting to get home.

It wasn't very hard to find my gate. Several yards away I could hear people yelling at each other in Hebrew, scolding one another, laughing, the smell of cheap cigarettes. It wasn't very hard to find my gate. I cracked a huge grin and prepared to have a hard time concentrating, and sat down next to several young Israeli women, one quite butch and pierced, smoking menthols, another wearing a Grateful Dead tee-shirt and bell-bottom corduroys, discussing how disappointing Milano was this year. I laughed to myself quietly and looked at the next row of seats, where a group of less well to do Israelis in their early twenties had gathered, their voices raised, showing off the clothes they had purchased while visiting Italy.

As commonplace as the scene in front of me might have been at any airport, what piqued my interest was how interracial *this* group of Israelis was. Judging from their heavily accented Hebrew and extremely fair skin coloring, some of them were very obviously from Russian immigrant families, while others were extremely dark, almost Arab looking, like Yemenite Jews. One of them, an extremely beautiful woman with long curly hair was very obviously what they call a Falasha, an Ethiopian Jewess. She was holding hands with one of the Russian boys, kissing him gently on the neck while he spoke to her softly. Then, it seemed, all of the couples in the group made themselves apparent: Middle Eastern looking women with European looking men, accents clashing, hands touching, cigarettes getting passed back and forth.

I leaned back in my seat feeling kind of stunned, remembering how I'd been interrupted by my elderly Israeli neighbor on the flight from San Francisco. I thought back to how I hadn't answered the question why I remained so concerned about Israel, twenty years after having left the country. Staring at this multiethnic group of Jews caressing one another, oblivious to the kinds of racial distinctions that prohibit Americans from different backgrounds from interacting with one another, I became totally overwhelmed. There were still little utopian moments possible in this poor, young country, possibilities which in some respects I could not see in the future of my adopted home, let alone in Israel's own tragic history.

Feeling a bit teary, I got up from my seat, lit a cigarette, and strolled over to one of the public Internet terminals to check the news. Logging onto the BBC site, I noticed a very bold and bright headline: NATO and Serbia agree to start peace talks. Stunned, I walked back to my belongings. My neighbor from my previous had planted himself next to them. "You know, I finally got some information about our flight from Alitalia," he said. "They told me our flight is delayed because our pilot hasn't arrived from serving his reserve duty with the Italian airforce over Yugoslavia."



Vegetarianism and veganism are a touchy subjects. The sensitivity surrounding them suggest they are moral issues, issues of right and wrong. This does not hold true for all vegetarians or vegans, but for some, to discuss being pro-meat-eating is

like having a discussion about serving broiled baby on a dinner platter. For some hard-liners, who view humans as a scourge, discussing broiled lamb may be worse than broiled babies. A hardline vegan once told me that humans *deserve to die* because of what they do to animals. His view is the extreme for sure, but it shows that for some, like the hardcore vegan kids in Salt Lake City, who firebombed a McDonald's, eating meat is a delicate and potentially volatile issue. There are many reasons why vegetarianism and veganism (hereafter referred to as just vegetarianism) are topics that invoke so much emotion. Some will be addressed. More importantly, the focus will be why some of these reasons are often based on criteria that have little to do with the eating of meat itself.

Sacred Animals: A Religious and Economic Explanation

Vegetarianism arose from religious principles. The reason for this began and ends with economics, but moral values also play a heavy role. Vegetarian historian Colin Spencer says that vegetarianism arose with the birth of large-scale agriculture and the domestication of animals; a time, he says, when animals under human captivity were valued for the contributions to human survival. He explains that the voluntary abstinence from killing animals and eating their meat is based in the ancient world on spiritual values and beliefs. ...Because of hardship, inexperience and the fact that everything had to be learned by trial and error [in the beginnings of agriculture], it is likely that the majority of the first farmers were involuntary vegetarians for much of the time. Even after the domestication of animals meat would have been kept for sacrifice, ritual and celebration...

In the history of the human decision whether to eat meat, the change from hunter to domesticator was a major behavioral shift: by selecting the plants to be cultivated and the animals to be reared, humans were now limiting the range of their diet. ...As humans became more domesticated, meat did not have to be hunted.... A captive animal was already half tamed and its mystery, an inherent spur to mysticism, had disappeared. Animals, once domesticated, were not seen as animals, but were investment, wealth, sustenance and survival, part of the human struggle to exist. ...Among some of those men and women who had chosen to become the priests of a community, who had taken a step away from it, an abstention from meat (even specific animals) began to creep into the tenets of religious belief. Not to eat meat, but simply to smell the aromas, was to become god-like, a sign of piety.[1]

Fastforward to today, and we find that animal domestication and the spiritual reverence for animals still holds true for the same reasons as when animals were first domesticated. Anthropologist Marvin Harris confirms that part of the reason why some animals came to be considered higher life forms, and therefore worthy of worship, was because they had more to offer to human subsistence alive than dead. Harris says cows in India, for instance, are considered the mother of life and are valued for their dung, burnt as cooking fuel and used as a floor covering; for their milk as nourishment; and because cows are "low-energy substitutes for tractor and tractor factories,"[2] items India's non-industrial economy can't afford. Additionally, he says cow worship exists because of valuable by-products of live cows, not exactly because there are qualms about killing cows. He says that lower castes will scavenge cow cadavers for their meats, and during a famine in World War II, "slaughter of cows and draft animals reached such alarming levels...that the British had to use troops to enforce the cow-protection laws."[3] Harris adds that India has a huge leathercraft industry despite the country's reverence for cows. His analysis shows that cow worship, as it's practiced in India, exists because of economic necessity. Cows keep humans alive in more ways than one, living or not, but their worth is obviously greater in that country when cows are alive.

Production: The Third Variable

Despite vegetarianism's religious beginning, some primary, modern reasons for a vegetarian diet are environmental. A friend recently sent me the following information:

- 70% of US grain production is fed to livestock
- 5 million acres of rain-forest are felled every year in South and Central America alone to create cattle pasture
- Animal agriculture is a chief contributor to water pollution
- America's farm animals produce 10 times the waste produced by the human population. 35 pounds of topsoil are lost in the production of one pound of grain-fed beef
- Pounds of edible product that can be produced on an acre of prime land: Apples 20,000; Carrots 30,000; Potatoes 40,000; Tomatoes 50,000; Beef 250
- The number of gallons of water needed to produce one pound of edible product: Apples 49; Carrots 33; Potatoes 24; Tomatoes 23; Beef 2,500
- 20 vegans could live off the same amount of land that it takes to feed one meat eater
- Between 19 and 22% of all threatened and endangered species are harmed by livestock grazing
- 5 million acres of rain-forest are felled every year in South and Central America to create cattle pasture
- Factory farms are the biggest contributors to polluted rivers and streams in the US.

Part of this view shows that meat production takes a huge environmental toll. The veracity of using such statistics is in question if for no other reason than because statistics are generally used to assert the proof of a theory, rather than to produce the theory in the first place. Nevertheless, these percentages are often accepted by others who support vegetarianism. One such proponent is Matthew Fox, an Episcopal priest, who claims that vegetarianism or semivegetarianism is not a moral *option*; it is rapidly becoming a requirement. It has everything to do with the health of the planet and with respecting animals and other non-human forms of life. ...If North Americans alone would cut back just 10 percent of our meat consumption, sixty million people around

the world who are currently starving would have food to eat.[4]

There's no doubt, then, that wide-scale meat consumption appears harmful to the environment. But let's look at a prime contributing variable that conflicts with the subtext of these statistics.

The correlation of environmental degradation to eating meat ends up a spurious relationship for a number of reasons. Since cause and effect relationships are scientifically difficult to prove, the meat-eating and environmental consequences relationship must be considered correlational. On its surface, the correlation between eating meat, which supports meat production, and the environmental consequences listed above, appears strong. However, in correlational research there are often confounding variables that disrupt the nature of correlation relationships. In this case, if a third variable, of *how the meat is produced,* is thrown into the relationship, we're left with a relationship that depends on this third variable: the method of meat production. Therefore, without this third variable, the correlation between eating meat and adverse environmental consequences falls apart. The relationship then becomes not between eating meat and adverse environmental effects, but between the method of production and adverse environmental effects. (Mass production processes, such as growing grains and produce, similarly treat the environment as expendable, and, in fact, our general cultural values rest upon the taking of resources for our population expansion.) This is further supported by one simple fact: our ancestors ate meat without modern production methods for millions of years, and without sullying the environment and, in most cases, this diet had minimal environmental impact.

Despite the convenience of blaming meat eaters for massive environmental degradation, it's certain that humans have an impact on their environment based on their subsistence patterns. This holds true for hunter-gatherer and tribal cultures as well as our culture. The difference is that, in hunter-gatherer and tribal societies, subsistence more often follows the same pattern as other living organisms, unlike how our culture practices resource over-consumption to the soon-to-be point of depletion. Regardless of their seemingly harmless ways of survival, hunter- and gatherer-based subsistence sometimes entails partial extinction of the food supply. As an example, the first natives crossing the Bering Straight into North America hunted large mammals to extinction.[5] The reason for this can be attributed to an evolutionary certainty. Science writer Colin Tudge says that humans did indeed hunt to extinction animals in various locations. Discussing North America, he states that the mammoth extinction was bound to occur: "All that has become apparent these past few years in ecology and population dynamics, including the mathematical modeling that shows how creatures like...mammoths will decline under what seems only like moderate pressure, proclaims that for big-slow-breeding animals, extinction is always imminent."[6] Tudge cites Dr. Steve Mithen, who created modeling to hypothesize about mammoth populations, and suggests the extinction process happened like this:

Dr. Mithen first posited a reasonable population of human beings in North America and then showed that if one mammoth were killed per year for every twenty people, then, sooner or later, the mammoths would go extinct, especially if, as seems likely, they were already under climatic stress. The original size of the population does not affect the issue. It takes longer to eliminate a big population, but it will crash sooner or later. In the interests of conservatism, however, [Mithen] proposed that the rate of hunting never exceeded 2 percent per year of the mammoth population. Still it dwindled to extinction.[7]

Even though hunters killed off some of their large-game meat supply in North America, it's doubtful that it occurred due to greed or because they intentionally wanted eliminate a valuable part of their food supply.

The relationship of human subsistence and its affect on the environment's condition has some validity, then, but under the conditions of our dominant culture, and the treatment of the environment to gain more and more food, the correlation of a meat eating diet and environmental degradation becomes weak, at best, in light of the evidence our hunter kin show us about how they ate: approximately 25 to 30 percent of their diet was meat of some form.

The difference between hunter-gatherer and tribal cultures and our own appears to be one of intent. Our culture purposefully dominates land and resources to feed its populations. For our hunter ancestors in North America, the environmental impact of losing some members of their food supply was merely a mathematical certainty, not a clear attempt to purposefully rid itself of part of its own food supply. Hunter-gatherers tended to live acceptingly in their environments, not bent on controlling them at the expense of everything else. In another sketch of indigenous behavior toward the environment, where people had an impact on their surroundings, anthropologist Peter Farb discusses how desert people [in Nevada and California] exploited every possible food resource in their inhospitable land ...; they must have existed on a precarious edge between survival and extinction. [Nevertheless], for thousands of years after the [desert] culture emerged, scarcely any basic changes took place in the pattern of food collecting as a way of life. And in some places...the [desert] way of life persisted virtually unchanged until the arrival of [whites].[8]

Farb's description of this native culture shows that even though these people used land to their benefit, this process was done in compliance with rest of the biological community, indicating a balance that matches caloric intake and the expenditure needed to get food. Cherokee student and teacher Michael Garrett explains how this process is viewed by the Cherokee:

All living things are connected in ways that enable life to continue in a balanced and cyclical manner.... Each tribe, traditionally, has a proper way of doing things that is specified in ceremonies and tribal teachings. These teachers extend from the natural and spiritual laws of Creation. For example, there is a certain way in which one must make prayers and offerings when hunting, fishing, or gathering plants or minerals for survival or for medi-

cine. In addition, one must explain one's intentions to the spirit of the animal, fish, plant, or mineral, also taking great care to never take more than one needs and to use all of what one takes.[9]

Viewed another way, each culture of this type typically lives within the constraints of their areas. Many indigenous people, depending on how they located and produced their food, tended to strive towards balance.

In contrast, another mathematical certainty concerns us, which is our culture's exponential population growth and how we feed ourselves. This relationship is critical to the understanding of the vegetarian argument. Our culture's surplus food production, a topic related to the confounding variable in the meat-eating to environmental-degradation correlation, is a missing link needed to illustrate our culture's relationship to its environment.

Production and Farb's Paradox

Despite convincing evidence from anthropologists, scientists and philosophers[10], the relationship between food production and population growth remains hotly debated and misunderstood. Yet, without an adequate understanding of what this relationship means, specifically for diet selection, and more importantly for the survival of our species, going much beyond the statistics that argue a pro-vegetarian stance will be pointless.

For millions of years people consumed meat, didn't threaten the extinction of their species or harm their environment because they ate meat. A trend today, as shown above, is to blame meat consumption for environmental destruction and degradation. Although not consuming meat may contribute to a MORE sustainable ecosystem, if our current production methods are taken into account, the halting of this production would lead only to short-term improvements. Adopting vegetarianism as a method of ending the negative externalities of meat production is a solitary measure that sidesteps a systematic production and consumption inherent to our culture. Advocating a global vegetarian diet does not take into account Peter Farb's paradox, as discussed in Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael*: "Intensification of production to feed an increased population leads to a still greater increase in the population."[11] Farb explains the relationship and its consequences like this:

Many signs point to an increased population as the real spur to food production. Both archeological evidence and studies of modern hunter-gatherers show that human populations—unlike those of many other mammals, which usually remain in natural balance with the environment—tend to increase in numbers because they have the cultural ability to surmount environmental conditions. ...Humans were unquestionably so changed by food production, right from the outset, that they could not have returned to a simpler existence. Once under way, the food-producing transformation could not be halted; its own momentum prevented any turning back. Humans had been seduced into what one ecologist has called 'those first fatal steps toward the primrose-lined, ambition-greased chute of civilization.' ...The population explosion, the shortage of resources, the pollution of the environment, exploitation of one human group by another, famine, and war—all have their roots in that great adaptive change from foraging to production.[12]

Physiologist Jared Diamond shares this view and says that "agriculture and herding...made it possible to feed far more people per square mile of land than could live on wild foods available in the same area. ...As a result, the world's human population rose from about ten million around 10,000 B.C....to over five billion today."[13]

Whether this increased food production is cattle and the externalities that come with raising cattle, or corn crops and the externalities that come with growing corn, the correlation between food production and population growth holds true. Given our systematic production and consumption methods, it will not matter if the entire populace of the world became vegetarian. Tudge agrees, saying, "We do not need to contemplate worldwide vegetarianism; but we certainly should not be producing megaquantities of grain...specifically to feed to farm animals."[14] (Tudge instead suggests that one solution could be that cattle be fed with grasses humans can't consume and should graze in areas where humans can't plant.) So, a global vegetarian diet may cause a short-term increase in the quality of the environment, but the long-term would lead to increased food production because, in the absence of animals to feed and grow, more land and crops are available to humans. Correspondingly, as humans continue to increase in population, more food will need to be available. Eliminating one kind of food from the mix would not alter the controls of the system. In fact, the beginnings of wide-spread agriculture, which Spencer claims spawned the vegetarian diet, have ultimately lead to near-catastrophic human population growth.

The problem, then, is clearly systematic. The effects of our production and consumption standards are much more correlated to environmental quality than the single matter of eating meat. A corresponding example could be considered: If cars were made 100 percent safe and wasteless, would it still be harmful to drive a car? Of course not, yet it is common to demonize cars because they are harmful and destructive to the environment. It's not the *car*, but how cars are *created* to use energy and expel hazardous waste, ending up in landfills. Much in the same way, to demonize meat-eating, even though it is the method of meat production that leads to negative environmental consequences, is setting up a strawman in which to cut down. Often, the strawman in the vegetarian argument becomes the individual consumer.

An Individual Choice: Or is it?

Someone recently claimed to me that:

by switching to a plant based diet, you are drastically lowering your impact on the planet and leading a more 'sustainable' life. It is a way to reverse our individual roles as consumers. Switching to a vegan lifestyle is probably the most ecologically responsible action an individual can carry out. I feel that a major lifestyle change is essential for the survival of Earth and all its children, and I envision

that veganism is only part of a necessary vision that needs to be embraced by most people.

This argument presumes, like with similar arguments that are pro-recycling, pro-spirituality or pro-religious, as examples, that the individual is responsible and to blame for the impact of all the humans in our culture and therefore can transcend our situations by individual lifestyle changes. Over and over, I have heard the view that:

If everyone would vote, then ...

If everyone would NOT vote, then ...

If everyone recycled, then ...

If everyone rode bikes more and drove less, then ...

If everyone believed in God, then ...

If everyone stopped believing in God, then ...

Over and over, our culture inundates itself with this idea that, if each of us just did this or that, we could improve who we are, and thus, the world we live in. The same is obviously spelled out by at least one vegetarian and probably many others. Again, this view ignores negative systematic externalities, discussed above, and instead puts responsibility onto the shoulders of the individual as if the individual was to blame for the entire system.

(As a personal anecdote, after hearing this view for much of my life, it was no wonder I was depressed for so long. I was sitting around waiting for everyone to stop being such a fucking asshole. It wasn't until it was spelled out for me—that, in fact, it wasn't me, or any individual—that I grasped a better understanding of things. Of course we each indubitably contribute to what we create in life. At the same time, the prevailing view commonly and erroneously blames the individual for what is systematically wrong.)

This argument is fallacious because it ignores the production variable. If one buys meat from a supermarket that buys it from a slaughtering plant, there's a considerable difference in that method of production than if the meat were bought from a store that buys from a local or regional farm that raises its animals organically. A view of mass-produced meat outlines the chain as follows:

Today... responsibility for the killing of animals for food is completely diffused by the corporate bureaucracies that have taken over animal agriculture. One firm, or a division of it, may specialize in breeding animals, another caring for young animals, and another in feeding them to market weight. Other business entities transport them to stockyards and auctions, where still others buy them and take them to the slaughterhouse. And dozens of others—packers, processors, and supermarket chains—reduce the carcasses to bloodless, shrink-wrapped packages that offer the consumer no clue as to their animal origins....[15]

However, if one were to buy meat directly from a farmer, raise the animal first hand or hunt the animal, production varies. All options are different, yet each lends the same net result for the individual: the product he or she eats. Under each option, the systematic methods of production are different, each having different consequences but with similar net results. External consequences become potentially greater, especially in this example, and those consequences are what are most eital. That doesn't necessarily mean that more steps in the production and distribution chain means more negative externalties; for, given each step along the way, if set up differently, the process could be sustainable through and through.

Even the seemingly less harmless option of hunting deer has its problems: What happens when everyone wants to hunt deer? With smaller, less cramped population densities, this subsistence pattern may have been perfect for those cultures that subsisted on gathering, hunting and small-scale agriculture. In our culture, a different subsistence pattern is needed, one that is healthier for all life, should we choose to have a livable world for our children. Though this change could happen from the work or lifestyle change of one individual, to expect this to happen could be an invitation to disaster; for, systematic problems will continue to flourish.

A Spiritual Conclusion

If animism is the acceptance of the divinity of all life, and of all life being more or less equal, the animist possesses an awareness of how life is a process, not a hierarchy. Therefore, both plants and animals are valued. Some would say equally. Michael Garrett says that plants have balanced importance to other life forms in Cherokee tradition.

In the case of plants, Cherokee tradition specifies that one must take only every fourth plant and leave the other three undisturbed. This is done out of respect for the life and great powers of the plants, so that they, too, may survive, and it is done is a spirit of thankfulness, humility, and kinship.[16]

Despite what at least one native culture teaches, continually through the exploration of vegetarianism, hierarchies of life appear. This makes sense considering vegetarianism arose out of cultures that brought us the dominating religions and lifestyles of today. The vegetarian argument seems to follow in the order that we humans know—fallaciously, because we're human, the unstated excuse asserts—what is right to let live or to kill, that one thing is okay to eat, but another is not, and more importantly, that *we are the ones to decide.*

What is astounding is how people who truly care about the world they live in further the human-centered view of life by constructing the idea that it must be in the hands of humans to make things right for all of life. This is a view that ignores how biological processes continue with or without the interference of humans.

Given that humans coexisted as omnivores along with other carnivorous and herbivorous animals for as long as we have, and the view of higher life forms is a relatively new construct that evolved out of a dramatic cultural shift, it's hard to consider an argument as animistic if it says we shouldn't eat animals. Part of being a member of the biocommunity is taking what the biocommunity has to offer, just as other species do, and giving back to it. To say that one is better than the other is, first, a construct unique only to modern humans, and second, in apparent contradiction to the animist view that values all life as sacred. Such views continue to assert humans as above a natural order that, in fact,

we are not above or separate from, but merely cohabitants of.

The animist view acknowledges the give and take relationship of all life, and it honors that view by unconditionally being a part of the process. Realizing that we exist in life as much as anything else also means realizing we live in a continuum that follows the laws of life. By over-populating our living space and taking irreplaceable resources, we are fooling ourselves into thinking we are above the laws of life. Those laws say that extinction will come to us if we have no more means to feed ourselves.

Addressing this situation systematically is key here. To say that vegetarianism is the key to environmental health bypasses the critical role of our culture's production practices and continues to assert humans as above the context of life. Attempts to rise above this context, either in judgment about what's wrong or right, or in how we overproduce food to support our expansion, continues to put us on a dictatorial pedestal. From this position we appoint ourselves the commandants of life and death. In doing so we walk a path of shortsighted unsustainability.

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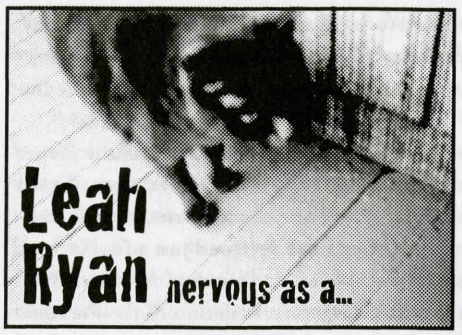

The question: Why should a writer of literary short fiction do a zine?

The answer: Why should a writer of literary short fiction do anything else?

Many years ago I lived in a small college town and a friend of mine published a little newspaper called *Perkins Press*. He was privileged to have some money at his disposal and this publication was undoubtedly one of the smartest things he did with it. It was newsprint, with the kind of ink that made your hands turn all black. Macintosh was the choice computer for desktop publishing then. As I said, this was a while ago. The beauty of the *Perkins Press* was that you never really knew when it was going to come out, but when it did, it was free, and it was distributed all over town. We didn't call it a zine. It was years before I would know or use the word zine. Not that the concept hadn't been invented yet, I just didn't know about it. My friend the editor used it as a soapbox sometimes; other times he printed ex-girlfriend's personal letters on the letters to the editor page. Well, yeah, sure, it was technically a letter to the editor. But he also printed everything he thought was cool, which often included work by people who didn't feel their work was worth reading, let alone publishing. He gave a lot of people a place to put their work. It would be circulated around this very small town and everyone would read it. I do mean everyone. Somehow, for all its snide literary attitude (which it did have) it also had a real populist appeal. Being featured in *Perkins Press* meant that all kinds of people would read your stuff and tell you what they thought of it, so you could just as likely be discussing the work with Joe Roofer as you could with Joe College Student.

Try that with a snotty little literary magazine that costs 15 bucks. Who reads those things? The advice you get if you write short fiction is to submit to lit mags. Most mainstream magazines don't publish fiction anymore. It doesn't have the popular audience that it used to have. So if you're not confident enough to send your stuff to *The New Yorker*, you send it to lit mags. I have a theory about those things. The only people who read them are other writers and/or academics. What's the fucking difference, actually? In any case, chances are good that you never will know much of anything about who your readership is or what they think of your work. It's all kind of embarrassing. You generally get paid about what you would by a zine; no cash, a few free copies (sometimes only one, since they're way more expensive to produce than a zine). The magazines themselves don't seem to be sold publicly. If you're lucky, they'll be buried in some little litmag ghetto at

your local highbrow bookstore. But I don't really want to ask my friends to pay $15 for it, so I don't really make a big thing out of it with people. It was much more fun to say, hey, did you see the new *Perkins Press*?

One of the things that I found endearing about *Punk Planet* was that they published fiction, starting with the first issue. That's how I found them; they published one of my stories. And then I started doing zine reviews. After I had reviewed just a few Xeroxed little numbers, I thought, fuck, I can do this. And *Violation Fez* was born. Of course it didn't have the circulation of the *Perkins Press* in terms of numbers, but the phenomena of zine trading meant that I could exchange work with people all over the country, for the cost of a stamp. To a zine veteran, this seems too obvious to bother mentioning. But to a fiction writer, it's a revelation. It makes you realize that this is actually what all of us "literary" people are supposed to be doing. That is, doing a simple, inexpensive exchange of work with a diverse audience. Would I ever get a fraction of the feedback from a litmag? And would it be as honest, or as useful? The answer is generally no on all counts. Not that "literary" people aren't worth consulting; I do think they should be in the mix somewhere. The problem with writers, though, is that they get incestuous. They learn this in those terrifying MFA programs. They write, they read each others work, they sleep with each other, they read each others work some more, they sleep with their professors, and read the professor's work about the last student they slept with, they write about that, and so on. They don't go outside that little circle, and really, they're writing for each other. Once I start thinking that my audience is just a bunch of writers, it's time to throw in the towel. This is why I have not sent my work to a lit mag in about ten years. Why should I?

Some writers spend thousands of dollars to publish their own books, and I can see why that would be attractive to those who can afford it. But then you've invested so much money, and you will want to get it back. I invest so little (financially) in *Violation Fez* that I can afford to lose every single issue. This means I can just give it away. And I usually do. God help me if I ever become one of those zinesters who whines that they're not being paid to write their own personal zine. Sure, it's true that we live in a crazy world that doesn't understand the value of art, blah blah blah. But a lot of personal zines are like poetry readings (and alas, many plays). When you're done with it you feel like the writer should be paying YOU for fucking therapy. I don't think I should get paid a lot of money to do my silly little zine. I do it when and how I want to, and when I'm sick of it, I'll stop.

I attended the Royal Fest zine convention here in NY, and it was pretty cool. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to take advantage of all the stuff that was going on because I was busy with a show, but it was a pretty interesting event. If you want more information, of want to present on your zine next year, email bobashtray@aol.com.

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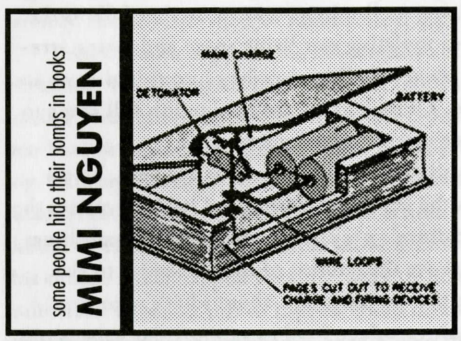
Violation Fez #7, *The School Issue*, is still available. Send me a dollar, or your zine. Leah Ryan, PO Box 2228, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108. LEAHzz@aol.com.



The heat kills me. I sit in the car, slumped, with my feet pressed against the windshield, leaving scuffmarks. I've got all my books in the backseat because I'm supposed to be making study lists for my oral exams, but instead I've got a fantasy novel I've read at least ten times before in my lap, page corner folded. My clothes are sticking to me even with the air-conditioning cranked up and Mark is driving, because he likes it.

We are on a two-week tour of the Midwest, by way of a wedding. Ten states between our apartment and our destination, we make lists of things we mean to do, record stores and relative visits scattered along our route. Thankfully, we share affection for truck-stop fare and roadside attractions, meaning that we'll probably consume about twenty-five pounds of candy between us and are all too willing to drive hours out of the way to stand before a scale recreation of Stonehenge, constructed with old junked cars painted steel-gray. (We do this, snapping photographs in frank admiration.)

It's a perfect vacation, except that I can hardly think in this heat; I sleep to escape it.

We are talking about the strike, still. (Mark is no doubt bored silly with my deconstructive efforts.) Last semester six undergraduate students went on a hunger strike, existing on fluids and camping in tents with about eighty others, also protesting, in front of the administration building.

Calling themselves the Third World Liberation Front, named after the original movement to include ethnic studies curriculum in the academy, the flyers were everywhere. Doors, bathroom stalls, wherever a piece of 8 1/2 X 11 paper might stick with a bit of tape. Each day they read something like, "FOUR days and counting—students are starving—,"for an education, for their "histories."

It's not that I had issues with their demands (more faculty hires for ethnic studies, which happens to be my graduate department, and less downsizing); but the slogan "students are starving" made me itch, uncomfortably. I wanted to know; did they consider the politics of hunger before striking?

Talking to Mark about my discomfort, but not sure how to articulate it, he replies with a high-school story about skating

downtown Indianapolis, where the homeless would shout out, "Gleam the cube!" and ask to see some handstands. (This, of course, is a reference to the late '80s Christian Slater flick, also starring the Powell Peralta team. It should also be noted that Mark tells stories to make a point.) Someone, somewhere, was on a hunger strike, and it came up in conversation between Mark and a homeless man, who said, "Hey, I've been on a hunger strike for three years, and I still haven't had my demands met!"

Just so. Now, I admit: I'm a critical girl and I don't let go easily, but it seems important to ask: Who has the luxury to go on a hunger strike, to go hungry (for just a little while) to make a political point, and for whom is hunger not a strategy but a normative condition, the way they exist from day to day? And since the undergraduates were especially invoking the "third world," what do the politics of hunger and hunger strikes mean in that more global context where hunger describes systematic underdevelopment and is not simply a tactic?

It was supposed to be symbolic, and no doubt compelling (the media coverage had been on the sympathetic side), but not unproblematic. And knowing the students involved (many fond of throwing around the terms "community," "the people," "working-class"), I want to know how the question of material inequity (as in, their material privilege versus that of the "third world," as well as local homeless and poor), so trenchantly foundational to the politics of hunger, was ignored.

Somewhere in Nebraska we wake up to see a painted concrete landscape outside our motel window, and in the parking lot, a car with a flat tire. Taking it to an auto shop in town, we watch the resident manager, a young white man our age, ask a co-worker to patch up our car. We watch an insectoid machine disembowel the deflated tire, and Mark says, "I was this close to ending up working in a place like this," holding his hands close.

It bothers me to hear some of my friends (derisively, if gently) generalize Mark as "a straight white boy," when most have yet to meet him—and if they did, would they change their minds? I mean, would they bother? I remember feeling contrite when I put the pieces of Mark's childhood together, growing up in a working-class family, a child of divorce, in a highly-segregated Midwestern city. Did I ever assume he had it easy, or at least easier than me?

But it's never actually that simple, is it? Picking and choosing your allies and enemies according to identity politics. I mean, I'm in an ethnic studies department supposedly full of "allies" but when someone feels comfortable enough to write on the graduate student list-serv, "This queer shit makes me sick," directed at me, I find myself deserted. (Can you say you've never been betrayed by "your kind"?) We rattle off the markers of gender, race, sexuality, class and even nation, but do these necessarily explain *how* we experience these things, *how* we then explain ourselves? (And the "how" is just as important as the "why" of social relations.) Striated by gender, nation, and sexuality, what if I've become "Asian" different from other Asians? What about those political and psychic differences that can't be explained by appealing to bodies or their social locations?

And still it doesn't matter how much work I've done around the politics of race, nation and sexuality in "the scene" or elsewhere because what it boils down to, in that split second between casual chatting and a rearing of heads, is this, incredulous: "You're dating a *white guy*?"

As if I've sold out, been duped. Goddamn, give me some credit, will you?

I put my arm around Mark and think these things to myself, fiercely.

Sarah takes us to the Museum of Science and Industry, all of us hyped on the possibilities awaiting us at the Mold-a-ramas—glass-covered machines that shake and steam and spit out still-soft wax molds of various objects, for only a dollar each. (Think grass-green busts of Abraham Lincoln, white space shuttles and gray submarines.) Mark and I hold them in our hands while Sarah bites hers and marvel at the many wonders of wax.

But tucked away in the one of the staircases, the anatomical display of two persons cut into horizontal and vertical slices, pressed between glass, gives me a bad feeling in my gut. Made in the 1940s and '50s, I wonder who they were and why their bodies were donated to science after their deaths. Poor, probably, and definitely not white, unless otherwise criminal. I think about the uneven politics of interiority, and the history of medical "science" studies of deviance and physiognomy, all those precise measurements of skull size and finger length taken from pickpockets, prostitutes, and asylum patients. Whose bodies, whose insides were afforded privacy? Whose were subject to discipline and surveillance anyway, because they were always already seen as too much body, on the verge of erupting?

It's because they were anonymous, probably typed as "undesirable" and stripped of certain rights by the state, that they became for once abstract enough, depersonalized enough to serve as standardized bodies for medical inquiry –or simple, public curiosity, watching people poke at the glass.

While others ohhed and ahhed, I sit down on the steps and wonder if I'm the only one who thinks this way, all the time.

On our way back, west on I-90, Mark and I are listening to "The World," a radio program broadcast after NPR, bored sick of the Dictators, Sleater-Kinney, and Turbonegro after ten days on the road. We clap (or I do, since he's driving) when a short clip airs about Basque punk bands, shouting in Basque about independence from Spain. (Our Minneapolis hostess Lilia is writing her thesis on women in Basque punk bands, so we especially appreciate the coincidence.) Minutes later, a woman narrates a short feature on U.S. solidarity brigades to Cuba and I lean forward to turn it up.

A cheerful 23 year-old from Northern California is interviewed about her two-week experience in the brigades, working at

a Cuban sugar mill. Her accent screams rich white girl and we groan as she relates her sense of "really knowing Cuba" now. How do tourists—and make no mistake, she is a tourist—even begin to claim to know the "real" after a carefully chaperoned tour of designated sites and state-sponsored events? (This applies to *any* country with a debilitated economy—usually due to histories of colonialism, war, or embargoes—dependent upon the tourist industry and wealthy foreigners.)

Asked whether the work was difficult, she spunkily replies, "Well, I don't think Americans are used to hard work. I mean, Americans don't really work with their hands, you know?" I cover my mouth with my hand in horror, roll my eyes behind pink plastic sunglasses. Mark and I wonder out loud, which Americans is she talking about? Her class and race blindness is astounding, for all that she vaguely desires something else revolutionary. I mention the agricultural workers who pick the lettuce she eats in her salads; Mark says something about factory workers, roofers, and mechanics.

And for whom does a "vacation" mean an opportunity to work? For whom is picking sugar cane a romantic gesture and not a defining (and back-breaking) condition of economic survival? From what kind of privilege is the manual labor a temporary escape?

I mean, it's just so loaded. Where would I begin?

We stop in Mitchell, South Dakota, to visit the apparently much-famed Corn Palace. A convention center and community facility, dried corn murals make up the outer facade of the building. Inside we make smashed pennies and peruse the tables of corn-related merchandise, relief from the heat and humidity of the 107-degree weather outside. On our way back to the parking lot, we notice a car with Jersey plates and an Avail sticker on the bumper.

Mark says with wonder, "There's punks at the Corn Palace and it isn't us!"

We decide to drive straight through, taking detours to buy firecrackers (two-for-one package deals, we set some off behind an elementary school when we get home) and a sack of White Castles. (For Mark, not me. I break my vegetarianism with chicken rings, only slightly less noxious.) We view Mount Rushmore in the dark, distant indistinguishable lumps looming against a big, cloudless black sky, and weave two-lane roads between mountainous rocks. Much of it is hazy; sleeping by the side of the road, I have bad dreams about the rows of wheat, swallowing Mark up whole and stranding me in Wyoming forever.

In the morning we stop to help a woman with a flat tire. She tells us about the low rate of rural employment ("The men are ranchers and the women are teachers") and looks wistful when we grudgingly acknowledge that jobs (of any kind) are more plentiful in the city. Back on the road we talk some more about critical theory, rock 'n' roll, and the amazing House on the Rock. The closer we get to California the more often we stop—every hour, it seems— to nap at rest areas and (discreetly) in parking lots; the knots in my shoulders rub together uncomfortably as I try to adjust in my seat. Coming down out of the mountains and spinning the dial (without much hope), we catch a punk show on a college radio station at three a.m., and we sing along in the dark, rejuvenated.

If I had my way, I'd spend half my time in the car with Mark, speeding along interstates at three a.m., watching to make sure he doesn't start running his hands through his hair, a sure sign he's about to fall asleep. We'd explore roadside attractions and state fairs, buying cheap souvenirs of ships in bottles, tin coasters, and yet more mugs. And I want to wake up in those pre-dawn hours, rolling my head away from the window, to find Mark eating the last of the Red Vines, an impromptu breakfast with truck-stop coffee.

Feet up on the dashboard, book in my hand, Mark singing along to the radio, knowing that wherever we are, I'm home.

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These days I am full of projects. I recently finished an issue of *slander* and hopefully the project directory of (hundreds of) zines, distros, et cetera, produced and/or otherwise comandeered by people of color. Both a historical record (*we were here*) and a networking tool (*where the fuck are we?*), get in touch with me if you want a gander at any of them. And I'll also have the surprise, commemorative issue of *STY* zine that I did for Mark's (icki) birthday, full of both the "best of...*STY*" and rollicking contributions from friends and family, dishing the goods on the boy. Juicy!

In the plug department, there's a great zine out of Berkeley called *Loud Paper*. Scrumptious architectural discourse—have you ever wondered about the psychology of supermarket lay-outs or Target housewares merchandising? (I have, all the time.) Send three bucks to Mimi Zieger, 1521 LeRoy Avenue, Berkeley CA 94708) and find out, feel yourself getting smarter by the second. And why haven't you sent your photobooth pictures yet? And hey, happy (early) birthday, Thomas!

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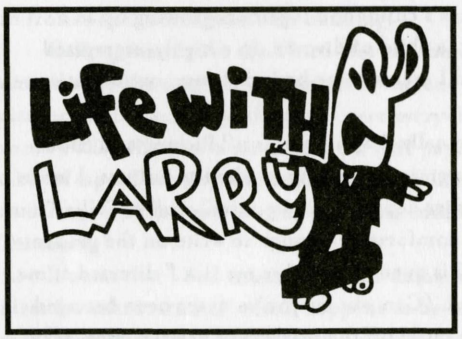

Belonging

Life is a process of constant disillusionment. Whether it's learning that there's no Santa Claus, that our parents don't know everything, that the policeman is not always our friend, or that nice guys frequently finish last, the longer we live, the more likely we are to learn that everything we think we know is wrong.

Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura recently stirred up a hubbub by saying that organized religion was for people "with weak minds"

who couldn't feel secure unless they felt part of a group mentality. You could tell he'd hit a raw nerve; commentators and columnists were soon calling him everything from "idiotic" to "un-American."

One writer reeled off a list of religious figures ranging from Martin Luther King to St. Thomas Aquinas, demanding to know whether these were people with "weak minds." He totally missed the point, of course. Ventura was not talking about saints and philosophers, but about the millions of people who unquestioningly subscribe to whatever they hear in their churches and mosques and synagogues, who substitute faith for reason, who confuse goodness with doing what they are told.

There was a time when I was almost violently anti-religious. Anything wrong with the world, I figured, was the fault of the government or the church, or both. As I got older, I saw that it wasn't that simple, that religions and governments were capable of doing good as well as bad, and that the real harm came when people stopped questioning and doubting, when they started letting others do their thinking for them.

Eventually, I decided that religion, even the more primitive kind, had its place. Telling people that they will burn in hell if they don't behave might seem only one step removed from frightening children with tales of the bogeyman, but if it works, well, it's cheaper and more civilized than shooting them or locking them up, isn't it?

I repeated this theory to a church-going friend of mine, adding that while I thought religion could work on a symbolic level, as an aid to meditation or philosophy for more sophisticated people, that it was essentially a control mechanism when applied to the less intelligent.

He got very irate, saying that I was being "dangerously cynical," that faith was something we all needed. "Well," I asked, "do you, a college-educated man of the world, really believe that priests turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus?"

He dodged that question (understandably), but kept insisting that we humans need to transcend our individual egos through collective faith, and that while questioning in itself was not a bad thing, there was such a thing as too much questioning. "Doubt is human," he said, "but is it really something you'd like to base your life on?"

He seemed to be saying that for the sake of believing and being part of something greater than ourselves, we should accept things we're not really sure are true. I asked him about this, and he countered, "What do we ever really *know* is true, anyway? There's an element of faith involved in everything we do, whether it's crossing the street or deciding not to murder people."

Okay, I thought. When I set out across the street, I don't know for sure that cars will stop for the red light; I'm making a calculated bet, based on experience, that about 99.9% of the time, they will. When I refrain from murdering or raping or robbing, I'm *almost* certain that I'm doing the right thing, that the Golden Rule or the Law of Karma, or Newton's principle of actions and reactions makes it a wise choice to treat people as well as I possibly can.

But that's stuff I can figure out for myself; in fact it seems like simple common sense. To wholeheartedly embrace a complete philosophy is quite a different thing. I know I could find things to agree with in Buddhism or Catholicism or Judaism or Islam, but no religion or school of thought comes close to agreeing with everything I believe.

So what's the problem, you say? Just don't go to church. Most of you probably don't either. But I'll bet most of you have something else to believe in that means just as much to you as religion does to other people. It might be a political cause, it might be music, it might be skateboarding or having funny hair.

To many, punk itself is a religion. Before you laugh, think how much of what you do is informed and colored by the values associated with "punk." You might not have a rulebook or the Punk Ten Commandments, but when you make decisions like being vegetarian, or only recording for indie labels, or wearing certain clothes, or not buying certain products, aren't those decisions at least partly influenced by what punk has meant to you? There are millions of Christians who take their religion less seriously than punks do theirs.

I'm no exception, even though I've publicly disassociated myself from much of what is called "punk" nowadays. I spent too many years in the punk scene for it not to have left its mark on me. I may not like all the music or the attitudes or the hairstyles, but some of the best times and best people I've known have come from my involvement in punk.

So what do I do when big parts of what is considered punk no longer make sense to me? Do I swallow my doubts, shut my mouth and go along for the ride? Or do I say to hell with the whole thing and go off in search of something that has more meaning?

I've tried both, and neither works. It's easy to ridicule the kids who faithfully replicate the costumes and manners that haven't been controversial or interesting since London in the '70s. It's tempting to dismiss all the Cometbus and Weasel and Mackaye clones as dullards who lack the imagination or courage to be themselves.

But tired and predictable as they may seem at times, the fact remains that they've got a community and I don't. They can get excited about the new band coming to town or the new issue of so-and-so's fanzine, and I can't. They belong to something, and I'm where I've been for much of my life, on the outside looking in.

So the question remains: how much can I or should I bend and shape my beliefs for the sake of belonging? Your instinctive answer will probably be, "Not at all!" But you'd be fooling yourself, and you know it. There's not a single human relationship that doesn't entail some kind of compromise, some degree of sacrificing your own desires or needs for the sake of getting along with someone else that you desire and need even more.

How could people stay married if they both insisted on always having their own way? How could a political party survive if each member refused to accept any deviation from his or her particular program for solving society's ills?

Here's an example from my own past. It might seem trivial, but it's not. I grew up in a time when the cool kids wore tight jeans or black slacks. It was not something you questioned; it was just the way things were. Toward the end of the '60s, I began noticing two things: that I was almost the only one left who still wore tight pegged pants, and that it was becoming impossible to find my kind of pants in stores anymore.

Oh, and I noticed another thing: that because I dressed differently, people treated me differently. They were all wearing bell bottoms, which I regarded as a heinous crime against nature, but fashion victims though they might be, they were the ones getting laid and invited to parties, not me.

Finally I gave in. One cold spring day in 1969 I put on my first pair of garishly colored bell bottoms and walked down State Street feeling like a clown who had just escaped from the circus. But before night had fallen, I realized that people who used to act as though I were invisible were now looking at me, talking to me, paying serious attention to me. I still felt like a sellout of sorts, but heck, it's nice to be popular, and for the first time in years, I was.

I gave up the bell bottoms as soon as proper jeans and slacks started reappearing in shops, but I went through similar processes over the years. Did I wear makeup because I genuinely wanted to, or because I wanted to fit into the early 70s glam scene? Did I do all those drugs and listen studiously to that prog and art rock because it was the best thing happening, or because it was what the other kids were doing, and I didn't want to be alone? Ditto for disco, and punk, and post-punk and emo and rave and dance and hiphop and fusions of some or all of the above.

In addition to divesting ourselves of illusions, the most important work we do here on this earth might be the cultivation of our own uniqueness. The people whom we consider most successful are not those who blend easily into the crowd, but those who stand out, those who never in a million years could be mistaken for anyone but themselves.

And herein lies the tragic contradiction: the better we get at being unique, the harder it is to fit in. If we don't have any deeply held convictions of our own, it's easy to keep quiet when other people express contrary ones. It's also easy, too easy, to go along with whatever's happening until we no longer act, but merely react, and in entirely predictable ways.

A couple weeks ago we were hanging out with some punk kids we'd just met when one of them said, "You should come to this benefit show on Saturday, it's for that guy who got put in jail for the Eugene riots." I wasn't going to be in town anyway, so I didn't bother saying anything, but I thought about what a damper I would have put on the conversation if I'd said what I really thought. From what I'd heard, the guy was guilty of just what he'd been charged with, and that while it's important to question and challenge the growth of global capitalism, busting up storefronts and throwing rocks at cops in some dumbfuck Oregon college town is not something I see as useful or defensible.

What if I had spoken up? Would it have led to an intelligent discussion of the issue, or, more likely, to her dismissing me as some kind of right wing nutcase who she never should have been talking to in the first place? Nowadays there's a whole set of not just costumes and music, but also belief systems, that seems to be expected of anyone who's remotely associated with the punk scene, and a lot of it is stuff that I just can't buy.

We're all supposed to be leftist and/or anarchist, to support Mumia, to maintain an attitude toward mainstream American society that is somewhere between confrontational and downright nihilistic. But I'm a moderate, I'm pretty sure Mumia murdered that cop, and I think mainstream American society, with all its faults, provides greater opportunities for individual and collective self-expression than any other society I've ever seen. Hell, it produced rock and roll, didn't it, not to mention nearly all of us who read and/or write for this magazine?

So, do I keep my donbts and questions to myself and continue to be part of "the scene?" Or do I raise them and risk being ostracized as a heretic? I've tended to do more of the former, and it's hard to see how I could stop, but there's still that desire, that need to belong, to be part of the group, to be "normal," whatever that is.

I suspect there's an answer to my dilemma, and that it's not nearly as complicated as I make it out to be. I think that what most sets us apart from other people is not conflicting ideas, but conflicting egos, that while people respect differing opinions when intelligently and thoughtfully expressed, they hate having other people's views rammed down their throat in a way that says, "If you don't believe what I believe, you're obviously stupid."

I've gotten enough feedback to realize that this is how some people see me. They feel I express my views not to promote a greater understanding or dialogue, but to show off my knowledge of big words and my skills at arguing, with the ultimate aim of making myself feel big and others feel small. I'm almost sure that this isn't the case, but if enough people believe it to be the case, then it's still a problem.

So one of my very early New Year's (New Millennium?) resolutions will be to listen more carefully, and to resist the temptation to dismiss other people's ideas or music or lifestyles until I'm damn sure I understand them well enough to have a valid opinion. That doesn't mean I'll be shutting up—if anything, I intend to be more outspoken than ever—but in the future I'd like to be just a little more sure I know what I'm talking about before opening my big fat yap.

Welp, fall has descended all around me. By the time this issue of *Punk Planet* hits the stands it will most likely be snowing in Toronto. But right now you can only smell the crisp chill in the air. Biking to get around town shifts from fun and fit to a strictly functional activity. These shortening sunny days are deceiving. What token foliage we have here in the city is looking either a little bushed (hyuk), or has already embarked upon its annual postcard-perfect facelift. Where did the summer go? Feh. You bat an eye-

lash and a season is over as soon as it's begun. Or at least that's how we've got it 'round these parts. Spring and fall are my favourite times of the year. Spring is all about the "Hey there! Howdy pahdnah! What's it gonna be this year, eh flabbyass?" Whereas fall is always much more introspective and pensive-like. Thoughts of mush and gush come oozing out of their pesky fox-holes, laying the groundwork for either excitement or complaint.

Listening to the morning news and weather has become a part of my daily routine. And one of the things I don't quite get is the announcement of "frost warnings in effect." Been getting a lot of those lately. Nope, we don't get warnings of hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes, and the devastating like. We get frost. Bring on the frickin' frost. As crackbrained as it sounds, it would be kind of nice to see Toronto undergo some major humbling experience courtesy of Mother Nature. Note that I said "courtesy of Mother Nature" and not courtesy of some whacko punk-rag columnist who happened to devise a city-sized Hello Kitty bomb in her spare time. Hello Ka-Blam Kitty! Dope. You ever get that feeling where you want to pick up an entire town and just smack it around? Whap whap whap! Rock the foundation if you will. Or maybe it's you who needs to rock right out of wherever you're at. You know, throw some Coug' on the tape deck, put the pedal to the metal, and hit the high road baby. Not being a car-owner makes this scenario a tad unrealistic, but hey daydreaming is always encouraged in the land of the PK. As if you hadn't already noticed, sheesh.

Transition—n. alteration, change, changeover, conversion, development, evolution, flux, metabasis, metamorphosis, metastasis, passage, passing, progress, progression, shift, transformation, transit, transmutation, upheaval.

A very nice boy asked me recently if I liked Toronto and if I planned on staying here. And I, in a mo' unsuave state than usual, responded with something about my friends and family being close by; having a sense of community and all that jazz. Then I added that if I were to move away from this place, it would be to somewhere where I don't know anybody. He replied that sounded completely frightening. And I would agree with him. But it's the notion of maintaining anonymity in the big city that appeals to me in a weird, stupid-romantic kind of way. Moreover, I wouldn't want to move to any place where one or two people feel like they have to be the crutch of my social melding. Odd—I don't mind doing the babying. May as well embrace them maternal instincts instead of swatting them off like flies. But I dislike getting babied. Does that make me a top? Oops, better leave the BDSM lingo at the workplace and out of this column. I've probably already tainted this tiny allotment of space for one year anyway.

"I was in a city where I knew not a soul, save the few I had come to know by chance. It was a city where the mentality, the sound of the language, the hopes and possibilities, even the appearance of the people in the streets, were as strange as anything I might have invented. My choice in coming here had been deliberate: I had a plan. My own character seemed to me ill defined; I believed that this was unfortunate and unique. I thought that if I set myself against a background into which I could not possibly merge that some outline would present itself. But it hadn't succeeded, because I adapted too quickly. In no time at all, I had the speech and the movements and very expression on my face of seedy Madrid."

—*When We Were Nearly Young*, Mavis Gallant

It seems to me that a handful of mixed emotions bubble to the surface when friends and loved ones decide to move on up and away. Sadness because their imminent absence is going to suck pasty ass. Resentment because your current surroundings and circle of friends are ostensibly not good enough for their unsatisfied ass. Envy because their ass is really going places while yours is as static as an ant stuck in a condiment bowl. And last but certainly not least, happiness. Because sometimes a good swift kick in the ass is exactly what your friends need. And of course, being the big, ginormous person that you are, if they are happy then you are happy bla dee bloo blah. The "Happy For Them, Sad For You" syndrome as my rad new co-worker so neatly put it. And if none of the above work for you, well then, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out where you can stick it.

Transience is a tricky thing, and hey, things can get pretty complicated. Ew, I'm starting to sound like a promo for that awful new tv show, Get Real. Whatever happened to the days of The Facts of Life, and Family Ties, huh? Especially the episode where Alex gets all doped up on speed and is whizzing around in his bedroom on the office chair. Like, how '80s is that?! Sweet moralistic sitcoms with ex-pothead parents and fresh-faced teenage girls in cashmere sweaters. Not to mention one endearingly smitten boy neighbour who would unknowingly pave the way for indie-rocker fashion and social skills for years to come.

"When this cardboard town can no longer amuse you
You see through everything and nothin' seems worthwhile
And hypocrite used to be such a big word to you
And it don't seem to mean anything to you now"

—*Between A Laugh And A Tear*, John Cougar Mellencamp

Ahhh, the Coug'. Such a sage of sorts in the rock industry—in his storytelling, pompadour-slicking, Midwest-loving, (thundering) heart attack surviving ways. Makes you wanna pack up yer satchel and move to that elusive oasis of charm and cute accents, where the roads are dusty and you can see almost every star in the sky. Then I look in the mirror and I see a Korean surly-girly with hipster thick-frame glasses, wearing her mom's clothes from the '70s, and non-leather shoes on her feet. She munches away on a yummy-looking sammich made with vegetarian chicken cutlets while damning the Gap ads for being too fugging mesmerizing. Looking straight ahead we lock eyes in a moment of sad, solid truth. She is a biddy of the gritty city and that is where she feels the most comfortable. For now anyway. Not educated in a small town, wasn't taught the fear of Jesus in a small town, sure likes to daydream of that small town, another boring romantic, that's me...

• • •

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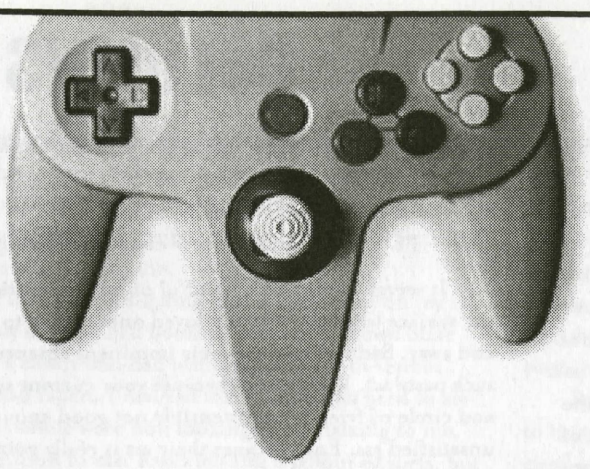

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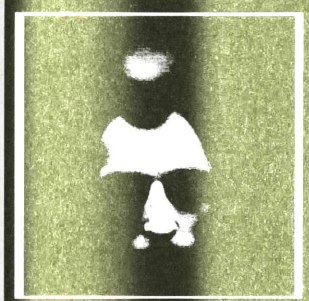

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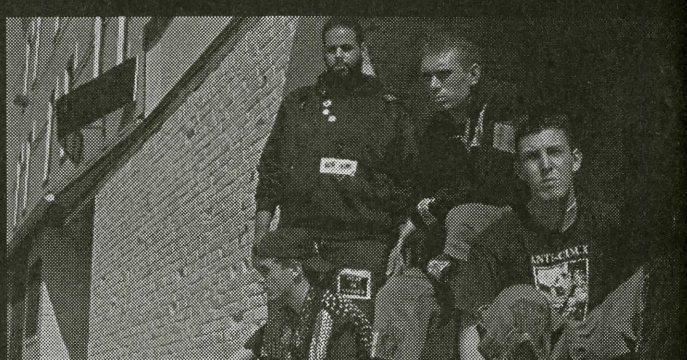

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Strummer

I'm just going to stick to plugging the guitar in and trying to make something interesting with that.

I was ten years old when The Clash's first record came out, living a short walk from the epicenter of the first highly publicized punk rock explosion: King's Road, in London. Even for the smallest, youngest, and least hip of awkward immigrant children like me, it was impossible not to have known who The Clash were. Like the Sex Pistols, they were literally everywhere: on BBC 1, in London's weekly entertainment paper, *Time Out*, on television shows like *Top of the Pops*, even on the pages of conservative newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph*. But at the time, it was very difficult to understand why the British media fixated upon them so strongly.

In contrast to Lydon and company, The Clash's first two records weren't the kind of radically conceptual artistic statements meant to start cultural revolutions like *Never Mind the Bollocks* or the Pistols' posthumously released *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle*. Instead of denouncing the music industry as a monolithic authoritarian political structure, albums like *Give 'em Enough Rope* were simply really great rock records that you could dance to. They eschewed the Pistols anti-politics in favor of a more traditional American folk music liberalism, filtered through the sensibilities of four young men raised on British pub rock, nostalgic for the days of protest singers like Woody Guthrie, The Weavers and early Bob Dylan.

Like The MC5, the early Clash were all about resurrecting the hyperbole of radical street politics, romanticizing riots, rebellion, and at times even old school revolutionary violence. The brashness of their early songs helped give this nostalgically radical stance a lot of fashionable weight, but the band consistently failed to explain where it was really coming from. Were they Marxists? No. Were they Leninists? No. Were they Anarchists? Certainly not. Were they upwardly mobile rock and rollers who co-opted revolutionary slogans in order to gain market share? Maybe, that depended on what side of the punk fence you stood on. If you were in a band like Crass, you definitely thought they were bourgeois accomodationists. "We're *Crass*, not The Clash!" they declared. But if you were someone like Billy Bragg, The Clash opened punk's door to the Communist Party.

While their politics may not have been expertly defined, there was no denying that The Clash had a real axe to grind. No matter how stylized and image-conscious that proverbial axe was, many people felt that The Clash helped demystify much of the tension underlying the Britain of their day. Regardless of how clueless they were about their politics, The Clash's first two records successfully anticipated the crisis of the British welfare state. To the imminent election of Margaret Thatcher, the failure of the Labor government to address growing income discrepancies, and Britain's inability to recognize the existence of an increasingly multiracial immigrant society, The Clash's emotional political drive added the sense of melodrama necessary to raise consciousness about the way the country was deteriorating.

However, the real significance of The Clash's work did not become apparent until 1979's *London Calling*, followed by 1980's even more magisterial *Sandinista*. Over the course of producing these two albums—and an occasional single and twelve inch—The Clash moved beyond the nihilistic political straightjacket of Sex Pistols-inspired British punk to develop one of the most politically sophisticated critiques of American imperialism to have surfaced in rock and roll. They went after everything, from American consumer culture writ large across the face of the globe, to the Middle East and even the Nicaraguan revolution. It not only made artistic sense, but it was politically valid too.

Yet what's difficult to figure out about these records is how they expressed their politics musically. Instead of simply delivering political sermons (which they were incapable of doing effectively, as demonstrated on "Know Your Rights"), The Clash's utopia was embedded in how they synthesized the musical forms of England's emerging multiethnic culture, melding dub and reggae with punk rock and pop, experimenting with hip-hop and New York's burgeoning post-disco remix culture. Metaphorically speaking, it was all there. Regardless of how many other artists engaged in similar international maneuvering during the '80s (The Talking Heads, Peter Gabriel or Paul Simon to name a few), The Clash added an explicitly progressive political dimension to their global explorations that was firmly rooted in the '60s Left. Whether the band actually understood the implications of what they were doing is beside the point. The fact is that they pulled it off, and in doing so, The Clash helped give punk radicalism its first overtly multicultural set of artistic sensibilities.

By the time The Clash got around to releasing its next to final LP, 1982's *Combat Rock*, the band was in total crisis. In deep debt to their record company Epic, for *London Calling* and *Sandinista*, which were shunned in England for various stupid reasons, The Clash decided that it was time to make a hit record. *Combat Rock* succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams, making the band a household word in the United States on the strength of the video for "Rock the Casbah," a song about the banning of disco music in post-revolutionary Iran, and a rather awkward opening slot on The Who's Schlitz beer-sponsored premiere farewell tour.

Taking The Clash on tour with them made The Who look like a bunch of cheap opportunists seeking to have their opening band's counter-cultural credibility rub off on their rapidly diminishing artistic relevance. However, for a band like The Clash, being taken on an American tour by a band that once smashed their guitars on stage and appeared on album covers mocking commercialism (*The Who Sell Out*) made perfect sense because, having been raised in the '60s, they were The Who's artistic offspring.

No British punk band at the time was more historically self-conscious about analogies like these than The Clash were. They were positioning themselves as the inheritors of the '60s rock and roll legacy. Nevertheless, playing "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" in Shea Stadium was a far cry from the riot-plagued Bonds Casino shows that The Clash played in New York the year before with The Bad Brains.

While reams have been written about what happened to the band after the *Combat Rock* tour, the only thing relevant is that The Clash began to fall apart. Having lost drummer Topper Headon before the tour began, Strummer's primary songwriting partner Mick Jones was forced out. The only surviving original members were Strummer and bassist Paul Simenon.

In a way, it's kind of fitting for the band to have lost it after the *Combat Rock* tour. Anyone who accomplished what The Clash did with that record was bound to suffer, especially if you consider the album's political significance. Based loosely around Strummer's concept of what he called an "urban Vietnam," *Combat Rock* was a highly overproduced, but none-the-less jarring recording that tried to see the emerging world of the '80s through the eyes of the African-American ghetto. It was a colonial battlefield, where the American military acted as world gatekeeper and the experience of Vietnam was being repeated in all of the world's ghettos. A grandiose, and highly ambitious gesture, yes, but the commercial success of such an outrageously conceptual political album outweighed the band's subsequent interpersonal failures. The only crime was that they didn't break up immediately after.

The Clash went on to record one more album, 1985's *Cut the Crap*, but by then it was clear that aside from that record's only memorable track, "This is England," everything was pretty much over. The group disbanded not long thereafter. Band members went on to pursue solo projects of various kinds: Mick Jones better-than-average Big Audio Dynamite, Paul Simenon's barely passable Havana 3AM, and Joe Strummer's short-lived but quite illustrious career acting in Jim Jarmusch, Alex Cox, and Akira Kurismaki films. However, Strummer took a ten-year break from recording his own albums.

Constrained by contractual problems with Epic over the next decade, Strummer made only one solo album, 1989's *Earthquake Weather*, while contenting himself to play sideman in friends' bands like The Pogues, Big Audio Dynamite, Shaun Ryder's brilliant, cynical dance act, Black Grape, and the all-star comedy band, Fat Les.

How fitting then that after a decade, Strummer would come forth with his best album since *Combat Rock*, *Rock Art and the X-Ray Style*. Issued by Clash fanatic Tim Armstrong's Epitaph imprint, Hellcat Records, *Rock Art* is a slightly inconsistent but otherwise beautiful record that reestablishes Strummer's significance as a songwriter in the tradition of older punk peers like Patti Smith. In the midst of a promotional tour of the US to plug his new record, I got a chance to talk to Joe while he was visiting his new label's office in Los Angeles. When I picked up the phone at the appointed time and the publicist asked, "Are You Ready to Rock," the only thing I could think of was how far away rocking was from my mind. I wasn't going to rock. I was going to talk to Joe Strummer.

Interview by **Joel Schalit**
Strummer portrait by **Piper Fergeson**
Archive photos compiled by **Sheila Sachs**

One of the ironic things I noted with your record coming out now is that when you were in The Clash, there was no one else taking as much of a critical stance towards American imperialism and American cultural and military hegemony than you. Yet, you issue your first full length record in ten years at a point when American world power is at its highest. The Cold War is over, the Soviets have been defeated. America is literally *everywhere*. It's more present in Europe, it's more present in the Third World. How do you feel about you're timing? I find something poetic about it.

You have to understand that I'm a European. You guys really did a great job from the '30s until now. Everybody loves American culture in Europe. You've done a great job of putting it out over there—we're all *steeped* in it. We get all your shows and we have all the films that you have, but we tend to get them a bit later than you. I think they show American films quicker in Tel Aviv than they show them in London. But what we like in Europe is the *good* American culture, not the generic one.

We should make Margaret Thatcher an honorary punk rocker. I should go over to her house in Chelsea and give her a pink wig or something.

That bias is definitely reflected in the specific types of American culture you've personally appropriated as an artist.

I'd like to kick for a minute this scene they've got here in Hollywood where they re-edit films according to the audience's reaction sheet. That's not art. Obviously they'd laugh at me for even suggesting such a thing, but American films between the '40s and the '70s *were* art. They were mass entertainment, but they were also art. Now they police audiences by changing a film every week to suit the latest screenings. Obviously it makes monetary sense—studios are making a fortune off of this method. But when you're 17, you want to see something grown up, not made for your benefit. When you're 17, you want to stretch a bit, you want to enter the grown up world. You don't want everything to be tailored for your tastes. This is a danger, I think.

You can definitely see your new record as being an example of what you're saying popular art ought to be about. It has nothing to do with American popular culture in the sense that you're describing it. I think that's inherent in *Rock Art's* global feel—not in the sense of a Peter Gabriel record, but in the manner of a Clash record. In that sense, your work still maintains an implicit critique of American cultural imperialism.

That's true. As long as we keep entertaining the people, we'll be doing good.

I've been listening to your work since 1978, when I was in the fifth grade and one of the things I've always noticed about your song writing is that you've always had a very ambivalent relationship with the United States.

[laughs] It's love and hate!

On the one hand you've been very critical of American politics and foreign policy, but on the other hand you've so thoroughly assimilated American popular culture.

Certainly, yeah. But let's point out that the British government is just as bad as the American government.

That's true. So what's your take on Tony Blair?

I came up with this nickname for him the other day. I thought, "Lets call him Tony Baloney!" He's a lot of baloney, yeah. I told my friend, "We're going to get this into the national language within twelve hours." So I went to this Clash party after they showed the Clash film [a recent BBC documentary on the band] and I drew on my tee shirt "Lets get rid of Tony Baloney—The Tuscan Liberation Front," because Blair goes on holiday to Tuscany [Italy's very gauche vacation region known for its countryside, medieval cities and local cuisine]. So I wore the shirt into the party, and all these journalists were there. They all asked me "Where'd you get that shirt?" I told them that I'd just come back from Fashion Week in Milan, and that everyone was wearing them. All the reporters immediately got out their notebooks and wrote everything down that was on my shirt. We got it in the first edition of the *Evening Standard* the very next day. Twelve hours later! [laughs]

There's not too many Tuscan guerrilla groups.

"Fronta Liberazione di Toscana!" But it was all spelled wrong. I wrote it in Italian and misspelled everything, but no one knows it.

I'm sure the British press totally ate that up. I know what you mean about Blair, he's totally fucking noxious. I just read the text of his speech to the recent Labor Party convention...

Oh no! It's terrible. We're never going to get rid of him. Blair's machine is so perfect that I reckon that if we can get rid of him in 15 or 20 years, we'll be lucky.

It seems to me that Blair is a charismatic leader in the tradition of Margaret Thatcher—that seems to be what he's deliberately going after.

They've learned from the American machine. In fact it's even more chillingly machine-like than the Americans have got it so far. Labor has certainly learned from them. You can't even have an opinion in the party. Say you're a MP [Member of Parliament] and you go, "Hey Tony, I think that policy sucks," the Labor Party would go, "Dock that guy's card. Get rid of him." There's no debate there. It's terrible. We don't have any debate. We don't have any dissension. Blair might as well be Stalin.

And yet Blair portrays himself as a radical democrat spreading multiculturalism and human rights around eastern Europe, like all of his posturing during the war in Kosovo for example.

Exactly. Maybe we've come to realize that all leaders want is power. They couldn't give a

damn what they say or have to do to get it. But this is quite a hard thing to come to terms with. What are we going to do now?

It must be an interesting experience for you, coming from the same generation as Blair. You guys are very close in age.

Oh, I know. I'm bewildered by this Blair development. We're all very confused right now in England.

Is there an alternative?

That's why I was saying it's going to take 20 years to get rid of Blair. There is no alternative. We're all standing around flapping our arms going, "What are we going to do now?" I don't know. It's going to be interesting. At least it's a comedy...

Do you think that it'll be good for the British counterculture?

I think so, definitely. Comedians are having a great time with him. Every cloud has a silver lining.

Yeah, it's true. Margaret Thatcher was great for punk rock.

We should make her an honorary punk rocker. I should go over to her house in Chelsea and give her a pink wig or something.

Doesn't she already have one?

[laughs] That's true.

I know a lot of people have criticized The Clash over the years for not having thought out their politics very carefully. For example, you never aligned yourselves with any particular political parties in Britain, yet you wore Italian Red Brigade T-shirts. Or how once the band broke up, you went on the Rock Against The Rich Tour sponsored by Class War, an organization dedicated to violent revolution, *after* you'd become wealthy.

It was all my fault.

[laughs] To an outsider, this sympathy for violence made sense, especially given the kind of street protest imagery that The Clash always employed. How did you respond to be criticized for adhering to double standards at the time? Where do you see your politics as really fitting in? Does it have a framework?

Right now I realize that in Britain, my vote is useless. We'll never get rid of Blair because there is no alternative to him. So I ask myself what I've got, and I find that I have a dollar bill in my pocket. So I'm going to vote like that. I'm going to shop locally—that's how I'm going to use my dollar bill as a vote—I'm not going to give it to the corporations.

You're going to support small business...

Putting my money into records and food, anything I'm going to try and buy. I think of my dollar bill as a vote. Every time I spend it in a small, independent, local spot, it's like one less dollar I'm giving to massive global corporations. The only vote we've got is the dollar bill in the pocket. Obviously you're going to have to take your kids to McDonalds when they're screaming, but this is what I want to push myself to do.

I understand what you're saying, but how then does it feel to be working with Mercury Records in Europe? They tend to symbolize a lot of the things you don't like.

At least they had the guts to come forward with me. There must be a lot of companies in Europe, but every man jack of them went, "Get out of the office." But Mercury said, "This is pretty good." I have to respect them for that, because it was looking pretty bleak.

It doesn't seem like your politics have ever been about typically punk things like being independent. Rather your music has consistently proffered some kind of radical multiculturalism, symbolized by your early experiments synthesizing dub and reggae with rock and roll. To me that's a pretty identifiable political position.

Don't forget that our entry into hip-hop culture was back in 1980 with "Magnificent Seven." It was a huge hit in New York that summer on WBLS. I want to point that out because we always get passed over in these hip-hop histories. Whoever puts together these accounts just hasn't done their onions.

Right, I agree. Such accounts tend to attribute the kinds of breakthroughs that The Clash pioneered to groups like the Beastie Boys. Not to diss them, but that's generally what's assumed.

19 years ago we entered into hip-hop culture. *19 years ago*! So lick upon that. [laughs]

The first time I heard "Radio Clash" was on a black radio station in New York back then.

That's incredible. Stuff like that doesn't happen anymore.

You also experimented a lot with remixing in the early '80s.

And it still sounds good too. When you hear that "Radio Clash" remix, it sounds like some guy just did it down the block.

The experimentation and international slant that The Clash took seems to have come—or at least been influenced by—your own background. I've been reading a lot about your personal history and your background recently. You grew up all over the world. I read that your dad served in the British Foreign Service.

That's right. I was born in Ankara, Turkey. I spent a couple of years there, followed by Cairo for a couple of more years. We also lived in Mexico City for a couple of years, followed by this fairly boring town in Germany called Bonn. Then I went to boarding school in England. My parents went on to move to Tehran. They spent five years in Iran.

Hence "Rock the Casbah."

[laughs] Then they went to Malawi, in central Africa.

That certainly explains the cosmopolitanism of your musical arrangements. On that tip, you employ a bit of Arabic on the new record, especially in the song "Yalla Yalla." You want to tell me what it's about?

It came out of the idea of a bunch of us coming down the street in London, in top form, shouting, "Yeah, we're free." I found out that in Arabic it means, "Come on, let's go." When I came up with the song's chorus, I wondered if I'd had it stored away somewhere in my brain and it just popped out. But what the song is about is that freedom is gone and we're fucked up in Britain. All we've got to do is fight with each other on the streets after dark. When they close all the bars at 11, it can get kind of grim out on the street. So "Yalla Yalla," is a story starting with Adam and going through "C'mon, let's cut out

of this scene. Let's go grooving." If there's some culture happening in Glasgow 600 miles away, we're going to go 600 miles—there's no object. And then it gets to the freedom verse, "Yalla Yalla Yalla Yallah."

It's interesting that you're talking about freedom. It seems to me that a search for freedom led to your transition to film after the dissolution of The Clash. Some people saw that as a radical break in your career at the time, but it made metaphorical sense to me because there's a real cinematographic quality to your song writing that made taking on theatrical roles seem absolutely natural.

Seeing people work in front of cameras, people who'd been thinking about it all their lives, makes you realize that you can't really jump in on a game. You might get lucky though. There are exceptions, like Tom Waits, who can easily move between the two roles. And there are other actor-singers who can do it great. But for myself, I figured that I have to really own up that there's no way to be better than these actors because they've been thinking about acting since they were born. I don't think you can catch up on that; I think you've got to respect that. I'm just going to stick to plugging the guitar in and trying to make something interesting with that. Leave the acting to the actors. Personally, that's my hope.

Nonetheless, you got to act in some very seminal indie films.

I had my go and I appreciated it.

So you don't see yourself doing more film work?

Only with a French guy called F.J. Ossang. He's an underground director in France. They don't even respect him in France, he's so good. I was in northern Chile with Ossang last year, where we made a film called *Dr. Chance*. It's such a complex art-house film that it certainly will never be shown in Britain. If anyone is into very strange films, and you can find it in a local video store, then you have a *real* store I reckon.

What's the film about?

When they showed it at the London Film Festival, we got up on the stage with Ossang to answer questions, and not one person moved a muscle. It was total silence. So when you ask me what the film is about, that might give you an idea of what you're in for.

Then let's get back to music. I bet that one of the things which must amuse you making rock and roll after all these years is how people still fight over what's "punk." I distinctly recall how much shit you took for making *Combat Rock*. That bore many parallels with what Nirvana had to deal with nine years later. When *Nevermind* came out and the shit hit the fans, it was as though no one could remember that the popularity of *Combat Rock* triggered many of the same cultural crises about punk going mainstream as Nirvana later did.

What a disaster that was. Poor Kurt Cobain!

Did you feel any affinity with the kind of backlash that Nirvana had to suffer?

It's just typical, isn't it? Cobain writes a brilliant record and everyone disses him. This is exactly what we had to put up with, way before *Combat Rock* even, back in London in 1977. As soon as you do something really brilliant, obviously it's going to attract more attention and more interest from your fellow human beings. As soon as that happens, all of a sudden all of these hipper-than-thou people start railing off at you. These are the kinds of people you just have to shuck off, because you're going to meet them in any corner of life. Any time you do something good, people are going to come and kick you down for it. You've got to be ready for it at any moment.

So for you, that's what the whole discourse about selling out is, simply jealousy.

Exactly. That's all it is.

I totally understand where you're coming from, especially if you consider some of your more early lyrics on songs like "Hittsville UK." It's not as though you weren't critical of the process of commercialization. That's why I think that it's sort of unfair to be flogging you for giving in when you were writing songs about how it sucks to become a commodity.

What can you do?

Personally, I have very mixed feelings about the selling out thesis, particularly in the case of *Combat Rock*, because it was the most explicitly progressive political record to top the American charts since the late '60s. For god's sake, any record that combines spoken word rants with funk, and sneaks Allen Ginsberg into a top ten album is pretty subversive in my book.

That's true, so true. Good old Ginsberg!

How did he end up on the record?

I used to call him a hustler for a joke. He was just coming to hang out at the *Combat Rock* sessions. He was sitting there with Peter Orlovsky [Ginsberg's lifelong companion, and a poet in his own right]. They'd just sit there and watch us record. After about a week, I just turned around to him and said "You're America's greatest living poet and you're going on the mic now." He said, "Well great, what should I do?" I said, "I want the sound of God!" I told him "You're perfect for the role. I just want you to do the intro to 'Ghetto Defendant.'" I gave him two or three words—like punk dances such as "the slam," and he spent about three minutes scribbling on the piano and on paper. And then there he was, "Slam dance the cosmopolis."

[laughs] He was acting as though he was an old Beat poet fronting a jazz band.

Absolutely.

That makes a lot of sense. I remember reading a lot of your press in places like the *New York Times* in the early '80s, and recall how older rock critics were saying that The Clash were a reincarnation of a particular way of doing popular art that they hadn't seen since the mid-'60s. I seem to remember one critic even saying that The Clash were essentially modern contemporaries of the former Beat generation, and this was well before Ginsberg had collaborated with you. Did you deliberately position yourself as being an inheritor of legacies such as the Beats?

For me, the Beats were the only game in town. During the '60s, England was probably more like the '50s were in America, but we carried it on longer. The Beatniks were exactly what we needed. The 1965 Beat poets' reading at the Royal Albert Hall blew the lid off of everything—that was the day that the old culture ended in England. We already had The Beatles and The Stones. When they hired Albert Hall, the jewel of

normal, boring culture, and brought in all the Beat poets, including Allen Ginsberg, it brought it all down and turned *everyone* on. That's when the '60s really began.

That makes sense, especially if you consider that in some respects British pop culture can be even more anti-intellectual than American pop culture.

Yes, I am completely anti-intellectual. I am pro-intuition and pro-instinct. We've already given too many props to intellectualism. The intellectuals' time is over. They've done nothing for us. They write long, boring philosophy books that no one can understand except themselves. All we've ended up with is a world full of jet airplanes screaming overhead with laser guided bombs and rockets. I figure that all the intellectuals should go off to an island somewhere and wear wooly clothing.

They're too complicit with the status quo.

Yeah.

I sympathize with you. That's part of what makes both The Clash as well as your own work so important in their own ways because when it's all at it's best, it represents a way of being both smart and popular, which is something that many traditional intellectuals can't necessarily be.

Yeah, because they're full of shit.

I wanted to ask you about all the activity surrounding The Clash in recent years. There's been a spate of reissues as of late. You even had the "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" and "Rock the Casbah" singles reissued in the UK during the early '90s. I recently read that they were your first top ten singles, six years after your band's demise. How did that happen?

Through a Levis' commercial, or what I like to call a 'trouser advert." The only time we ever went number one in our own country was through a trouser advert!

How did you feel about that?

Well, I quite liked it because sometimes you can get holier than thou. "We're so pure, we won't allow our music..." I mean I'm bloody wearing a pair of Levis right now, so fuck it!

Did you guys get paid well for it?

I can't really remember getting a huge amount of dosh, but who knows, I could have gone out and spent it.

It's funny to have discovered this now, because it's analogous to a situation that the Dead Kennedys are currently fighting over.

I've been following it. It's a very hard thing, because you can see that the guys who don't have songwriting credits are going to be hard strapped financially after their group is gone. That's what's behind the Kennedys' thing. Doesn't everybody in the group deserve a bit of dosh? They've done their bit. They were forerunners, pioneers in the day. Yet you can also understand Biafra's point of view which is that he doesn't want to sully their music with impure uses of their art. That's a tough one because the other guys in the band have kids, rents, mortgages. What was the product that they wanted to license?

I believe Levis wanted to license "Holiday in Cambodia."

That doesn't sound too bad to me. It's not as though they wanted to use the song to advertise a weapons guidance system or something.

"Kill the Poor" would have been more appropriate.

I come down and say "What the hell." "Holiday in Cambodia," is a fantastic track. It might do the world a bit of good to have it pumped out over the global networks and airwaves.

The idea being that you're taking advantage of the global media infrastructure...

We need a bit of "Holiday in Cambodia" blasting out of these entertainment centers. Maybe Biafra should reconsider.

So tell me how you felt about the The Clash tribute record, *London's Burning*. I have to say that the thing horrified me.

You didn't like the Cracker track?

I happen to think that David Lowery's first band, Camper Van Beethoven, did a much better version of "White Riot" than Cracker does.

Oh yeah, but the Cracker version is superb.

You like it?

Yeah, they kick it up.

I think it was the presence of Silverchair that upset me.

Yeah, yeah, well that's probably... They do their thing. But there's a lot of sense of humor to Cracker's version. It's like "Alright, we're covering it, but we're sticking it with a pin as well."

I suppose part of my ambivolence towards that compilation is due to the fact that The Clash seems to be getting nods from other, better sources. It seems like you can hear Clash influences in a lot of stuff nowadays. You can here it in everything from, obviously, Rancid to more obscure bands like the Asian Dub Foundation's *Rafi's Revenge*? What all these bands are doing is a direct result of what you and your bandmates set out to do. How do you feel about that?

I've noticed lots of groups in Britain that say, "Yeah, The Clash smiled on us. We're the new Clash." That never works for anyone. It's like saying you're the new Bob Dylan. Comparisons like these just don't seem to work for people. You've got to come out and say, "We're ourselves." You should never say, "We're the new *anything*." It'll kick you in the ass sooner or later. ◎

fter about a week, I just turned around to him and said "You're America's greatest living poet and you're going on the mic now."

THENEED

The Need have a really bright future ahead of them. Rarely have bands inspired as much excitement on the strength of one album. This proudly queer Olympia-based twosome are a powerful reminder of the creative potential in rock music. Although the sound on self-titled debut album, released in 1998, calls to mind the spare, try-anything-once intensity of first-wave punk, it veers off in new and unpredictable directions. Sometimes it betrays its affinity with other contemporary Northwest artists like Matthew Steinke's bands Octant and Mocket (with whom The Need have often collaborated), but sometimes it's just out there, refusing to submit to the classificatory impulse of music critics.

Maybe the best way of describing The Need's music is to say that it's fragmentary. Although they aren't a turntable or computer-based collage act—at least not yet—The Need steadfastly refuse to provide the listener with a sense of musical cohesion. They impart a sense of proto-New Wave musical vertigo. Everything falls apart; bits and pieces fly up out of the vortex, lodging in your mind like so much musical shrapnel.

And the best part is that, by all accounts, The Need's first album doesn't come close to capturing the intensity of their live shows. If the recent Up Records 10" with one-time Melvin Joe Preston and DJ Zena is any indication, the band's next album *The Need Is Dead*—due out on Chainsaw early this—is really going to up the ante.

Punk Planet caught up with The Need's Rachel Carns and Radio Sloan shortly after they had returned to Olympia from a short West Coast tour.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

What are you working on right now?

Rachel: We're working with vocalist and lyricist Nomy Lamm on our next monstrosity—a full-production rock opera called "The Transfused" that'll be staged at the Capitol Theater in Olympia in July, 2000.

You don't see too many rock operas in the world of independent music community. Could you describe it in a little more detail?

Radio: We're actually going to have auditions in a couple of months. It's a huge project. It's about these creatures that are all genders and all animals at once.

Are you also going to be in charge of the visual components of the production, such as the scenery, costumes, and stage direction?

Radio: Definitely. Nomy, Rachel, and I are working with a production person on those details. We'll choose who we want to do those specific things. We'll tell them what we want them to do, how we want it aesthetically—our "vision," in other words.

I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the status of punk music in the queer community. A year or two ago, so-called "queer-core" was all the rage, at least in places like the San Francisco Bay Area where I live. But that seems to be changing. With the mainstreaming of Sleater-Kinney, the long-term hiatus of Team Dresch, and the demise of Matt Wobensmith's Outpunk/Queercorps label projects, the profile of queer punk seems to have diminished considerably.

Rachel: Is that what's happening? I don't read the papers. If it's true, then on a personal level I'm relieved. However politically rad it is to be a dyke rock chick, there's something lost in making good copy. What makes hype matter is the same thing that makes it stupid. But it's even stupider these days to claim to think for oneself—that's the big dirty joke. Sleater-Kinney's a great band not only cause they've kept things fun for but also because they've managed to maintain the ultimate shtick: *the band with integrity*. Those kids deserve every bit of attention they get.

Radio: Personally, I'm happy for Sleater-Kinney. If that's what they want to do with their life, and it seems like it is, they must be doing the right thing. They're really nice people and I think they're a great band, so I think it's good that they're getting what they want.

Since you come from the same area as Sleater-Kinney, and because it's such a small scene up there, have you found that their success has influenced how people look at The Need?

Radio: That's a really good question. It's hard to say. A lot of kids will come up to us and say, "I like your band cause I like Sleater-Kinney." I don't suppose there's anything bad about that.

Rachel: I wonder how different my vision would be if I'd had access to out homo teen idols. One of the coolest things about touring is playing some crap basement somewhere and all these small town baby queers show up. When you come through the next year, they're all in the opening band!

There's a lot of talk about how globalization has made the differences between places less and less significant. To what extent do

Every Need song comes about differently

you still feel part of a local scene? Do you think it's possible to convey the particulars of a locality—the people, the concerns, the way the community works—to people whose only access to it is through the purchase of commodities?

Radio: Olympia's like the practice ground. We can do all sorts of different stuff here and then, when we're ready, go out into the world.

Rachel: Olympia is essentially a small town. It's a culture of boredom so extreme that survival means turning completely kooky. I think it's one of the weirdest places in the United States! Part of its magic is that the population is so transient: college students and the kids who come around cause they're into music, kids in bands who tour a lot, bands coming through town. I don't think the genius of a place can be extracted. It's like trying to sell the weather. I can't imagine living anywhere else. When I can, I'll move there. ¶ The ultimate Olympian project we've put together is "Karaneedoke"—The Need and a rotating cast of locals form the backing band for a series of singers to do cover songs. Kids who aren't in bands or who don't usually sing get to show off and they're pretty much the funnest shows ever. Kill Rock Stars recently released a double 7" of Karaneedoke, but I don't think vinyl can recreate how cool it is.

The Karaneedoke project sounds much more straightforward than your other projects. I'm curious how you construct your songs? Is there a standard order of progression or is it random? What do you look for as signs that you're headed in the right direction?

Rachel: Every Need song comes about differently, but never at random.

Radio: Mostly we sit down and decide what exactly we want a particular song to sound like—if we were listening to a song, what would we want it to be? And if that doesn't work, usually I play the guitar for a while until I make something and Rachel goes "That's cool."

But you often have a definite sense of what you want as an end product before you begin?

Radio: Totally. Most of the time, to tell you the truth, I pretty much hear the entire song in my head before I play it.

What about the lyrics? Do the words ever precede the music?

Radio: No, they always come later.

Does the fragmentary feel of your songs reflect the way in which they're composed?

Rachel: Some songs can't be finished. We've re-worked and rearranged certain fragments so many times I can't remember where they came from. Something that's right can always get righter.

It's still relatively unusual, at least outside of techno circles, to be a two piece band. What are the advantages to doing things that way?

Radio: It's really easy to organize everything.

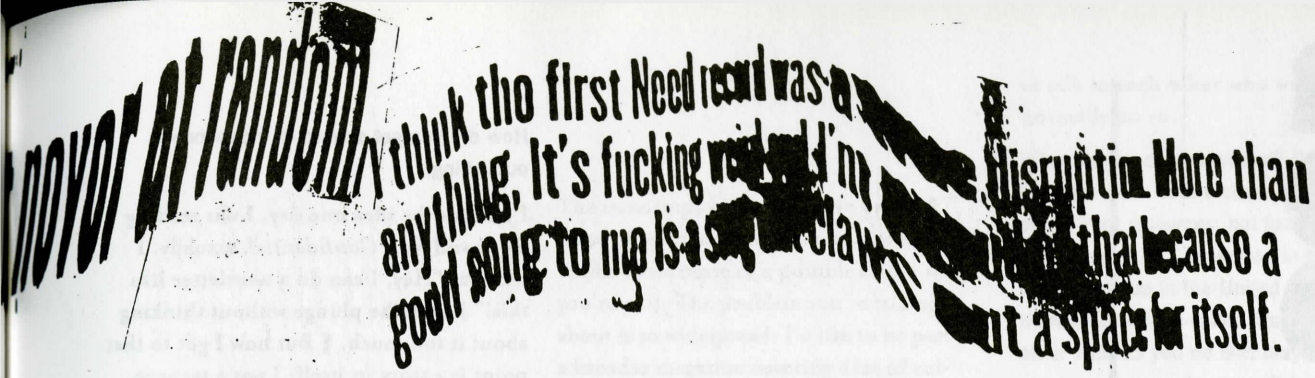
Rachel: We've been able to work with a lot of other people. It makes for ease of travel (literally and metaphorically) and less equipment to carry. Plus, we've become telepathic!

Radio: There are fewer opinions to clash. But I do miss having someone to match notes with, if you know what I mean.

A good deal of the press coverage about The Need that I've read emphasizes the fact that you use specially made equipment, designed by Rachel, instead of "off the shelf" items. I imagine that there's a convenience aspect to this, but would it also make sense to interpret what you do as being a deliberate attempt to break down the divide in the production of popular music between the person who makes the music-maker and the person who makes the music?

Radio: I think that when I first started playing, that was all true. But to tell you the truth, I've been concentrating so much more on the songwriting that I finally got enough money to go out and by some equipment! [laughs]

Rachel: What's more interesting to me is the fact that this way of moving through the world is taken to be either highly politicized or downright quirky. Everyone knows there's more than enough trash at the curb to build the perfect machine. In our town, there's a lot more time than there is money. When we worked with Mocket, Radio came up with the craziest assemblage of castoffs—a moldy old sampler; an 80s drum module with Radio Shack trigger mics taped to my drums; a cardboard kiddy record player for scratching; a shitty keyboard; a homemade mixer; and, to top it all off, the most awkwardly huge speaker cabinet ever—it took three people to carry it. When it came to playing shows the lesson learned was that there's a place after all for brand-new portable disposable machines.



So does this mean that you've made a conscious decision to use more standard instruments these days, or is there still that sense of "Who knows what they're going to be playing this time?"

Radio: I don't know. Even though I said that I buy stuff now instead of making it all myself, it still isn't really "standard." I don't want to answer that question! [laughs] We even used to make a microphone for Rachel's head, but we finally just bought one because, if you can you can.

Rachel: The Need recently acquired a sampler and drum machine. Personally, I have such deep roots in classical music and pure rock and roll that I'm reluctant to give up my sense of touch. But Radio's restoring a 1964 Mercury Meteor, and to tour in it we have to strip down our gear—I figure that's as pure an incentive as any.

What about the opera? Are you doing anything different on the technical end there? Obviously it's a different kind of music-making than just performing a regular show.

Radio: There are going to be a whole bunch more songs, an hour and twenty minutes worth of music. And the songs will be constructed differently, because it really has to do with matching the plot. I have no idea what it's going to sound like. It'll probably be more of a speed metal opera, you know? Because that's what we all like more than *Grease* or *Tommy*. Another way in which the music is going to be different is that when you're in the auditorium watching this rock opera, you're going to be hearing it in quadrophonic sound. So what I'm going to do is have the people who are singing the lead roles come out of either the front left or right speakers. And the choir will be coming from the back of the building on the left or right.

Is it going to be a more obviously compartmentalized sound that what you'd hear in a surround-sound movie theater?

Radio: Definitely. Every character will have its own area, so that when you listen to the live performance or even the soundtrack we're doing, you'll be able to determine the location of the person singing. That's my goal.

Do you plan to perform the opera outside of Olympia?

Radio: We thought we'd put it on first and then figure out how to scale it down so that we can travel with all the props. We have to have a hell of a sound system too.

I'm curious to know whether the stop-and-start aspect of your songs. Besides being a rebellion against the strictures of traditional 4-4 time, is it conveying a message? The horror-film imaginary of your lyrics seem to be the sort that are, for want of a better word, susceptible to being "fleshed out" with pauses, silence etc., particularly insofar as they deal with sexual themes.

Rachel: I think the first Need record was a true disruption. More than anything, it's fucking weird and I'm proud of that because a good song to me is a song that claws out a space for itself. It's alive—it breathes, it mimes, it farts. And it follows that in my mind music is plasmic rather than gestural and filmic rather than lingual—but it's the work of giants to figure out what it all means. I think the records we've released smell like semiotics because they're the first awkward stabs at restructure, and we've been working with salvage & scraps because "our" language doesn't exist yet. All the smarty-pants kids want it to be true that modern weirdness is intentional. I think our next record is more calculated, more mature. It's sneakier. It burns and robs in the service of balance. And about the sexy stuff: we all know a well-placed pause is worth a thousand descents.

What do you feel is the sexual dimension of your music?

Rachel: Guess what? I'm gay! If I choose to affiliate, what that means is that my partisan identity begins where I fuck. Where I fuck is where I begin saying what I really mean, because being gay every day means speaking with an accent. It's just another layer of being a freak.

Radio: I think if anybody has to categorize where The Need fits on the shelf, then "queercore" may be the best way to describe it. By all means, I'd rather be queer than a good musician or a bad musician—personally, politically, I think that's the most important thing.

Rachel: I shan't belabor, but I do have one request. It'd be the greatest honor to find out who's had sex to our music and which song is the best. Please come find me! ◎

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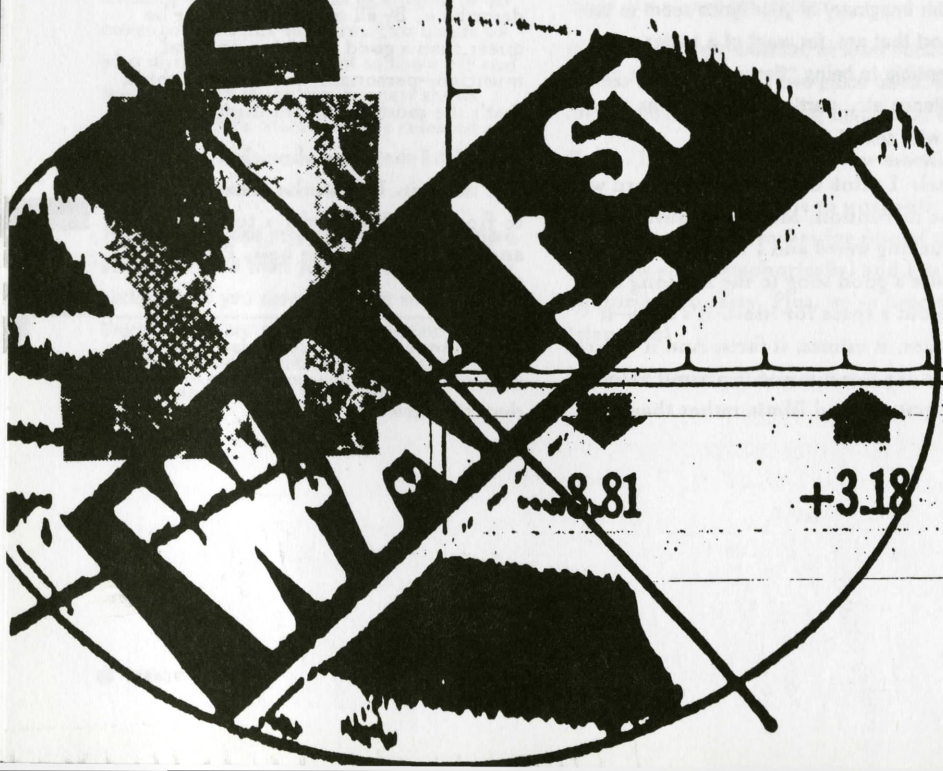
DOUG HENWOOD



Although he can reel off numbers with the best of them, Doug Henwood is not your typical economist. Despite his mastery of financial data, he is an outsider to the profession. An unapologetically pro-government leftist swimming in a sea full of free-market sharks, he directs his talents not to building portfolios, but to exposing the inequalities perpetuated in the pursuit of wealth. His labor of love is *The Left Business Observer*, a newsletter on economics and politics he has been publishing since 1986. Doug is perhaps best known for the book *Wall Street* (Verso), which explains the world of stocks and high finance in plain English and with a decidedly critical eye. He is also the author of *The State of the USA Atlas*, an eye-opening work that has found its way into many college geography courses.

Punk Planet spoke with Henwood about his experiences as an independent publisher and a left-wing pundit.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

How did you get started in independent publishing?

I just got the idea one day. I was reading *Rock and Roll Confidential*, actually. I thought "Hey, I can do a newsletter like this!" I took the plunge without thinking about it too much. ¶ But how I got to that point is a story in itself: I was a teenage right-winger. During my freshman year in college, I planned to be an economics major and make a lot of money. But I'd always been interested in literature and culture too, so I was wavering. When I gave up right-wing politics early in my sophomore year, I decided to give up economics too and became an English major. I went on to graduate school in English and even toyed with the idea of writing a dissertation. But then, as I was doing research for the dissertation, I started reading about economics again. I got the idea of tying the evolution of American poetry to changes in political economy. When I gave up the dissertation, I kept reading about political economy. I went to work at a medical publisher for a couple years and then my wife and I started doing freelance work making book indexes. I figured out once that we did close to 1,000 of them over the course of about ten years. [laughs] Working freelance gave me enough flexibility to start writing the newsletter.

It's intriguing that *Rock and Roll Confidential* was the newsletter that started the ball rolling. In the world of economic advising there are lots of newsletters, many of them with very high price tags. Didn't they inspire you too?

I got some of the ideas about how to present material from them, the way they used graphics and so on. But the idea for

the format and the belief that I could pull it off came to me while reading *Rock and Roll Confidential*.

Were there other publications, even if they were different in format, that served as an inspiration for you?

I liked *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, but I hadn't immersed myself in it to the point where I can say that it was a model. The *LBO*'s genre sort of suggested itself.

One of the biggest problems in American progressive politics since the 1960s is fragmentation. For example, although there's a left wing music community, it doesn't necessarily have a lot of contact with other leftist circles. And this leads to a lot of redundant effort, with different sectors of the American left repeatedly reinventing the wheel instead of pooling their resources and knowledge. In fact, when I first met you, I was surprised to find out how interested you were in music—specifically punk music—because it's hard to find leftists who move comfortably beyond their field of specialization. I'm curious where you, as a pundit on economic questions with a strong interest in the cultural left, think the left-wing music community should direct its political energy.

That's a tough one. I think most didactic music sucks, so I wouldn't advise anyone to agitate lyrically—that doesn't work very well. The most important thing is to create a sense of resistance and community and maybe some sense of a possible future while you're at it. The problem you're talking about is so widespread. I'd like to be part of a broader magazine covering a lot of culture and politics in addition to the economy, where all these people who don't normally talk to each other would do so.

***The Baffler* certainly falls into that category to a certain extent.**

It does. I should put in a good word for *The Baffler*, because I definitely feel an affinity for what they're up to. They're serious about being old farty, which is a pretty hard thing to do. [laughs] The temptation for so many leftish periodicals is to soften their message in order to broaden their audience. And they end up with a lot of pablum as a result.

The fragmentation of the American left leads to factionalization within its different parts—music people fighting with other music people about matters which are only of concern to other music people or environmental people fighting with other environmental people etc.

You could make a long list of that sort of thing—identity politics vs. class; cultural politics vs. "real" politics; Marxism vs. Postmodernism—and it's all tedious camp-building, an exchange of volleys that's really a sign of weakness and defeat and a recipe for more weakness and defeat. It's really kind of sad.

Do you have any suggestions on how we might overcome this wasting of energy?

[laughs] I don't know. This is one of my obsessions these days—to try to get people to talk to each other who wouldn't normally do so.

What do you do to that end? Obviously you have the *LBO*. Your website is a compendium of different resources, not just for leftists, but for anyone who's interested in questioning the status quo in the United States and throughout the so-called first world. But what other stuff do you do that may be less obvious to someone who doesn't know you well?

The *LBO* sponsors an Internet mailing list too. The founding manifesto emphasizes the importance of speaking across all these divides. It's not always as successful as I'd like it to be, but that's my ambition for it. It'd be nice to see more publications trying to bring people together personally.

Many people seem to be informed politically or even be active in politics, yet they tend to steer clear of economic theory. Why do you think this is?

There's a tremendous amount of mystification about economics. Its practitioners like to treat it almost like physics, as if it were a natural science. I think a lot of people whose instincts are oppositional nonetheless get taken in by that mystique—the pretension to science, the sense that the economy is this independent mechanism impervious to human influence. So what I try to do is to demystify it. I tell people who's really got the money and how things are distributed. This is part of a broader project to show how power works economically and politically, because I think a lot of people who have this gut instinct that things are pretty fucked up don't know exactly how or why—I try to fill in those blanks.

It's interesting that you talk about a gut instinct about things being fucked up because every time I hear a news story about a million-dollar Internet stock, I get queasy,

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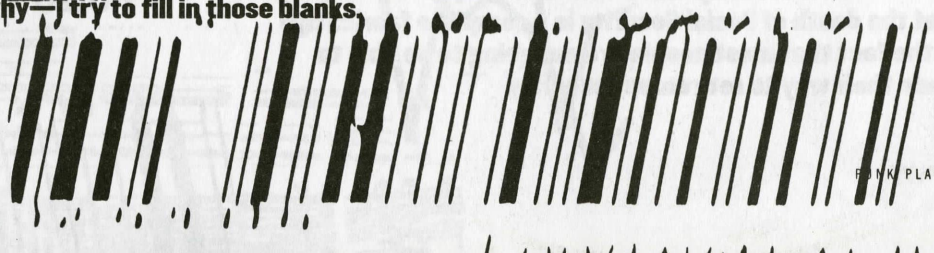

but I can't quite articulate why.

These wondrous stories are targeted to a youngish age group. Yet younger workers are actually worse off relative to the averages than older workers were in their youth. That's not the image you'd get from reading the papers. I think this whole boom, which is all dependent on people in the stock market feeding money to the tech people, creates an illusion among people that things are a lot better. But it also feeds this sense among them that there's something wrong with them if they're not participating—that they're somehow defective because their missing this great boat. In fact, the present situation is extremely unusual from a historical standpoint. Plus, it involves so few people—really only people whose incomes are in the top one or two percent that are making out like bandits in the great boom. Everybody else is just barely getting by. Average incomes have just regained 1989 levels.

Why do you think that these stories have been so successful at saturating the culture beyond the world of the business section? Even looking back at times when Americans were not supposed to question what was going on, it's hard to find much that compares with the present celebration of the free market. In the 1950s, for example, the most blatant examples of propagandizing were reserved for the nation-state. If the virtues of capitalism were being touted, it was almost always in conjunction with nationalism. The superiority of western countries was explained in terms of the freedoms they permitted, including a free market. It wasn't that common to find capitalism praised for its own sake without reference to the struggle between nations. Today, by contrast, the nation has almost become an afterthought, a topic left for reactionary populists like Pat Buchanan.

There's a big difference between what was going in the 1950s and what's been happening lately. From the 1950s into the 1960s there were very broad income gains throughout the working population. The overall income distribution was actually getting slightly less unequal and kept doing so until about 1967 or 1968. There was this sense of broad prosperity, though it was nowhere near as stable as nostalgia would have us believe Certainly a lot of people were excluded from it. People romanticize that period of our history. The situation these days is not at all similar. Now there's just this fragmentation of economic and social life. Old hierarchies have come undone and people feel responsible for themselves.

That supports the whole entrepreneurial myth.

Yes. The fact is that some people are getting very rich, and it does excite mythmaking. But there's a long tradition of that in American history—people have been coming here to get rich for a very long time. But the present era is one of the more extreme examples. We've had several moments like this—in the late 1920s, the late 1960s and early 1970s, and now—in which the stock market mentality has infected the whole culture. Because people have been convinced that Social Security is going under, they feel that they have to trade their way to retirement security. And this is true despite the fact that the death of Social Security is a complete fabrication or the fact that most people are not going to be able to trade their way to retirement security.

Earlier you explained that one of your goals is to demystify the economy and its workings for people who regard it almost as a force of nature which they have no control over. But there's a flipside to the belief that it's impossible to intervene in the economy: There are people playing the stock market without any of the economic knowledge that would have been necessary at other times in American history. What you think about the phenomenon of people doing this stuff without necessarily knowing what they're doing?

I think most of them are losing their shirts. We don't really know for sure, but there have been preliminary studies showing that 70 percent or more of the people who do day trading lose money. Even very educated people don't understand the basics of finance. They don't understand the arithmetic of interest rates or anything like that. To ask them to manage their savings and their own retirement is really a lot. Even professional portfolio managers consistently underperform. So amateurs are likely to do even worse than that. When the market is going up 20 or 30 percent a year, it papers over a multitude of disasters. But at the slightest sign of trouble, there are going to be an awful lot of people who feel very poor and very betrayed.

Of course, a lot of the recent surge in the stock market is attributed to people investing for their retirement. Retirement doesn't really seem like a reality for many of us, because it's still so far off...

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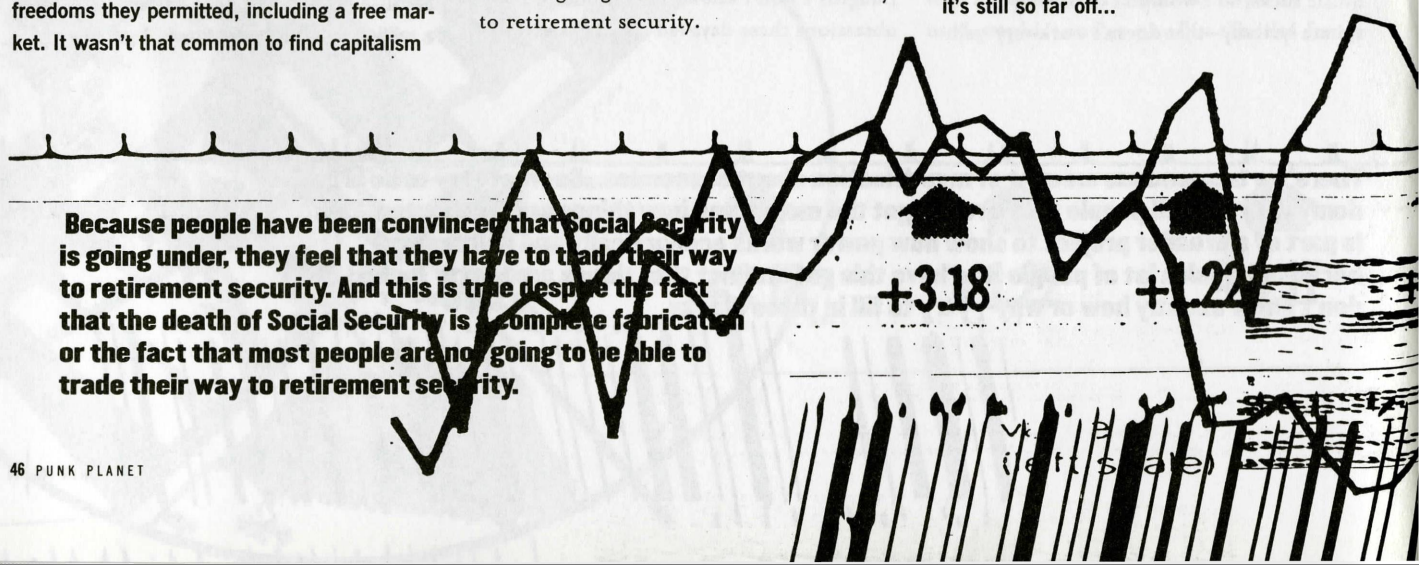

In a practical sense, a lot of independent operations scre their emp yee nd customers as much as anybody else does. You could say that there's often something oth r than the logic of profit maximization at work in independent operations, but you can't be sure of that. There are lots of scum bags and frauds everywhere, including independent music labels and publishers.

I never thought about retirement in my twenties. But I hear people in their twenties talking about it these days. There are publications pitched towards them, and there are Gen-X mutual funds and the like. So there is some consciousness among younger people that I don't remember having existed before. Most people, except maybe those in the top 20% of income, are not going to be able to save very much money in their lifetimes. They have to rely on a generous and secure public pension check, possibly supplemented by a private pension fund of some sort. Because they're not going to be able to take care of their own retirement, they better spend their time preventing Wall Street from privatizing Social Security. That would be a much better expenditure of energy than trying to beat the market.

Personally, I see the importance of that. But as important as it may be to invest your political energy in trying to prevent the privatization of Social Security, it's not something that necessarily has the aura of excitement that other forms of political activism have.

No, it certainly doesn't! Fiscal policy is pretty boring.

It seems in punk circles people take for granted that independent production and distribution is a good thing, particularly in this era of corporate consolidation. Do you think that's true?

In a practical sense, a lot of independent operations screw their employees and customers as much as anybody else does. You could say that there's often something other than the logic of profit maximization at work in independent operations, but you can't be sure of that. There are lots of scum bags and frauds everywhere, including independent music labels and publishers. Another point to consider is that the independent model can only be applied in certain contexts. You can't universalize it. You can't have "independent" computer companies or locomotive manufacturers or things like that. You have to think about what kind of arrangements make for large-scale operations, unless you want to give up on industrial civilization. I don't think most people seriously want to do that, even if they might fantasize about it. Once you start trying to conceive of some larger-scale, more cooperative way of doing things, you have to get beyond the fetish of independence.

Why do you think that the fetishization of being independent is such a big part of the cultural left in the United States?

That's American individualism at work. We don't think of political action, but what we can do for ourselves. An extreme example is people who blame themselves for being unemployed and take a resumé writing course instead of thinking about why so many people are unemployed. There's this fantasy that you can opt out of the system. Then again, I've actually done that to a certain degree! But everybody couldn't do that. So if you want to think about politics, you have to think about some way of doing things collectively that's not exploitative and hierarchical.

What about those people like yourself—and I realize you have probably been more successful than most—who have managed to opt out of the system and still make a comfortable living. Do they have something which other people lack?

It's a combination of being good at it, finding a niche, and luck. I guess it also takes a certain kind of personality. And I also think you need what the economist John Maynard Keynes called "animal spirits." You don't really think about what you're doing. Instead of doing market research, you just plunge into it. ◎

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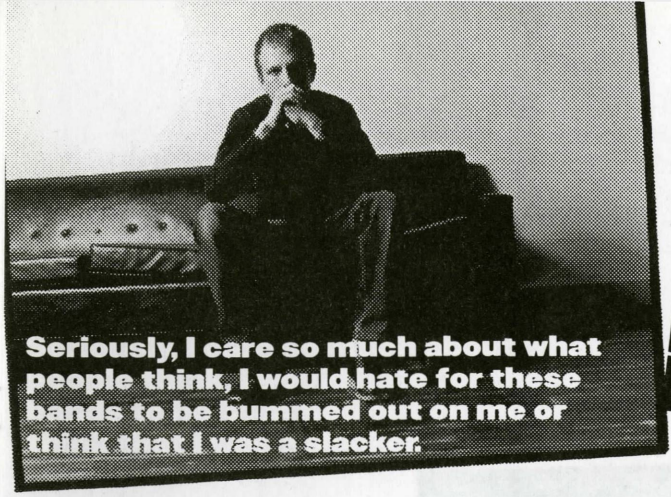
BVVR
Ian



Seriously, I care so much about what people think, I would hate for these bands to be bummed out on me or think that I was a slacker.

BIG WHEEL RECREATION

Rama Mayo's other line is beeping—it's the fourth time so far in our converesation. Each time the line beeps, Mayo becomes more and more irretated. As he clicks over, he promises that this is the last time we'll be interrupted. When he finally finds his way, he sounds like he's at wit's end. "It's after 11," he scoffs, "why are people *still* calling about records!?" Mayo sounds frustrated and on the verge of burnout, but things at Big Wheel Recreation, his five-year-old Boston based label, aren't slowing down anytime soon. Between single-handily running one of the nation's leading post-hardcore labels, screening T-shirts for dozens of indie acts and booking just about every band in Boston, outside of Aerosmith, the 23 year old mogul's life seems to have become too hectic for its own good.

The gruling schedual has Mayo envisioning a tamer life—one in which his days are filled with art, Red Sox games and a few less hours on the job. His daydreams are driven not just by overwork, but also by his estrangement from a punk community that has replaced sincerity for sales. As he revealed in our late evening chat, his aversion for a few of the more business-minded labels has grown so strong that he's begun to reevaluate whether or not he should continue with his own. But Mayo isn't throwing in the towel just yet—Big Wheel is gearing up for its most hectic and promising year yet.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**
Photographs by **Bryan Sheffield**

Do you think that there are too many labels putting out records right now?

Oh my god, yes! There's too much of everything! Long ago, Eric Astor and I had this same conversation when I interviewed him we both agreed that when you have too many bands or too many record labels, it makes it OK to be mediocre. But *now*, the big labels are getting away with bands that aren't even mediocre. They're getting away with bands that are really bad. And it's not just specific genres of music. There's sub-par work happening all over the place. ¶ The main reason is because it's too easy to put out bad punk rock records. It's *so* easy now. When I first started putting out records, it was impossible to really find out how to do this—you'd end up asking around to hundreds of people. But now everybody knows where to get records made. There's places like Furnace, that are so user-friendly and everybody can go to them. ¶ I think it's awesome when people release their own records, but shit, I'm broke as hell and when I see people start up these labels to make money and they try to outbid other labels with absurd promises, I hate it. The reason Revelation are such media hounds and their bands do so well, is because they've been doing the label forever. They have the money for things like promotion and publicists.

In the last three years or so, I've seen a ton of small labels crop up that seem to be borrowing liberally from the playbook of your label or from some of your contemporaries, like Jade Tree Records.

The thing they're not getting though is that a label like Jade Tree isn't limiting themselves to any genre for their releases. The same goes for Gern Blanstden—they did that Dalek record, which was a hip-hop record. I get tons of demo tapes that sound like Jejune. In fact, I have ten sitting right in front of me, which *won't* get a listen because I don't want to put out *another* Jejune! A lot of our bands sound different, which is good because I don't want to be pigeonholed.

God, there's so much of that going on: bands striving to be other bands. To me, it seems like all of these melodic rock bands are becoming far too accessible.

Well, there will always be bands that start a musical scene and there's obviously the bands that come after it's already been created. Bands like the Promise Ring, Christie Front Drive, Jimmy Eat World and even Jejune—who hadn't heard the Promise Ring until they played together—weren't inspired by young bands. They were inspired by older bands. To me, it's really terrible that people intend to start bands that sound like the Promise Ring. Don't get me wrong, they're an awesome band, but why would you start a band based on a band you'll probably play with?

It seems to me that dozens of labels out there are in a huge rush to become a business, but they're not concerned with taking the time and making the effort it takes to get there.

I would have never put it that exact same way, but that's totally true. Right now, Big Wheel is becoming such a business—which is exciting but at the same time, it's totally taking the fun out of releasing records. When I first started putting out records, I couldn't see it as anything but fun—especially since when you first start out, it's almost impossible to make money. But I know labels that are putting out their first record and they already have contracts. That's crazy! If you've never put out a

record before, why would you want to have contracts? It's even true with the big labels like Revelation. I guarantee if you asked them to recite back what their contracts cover, they couldn't do it. It's just some 40 page contract that they've photocopied out of one of the music industry books that I have piling up on my desk which I don't understand either. But these business-inclined labels, they all have a business license, a separate bank account, a fax line, an Internet site, but they don't know how to release records.

Well, the office space and the fax line are things you should surrender to, not aspire towards.

Exactly. A label like Crank! is a great example of a business that put those things first. Since Jeff used to work at a major label, it was instantly started as an indie label that practiced major label mannerisms. They have all this shit going on like company cars and detailed contracts which is horrible because these bands don't know about contracts. That's what separates us. Lazycain just got an offer from Revelation and they turned it down because they were too business-like. ¶ Another example is, early on, we had one of our bands do really well and then we "sold" them to another label. We sold Ten Yard Fight to Equal Vision [laughs] and, in the process, I got completely ripped off. I was completely taken advantage of because I just didn't know what was going on. I'm not bitter, but we *had* to sign the contract that sent them away. When I read that contract, years and years ago, I didn't know what it meant. Neither did the band. When they signed that contract, they just said, "If they wants to rip us off, they're going to rip us off anyway." It's absurd that bands get taken advantage of that easily. ¶ I mean, Big Wheel just moved into this new space and it's gorgeous. I wanted to do it right so I got a fax line, a modem line, I have a cell phone but I don't have contracts. I think it's more important to be there for my bands. I saw Henry Rollins speak recently and he was talking about going to Dreamworks after years of being on an indie label. He said that, basically, he was sick of being on an indie that would tell him they didn't send out his press packets because they couldn't find any paper clips. I always think of that and sure it's funny and exaggerated, but I don't want to be the label without any paper clips. [laughs] Seriously, I care so much about what people think, I would hate for these bands to be bummed out on me or think that I was a slacker. I don't want to disappoint people, especially people I respect.

I've been thinking about what you are saying a lot lately. There's a lot of 'zines and projects and labels that focus on all of the wrong things; but, the thing is, they are bound to outlast you and me. Like, last week I turned 21 and I began to think about how I am not a kid anymore and that I can't do a fanzine the rest of my life. I began thinking about all the new faces and projects that are popping up and I felt really alienated by them. It makes me feel that my time within this community is really limited, because I can't compete. Do you feel that's true—that maybe you're acting on borrowed time?

You know, a lot of people envision Big Wheel as this "larger" label and that's funny to me. When Fastbreak was on tour, they said they couldn't believe how huge people thought Big Wheel was. These kids were all acting like it was a huge company. They were all surprised that they called this big company and they talked to *me*, or they were surprised that I e-mailed them back. But the fact is, Big Wheel *is* me—it has always been just one person. Now there's one other employee—Luke, the drummer for Fastbreak and In My Eyes—who does our mailorder. But both of his bands have new albums coming out, so his time is limited. But that aside, five days out of the week, it's just me. I wish I could get more people involved, but I take it way too personally to do that.

That must mean that you're working almost constantly. Do you ever think about stepping away from it all?

Well, if I had the time I would travel a lot. I don't know if I would play sports more, but I'd probably go to see live sporting events more often. Like today, I was rushing around going to FedEx and the post office and when I finally got home, I could see the lights from Fenway Park and I wanted to stop and see the Red Sox so bad but I couldn't—I had to design new ads and make new invoices. I would love to say, "I don't know" when someone calls me up and asks, "What are you doing today?" ¶ But the idea of stepping away? *Man* that's a bad question to ask right now. See, for the past two months, I have been debating whether or not I should call it quits—and for no good reason! I often think back to when I was sitting in my college dorm. Back then, I couldn't wait for Big Wheel to be legitimate. But now that it is, I really don't want it to be. The fact is, when the label becomes really focused on the business aspects, it takes away the fun of doing it. Going on tour with Piebald this summer was probably the most fun I have had while doing this. It was so fresh and new and they were really excited to be doing it. That experience definitely saved me. ¶ There are so many other things that I want to do, but I'm not able to. Today I went out specifically to rent *200 Cigarettes* because Mark from Charles Bronson is in it. I got it and came home, and when I got here I realized I had a couple of things to do and knew you were going to call, so I know I just won't get to watch it. I *should* have time to do that. I don't know, maybe in two months from now, I'll read this interview and think, "How could I have ever thought about not

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I don't know, maybe in two months from now, I'll read this interview and think, "How could I have ever thought about not doing Big Wheel!?" It's easy to forget that because I am so goddamn busy and I work so fucking hard.

doing Big Wheel!?" It's easy to forget that because I am so goddamn busy and I work so fucking hard. ¶ That's why, right now, I've been heavily debating if I should just stop the label, take whatever funds are left and *not* re-invest them. I've thought about taking that money and going to art school with it, because, unfortunately, I don't know art at all. See, my roommates are all art students and they do these amazing things that totally inspire me and god, I'm so jealous of that. I'm jealous that they don't have huge responsibilities or dozens of people depending on them. I feel obligated to make sure my bands are set for tour or their records are all pressed. [long pause] I don't know... I go to college and I'm constantly learning, but fuck, I go to college for "music business."

Which, when you come home, devours the rest of your day?

Yeah. I have to think about music-related business *all* day long. I have even been talking to the dean about rewriting some curriculum at the university because there is a lot of things that people need to know. I don't want to come off like I'm this super cool guy, but they asked me to come and teach classes next fall which rules because I love music *so* much, but it totally makes me crazy. ¶ Lately, it's become all business, but I still get psyched, even when we put out bands that don't sell records, because it all works out. You know, the Jejune record pays for the Lazycain record just as the Fastbreak record will pay for the Get High record and the last Piebald record will pay for the At the Drive In record. That's what gets me excited. ¶ Just now, my roommates left and on the way out, they were making fun of me because I was going on and on about how hard I work. That's horrible. Sure, they're all artists and maybe they don't know what all of this means, but I would never downplay their art. When you told me you wanted to interview me for *Punk Planet*, I was *so* psyched because I don't feel like I deserve it, which might be because I don't feel like people take me seriously. When someone downplays and belittles what you love most of all in your life, that's fucked. When you work 80 hours a week on something and you've done it forever, you take it personally. But I've begun to separate the personal part. I mean, I used to get really offended when Jessica Hopper or *Punk Planet* would bash Jejune, but now it doesn't matter to me because I know that there are thousands of people that love Jejune. I get 50 e-mails a week *just* about Jejune. ¶ I'd love to say that one day I'll just quit, but I've done it forever and it's all I think about. It would be extremely hard to actually leave. When you said that you're 21, that bummed me out, because I am going to be turning 23 in a month and I'm freaking out. Who knows, I may just be having a mid, mid-life crisis.

Well, that's normal. You work, what, 14 hour days?

When I lived in New York last year, it was even more than that because my neighborhood was so fucking miserable that I rarely went out. I would go five days without showering and changing, just because it was such a heavy work load. But, on average, I work from nine in the morning to about midnight. That's counting school and that's not seven days a week either. But they're long days and it *is* a legitimate job. Just because I don't have to put pants on doesn't mean that it's not a real job!

What keeps you focused? Obviously you're having doubts about continuing Big Wheel, but you continue to put so much time into it.

Well, part of it is that I live in *another* bad neighborhood. [laughs] But what realistically keeps me going is this guilty feeling that I owe my bands. I know that I'm in way over my head with Big Wheel and doing shows and printing T-shirts and designing miscellaneous things., but there are certain people that I respect so much that, if I didn't get their stuff done, then I would feel horrible. The people at Lumberjack or the bands I book shows for, they are all really good friends and I don't want to offend them or let them down. Plus, there will always be a desire to work with new bands or to keep the label progressing. That's why I am so excited about the At The Drive In record, because that band just fucking rules and they're great kids. It's sort of a combination of all of those things.

What do you miss most about having a normal life?

I miss sleeping in on a Wednesday. I miss being able to go see the Red Sox on a whim. But, mostly, I miss having a steady paycheck. It sucks, but money is so dominating. It may sound lame, but cash rules everything around me. [laughs] Sure, it sounds ridiculous to put it that way, but it *can* be really depressing. I can't buy clothes and records without feeling guilty. Normal people buy records, but I don't. I could buy records, but I'd rather buy a full page ad in *The Big Takeover*. I feel like that's what I *have* to do. That is my life. And, really, right now is the closest I have ever been to a normal life. Usually, when I think of someone living a normal life, I think of someone who exists outside of this scene and listens to 311 or Limp Bizkit. But I haven't had a normal life for so long that this *is* normal. ◎

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When I first listened to American Steel's new album, *Rogues March,* what struck me was how warm the record sounded—raw, passionate guitar playing, an energetic rhythm section so damn in sync you'd think they were going to pop. The whole presentation felt so full of life that it left me with this strangely reassured feeling. Maybe it was my timing, but I guess I just wasn't prepared for it. *Rogues March* felt like a real rock and roll record, sans cliches, without any pretense or traditional punk bullshit posturing attached to it. I played the record over and over again, wondering if my surprise was due to some kind of diminishing post-punk weariness or not, or whether *Rogues March* was just a really great, inspired piece of work. The fifth time around, I figured out that what was really going on was that it was all to the band's credit. I love having experiences like that when I listen to new music, not only because it's rare, but because that's the kind of feeling that every album ought to inspire.

My old friend Nathan and I had the opportunity to yack with American Steel over a few beers on the roof of the Triple Rock Brewery in Berkeley early this fall.

Interview by **Joel Schalit** with **Nathan Keene**

So are you guys technically an 'East Bay' band?

John: Yeah, we are.

You certainly don't sound like one to me. Your sound is so much bigger than that.

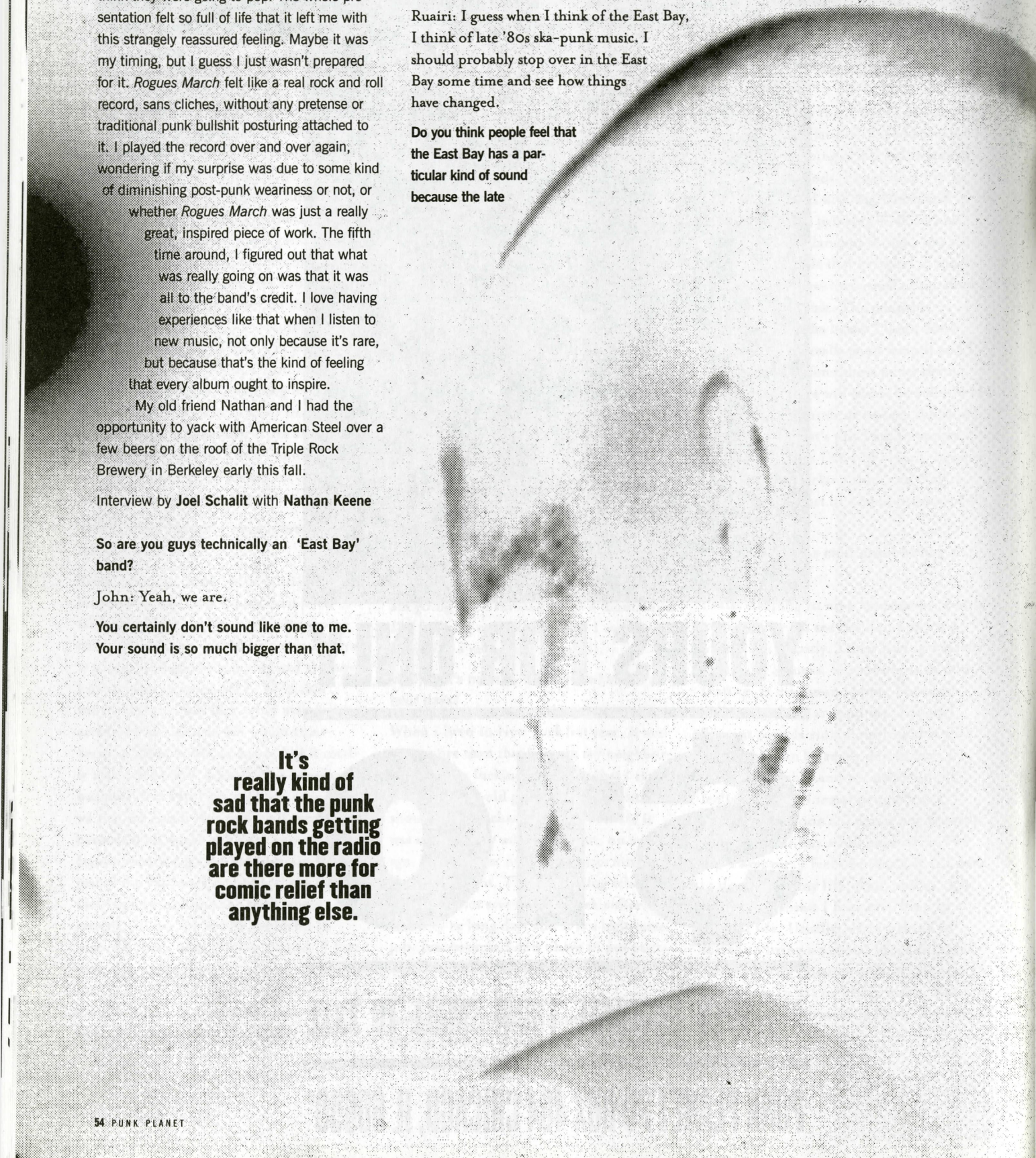
Ryan: We don't have fake accents. [laughs]

In all seriousness, you guys sound a lot harsher than the "La La La" Buzzcocks-cum-Gilman clone archetype that's been so heavily replicated here.

Ruairi: I guess when I think of the East Bay, I think of late '80s ska-punk music. I should probably stop over in the East Bay some time and see how things have changed.

Do you think people feel that the East Bay has a particular kind of sound because the late '80s were the region's musical heyday or is it because the East Bay is less interesting to think about in the '90s than it was 15 years ago?

Ryan: Oh, I think the problem with the '80s tag is that it just designates the time



It's really kind of sad that the punk rock bands getting played on the radio are there more for comic relief than anything else.

when people first started recognizing what was going on musically in the East Bay. It's a very long-lasting first impression, really.

I like some of the political sentiments being expressed on your album. But what I really appreciate is you're able to say your piece without getting overly dogmatic. You're not a manifesto type punk band.

Ruairi: I think there were a lot more politics on our first album. I don't feel very comfortable writing critical, political songs though, even though I've written hundreds, because I don't feel like I can get it quite right. I don't want to get into the position that many political bands get into where they write a song and it reads like a non-musical manifesto.

Ryan: Sometimes it sounds like political bands are saying, "I have this idea, I've discovered a problem. Here's what it is, and here's what you can do about it." It gets really boring, because it never feels like it comes from the heart.

Scott: The problem is that it comes across as though bands like that are trying to tell you what to do. We're not really those kinds of people—all we're doing is telling you how we think.

Ruairi: Right. Writing manifesto-like songs makes you come across as a dogmatic, simpering liberal.

Getting back to the East Bay thing again, how do you guys feel about being from here at this point? Is it still a positive association or is it a hindrance?

Ryan: Whenever we play out of town and people go, "Oh, you're from the East Bay." Everyone wants to know about it; they want to move out there. My response is always that Berkeley is just another town. It's just another place to live with really high rents.

Ruairi: It's really hit or miss. Some people come to our shows because we're from the East Bay and because we're on Lookout, and others will tell us we suck because we're from the East Bay and because we're on Lookout. There's nothing you can do about it.

That's symptomatic of what you guys were saying earlier about how time-specific people's conception of East Bay punk culture is. Take your label for example. Over the past couple of years, Lookout's roster has gotten extremely eclectic.

Ryan: Exactly. I was really impressed when Lookout put out the Black Fork and Criminals CDs. Those records were 180 degrees from the kinds of albums that Lookout had been putting out five years before.

Ruairi: That change in sound was something that was happening in the East Bay too, but it was a bit different than the direction Lookout went. In response to the popularity of Green Day and Rancid, as a knee-jerk reaction, many people in the East Bay started getting into metal and passing it off as punk rock.

What a sorry ass state it is when people start seeing metal as an alternative to punk. It's happened so many times over the past 15 years, you'd think that punks would come up with better alternatives by now.

Scott: The worst thing about going to see your favorite punk rock bands in the mid-'90s was how all of the sudden they all had long hair and were playing metal.

It reminds me of back when SST bands like Black Flag discovered mid-tempo rock like Black Sabbath, and all of the sudden Henry Rollins had grown his hair out and looked like Ted Nugent.

Ryan: What's wrong with that? [laughs]

It's interesting to talk about all these circular changes in musical styles, because right now pop-punk is going through a huge renaissance, especially in terms of major label interest.

Scott: Like funny punk.

Seriously stupid frat boy bands like Blink 182.

Ryan: Right, comedy punk.

Ruairi: It'll disappear.

Ryan: Bands like Blink 182 are just awful. I find them offensive, especially when I see them on bills with bands like Madness.

Scott: That doesn't make sense.

It does make sense if you consider the marketing folks at majors going "Let's put two generations of alternative bands together on the same bill." Personally, I always thought Madness were kind of a frat boy act too. That's what the jocks at my high school listened too.

Ruairi: Everyone has their own definition of punk rock, but whatever it is, it's definitely not *either* of those bands. They bear no resemblance to the real thing.

Scott: It's really kind of sad that the punk rock bands getting played on the radio are there more for comic relief than anything else.

Ruairi: But that's because they're all *showbiz*. ◎

AMERICAN STEEL

My being alive helps a few other peop

JUNO

make it through a day. That's a wonderful and amazing realization—only breaking my neck could have brought me to it.

About three years ago, I attempted to see a Juno show but missed them. I could tell by the reaction in the room that I had missed something that I really should have seen. I made it a point to go out of my way and see them play in a neighboring city the next night. The show wasn't well advertised and my friend and I were two of the four people there. Unfazed, Juno played their hearts out to a practically empty room—they played like they needed it. From that point on, I kept close tabs on the band, following their career through its ups and downs. Unfortunately, there seem to have been many more downs for the Seattle quintet.

After years of patience, the band had just recorded their first full-length record for DeSoto and Pacifico records when Juno was hit with a hard and serious setback when singer Arlie Carstens broke his neck in a snowboarding accident. Suddenly, the trials the band had suffered through before—indifference from the scene, difficulty finding a label—seemed insignificant when set against the very real possibility that Arlie wouldn't walk again.

Not many bands I know could have suffered through this kind of tragedy and stayed together. Juno's music expresses the kind of chemistry and intimacy necessary to remain intact. Their loyalty to each other and to the band they have created has paid off. After the dark days following Arlie's accident, things seem to finally be looking up for the band—their long-awaited record is out and Arlie is playing (not to mention walking) with newfound life.

I got a chance to speak with Arlie and Jason just after their first tour since Arlie's accident and on the eve of the release of their record.

Interview by **JJ Klien**

There's really no easy way to ask this, so I'll say simply: what happened?

Arlie: I am, was, and *maybe* will continue to be a professional snowboarder. On February 23rd, 1999 I was in a half-pipe in Tahoe, CA doing a photo-shoot with one of my sponsors, Santa Cruz snowboards, when I had an accident. Going very fast coming out of an inverted aerial, I slammed my chin into my chest, breaking four vertebrae in my cervical spine and becoming paralyzed from the neck down. The paralysis eventually subsided after they drilled screws into my head and hung 55 pound weights from them for three days with no pain killers, then put me in a halo and performed a few surgeries to implant titanium plates, screws, a hip bone graft and some wire in my neck. I was in the trauma center in Nevada for about three weeks and then transported home where I sat in a medical bed with the halo drilled into my skull at four points for four months more. Now, I'm in a long-term and very rewarding physical therapy and spinal cord trauma program here in Seattle. ¶ Of course, there have been major downsides to this—it put our release date on hold, we had to cancel two tours, I'm in a lot of pain and shows are difficult for my to get through. But there have also been upsides. I'm alive! For the first time in my life I really know what that means and appreciate it. I've made a lot of peace with things I can't change; I've accepted the passing of people I've lost along the way; I've calmed down and am daily learning the power in choosing my battles as opposed to looking at life in black and white or as some series of goals and problems to overcome—each as epic and important as the next. I've lost the frustration I'd felt at not making this record for so long and now just enjoy its existence and the opportunity to keep making music. ¶ Though I've got some serious neurological and mechanical boo boos to work out, for the first time I am really enjoying being alive. I can walk, sing, play music, pick up forks to put food in my mouth. I can make sweet love. I can help others pursue their goals. I can hold those dear to me in a fond embrace. That stuff is so taken for granted or dismissed as being "normal" or "lightweight", but goddamn I now know my life counts, whereas before I wasn't so sure. My being alive helps a few other people make it through a day. That's a wonderful and amazing realization—only breaking my neck could have brought me to it. Absolutely nothing else in the normal course of daily events would have shown me this. God, I sound like such a fucking sap, but sorry, it's all true. Pillow-biting, sensitive punk...

It seems to me like you all have such an incredible resilient relationship to have been through what you have been through and stayed together.

Jason: We have definitely been through a lot together. I think it comes back to being committed to making music together first and foremost, and really enjoying making that music. I don't know if we do all share the same vision though. Maybe we share a general sort of direction, but when it comes to writing music, there's a lot of friction involved—a lot of taking things apart and putting them back together again. ¶ One of the things I really enjoy about our band is that we all want different things out of the music. The things I'll push for or bring in are really different than what Gabe might write. If anything makes our music special,

I want to affect change in my surroundings as opposed to writing songs in reaction to a system or a clubhouse I'm not really all that concern

it's the different influences each member brings to the fold. It makes for some pretty interesting practice nights.

I know your neck injury must make everything else look petty by comparison, but I know that you've had some difficulties with the music industry in your past. It seems to me like a number of your songs deal with that whole experience. Am I I right in reading that into your songs?

Arlie: No. I've got more emotionally personal and overtly political things to ponder and make art about. If you just ignore what's going on in the established "music industry" then the rules and inherent disappointments of it don't really apply. What fun is it to bitch about the music industry? I want to make music about my life and the lives of the people in it. I want to affect change in my surroundings as opposed to writing songs in reaction to a system or a clubhouse I'm not really all that concerned with being a member of. Art and commerce are at war, as they should be and as they always will be. Sometimes it works to one's favor but you shouldn't bank on it. Pop jingles like Ricky Martin and Days of The Dude have a built-in success quotient. Occasionally, for "underground" or "difficult" music if the "cross-platform synergy" or whatever the ding-a-lings call it, is there enough and all the planets are aligning, then sometimes punkers, indie rockers, slackers, deathmetal dirt-heads and mullets get to buy homes and have proper healthcare plans. They get to not pull coffee at Starbuck's or slave as a temp at some soul-sucking 9 to 5. That's rad, but music is art first and it's a struggle. No one has to like your music but if they do, you as the musician should feel grateful and appreciated. You should do it regardless of what the state of the industry is at any given time if you imagine it as a means of community and personal expression.

It seems like a number of your songs are about specific people. Obviously, you're keeping it vague enough so that they're fairly universal, but do you ever think about how those people will react to hearing your words and knowing they are about them?

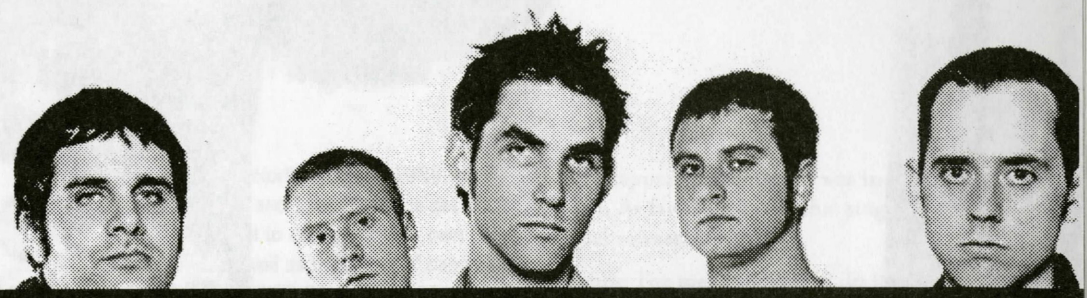
Arlie: For those who are dead, no. I write songs about them to help myself deal with their absence and to honor them. As for the living, yes, buy only for a little while. That's not really the ultimate point. Save that drama for the soap operas. I'd hope that there's room for multiple interpretations of these songs. The beauty of lyrical songwriting is our ability as listeners to take these words and personalize them, to apply them to the storylines of our lives. This is why the medium sticks around—music acts as a conduit or a reflection of our own lives. It consoles us; it often inspires us to get off our asses and do something creative or challenging. If you say names loud and clear then you alienate everybody who'd otherwise take that song and invent their own imagery and story for it. Music is interactive in that way.

I thought that you were a live band until I heard your record, now I don't know. Do you feel like you are more of a recording band or a live band?

Arlie: Were Hüsker Dü a live band or a recording band? The Dead Kennedys? Drive Like Jehu? Each amazing at both ends. And today? Fugazi? Les Savy Fav? Chavez? Burning Airlines? Neutral Milk Hotel? Low? All are brilliant at doing both. Their live shows drive you to buy their records because each and every time they're just so fucking incredible. Conversely, their records make you want to drive hundreds of miles to see them because their recorded material is just that amazing. I think most bands in the punk community would like to think of themselves as a band worth seeing live as well as a band that puts whatever limited recording resources it has to good use. If not, then why bother? I hope we are both. I think having a conviction for putting all of our energies into our live shows and making interesting recordings is a guiding principle of ours. It is not an either/or option.

Jason: I know for certain we'll continue to do things on record that we can't necessarily pull off live. On record it's all about making parts stand up or sit down in particular ways and we try different things to achieve that end. But live it doesn't really matter if every part is there, it's more important that the overall feeling and energy of the song is represented well enough. When we recorded "January Arms," Gabe overdubbed glockenspiel to add some depth and make it rise up out of the mix, but live you probably couldn't hear a glock over the din. I personally really enjoy playing both live and recording. They satisfy different urges. Live, you get to jump around and go crazy while in the studio, you get to be really particular and add all these dimensions to the music that didn't necessarily exist before. I'd hate to have to choose between one or the other.

How did your record end up being put out by both Pacifico and DeSoto?



with being a member of. Art and commerce are at war, as they should be and as they always will be.

Jason: Terry from Pacifico approached us last fall about making the record, and at the same time, we had been having conversations with Kim at Desoto. We really wanted to work with both labels and after numerous conversations it seemed like it might actually make sense to do it as a joint release.

Arlie: I care very much about how our music comes out and absolutely I care about playing. I don't want to be a hobbyist at anything, *especially* music or art. We all care about playing and making recordings. It is what we collectively want to do more than anything else in our individual lives. That's why it took three years and numerous tours to finally make a full-length with DeSoto and Pacifico. We wanted to see foremost if we liked each other in the band, if we liked touring, and if we liked our songs. The second concern was who do we put a record out with? We didn't want to fuck anyone over or not live up to their expectations, or the expectations we set for ourselves. Similarly, it's a scary thing trying to figure out who you're going to work with because as anyone who runs a label or who has been in a band knows, things go wrong; good people become overwhelmed and sometimes do bad or lame things simply because they're winging it and are exhausted, or find their focus shifting to other things. We want to work with people who have similar ethics and ideas about music and community. We've found this in Terry at Pacifico and Kim and Bill at DeSoto. They bust their asses to put out these records and they try to be as straight up as possible with their efforts, and conversely their expectations of us.

Do you completely trust the process of making rock music, or at this point do you just care about playing?

Jason: If trusting the process of making rock music means putting blind faith in anyone who is involved in getting Juno's music out to be heard, I'd have to say no. I don't extend that trust to anyone outside the band—even within the band it's hard sometimes. We all have pretty different ideas as to how things should be done and spend a fair amount of time working things out to everyone's satisfaction. As far as working with people outside the band, there's a lot of pushing and pulling that goes on when trying to get things done. I'm sure we're perceived as being a pain in the ass, but that doesn't really bother me. The relationship between artists and labels, even if you are all friends, is inherently awkward. In our case, we're really lucky to be working with people we trust and believe in, which makes it way easier, but there are still moments when I'm sure they'd love to wring our necks. That's just the nature of getting things done—at least it is with Juno.

Do you feel like this band is the most important outlet in your life right now? Have there been times when you felt different? How long have you actually been playing together?

Arlie: Collectively it's the most important thing. We spend more time writing and playing music together than anything else we do individually, except for sleeping. I'm sure at times each of us has wondered if there aren't other things in life, moments when it gets really hard or exhausting. Like this most recent tour, which was after neck injury, was really physically hard. There were times when I was tired and vomiting after shows and had the shakes because my nerves were so spent. At those moments, I wondered if music could still be the most important outlet in my life. Was it worth it? But I got through it despite the awfulness and I look forward to our tour a month from now. I still believe in the power of punk rock and the importance of personal expression. I believe in getting in the van. It's worth the long drives and occasional anguish if it means helping some person relate to a larger world and community of expanding ideas. It's worth it if it means making new friends and being part of a movement, as opposed to being sedate and unwavering in one's apathy.

Jason: I go back and forth. Music is definitely one of the most important things in my life, but being in a band and working full time gets to be a drag. Sometimes I question what we're doing. I wonder if it's worth going through so much grief just to write songs, record, and tour. So far, I always come around. Honestly, I'd be miserable without it in my life. I need the exercise it provides my mind and I need to have creative interactions with other people in order to thrive. It's sad how hard it is for people to keep that part of themselves intact as they age. I live in mortal terror of the middle class dream and giving up pieces of myself in order to survive. The price people pay for that lifestyle is frightening. It's not like choosing to give priority to creativity doesn't have its price, but at least you get to keep a portion of your humanity by doing so. That to me is far more important than having two kids, a dog, a yard, a nice car and keeping up with the Joneses. ◎

MERGE RECORDS

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1989: Mac McCaughn and Laura Ballance decide to start a label to document their own band, Superchunk, as well as their friends' bands and local bands they liked. Some of the early releases, such as Superchunk's indie-anthem 7" *Slack Motherfucker*, and singles from influential favorites Drive Like Jehu and Breadwinner are now considered to be classics. Merge also introduced bands as varied and notable as Polvo, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Neutral Milk Hotel and Cornershop to the world.

Minneapolis, Minnesota 1992: The second 7" I ever bought was Superchunk's *Fishing b/w Cool* on Merge. I traced the album art, the band name and the label logo onto a white T-shirt—stolen from my dad—with a sharpie. I loved those songs, I loved Superchunk, I loved Merge and I needed my whole world to know. With every passing year, my fandom and respect for both band and label grows with every release I buy.

Chapel Hill, 1999: My boyfriend and I drive 18 hours to see Seaweed's last show at Merge's three day long 10th anniversary fest, "M10K." Even though we are only there for a few hours, the show makes me feel like I am magically back in 1993: back before the major label open season on punk; back when people danced at shows; back before shows were either all adults or all kids; back when people didn't give a shit about all the wrong things. But one of the most refreshing things was how humble and excited Mac, Laura and the other Merge employees were in the face of such a huge accomplishment.

Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

What was the impetus to start Merge? Was it out of necessity for Superchunk?

Mac: It was more a hobby at first. It seemed like fun and we knew some other people who were doing it. It seemed fairly easy. When we started, Superchunk had played a couple parties, but it wasn't the first release. The first release we put out was a cassette of Bricks, with Andrew Webster who went on to be in Tsunami. Superchunk was the fourth thing we released on the label—it was the Chunk single, before we became Superchunk. I was in school in New York, so the band just happened whenever I was in Chapell Hill. As far as we knew, that single was our final release. [laughs]

Laura: For me, I wanted to do it because there we a lot of good bands in the area. They would be around for a while and lose steam and just break up and just be gone, with no record that they ever existed. And there really wasn't much motivation for them to keep existing—they couldn't tour, there wasn't a way to get exposure outside our area.

How did you figure out how to do stuff? How did you know what were the right steps to putting out records? Did you have friends who did labels that you could call?

Laura: It was pretty much trial and error for a while there. [laughs] We still operate that way.

Mac: I had helped put out a record—actually a five single box set—of bands from around here about a year before called "Evil I Do Not, to Nod I Live" and I played in two bands featured on it, Hush Puppies and Wax. From that I learned that it was pretty easy to send off a tape to a pressing planet and get back a bunch of singles. We knew cassettes would obviously be a lot cheaper, so initially, we just bought a cassette deck and dubbed them off, which explains why they were in limited editions of 100. [laughs] But even with the cassettes, we would get nice labels printed up, because the other labels that were going on at the time that we were into, like Amphetamine Reptile and Teenbeat, were putting out a lot of stuff but clearly didn't have much money.

Laura: Yeah. Sub Pop was still kind of in its heyday, K was doing a lot of cool stuff, working with what they had.

Mac: We definitely didn't know what we were doing on some things, so I would call up Tom Hazelmyer [Amphetamine Reptile] or Mark Robinson [Teenbeat] or Gerard Cosloy [Homestead/Matador] and ask them, "Where do you buy plastic sleeves from?"

Did you ever make any really major mistakes?

Laura: No, we just went really slowly with everything because we never had any money. [laughs] Usually a band, like Erectus Monotone, would have some songs recorded and we would want to do a single, but we didn't really have much money, so the bands would often put up half the money!

Mac: Bands are so spoiled now. Now we pay for the whole thing! [laughs] People make their first demo tape and they turn into a CD now. But back then, it was like, "Wow, if we give you a tape and $350, we can have it turned into a single?" [laughs] And we would pay them back after we sold 100 singles, and once you do that a few times, you get some money together. ¶ For our first single, we borrowed money from my dad, and we had borrowed $600 from my friend Lydia Ely, who grew up in DC and had seen the heart of the Dischord scene, so she had seen what could come of what we were doing. Also, she was one of my only friends who had gotten a real job out of school [laughs], so she gave us the money and we paid her back in a year. We were finding it wasn't too hard to do these little loans with people, because were borrowing amounts we could pay people back pretty easily. We kept it small scale and let it grow naturally.

What sort of job did you have then?

Laura: Kinkos. [laughs]

Mac: Laura and I both worked at a pizza place for a long time, and then we both worked at Kinkos. I was maybe about 20 or 21 at the time. I was also a substitute teacher for a while, but I still worked at Kinkos. When Jim Wilbur [Superchunk guitarist] moved down here, he worked at the Kinkos too. [laughs]

When was the point where you felt like you had "made it" with the label?

Mac: I still don't feel like that. Obviously it's grown, but we always have a money problem. We're always just breaking even. I mean, we pay the bands, but we're always almost running out of money.

Laura: I guess I felt it, intially, with the first full length or when we hooked up with Touch n' Go. The first time we put out a CD, I was like "whoa, cool!"

Well, maybe this is a better way to put it: What is your definition of success with Merge?

Laura: Success, with both the band and the label, for me, is just that fact that we can just do what we want. If we could promote records however, without worrying about breaking even, then I'd feel really successful. [laughs]

Mac: We don't ever take much time to just sit back and take a look at what we've done with Merge, mostly because we're super busy. Looking at the list of releases we've produced, that right there means we are successful in terms of what we set out to do which was pretty much just put out good releases of bands that we liked. We've released a bunch of them. Plus, the stuff we're releasing is still moving forward, still interesting and hasn't settled into a niche. I think Merge is a great success in terms of what we have produced, but with money, we're still on the edge all the time. But that's just how it goes. [laughs]

What has kept your interest in music and putting out records for 10 years?

Laura: I think of music so differently than when we started doing this. There are so many cool people doing music and so many good bands, so many people just doing interesting things, that things are constantly different. I don't have any higher goal in doing this than having fun. It's better than working at Kinkos. [laughs] What we do, it somehow fills a need with a lot of people. That's a really good feeling. I feel like our audience has grown old with us. They've been loyal...

Mac: Every time Lambchop or whoever sends us a tape of their new record, it's suprising and interesting and everything you'd expect out of a record. That's the whole reason we started. There has never been a time where I wanted this to be over. I mean sure, sometimes I've thought that it'd be nice to just concentrate on Superchunk and working on those records, but then I would miss the opportunity to be involved with all these interesting artists and being involved with some great records.

Laura: Sometimes I wish we could step back to when things were simpler. Back to doing just 7"s, if they actually sold, or cassettes even. Sitting in the living room, watching a movie, putting together singles, that was nice. There was not so much to worry about.

Mac: There have been times where nothing goes right on a release— like when Polvo used artwork from some Mormon book and we had to recall and reprint all of them. [laughs] But you know, what can you do? You take in stride. Rock bands, they're always going to give you trouble somewhere down the line. [laughs]

So much has changed since you first started doing the label, are there things that haven't changed that you though would?

Laura: I though we'd be more organized by now. [laughs]

Mac: What hasn't changed is that there are still good bands and people doing cool stuff. What has changed is that it is much harder to find. There is so much stuff out there, you have to dig through so much to find these good bands.

Instead of putting a demo tape and then a couple singles, then maybe an LP or CD, people are all putting out CDs and all these CDs are competing for the same limited audience.

Mac: There are way too many bands, too many labels and way too many CDs. And the media chooses to cover the most obvious, gimmicky, crappy stuff. In some ways it's heartening because I know the people buying Superchunk albums are people who really like Superchunk or people who heard that it's good music or whatever and not just someone who saw a video on MTV or who heard a song on the radio. That's so fleeting... There was that time six or seven years ago when it seemed like maybe there were inroads for indie bands into the major media. But that closed off and it's sort of bizarre now to see what's on the cover of magazines that at one time seemed interested in promoting interesting music.

Laura: In some ways, everything has changed. In a weird way, punk rock was taken away from being an actual alternative. It got sucked in, then spit back out, by major media and by MTV. In some ways, some part of punk rock has always been commercialized, but when I was a teenager, I saw punk rock that not everyone was into. That was part of the reason I liked it. Not everyone had pink hair and piercings. Now

it's all so common. I don't know if people can get the same gratification that someone my age may have gotten out of it.

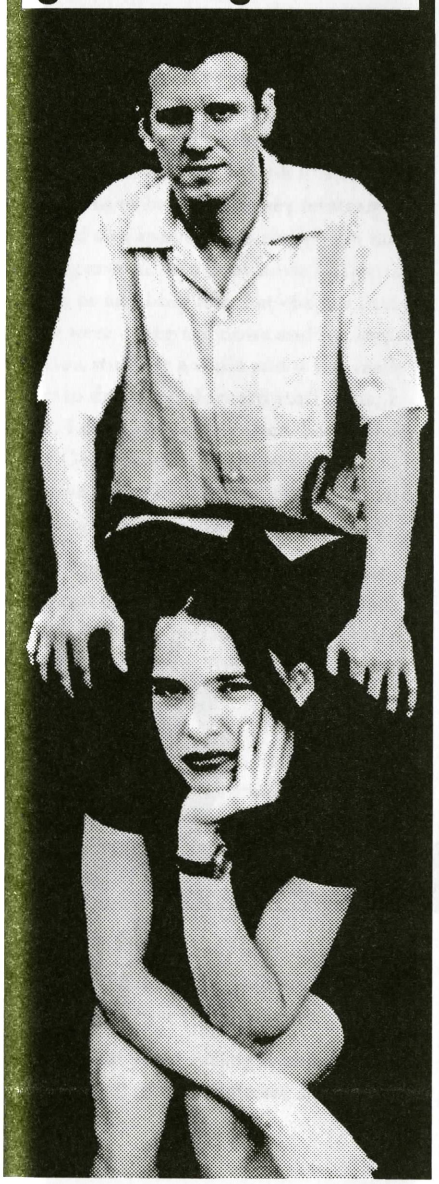
I'm sure you had friends and even peer bands of yours that ended up signing to majors, right? How did you feel about that?

Mac: Personally, I don't check a CD before I buy it to see whether it's on a major or an indie, I buy music that's good. But when bands started signing, it was kind of depressing, because you knew it was going to mean the demise of a lot of those bands. I mean, you see people get involved with that world and when it's a let down, it's a much, much bigger letdown than if you'd put it out yourself. If you spent six months and $200,000, that's a much bigger let down. If you put it out yourself, it's not a life shattering experience and you aren't eternally in debt to some company. There have been bands, like Unrest, who signed, and whether their break up had to do with major label stuff or not, he's still putting out great records for himself. Or, like the Jawbox people are still doing stuff. Some people survived, but a lot of people didn't.

I think for a lot of people, a lot of bands, it permanantly taints or distorts expectations of whats reasonable for their band. They may have sold 2,000 records on an indie, but enough marketing people pumped them up telling them they're going to be huge, because now they need to sell 100,000 records at least. When the major label record comes out, they sell 14,000 copies and they come back to the indie world still measuring everything on a major label scale of success. I think one of the most destructive things of the fallout of major label open season on indie rock is distorting people's scale of success. Personally, I think success has very little to do with the amount of money you make off your music.

Mac: Obviously, it's great if a good band can sell a lot of records and have a lot of people hear their music, but I think the way that major labels do it is a really bizarre way to go about it. I'm really happy that people like Mark [Robinson of Unrest] pulled through it, or that J [Robbins] is doing well with Burning Airlines, so it hasn't destroyed them. But always I wonder "What if so-and so hadn't signed? Would they still be around making records, would they still be good?"

So many times people say, "There are no good bands, indie rock is dead, blah blah blah," But I'm sitting here and I can't even name everything that I like and I can't even list all the labels I think are releasing great things.



Are there any records that you wished you could have put out?

Laura: Any Built to Spill record—all Built to Spill records. Any record I like, I wish I could of put out. But maybe it's best that that hasn't happened because I think it's easier to enjoy a record if...

...if it hasn't been a labour of love?

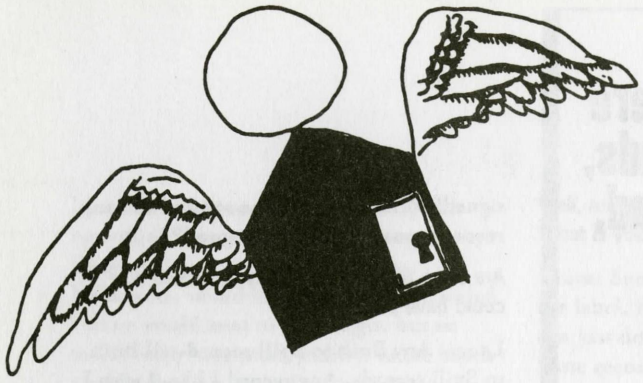
Laura: Exactly. [laughs]

Mac: We were once supposed to put out an EP by Sebadoh that ended up being *Smash Your Head on the Punk Rock*, which came out on Sub Pop. Sup Pop offered them more money. Lou sent a tape and we thought it was amazing, but they went elsewhere. That was a big bummer for a while. Any record I hear and like, I wish I could have put out and been involved in. [laughs] But honestly, we have so many bands and so much going on, that I never really think about that.

Are there any bands or labels that you really think have the right idea now?

Laura: Teenbeat, Built to Spill... I really respect Yo La Tengo—they have been around forever and they are still making relevant records. They haven't quit thinking; they aren't automatic pilot. Smells Like Records always has great bands. Those labels have a broad sense of music, which is so important....

Mac: This band that we just put out, And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead are amazing. Magnetic Fields's new record, it's a 3 CD box set. Those bands amaze me. The new Rondelles, the new Flim Flom, and Belle and Sebastian, I love. There's so much good stuff, you just have to find it. Drunken Fish is a good label, they do a lot of the stranger New Zealand stuff. Aum Fidelity, Eremite and No More Records are all jazz labels I really like a lot. Thrill Jockey, Touch n' Go... There are so many. So many times people say, "There are no good bands, indie rock is dead, blah blah blah," But I'm sitting here and I can't even name everything that I like and I can't even list all the labels I think are releasing great things. ◎



deerhoof

We could very easily change next year. Not because of anything special, but because we're lost and confused.

The night I interviewed Deerhoof was a summer evening that only San Francisco can produce: windy as hell, black as pitch and cold as fuck. Not exactly the interview weather you would wish for if you could play punk rock meteorologist for a day. If that weren't enough, we couldn't do the interview in the club because one of the evening's bands was still doing their sound check. So out into the frigid night air we went, squeezing into those white molded plastic patio chairs that follow neither form nor function, but just give you a sore ass. A steady stream of friends, well-wishers and absolute strangers passed by the table to say hi, answer questions and divert the flow of conversation into this or that new direction. And to top it all off, the club's exhaust fan whirred into life just as we started the interview and droned on the entire time we talked. Adverse conditions for an interview to say the least. Yet in spite of, or because of, such distractions, the interview was loads of fun, down to earth and chock full of moments of spontaneity. In other words, it was an interview a lot like Deerhoof itself.

The San Francisco quartet recently released their third full length, *Holdypaws*, on Kill Rock Stars/5 Rue Christine. Blending pop, noise, a Casio calculator and surreal images of animals and Satan, *Holdypaws* is a touching post-no wave testament to the fact that life is never a very straightforward affair.

I spoke with Rob and Kelly Goodefisk, Satomi Matsuzaki and Greg Saunier before their show at San Francisco's Bottom of the Hill.

Interview by **John Brady**

Is your song-writing process a collective process? Do you do it together?

Greg: Most of the songs come from ordinary situations. Say Satomi and I are walking down the sidewalk or making dinner or moving from one room to the other in a house or doing something that involves movement or the feeling of movement and Satomi will sing a little something. You know a song that you make up and sing to yourself without thinking about it? We'll take that melody and try and add other instruments it. But other songs might come from dreams. We're trying to do a mixture of things that you don't have any control over—things like dreams or things that you sing to yourself by accident, mixed with things that we're trying to be very rational about.

It sounds like a fairly organic process.

Greg: Yeah, I guess so. We'll try anything. If somebody has an idea, we'll try to have everyone contribute. We try to leave space for everyone to contribute. We try to avoid the situation where only one person controls everything.

I was listening to some of your early 7"s and had the impression that you've gotten less noisy. Do you think that's a correct impression?

Greg: Yeah, but it's because Rob lost his distortion pedal. [laughs] I'm not telling the truth, I'm making all this stuff up.

Rob: All kidding aside, I think a lot of changes in this band have been because instruments have been broken or lost or sold or something was lying around and it actually worked, so we used it. Yeah, I think we're a lot less noisy now. Me personally, I like the idea that we're not noisy anymore just because I think it is really scary to us to be disciplined and straightforward and specific. It's really—I'm not dissing anyone who does noise or improvisation or anything like that—its just that for us we were doing the noise and the improvisation stuff for a while and it was really scary to do straightforward stuff. Plus, I suck. I can barely play guitar. Some of the stuff Greg shows me to play, it's like "You've got to be kidding, that's too hard." Although, it's only hard because I suck.

When I was reading your press kit, some reviewers classified Deerhoof as Krautrock, some said it was musical art, while others said it was no-wave. The reviewers seemed genuinely confused.

Kelly: Good.

Rob: Yeah, I think it's good. I don't think we're figuring it all out. We could very easily change next year. Not because of anything special, but because we're lost and confused. This is just what's happening now. It's really fun and it hasn't gotten boring. I think that is really important for us. When we have a new idea, we go with it.

The fact that you're willing to change and also blend all of these different styles raises the question of what sort of effect are you looking for. What sort of reaction are you trying to get out of the audience?

Greg: It's sort of like what I was talking about before: We don't have any control over what we're going to dream tonight and I can't say what Satomi is going to sing next time she walks down the sidewalk or what melody is going to come out when Kelly starts hitting her keys. That's what I meant when I was talking about liking something. It's not a question of liking, it's a question of just doing something. It's like a report....

A musical report about events...

Greg: Yeah, it is sort of like reporting events, but with a little refinement. I think it would be really fun to see what would happen if every band did that. Instead of trying to be good, they just showed people what had happened in their imagination lately—sort of reporting back to you. I think that would be so cool, if bands did that instead of trying to guess what people are going to like.

Rob: I think we just try to keep it exciting for us. The main goal we try for is to keep it exciting and to have fun. A lot of different possibilities lies within that.

Kelly: Oh, I like it when people say "Wow!" That's what I like.

Rob: Yeah, it's better than the heckling.

What would be the worst musical fate to befall you?

Rob: To become bored?

Greg: I don't know, I don't mind being bored.

Rob: Stagnant?

Greg: [laughs] Stagnant's pretty cool, though

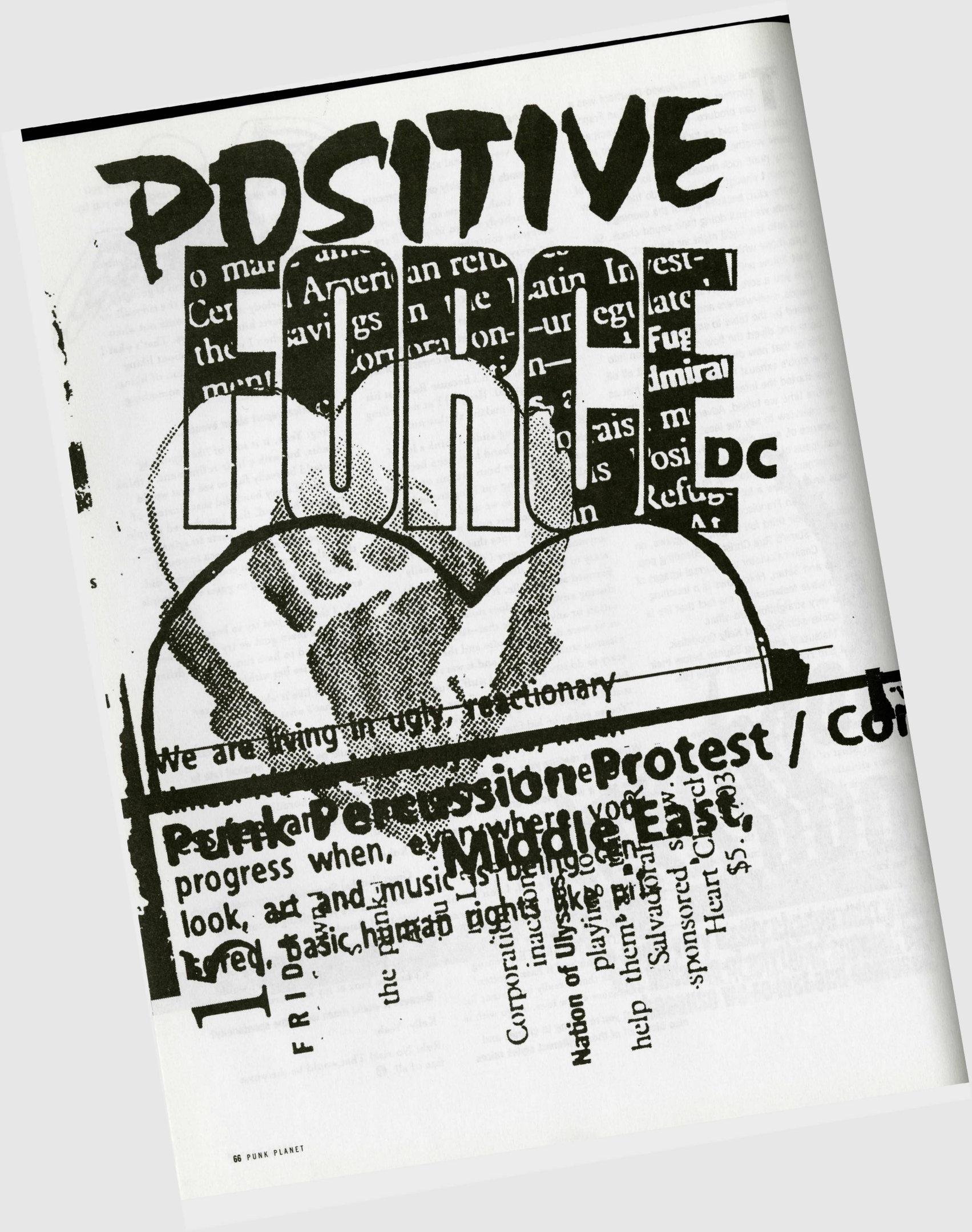
Rob: What are you talking about? You hate that! [laughs]

Kelly: For me it would be learning and knowing what I play so well, that I wouldn't have to look at my keyboard.

Because it would mean losing the spontaneity?

Kelly: Yeah.

Rob: No risk! That would be the worst fate of all. ◎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Interview by **Katy Otto**

MARK ANDERSEN

VE BORN WITH A CHANCE/I AM GONNA HAVE MY CHANCE/RISE ABOVE!!" rt against the U.S. war in the

In his typical attire of a ragged T-shirt and worn black jeans, Mark Andersen does not appear a bastion of leadership. But upon closer investigation, his prominence in social justice movements throughout Washington DC, as well as his devotion to those efforts, is revealed. But standing beyond his many achievements with these groups is his 14-year commitment to Positive Force, the youth activism group he co-founded in 1985.

From the beaten couch of the Positive Force house in Arlington, Virginia, Andersen facilitates weekly meetings of people who come to the group from DC's underground music scene. The group centers its activities around direct outreach such as grocery deliveries to the fixed-income elderly in the Shaw district of DC, political actions that often take the form of percussion protests, educational workshops and events and benefit concerts to raise money for local non-profits.

At 40, Andersen is twice the age of the average Positive Forcer, and walks the fine line between peer and mentor within the group. With his wire-rimmed glasses and round, cherubic face, Andersen looks the part of a man quick to comfort and protect others. Positive Force is his avenue for reaching out to people on a larger, more radical scale than his simpler one-on-one interactions.

I talked to Mark at the end of September about the DC punk community and the new Positive Force house and community center opening this summer.

I just wanted to start by asking how Positive Force started and how you were involved.

Positive Force started in 1985. The genesis of the group traces back a little bit earlier than that to the fall of 1984 when I came to Washington preparing to go to graduate school. At the time I had been involved with punk rock—it had been a huge part of my life back in Montana. ¶ In the late '70s and early '80s in Montana, perhaps needless to say, there basically was no punk scene. There were literally a handful of people who were inspired by it and adopted it as an approach to life in some sense of the word. Since it was so unpopular, one had to be really touched by it or somehow seized by a certain passion because there was no social support for being a part of it. What that tended to do in practice was that it meant you got either the really idealistic people or the real lunatics. But it helped me to discover that I had a life outside of manual labor, which was what I had to contemplate in my home area of Sheridan County, Montana. As a result of that realization, I turned into a political activist and a good student. I did well enough at school that I could come to a fancy college in the east, so I did. It was my first experience with a big city, and a big city punk scene. ¶ My first encounter with DC punk was literally when I moved into the Dupont Circle neighborhood in September of 1984. I walked across the street to a pay phone to tell my parents that I was here and that I was safe and the first thing I saw was "Nazi punks rule—oi oi oi." That was my first encounter with DC punk and it was just the beginning of an extraordinarily painful introduction to what a big city punk scene, at least in Washington, DC, was like. ¶ From my point of view, punk—which had begun as a critique of mainstream society and all of its stupidities: consumerism, conformity, and violence—had become a new form of the same things. For me, in that context, it was very, very disillusioning to go from this place where you had an embattled little pocket of idealists and lunatics bound together in this extraordinary way by this music and its ideals to a larger place that was in many ways a very superficial, socially-oriented community. ¶ One of the basic things I learned from punk was that when you encounter something you don't like, you should first try to make sure you aren't a part of it—that you are not exemplifying what you claim to despise. The second thing is that you should do something about it. For me, Positive Force came out of a desire to bring something positive, something constructive, something radical and revolutionary to this community. In essence, I wanted to return to it some of the things it had given me when I was younger. Positive Force was literally about being a positive force in the DC punk community. ¶ The reason I mention the fall of 1984 is because that is when I met Kevin Mattson, who had been involved with the DC punk scene for some time and was in the band Hate from Ignorance. He had put together a benefit record with a band that I think he was in called Subtle Oppression which was to benefit Student Action Corps for Animals (SACA). He had always been pretty critical of the punk scene even though he had drawn inspiration from that. He had just left high school, and wanted to do something that would carry on the energy of student activism he had felt there. We got to know one another, talked some, and discovered that our ideas kind of meshed—my idea for something to help renovate or recharge the punk scene and his idea to create a group that would help young people to find their power, to learn skills about organizing and to educate themselves about issues in the world. ¶ We read an article in March of 1985 in *Maximum Rock and Roll* about a Positive Force group that had started in Reno with people in and around the band 7 Seconds and then moved to Las Vegas when some of those people moved there. We realized we wanted to do something like that. The basic idea of that original Positive Force group was very simple: To turn the punk rhetoric of *seeking* change into *action* for change. They formed an affinity group which would go to demonstrations together, they would go work at soup kitchens together, they would have educational events and organize concerts which were sometimes benefit concerts. Their idea was that this kind of organization should exist in every punk scene. ¶ In June of 1985, Positive Force DC had its first meeting, inspired by those different currents. We were initially a project of the Washington Peace Center. Then we opened up Positive Force House in January of 1987, which was the logical outgrowth of some of the ideas of the group. We wanted to demonstrate that how you live what you are is far more important than what you say you are about or what ideas you claim to hold. We wanted to live what we were talking. Obviously, to set up a house like Positive Force House, which was a communally run, vegetarian, drug-free household, and which would hopefully be in service to radical transformation, was a logical outgrowth of that.

Do you feel as if the need that existed then exists in the same form now?

I think what Positive Force DC was speaking towards was, in one sense, a particular moment. But that Positive Force remains active while the other 12 or more Positive Force groups do not is because of the nature of the DC punk underground. It is a very special community. What I didn't see when I first came here was that there was a group of people, most of them around the Dischord crowd, who really did hold this burning, passionate, idealistic vision of punk and what its possibilities were. ¶ As we were putting together Positive Force, they were preparing their own kind of renaissance, if you will. It kind of got caught up under this label "Revolution Summer." It revolved around bands like Rites of Spring, Embrace, Beefeater, Mission Impossible, Lunchmeat, protests at the South African embassy, and renewed emphasis on the possibilities of the straight-edge idea and how it could grow to include political activism and vegetarianism. All of this made the perfect partner to what Positive Force was trying to do. We linked up with them pretty early on. That link is probably preserved most notably in the partnership of over a decade between Positive Force and Fugazi, which continues to this day. If Positive Force has been a success, a lot of that is due to the nature of the community that we are a part of. ¶ To answer your question in another way, what we were

reaching towards is an ongoing dilemma for the human person. We grow up in a society that tips its hat to certain ideals and has structures that are supposed to carry them out, such as governments and churches. These ideals are beautiful things if you look at liberty and justice for all, government of, for, and by the people. But just as the ideals of punk rock were being suffocated under apathy and consumerism and lack of vision, so too are these ideals. The challenge is always for us to turn the ideal, the vision, the things we say we are about, into reality and action. Punk rock does not exist as it did in the mid-'80s or early '70s. This is due in one part to its victory—this rebellious, ugly, snarling, smelly underground dweller called punk rock broke though. Much of that culture is now part of mainstream rock culture. Look at the recent Woodstock: The music the people on stage were playing, the dancing. Where is that stuff coming from? Out of punk rock culture. So punk sort of lost its soul in certain ways, and became co-opted by the same structures that punk rock sought out to rebel against, even to destroy, to make

irrelevant. Certainly this applies to the rock and roll industry. The context of punk now is dramatically different. There still is an underground, but it exists in a strange context because there are all these links to the above ground world. That isn't all bad, even though it is obviously not all good. The bottom line is that if people define punk in its original meaning, the same challenge is in front of them as it was in front of us in the mid-80s. Look around. This society has become more unequal, more racially divided. Some of the basic issues have actually experienced retrogression. For those people who still identify with the label punk, and still see it as a radical transformation, the same dynamic is there. That is why Positive Force still remains relevant to folks who were not born when the group started. It is more important now, as the larger world has become more grim.

How do you feel about the DC punk community at present?

That's a hard question to answer. One thing I see which is very distressing is that there is a lot less explicit politics now than in the scene's heyday. It seems like mostly an entertainment scene, and thus something I am not particularly interested in. On the other hand, there are people I know who have been involved for a long time who are still living out that punk idealism, that radical vision. They aren't very obvious a lot of the time. Some of them aren't even in bands anymore, but they have taken that energy into other parts of their lives. They are still very committed and maybe what they are doing now is actually more important in terms of affecting more people. ¶ The second thing I would say is that there are also small pockets of people that I see, yourself included, who really seem to have that spirit, who are still trying to carry forward and think through the implications of a commitment to this shadowy thing called punk in one's life. They are still learning and growing and challenging things. ¶ Positive Force still prospers. At any given meeting, there might be two dozen people. That is saying something when you have met just about every Saturday for a decade and a half, and it is an entirely volunteer group. That is extraordinary to me—I don't know another volunteer group that has existed that long, certainly not one in such a transient, youth-oriented community as the punk world. ¶ I don't find the DC punk community as inspiring as I did once, but there are still inspiring things happening, there are still courageous and visionary people, and that is what has made Positive Force relevant to me in my life even if it isn't as central to my world as it was in the mid-'80s and early '90s. I am one of those people whose energy that came from punk is usually expressed outside of that community now. But I still know where it came from, and I am still extremely proud. I am aware of the failures and the shortfalls more than most, but I am also aware of the real victories.

What are current projects of Positive Force and what is the group looking towards in the future?

There is continuity now with what happened before. We do the direct work with Emmaus Services for the Aging helping the elderly; we help homeless women through Bethany House, a shelter for women; we organize protests like the Anti-Klan protest and the Leonard Peltier protest; we do educational programs like our alternative 4th of July film and discussion focused on the corrupting influence of money on free speech in our society; and obviously we do benefit concerts like the recent one against primate testing. There is the continuing use of our house as the basis for our activities. The big step facing us now is our move from a suburban neighborhood to a pretty embattled inner-city context. I think that will be a big step forward. The big challenge for people in punk is to take your ideals out into the world.

One of the basic things I learned from punk was that when you encounter something you don't like, you should first try to make sure you aren't a part of it—that you are not exemplifying what you claim to despise.

What is the concept for the new house?

The genesis of the community center that Positive Force and Emmaus and some other groups are working on goes back several years to a point when there was a fairly long-term group of people living

here at the house. The idea was, "Why are we paying rent?" We had paid for the house twice over! We wanted to look for a place that was our own, to take a step towards being owners and look for a space for Positive Force that was long-term. At the same time, Emmaus Services for the Aging was looking to move and to have a building of its own. Since I work with both and both are really important to me, it became kind of obvious that maybe we should try to do this so that the two things could be achieved in one location. ¶ The first challenge was to find the right building. I looked at around 60 different properties in the Shaw neighborhood, always keeping in mind that I wanted a place that could accommodate this vision. A year and a half ago, we settled it down to 1424-1426 9th Street. ¶ The second challenge was already in motion, to raise the money to buy the buildings, which would be several hundred thousand dollars. Then we needed to raise money for the renovations and find other people to be involved with the project. We had a very good building at a great price which was huge—11,000 square feet. Fortunately, we had gotten enough excitement around this idea that we could buy this building outright with the money already raised. The building was valued by the city at close to $600,000, but we got it for $220,000. A very good deal, I would say. At the same time, the building next door was wide open and was being used as a crackhouse and a brothel. We needed it to be secured so that what we were doing could be safe. It would be good to have 1422 also because it could complete the community center by giving us more office space, parking, and outdoor access for the multi-purpose public space we were planning in the other building. We plan to use this second space for a senior day center and a space for political meetings, poetry readings, small shows. It has been a nightmare buying that building from DC Housing and Urban Development. It has taken about nine months, but we have succeeded in buying the building and we will go to closing next week. The total for both buildings will be $300,000, and then we will spend about $900,000 on renovations. It looks as if we will get that funding if the grant we have been told we are getting comes through. We hope to being renovation at the end of October or into November. The new space should be open after the renovations either as early as March or as late as June of 2000. We also had to sculpt the vision of the building and get the groups together that were going to be a part of it. We still need to secure a public hall license for the public space, but I don't think that is going to be terribly difficult. For me personally, it will bring together some of my very disparate worlds. I will be working with my neighbors and living in DC, which is essentially a disenfranchised colony.

What are the other organizations that plan to have office space?

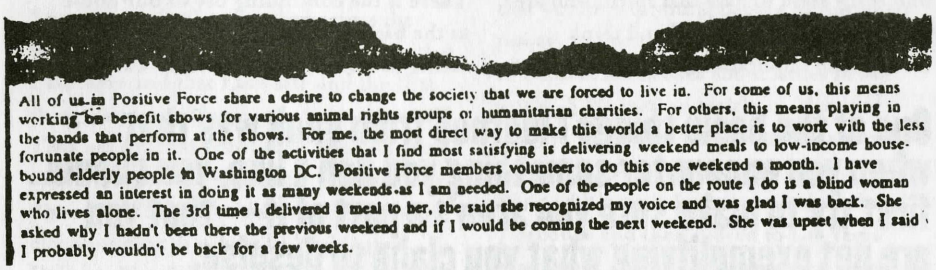
Emmaus and Positive Force of course, also Pax Christi Metro DC, which is the local affiliate of the Catholic peace organization, the Hip-Hop Federation which does work similar to Positive Force in their own community. Then there is the Peter Moran Center which comes out of the Catholic Worker movement and is committed to direct solidarity with those in need and direct action for justice—they would run a household goods exchange out of their space as well as a Catholic Worker bookstore. Also included is the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, bringing together the major faith groups to do work for social justice and to increase understanding with each other. We are also hoping East Timor Action Network and Education for Peace in Iraq Center will join us. The Washington Peace Center may eventually be involved as well.

How do you think the larger community perceives Positive Force?

At this point, the punk community itself is so diverse it is hard to say what people think of Positive Force. I think a lot of people respect what we do. Some people still have the image of us as the straight-edge, vegan, too-serious-for-this-world fuddy-duddies. There are also people who don't think music and politics should mix at all. I think, by and large, people respect us even if they don't agree with us. The Washington Area Music Association, an organization with which we have almost nothing to do and for which we have no great love, nonetheless gave us an award for community service which was cool. The progressive community respects us because they have seen us raise a couple hundred thousand dollars for a bunch of groups that do really good work, and all those groups have to do is show up to say thanks and to tell people about what they do. We are also respected for our visible involvement in local demonstrations and political actions.

With all of the different politics of the group, do you see difficulties in the internal workings of Positive Force?

I think the differences help to make us strong. We set out from the beginning not to be organized in the classic Marxist-Leninist way where you have a party line and everyone has to follow it. There are some general ideas that float around. Generally, we are associated with a vegetarian, anti-drug stance and we have very clearly placed ourselves in opposition to racism, sexism, homophobia, economic injustice, things like that.But within those general ideas, there is a lot of room for people to hold specific beliefs. The point was to come together, find common ground, and work on that common ground, not to pretend that there weren't differences between us. ◎



All of us in Positive Force share a desire to change the society that we are forced to live in. For some of us, this means working on benefit shows for various animal rights groups or humanitarian charities. For others, this means playing in the bands that perform at the shows. For me, the most direct way to make this world a better place is to work with the less fortunate people in it. One of the activities that I find most satisfying is delivering weekend meals to low-income housebound elderly people in Washington DC. Positive Force members volunteer to do this one weekend a month. I have expressed an interest in doing it as many weekends as I am needed. One of the people on the route I do is a blind woman who lives alone. The 3rd time I delivered a meal to her, she said she recognized my voice and was glad I was back. She asked why I hadn't been there the previous weekend and if I would be coming the next weekend. She was upset when I said I probably wouldn't be back for a few weeks.

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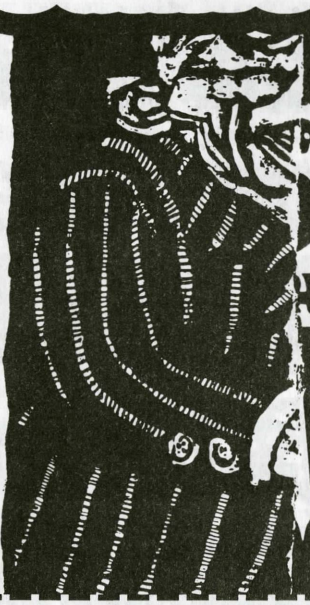

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DR. Frank

I first came across Dr. Frank in the early 1980s, when as a DJ on the local college radio station, he did a rap version of "Green Eggs and Ham" over an instrumental version of Granmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message." He was a fascinating DJ, with attitude and a great sense of what made good music, and it was no surprise when his band, the Mr. T Experience, reflected that attitude and that musical sensibility. MTX have been making albums for close to 15 years now, putting out great music deserving of at least Ramones-sized popularity, and have survived as a vital contributor to an underground scene with which they have a somewhat prickly relationship. On the heels of a new Mr. T Experience album, *Alcatraz*, Dr. Frank spoke to us about his early punk days, Gilman Street, his recent solo album, *Showbusiness is My Life* and more.

Interview by **Steven Rubio**

When did you first become exposed to punk?

My initial exposure to punk rock was mainly from radio. I was 13 in 1977, and at that time in the Bay Area you could hear punk rock on college radio stations like KALX, KFJC and KUSF, and on specialty shows on commercial rock stations like KSAN and KSJO. This included, strangely enough, the Dr. Demento show, which, if I recall was where I first heard the Adverts' "Gary Gilmore's Eyes," which was the first rock and roll song I can remember being really excited about. ¶ At that age, and for many years to come, I was consumed with bitterness and hatred for my fellow man—or at least my fellow 8th-graders. Discovering a kind of music that I knew all of them would hate was quite fulfilling. I was in a school club called the Monty Python Club, which was about as dire as you're thinking it was: several nerdy 8th-graders—all at least theoretically potential serial-killers in embryo—discussing Monty Python sketches with our nerdy faculty sponsor. At some point someone started bringing in Dr. Demento tapes, as well as tapes from shows like the Outlaws and the Heretics, and soon it turned into a sort of unofficial punk rock club. I'm sure that's the least "hip" answer to that question you've ever heard, but it's absolutely true. And I suppose there are those that won't be surprised to learn that I came to punk rock by way of British sketch comedy and the Bonzo Dog Band.

What was your initial reaction to the music?

Well, as I said, because of its obscurity and strangeness it was a good backdrop for and emblem of all my anti-social pretensions. It was an artificial situation, because my suburban junior high and high schools were even more backward than most, and everybody's favorite rock bands were Boston, Steve Miller, Foreigner, Journey and Eddie Money. It wasn't too difficult to feel superior by virtue of even slightly cooler tastes in music. ¶ Although I was initially very naive and undiscriminating, I did tend to gravitate towards the more "pop" punk groups, like the TV Personalities, The Boys, The Buzzcocks, The Dickies, as well as the more obscure artsy groups like The Swell Maps and Soft Boys. I was also a fan of the usual Elvis Costello/Joe Jackson/Graham Parker continuum as well. It was a pretty typical set of tastes for the time, unusual in my case only because I was so young and suburban. But I just appropriated the tastes of older and wiser college radio DJs.

You eventually became a DJ on KALX, right?

It's true. The Mr. T Experience began while I was involved with KALX—that's where I met Jon Von.

Did being on college radio help place you within a community?

I don't think so. I was always very hostile to the radio community. My radio show was mainly intended to irritate as many people as possible. Most of the people at the station hated my show! I grew up listening to KALX during 1976 through '81 or so—some of the most exciting years for underground rock and pop music that ever occurred. By the time I went to college and got on the air myself, it was right in the middle of the '80s, which is probably the lowest that music has sunk, ever.

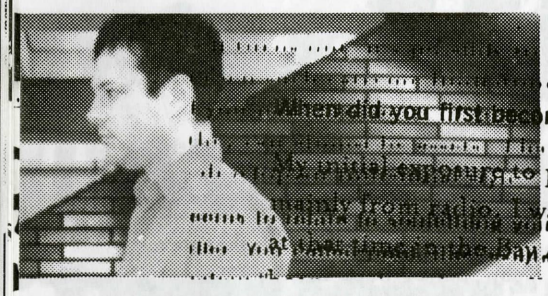
The punk scene had turned into the hardcore scene, typified by *MRR* and bands like MDC, with a sound and an attitude I found extremely alienating and unappealing. It was a terrible time for culture as a whole, not just rock and roll. I guess it's an exaggeration to say that there was nothing of value in the '80s, but that's the way it seemed to me at the time. ¶ I suppose that on my radio show, as later in my band, I reacted by deliberately being contrary for its own sake. It was quite childish really, but by that time I was absolutely conditioned to reject the status quo as a matter of principle. It sounds funny to say it, but in my world at the time, the status quo was hardcore, which seemed to me to be the most tuneless, humorless, least rockin' music the world had ever seen. So my knee-jerk reaction was to try to do what I saw as the opposite. ¶ Of course, playing records by other people is easy, but when I started the band I ran into a big stumbling block: utter ineptitude. I couldn't sing, play, or write songs, and neither could anyone else in the group. But, as it turns out, it's possible to work within even such extreme limitations. In fact, if you make the most of your limitations they can almost be assets. That's one way to develop an individual style.

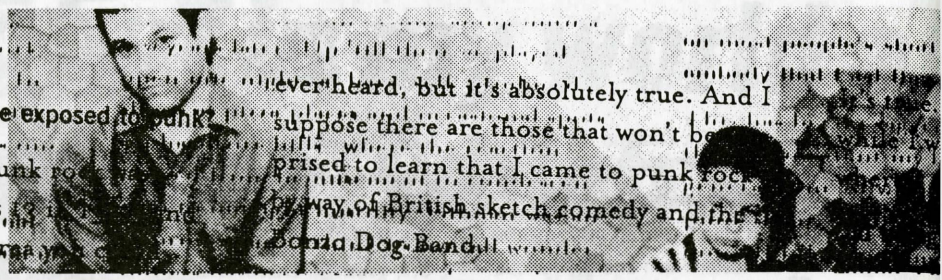
That seems to relate to something you told me earlier. You called punk the "exaltation of the amateur."

What that means is that you don't necessarily have to have any talent or skill or resources—like a record or a management deal—whatsoever. All you have to have is an idea, and then you do your best to bring it about, your screw-ups become part of the project. You adopt an "I-meant-to-do-that-all-along" attitude. Some absolute works of genius were made possible by this kind of aesthetic, like Wire's *Pink Flag*, the TVPs catalog, "Where Were You," "Oh Bondage, Up Yours," not to mention the Velvet Underground. ¶ Unfortunately, in punk you also get people with no talent, skill, resources, *and* no ideas. Eventually, the superficial characteristics of the music, the sound, the politics, the beat, whatever, get turned into clichés and professional musicians become adept at aping the sound of the brilliant mistakes of their predecessors, and everything gets extremely predictable and boring. ¶ Indeed, this meaning of "punk" is no longer current. "Punk" has really lost any meaning it may have had as a descriptive term. You can't really even say the word without at least a bit of irony.

Your time at KALX was before Gilman Street existed even. I know my own connection to East Bay punk was almost entirely due to KALX at that time.

Right, Gilman didn't come along until a few years later. Up 'till then we played open mic nights at bars, self-produced shows at pizza places and occasional spots on hardcore bills—where the reaction ranged from bemusement to condescension to outright hostility. Gilman was an improvement. I think its overall wonderfulness has been exaggerated—people sometimes describe it piously as some sort of paradise on earth, which it certainly wasn't. It grew out of a group of bands and individuals who felt shut out from the "scene," and that included my band. The result was an environment where it was definitely safer to be a goofball, which was a help, because you didn't have to pretend to be some kind of tough guy. It was usually more like *Mad* magazine than *Lord of the Flies* in there. And it was possible to play our little messed-up pop songs without getting booed off the stage, though of course it helped that there were usually only about 50 people there at any given time. Usually, the Gilman crowd couldn't boo their way out of a paper bag. ¶ Here's where I'm supposed to say "...and at last, my prayers were answered and I finally found a sense of belonging and something to believe in." I've heard this sentiment expressed by several people, but it didn't work out that way for me. For some reason, I have this propensity to be severely alienated in absolutely any situation, and Gilman was no exception. Call it a talent. My self-image, especially in those days, had a certain precious quality, and the thought of fitting in or believing in something just seemed horribly banal. I've never really felt like me or my band was ever part of any "scene," though we've been associated with several of them over the years.





You certainly have. The Mr. T Experience is on most people's short list of bands that embody that East Bay punk scene.

This has been exaggerated as well. I think that to an extent my band helped set the general tone of what became the East Bay punk scene, for better or worse, but I don't think it goes much further than that. Even when I was less than adept at executing it, I always had a very clear vision of what I thought rock and roll, punk rock, and pop music ought to be, and this vision was always competing with others. I've said before that when pop punk was the most popular rock music in the world—for about three seconds in 1995—I felt like our side won, as least in the battle of pop punk vs. hardcore. But I don't feel like I was actively involved, but rather that some relatively like-minded people managed to make something of

themselves. When I say "like-minded," I'm speaking in extremely broad terms. There's a sort of affinity in the idea of succinct songs with verses and choruses—which is not a foregone conclusion in this day and age—loud guitars and perhaps a general vocabulary of ironic disaffection. But beyond that, I don't think my band has all that much in common with those that made it big.

Which relates to some of your songs. There's lots of wonderful irony in many of your songs about fame—or at least the lack of fame. It remains a crucial question for punk: What are the implications of success? What are your thoughts about the connection between success and artistic creation?

It's true that you can't put a dollar amount on success. But if the amount approaches zero, it does make you step back and wonder if you've made the right choices in life. If you stick with a less-than-successful band for long enough, you end up spending a lot of your time explaining yourself, coming up with justifications to offer as proof that you're not a total idiot. So maybe a good portion of it is simply rationalization, but I believe that my songs *are* successful. They affect people, even if they're not "hits."

Do you find yourself wishing that your band could be *more* successful?

I'm never satisfied with my situation financially—which I take as a given—or artistically, which is more important because it's something I can theoretically do something about. That's one reason I keep trying to screw around with the songwriting and the production and everything to not repeat myself, and to try to have constant movement. It disappoints some people to be presented with the unexpected, but I really believe that in the end it keeps them more engaged. It certainly keeps me more engaged. ¶ Financial "success" is a mixed blessing. It can limit you, even if you don't have a consciously mercenary outlook. I know from my own limited experience with *Love is Dead*, which was our first album to do much more than break even, that even modest success can cause a subtle pressure to stick to what worked once and to avoid rocking the boat. I can only imagine the kind of pressure when your record makes millions of dollars. ¶ But rock and roll *does* cost money. It's yet another difficult balance to try to strike. In our early years, we had absolute freedom to do whatever we wanted, because nobody cared what we did. Unfortunately, we didn't have the financial resources to make recordings that matched our relatively grand ambitions, so many of these experiments were utter failures. At a minimum, you have to be able to pay your way. We're fortunate—you could almost say successful—in that each of our records basically stays afloat and justifies its existence to an extent that we can still make more.

One experiment you've done recently was break off from the Mr. T Experience entirely to release a solo album, *Show Business Is My Life*. What prompted that move?

I'd had a growing sense that some of my songs were getting lost in the thick miasma of punk rock on Mr. T Experience records. On the last album especially, I felt I'd made some great strides and written my most fully-realized lyrics ever, but every review still said "more of the same from those wacky, jokey pop-punksters." When I went back and listened to the acoustic demos of those songs, it seemed that occasionally there was a quality that came across in the demos that somehow didn't end up on the album. So Kevin Army and I decided to try to do an album that was more like the demos, mostly as an experiment to see what would happen. It was extremely low-key and casual, and hence was a lot of fun. I learned a lot from the experience, and I was able to apply some of the lessons to the next MTX album that we recorded a few months later.

How does that solo album differ from your MTX work? What makes the Mr. T Experience more than just Dr. Frank and His Band?

Well, MTX is a rock and roll band, and I'm not. On the solo album I wanted to put as little as possible between the songs and the listener, to make the songs the sole focus. In a way, I was trying to make an album of disembodied songs. But you can't fake rock and roll, and you need a real band to make it happen. In a way, there's an inevitable tension between the intensity and excitement of rock and roll and the integrity of individual songs. At one extreme, you're in danger of losing nuances and subtleties, while at the other, you lose the energy and end up with lifeless music. You've got to try to strike the right balance, which can be very difficult. In fact, a pretty good case could be made that the hybrid of singer-songwriter plus rock and roll band is an impossibility, that each diminishes the other, and that subtlety has no place in rock and roll in any case. But I've always felt it's worth a try anyway.

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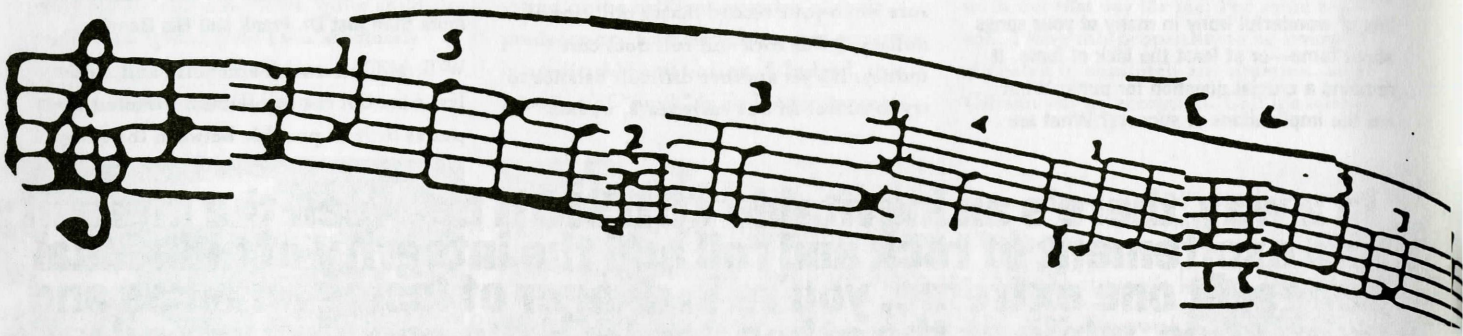
Moves like putting out a low-key solo album when you're known for pop-punk rockers seems like a risky venture. Do you conciously refrain from making artistic moves that might result in superstardom?

No, just being who I am seems quite sufficient to prevent any unexpected superstardom. ◎



If someone described a band as "ex-members-of," and "hailing from San Diego," I, like most people, would most likely sigh and go, "Please, not one of those stupid screamo, roll on the floor, faux-goth bands again." But before you hang up the proverbial phone here, Pinback is none of the above. Comprised of ex-members of 3 Mile Pilot and the Isaac Bachiev-like singer of the punk scene, Mr. Prolific Rob Crow, Pinback offers up a dark, irony free, twinkley, melancholy pop sound with lots of pretty parts, pianos and even some samples and electronic detritus. Their long awaited debut, on Ace Fu records, is out now. I got a chance to speak with Pinback's Zach—along with a special guest appearance by bandmate Rob Crow as "The dude on the other line"—in October.

Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

So, how did you get into punk?

Punk rock?

Yeah...

[silence]

Do you like punk rock?

Actually, not really—well, sort of. I always liked the Dead Kennedys, but that's about as far as I went with it.

Then how did you end up doing what you're doing now?

I ended up in a punk band by accident when I was 15 called Neighborhood Watch. I was mostly listening to nothing but reggae—Black Uhuru and Steel Pulse. I was playing bass. After about three years, I decided I didn't want to make that music anymore, so then I was in Dark Sarcasm.

What a horrible band name...

I know. But that was me and Pall, and it turned into 3 Mile Pilot. That was in about 1992.

And 3 Mile Pilot is on hiatus while you do Pinback and Pall does Black Heart Procession?

Yeah, but we're finally, *finally* going to starting playing together and making the new record again this winter.

And is this hiatus a direct result of the Geffen shit that went down? What exactly happened?

We did some records with Cargo, then we went to Geffen and we had gotten so, *so* screwed over that we just had to take this break.

You guys were on the tail end of the whole mid-'90s alternative signing boom.

It took so long to get everything accomplished. We would make a record and then they would want us to record again. After two years of trying to make this record, they let us out of the contract. At that point, we went, "Let's just get this out quick" and so we went to Cargo and we didn't try to look anywhere else, which now I wish we really had. [laughs] It was horrible...

At the dawn of the hiatus, were you thinking, "I don't want to play music" or were you thinking, "I don't want to play music in this band?"

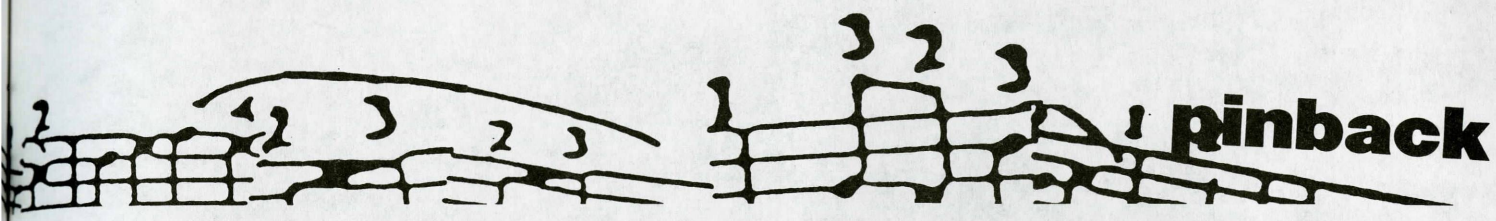
There was some tension, but it all had to do with this big, fucked up thing.

Having something as personal as your songs, or your art completely distorted and put at the mercy of—literally—a corporation, sounds like pretty much the biggest nightmare any band could imagine.

It was so weird to see them try and shape 3 Mile Pilot into something so far from what we were—a commercial pop band. It was hard, it was wrong, it was confusing...

And then, after all that with Geffen, finally you're free and you went through a lot more label wrangling again. Tell me about that if you can...

The last few records I have made have put me in hell. [laughs] Once we finished the record, Rob and I looked for a label and we wound up with Tim/Kerr, which was just... evil. [laughs] Wait, jeez, I'm not supposed to even say evil. [laughs] It was *great* [laughs and pauses] We had to sign a



release thing to get our record back from them and I'm not supposed to incur negative publicity for Tim/Kerr. I don't care... What happened, to give you the short version, is that we played in Portalnd and they wanted to sign us. Finally, months and months later, we get contracts but all this stuff happened and the label had run out of money—everything was on hold. It wasn't good. We got a lawyer, because Eric from Ace Fu, who was working at Tim/Kerr decided to put out the record. And at this point I had just had it, I was like, OK whatever it takes, I just want to put a record out! [laughs]

So the moral thus far of the story is that indies will fuck you just as hard as the majors. Which struggle was worse?

Tim/Kerr was worse than Geffen. Because sure, they were both lying to us, but at least one was giving us money. [laughs] I'm hoping that that's the end of the bullshit.

Did all of this change the way you felt about making music or even about how you perceived yourself as an artist?

The main thing it changed was that I did the Pinback record at home, alone. For 3 Mile Pilot, we made a $200,000 record. So what happened was, I realized you don't have to spend a lot of money—you don't even have to spend *any* money—and you can make a good record and get the idea across. After all the headaches and making this monumental, expensive record, all I wanted to do was make a cheap, almost easy listening, record. We just wanted to make a happy record. [laughs]

[other line clicks] Hold on... Hello?

Rob: Hell-o, This is. Rob. Crow. Is Jessic-a there?

Hi, Rob, I'm on the other line with Zach. I'll call you back in a few minutes, OK?

Rob: O-K. Bye.

[clicks over to other line again] Zach, does Rob normally talk like a robot?

No.

Do you think he would feel weird if I asked him? Do you think he's just trying to be weird for the interview?

Well, he works like a robot—he silk screens.

But working like robot and talking like a robot are two very different things. Working like a robot is not a good excuse for talking like a robot. Watching Lost In Space reruns all day is a good excuse... So give me the dirt on Rob before I call him back. What should Punk Planet readers know about Rob that he'd never tell us?

He must have tea with him at all times. He brings his little tea mug and his tea everywhere. I think that's pretty weird, don't you?

No. I do the exact same thing.

But he won't go *anywhere* without his tea cup.

I don't think that's weird at all.

But do you carry a kettle with you too?

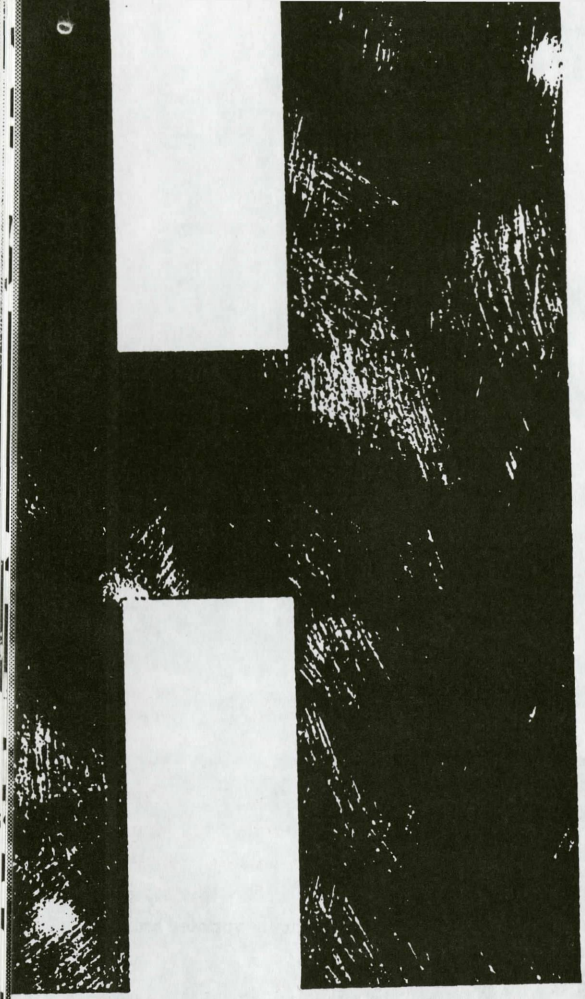
Dragging a kettle around with you everywhere is definitely a little weird. Do you feel embarrassed by him doing this? What does it take to embarrass you?

Nothing really embarrasses me. Well except this one time... ¶ I went to camp one summer and when I got there, I realized I really had a problem using the bathroom with other kids around. I just couldn't do it. Not peeing... but the other thing. So, I decided it was easier just not to poop at all. I didn't poop the whole time I was at camp! When I got home, I was totally sick. My mom took me to the doctor and he had to help me. He had to remove the poop manually. That was pretty much the most embarrassing thing I can remember...

[Silence] Well...

Now I'm thinking I shouldn't have told that story because it's feeling much more embarrassing than I remember. Yeah, I should really shut up now. [laughs] ◎

Lungfish



How does one explain what Lungfish does, especially to a person who has never heard their music? It becomes apparent with each successive listen that the motionless energy created from such spare forms might be too simple to describe. It is perhaps best to talk about those things which are quantifiable: time, dates, people and places.

Lungfish formed at Hour House, the top floor of an abandoned storage warehouse midway between downtown Baltimore and the myriad of blue collar neighborhoods that ring the city, in the late 1980s. I visited the place in the summer of 1990, a couple of years after Lungfish began playing, and the condition of the joint resembled what I had read about squatters' rooms in Berlin during the Cold War. Doubling as a group house and an artists and musicians' performance space, Hour House was strewn with books, magazines, mattresses, clothing, and other sublime tools of group living. I was there to see the DC band Shudder To Think perform; the place was intimate and charged with energy. In comparison to the antiseptic group homes that sprang up around DC at the time, which were populated with a more politically-minded crowd, Hour House in retrospect seems the only logical place something like Lungfish could have evolved from. In the back of the room was a makeshift stage where bands would perform. There was no PA and bands played for hours to crowds who would wander in and out of the room at will.

It was in this atmosphere that Lungfish adopted their philosophy about being in a band. It is a philosophy that has confused many, while attracting a core following that could best be described as less fans than as a cult, bent on investigating the unexplained, propelled toward as uncertain a definition of "music" as any recorded today.

Nine years after my first time seeing the band play, I visited Lungfish again in October, 1999. While it's been more than a decade since the band first picked up their instruments, I arrived at a time that singer Daniel Higgs and guitarist Asa Osborne described as being pivotal in the band's history. Interviewed at different intervals over the course of a weekend in and around Baltimore, Higgs and Osborne spoke enthusiastically of their arrival at an approach only recently realized—one far from the concerns of touring and promoting and interviewing, trappings that normally make being in a band an experience. For the members of Lungfish, the music is the experience, whether shared with strangers from the vantage point of a stage or kept close at home, cranked out in a practice space on the fringes of Baltimore.

Interview by **Charlie Scheer**
Lungfish portraits by **Sam Holden**
Live photos by **Shawn Scallen**

Before I came out here, you left a message on my answering machine saying that "It may or may not be a good idea" to do an interview. Why did you do that?

Well I'm not really clear on what the function of an interview is... I mean I'm clear on what the *supposed* function is, but from reading interviews myself, usually I think they take more than I get. You read a person relating some stories, or their philosophy about things, or answering the questions when they're asked and it just never quite... I'm drawn to read it—especially if it's a person whose music or whatever I'm interested in—but ultimately it doesn't really affect or inform me about the music. I usually think I was a lot better off just listening to the music. ¶ For me personally, the difference is that we are not trained to address a readership. We are trained to address a theoretical listenership and we already do that through our records. I would hope people are more interested in the music than in us. When I think of the music, I know it as an entity. Anything that I have to share with strangers, I share in the music. I add to the music and the music goes on and shares it.

But I think there are so many people who want to know about you personally.

These people, whether they're real or imagined, if they desire to know more about *me*, then I hope that they could somehow transmute that, take a look in the mirror and find out more about themselves. There's nothing to know about me. There's no more for them to know about me than there is for them to know about themselves, you know? For them to reflect on themselves would be far more rewarding for them, and far more interesting. Because it's *them*, it's their reality, it's their world.

So is what you're doing when you're singing...

Is it me singing?

I don't know.

I don't know either! Haven't you ever watched a band and the power of the music kind of draws you in? You begin to identify with the music— you're no longer watching musicians perform their music, you are *with* the music. It's *your* music.

It's not their music anymore, it's yours. That's what I hope it's all about with our music. When a person hears our music, it's their music. They are perceiving it, it's in their mind and it's in their interpretive processes. The words that I transcribed are *their* words, they mean what they mean to them. The effect of each individual word on the individual listener is none of our business. We're not trying to manipulate anybody, we're just doing what we must do. We must make the music. ¶ Now must someone else listen to it? That's not our business. We want to share it—it's a kind of innate drive—but we're not going to force anyone to engage in the process with us. We can't, nor do we want to.

But by doing what you just said, you're doing something that definitely impacts on others...

It's an unknown amount. I don't think it's as many as you're implying.

But isn't there a certain degree of interest on their part, not as much to analyze *why* this is happening, or to learn about specific lyrics, but to find out about you as a person?

But maybe not to the listener.

But the thing is, if that's what I had to share, I'd write totally different lyrics. I'd write, "I woke up this morning and brushed my teeth and my hair's falling out." My personal life does intrude in the lyrical content of our songs, but I try my darndest to keep it out.

What does come through?

All sorts of opinions that I view as like pollutants, that need to be neutralized.

But what is it, specifically, that is there? What causes you to let that out?

I'm not privy to that, I don't know. It's none of my business, you know? It's not my business. That's up to scientists who can tell us what it's all about. It's your genes, you know—your genetic likelihood to behave in a certain fashion in a particular situation.

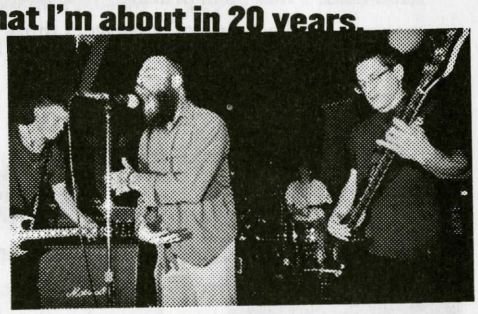
Danny, come on. You wrote a song about talking to a bunch of animals who said, "Don't shun the world, shed it." That's advice you're giving and there had to have been something to cause you to want to get that idea across to people.

wants to say and it says it via my language center, which is according to some, a complete fabrication based on a particular schematic. "Don't shun the world, shed it?" I don't even know what that means. With what authority do I say that?

But what if there is a listener somewhere who hears that and who goes out there and does it?

But what's he going to do? They're responsible for their interpretation. If they're really that interested in finding the answers, they can find them in the songs. Now maybe the answer to that particular song lies in another song. Each individual song is not exclusive. Even the older songs I wrote, which are completely perverted and just wrecked, they all speak to each other. ¶ What sometimes is a criticism and sometimes is a compliment about Lungfish is that we have only written one song—one endless song. But that holds true in some contexts. I don't know all the lyrics I ever wrote, but I would imagine there's a lyric in some other song that would completely negate that lyric. All the songs will completely nullify themselves; they will all become mutually opposed and

If you and I were to become lifelong friends, I couldn't tell you what I'm about in 20 years.



But I can't tell you that in an interview. I could counter with a prefabricated persona, but I just can't tell you that in an interview. I mean if you and I were to become lifelong friends, I couldn't tell you what I'm about in 20 years.

But do you know why the listeners might want to know that?

I can understand why, because I've been on that end of it too. I read a poem or see a painting and I wonder, "How could a person have done this, what led them to do that?" But I've also come to understand that my past is forever in flux, that it is never static, or ever complete. Every time I recollect something, I'm recollecting a totally different set of ideas and feelings that may not have even been present at the time. I can give you the circumstantial stuff, "At that time I was that old, I weighed this much, I was married or I was not married, or I was riding the bus, or I was living on this coast or that coast," but that's just an empty framework.

The words lead me. You write, you said you write, you know there's all these forces at work, the language is trying to pull you one way, and the mind is constantly... The mind makes rhymes, and goes through processes of identifying allitteration between words. Your mind is taking over the rhythm of words, and that part of your mind is the part of your mind that tends to be led by the language. There's always an obvious word to follow each prior word. So I say, "Don't shun the world, shed it." That's English. That's a thing that English can say. And that's what I write, I write down what comes to me, and alot of the things that I've written are things that English would like to say. With English being a very hyper-abstract, structured, improvisational language, it just gets funneled right into the Lungfish music. The music has something the music wants to say, the language has something the language

vanish in the mind. It's all for naught, in the end anyway. It's all just going to be tinder. And that's okay. Some people can come to grips with that and some can't. We're a species in decline and that's beautiful.

Why do you think that?

It's obvious to me. That doesn't mean I'm right, but to me, it's perfectly obvious.

But where is the evidence?

It's in my instantaneous interactions with my fellow human beings every day. Perhaps I've done it too, I mean perhaps I've created this

web of occlusion that leads me to believe that I'm not occluded, and I'm willing to admit that. But a lot of people that I meet, my impression of them and my interpretation of them and their behavior is that they willfully and deliberately—however subconsciously—decided to be less than themselves. A lot of people that I meet—but not all of them—want to be idiots. And maybe I'm an idiot, but I'm willing to admit that. People want something they can't get, but then they trick themselves into thinking they've gotten it. But what they *really* got is something they never wanted in the first place. I think what people want ultimately is a type of freedom that is impossible for us to achieve. But that is no reason not to strive toward it—there are questions that we can't answer, but that's no reason to quit asking them. I said we're a species in decline, but now I'm going to change that and say we're a species *ascending*. That's OK too, I can't commit to that, I'm in no position to try and make a statement about that.

But you are, you've made statements of that sort on records and in songs.

Yeah, and I'll continue to make them, but as statements, I view them primarily as statements about the nature of language. I think I said in one song, that they're "songs about music," which sounds overly simplistic at first, but when you think about it, it's really not. It's not songs about *musicians*, because we've had generations of that—musicians singing about their exploits as musicians and their social standing, whether it's top of the heap or the bottom or whatever. I feel like I *require* music. I hear music in my head. It seems to be a vital necessity. That to me is worth thinking about: What is music? What's it for? You find out when you play it or when you hear it.

So then let's talk about music. What was your earliest recollection of punk music?

My earliest recollection of punk was like in 1976 or something when I read an article about the Sex Pistols in *Time* magazine.

Did you seek out the music after you read the article?

I kept my ear to the ground, but I didn't rush out and try to buy it. But I was interested. I was interested because I didn't understand it. But I hadn't heard it, I just saw in words what this music was like and what it was about and how these people in this band behaved, so I guess my first experience in punk rock was a journalistic one.

What about hearing the music?

The first band that I was into that you didn't hear on the radio was Devo. That was a real revelation to me. I never knew that there were records of bands that you didn't hear on the radio—it just never occurred to me.

I remember seeing them on *Saturday Night Live* real late, all bug-eyed, and I was saying, "What the hell is this?" You didn't hear that anywhere, it was such a shock

I was sold on Devo pretty quick. I couldn't believe that there was a band making music which to me at that time was highly unusual. And then what they were singing about...

It was bizarre, really bizarre.

Yeah, I couldn't get my mind around that. I'm *still* dealing with a lot of Devo lyrics. There were so many layers of meaning.

I think I said in one song, that they're

Seeking out their records led me to particular record stores with even more underground records and I eventually got a hold of a Black Flag EP.

So American hardcore influenced you?

I just thought it sounded really good. I responded to it immediately—I was really

Asa Osborne

When you started playing guitar, what moved you?

My first record was the Beatles' *Abbey Road*, it was a hand-me-down from my brother. The first record I bought was the Ramones' first record. I learned that whole record on a borrowed, home-made guitar. Then my mother bought me a Sears guitar, and so when I started playing guitar, I started playing punk music.

There are parts of the second side of Abbey Road, like maybe the tail end of "Carry That Weight"—that revolving riff—that sound like they may have influenced you. You definitely have a recognizable sound, how do you think that may have happened?

I don't know, I just play the way I play. It tends to be repetitive riffs, for lack of a better description...

Do you like that?

I do, I mean that turns me on. I'm a limited guitar player for one thing—I can't play scales and things. I hear bands that are pretty amazing, with virtuoso guitar playing, and I like listening to it, but I wouldn't want to play that. I wouldn't trade my playing for that.

I first saw you play early on and it was different. Did you feel like there was something different happening?

I felt self-conscious at that time. I remember wishing that we weren't going to be playing shows at that time; anytime something came up, I was terrified. We definitely had an energy, but we didn't have professionalism, even in a punk rock format or something. We never knew it if we were going to make it through songs and a lot of times we'd stop halfway through songs. We *still* do that, which now I get a kick out of, but back then it was terrifying doing a whole set of music in front of people.

How do you write songs?

We just get together and make 'em up.

But they seem to have a similar framework. Is it something that happens quickly?

excited about it. At that time I had already begun playing in a band, and our revolutionary idea—we thought—was that we were going to play our own songs. We didn't know any band that did that, because every band that we had ever seen played covers. We thought we were really on to something. Then I got the Minor Threat 7" and it was all their own songs, and they made a record! It was mystifying to us, like, "How the hell did they get this thing out? How would you get a record out?" It was really inspiring.

So you were inspired to start your own band. But what was your goal for starting Lungfish? Do you think whatever the reason was you started out, you've reached your goal?

When we're playing the music, then we've reached our goal. And we reach the goal every time we play the music. The goal is to play the music. Now we do like to share it with others, but there are totally different variables at work when we play the music and there are other people listening. We play together all the time.

Just by yourselves?

Yeah, just the band.

Where do you play?

We play at a house. We've been blessed with a really great space. It's out in the woods but still in the city.

How often do you write new songs?

We write new songs all the time, but a lot of them only get played once or twice, 'cause the cycle seems to be that you write the songs, then you start thinking about recording them and then we zero in on 10 or 12 or 15 of them. We may have others that we like, but if they don't make it past the studio, we generally don't return to those—we view them as all being part of the foundation, of the songs that actually got recorded, but we're all the time, always making new songs.

How are they actually written?

There's definitely a system now. I write the lyrics independently—I have them all ready before I've heard any music.

Really? So you don't listen to the music and then...

I listen to the music and see if I can try to recognize which lyrics it's calling for—both in the rhythm and the phrase and the feeling of the music.

So you're listening to the music for direction?

You're trying to understand it as you're doing it. If you get beyond that, you have no foundation. When we play the music, we're trying to understand the music we're playing. Often the only time we even approach understanding the music we're playing is when we're playing it. As soon as we stop playing it, we leave our understanding in the song—which is now decaying into infinitesimally small sound waves and it's gone. If we still want to understand, we have to play the music again, because the understanding, if it occurs, will most certainly occur while we're playing the music we're trying to understand. We can talk about it, and it's fun to talk about, but we don't go anywhere when we talk about it.

Would you say then that playing music is a spiritual pursuit?

I think that I do. But I'll say that I think

"songs about music," which sounds overly simplistic at first, but when you think about it, it's really not.

It's pretty quick. There aren't lots of parts—but there is a riff and it takes a while for the whole band to find the riff together. That might take a little while, but when we do, there's also Daniel finding words to fit with that riff, which isn't immediate. But, when his words fit to a song, it's still just as exciting as ever. We know then and there it's a song. We've always joked about how if we come up with another part to that song, we just make it another song, and get two songs. A lot of people make a criticism of our songs that they're monotonous or repetitive, which is a valid observation, but that's the way we make songs. There's nothing we could do to make it different, and it might not please people any more if we had *tons* of parts. We're just one tiny band in the whole cosmos of songmaking, so I figure if that's the way we like to make them, it's all we're going to do. It comes naturally to us. Our songs don't all sound the same to me, but it's not like we're going to add salsa beats or something to shake it up. I guess some people feel compelled to do that.

Why do you think they do that?

Some people might think it's more sophisticated, but I don't think they have a grasp of what sophisticated music is if they feel it's about making it more complicated. Maybe they do it to genuinely challenge themselves, and within the context of the group, it might be challenging and it might work sometimes, but other times it might not. It might be pressure from other people telling them, "You have to stay contemporary, you have to be aware of other music, your music should reflect the signs of the times." But no matter what you do, you're of *your* time, so the best case scenario is to do what comes natural to *you*.

There's a drone in Lungfish music that kind of charges ahead, that takes everything in its wake, in a way. Are you conscious of a kind of style or sound to your music specifically?

It's hard for me to say... I mean, we sound like Lungfish.

But would you say that Lungfish plays rock & roll?

Yeah. At least I would hope so. It's just plain rock music, as far as playing live. There's nothing too complicated and conceptual about it, and there's nothing unique about what we do necessarily. It's just basic instrumentation—songs start, middle, end, play another song—but I think at best we do what can be done with rock music to move you.

Talking to Daniel, he indicated that this is sort of a pivotal moment, for Lungfish.

I agree with that, and I think I know what he's talking about. We've stayed together long enough that we're seasoned. It's allowed us not to worry about anything but playing music. We started out jamming in

that's what *anybody's* doing, in *anything* they do—and I mean *anything*. Now, what they may be doing may be off-base, it might be brutal, it might be wrong, but it's what's in them. Their world as they're perceiving it has led them to live in such a way. And the way a person chooses to live reveals what that person feels their place is in the scheme of things.

When you listen to your older albums, what do you think about?

Sometimes I think about the way it sounds, how it was recorded, whether I still think it sounds good like that; or I think about the lyrics and kind of marvel about the fact that I have zero recollection about when I wrote it, or how I wrote it, or what I was thinking about, or whether I have any relationship to any type of message that may be in the lyrics or in the music. Sometimes it sounds really foreign to me; sometimes it sounds really good; sometimes it sounds really embarrassing. I see a map—that's one way I view the records, I can see which songs on each record lead to the songs on the successive record. I view it that way sometimes—I see a vein running through particular songs. I see the door in each record that opens up to the next record. It's not every song, like each album's like a door with all these songs clustered around it, but only one or two of the songs actually leads to the next bunch of songs. Any one of the songs could have been the point of departure for the next record. We all have distinct memories of when a particular song was first played and that we all immediately acknowledged within ourselves, "This is where the Lungfish music must go. This is the song we've been striving to play." And those are really pivotal songs.

What do you think is in store for Lungfish?

If we stay together long enough, who knows what'll happen, you know? We feel like we're making the best music we've ever made. I feel like we are. The band is more active in our minds now than it ever was, even though we do far less in public. I know it occupies a larger place in my heart and mind right now than it ever has.

Why?

Because I think it's coming to fruition musically in a way I never really could have predicted. We knew years ago that we wanted to hear the Lungfish music, but we didn't know what it would sound like. We had to keep playing it, and we'd hear a glimpse of it in a song. We write the songs in a linear progression, one song at a time—it's a chain of songs. But once each song is completed, if it ever *is* completed, it's like, "Which way is the song leading us?" You've got a variety of ways.

We knew years ago that we wanted to hear the Lungfish music, but we didn't know what it would sound like.

Well, you've changed as well, added different instruments, experimenting...

It's all about listening. We had to listen to the Lungfish music harder than anybody else. I would hope it speaks to people, because it's speaking to us as we're making it. It'll be telling us many things at once and you've got to try to make sense out of it. It takes all four of us to listen, to take orders from it, and to go on to the next song. But we're on the verge of something.

What is it?

The Lungfish music. ◎

warehouses and stuff—we didn't have anyone to please and didn't have any goals in mind. And now after 12 years, there are still no goals or achievements we need to accomplish. We have nothing to prove. But that doesn't mean we don't care about what people think, it means that we can still *just* play music. We still like to play music, we're not sick of playing music, so it's bound to be liberating. And we're playing better, too.

How can you tell?

I don't mean "better" like stopping on a dime or writing more complicated songs, it just seems better for some reason. When we used to play live a lot, we'd just get in a certain state where we'd intuitively know how to play as a band. Then it starts to get rote, because you're playing every night... but just practicing and playing music outside of shows and outside of anyone's knowledge is really liberating for us. We're just playing music.

When I've seen you play, your eyes were completely shut. What's going on inside right then?

It's definitely something... It's something... I've never really tried to put that into words.

I wanted to see if you knew what it was that moved you to play like that. You just don't listen to Clash albums, pick up a guitar and start playing like that.

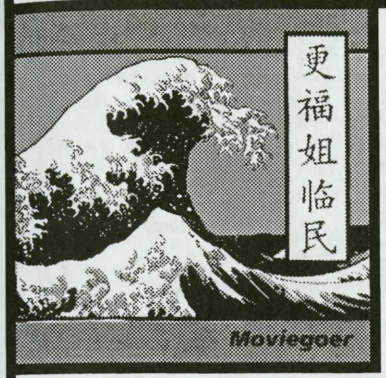
Playing with who I'm playing with is a big part of it...

How so?

I mean, I guess because we've stuck together this long, I get everything I need musically from playing in Lungfish. Whether we're just practicing—where no one hears us—it's enough for me. It's enough until I'm hungry again, which is for the next time. It definitely fulfills me in a way that's beyond talking about music. It's just something that we do. Maybe it's the vibration of sounds that unlocks chemicals in my brain, or it's a time when things are loud enough to drown everything out, or something, but that's what makes playing worthwhile. That hour out of 24 hours that you're playing music, it's a real honest chance for release. It's like driving across a desert, where you're driving for four hours and the landscape's exactly the same, you have this rare opportunity to just think. You're looking for a place where you can remove the clutter. Music, for me, is one of those places, and our music is a steady, steady place I can go and lose the clutter. ◎

That hour out of 24 hours that you're playing music, it's a real honest chance for release.

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND MOVIEGOER



1. When did your band form?

Summer '97.

2. When will it break up?

Uh... we're not supposed to think about that, are we?

3. What have you released so far?

Discount EP—Fall '97
Urban Development Compilation CD on Ambiguous City records, fall '98.
64 FPS fall '99

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

We have no choice in the matter—the music plays *us*.

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

The Scott Farkus "beer spitting" incident.

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

This past spring we played with the Dismemberment Plan, with our good friend Juan filling in on bass for us. Amazing...

7. State your purpose.

To rock.

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

We struggled coming up with Moviegoer—there were no other choices.

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

Loud "earplug rock."

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

We try not to describe ourselves. We let people decide for themselves. If they haven't heard us, we give them a CD.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

"Why does Mike always get to sit up front in the van?!"

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

Musically, easy listening stations.

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

Art, literature, and good beer.

14. What is selling out?

Changing the music for the sole purpose of making a buck.

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

Definitely!

16. Where do you practice?

Ha ha—we're sort of nomadic right now. We had a great place but got booted because of "volume considerations." We are playing wherever we can get the space.

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

1st– Ramones
2nd– Helmet
3rd– Husker Du
4th– Spinal Tap
(Notice we aren't on the list—we'd be watching!)

18. What goals do you have as a band?

Have fun and make music we like.

19. What makes for a good show?

Energy

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

n/a

Moviegoer
PO Box 508 Hanover MD 21076

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE ZINE YODA

1. How long have you been doing your zine and what issue are you on?

Well I've been doing the zine with Liesbeth since the end of '95. At least that's when the idea started—our first issue saw the light of day somewhere around February '96. We're over three and a half years old now and are up to issue number 12. We try to put out an issue every three/four months.

2. How long do you plan on doing it?

Well I plan on doing this as long as possible. I've had some financial help, so that's great. I also think I still have too many words that need to be written, and there are too many good bands left I would like to have a word with.

3. What would cause you to quit?

Well, there maybe are some possible reasons. Like if my girlfriend would die, I couldn't go on then—she is such a source of inspiration for me. Or a more obvious reason would be if there was nothing left to write about. (Cheesy, huh?)

4. How do you distribute your zine?

This is the weakest part of the zine at the moment, I guess, Genet records in Belgium takes a lot for distribution, but anywhere else in Europe and overseas is very hard for me to get to. I also try to contact as many distros as possible myself, or try to work out trades with labels or other zines. I do hope that some bigger distros (maybe from the US) would contact me, so that I could have a bigger press run and could reach more people.

5. Why is your zine called what it's called?

Okay it's a very cheesy name, and it's maybe it's a stereotype to take a name from the *Star Wars* movies, but you have to know that Yoda is a very wise man, and I think in some ways, I try to publish a zine that can be of any meaning to people. Of course, in the beginning I only chose the name because Yoda is such a cute little fella.

6. What were the runner-up names for your zine?

I don't know if we had that many runner up names, I guess they were evil though. Maybe some title from a horror movie... I guess *Desperado* would have been cool? Or I think there actually were some more Star Wars names on the list, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Obi Wan Tales* etc... But it definately had to be evil in some way...

7. In order of importance, what would you rank as the three main subjects you cover?

Well I think I'll have to admit that music is the most important thing (any punk/hardcore related substyle). Then maybe the personal writings—I always like to read another person's reflections on life, especially if those reflections have some meaning or could be of any help. And last but not least, a topic that is gaining much more attention: ART! I am currently attending my last year of art school, so that explains why.

8. What's the hardest part about doing your zine?

For the last few issues, gathering all the stuff, contacting bands, writing down some words, those things have been the hardest 'cause I've been on my own for everything. I do layout, most of the interviews, I take the pictures, arrange everything with the printer, and that's very hard, especially if you want to follow deadlines.

9. What is the most rewarding part?

The end result and all the friends I have gained through all the issues.

10. Are you doing your zine for free records?

Ha, off course not! I do get a lot of nice stuff, and I'm very thankful for that, but I guess the moment I would feel that way, I would quit doing this.

11. What's the best and worst interview you've ever done?

Well, I loved talking to Jeff from Reversal Of Man because he's such a nice person and cares so much about his friends and bandmembers. Also Marco from My Hero Died Today is a great person to talk to. And, of course, Scott from Metroschifter. But are those my best interviews ever? I don't know. I definitely enjoyed those the most. The worst interview ever? I once tried to do some e-mail interview with One King Down. I had prepared some nice questions, that they could answer in-depth, but instead all I got were one liners of the most stupid kind. I still decided to print the interview to show the readers how devoted some bands really are... I don't think anyone followed me though.

12. Quote your favorite thing ever said in the pages of your zine.

Dan from the Promise Ring explaining the title to one of their records: "..nothing feels good, the absence of not knowing everything, feels good..."

13. Do you write everything yourself? If so, why?

There are a lot of pieces written by myself and most interviews are done by me. But there are some occasional writers that contribute with a column, or some written piece or even an interview. There are two regular contributors, Jelle and Koen, but other than them, I have to depend on occasional reactors.

14. How is your zine produced?

Like I said before, I make up a deadline for ads and then a deadline for letters, columns and interviews. I try to gather everything and when everything is received, I start with the layout. First the cover, then all written stuff, and last I fill in the gaps with the ads. I have felt that this is the best way for me to take care of things.

15. Handwritten vs. Typewriter vs. Computer?

Handwritten is very nice, and gives the zine a very personal character, but is too messy at times. Typewriter is also very cool, but asks for some good typing skills (which I don't really have) it would be my plan B though. Computer, I do everything on it, even some interviews through email, so this is definitely my choice for a good clean result (I do like to add some cut and paste stuff occasionally).

16. What other zines inspire you?

Trustkill and *Second Nature* are the magazines that made me wanna do this. As for the best zines around, I'd say *Status* #10, *Punk Planet*, *Heuristic*, *Second Nature*, *Interpol Times*, *Slave*, *Hanging Like A Hex*, *Rumpshaker*, *HeartattaCk*, and dozens of others.

17. What is "selling out"?

To me it is giving in to what you once hated... selling yourself.

18. If you could live off your zine, would you?

Well if you mean that I could barely pay the rent and stuff, I don't think so. I don't think I would ever try to live off it, I mean since the beginning of the magazine we donated money to organizations that help the thirld world countries. We have organized a benefit show for the people in Nigeria, and so on. Whenever we have some spare money we donate it, so I don't think I will ever get rich off the magazine.

19. If you had a chance to interview someone who you would most likely never have a chance to talk to, who would it be?

Well there's this Belgian child molester/killer, Marc Dutroux, he got arrested about two years ago I guess. I don't know what to think about him exactly, I just want to talk with him about his actions.

20. Describe your dream interview (who, where, what setting).

I think I would like to have a chat with Henry Rollins in my backyard. I really love everything he ever did, Black Flag, The Rollins Band, his writings, his spoken words... he's been a very inspiring person to me.

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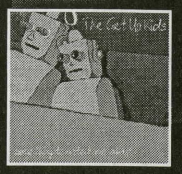

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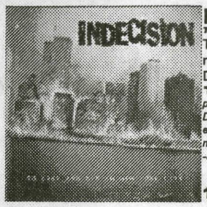

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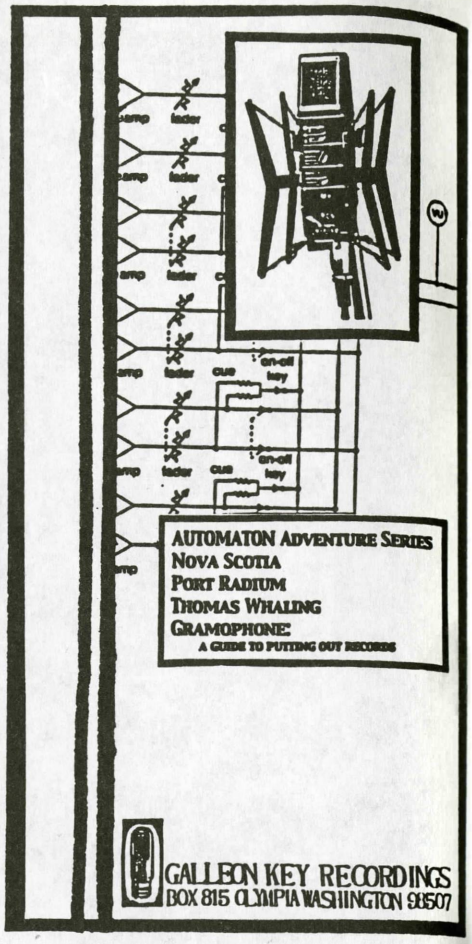

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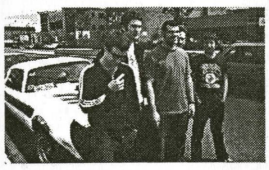

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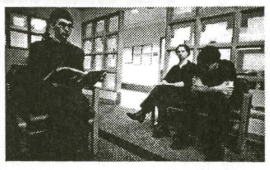

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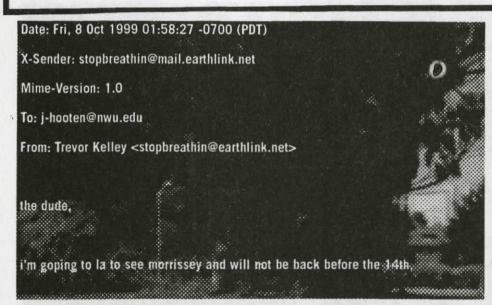

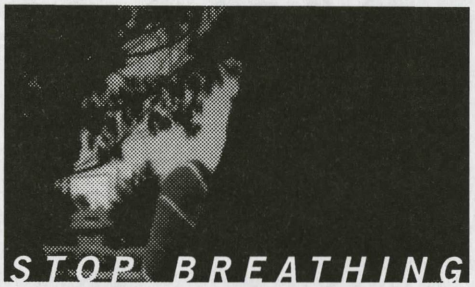

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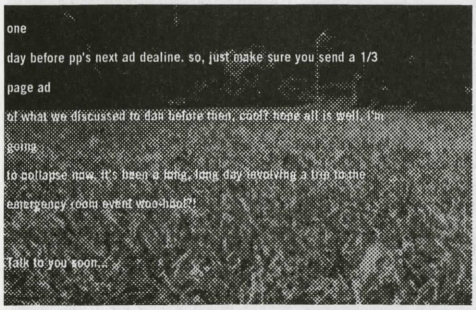

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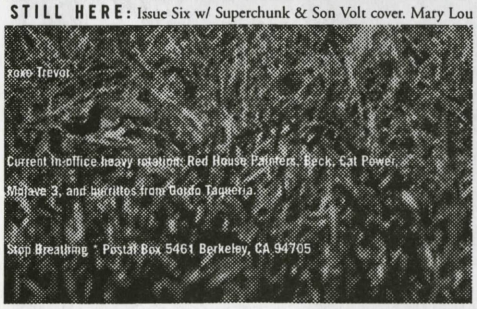

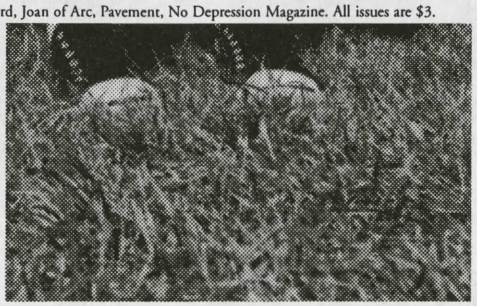

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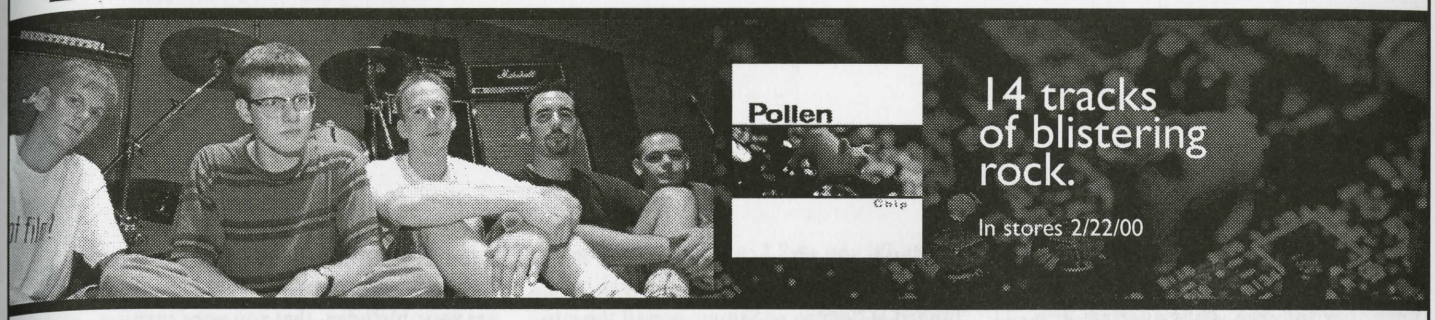

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Looking

by Melissa Klein

You stop under a streetlight and count all the change in your pocket—all the money you own. Four quarters, two dimes and a Canadian coin you found between the cushions of the drop-in center couch. You go into the donut shop just because it's there and you don't know anywhere else to go; just because you've been walking around all day and it's almost 10 o'clock.

You spend your last dollar on a donut and some coffee. You put your orange tray down on the table, slide your pack and bedroll under the hard green bench. Your jelly donut is powdered with fine white sugar. Purple lurks like a bruise just beneath the surface of the dough. You take a bite of the donut, take a tentative sip of coffee. The coffee is weak but at least it's hot and it's almost enough right now, just to have warmth and sweetness work their way towards your belly.

Remember that day late in summer, September probably, when you and Sammy and Tweekling sat outside the supermarket sparechanging to buy fruit pies? The wall of the supermarket was warm against your backs as you sat there drinking malt liquor out of a half-crushed McDonald's cup and halfheartedly haranguing passersby. Sammy was being slow to pass the cup and Tweekling was getting impatient, saying, "Come on man, you got an anarchist stencil on your pack and you can't even share a fuckin' cup of Olde E?" Sammy grinned at him, holding the cup out of his reach and taunting, "Twat did you say? I cunt hear you! I've got an ear infucktion!" Then Tweekling lunged at Sammy as Sammy passed the cup to you and they scuffled on the sidewalk, rolling over each other like puppies while you sat there laughing with Sammy yelling "Make sure it doesn't spill" at you.

When they got done tussling, you handed Sammy the empty cup, let out a long burp and said proudly, "None of it spilled." Tweekling said, "Aw Goddammit!" but

Sammy laughed and pulled out of his pack a half bottle of whiskey in a crumpled paper bag.

"Always prepared!" he said. "My momma didn't raise no fools."

"No," Tweekling said, grabbing the bag, "she raised an alcoholic."

The door to the donut shop is propped open and it's cold inside. There are a few other customers, all men and all alone. They hunch over the tables in their coats, their hands forming circles around their coffee cups for warmth. No one gets up to close the door or to ask the owner why it's open in the first place.

At the drop-in center it was usually pretty warm and the lady there at least had a few decent sandwiches to eat, only you had to let her talk at you in that overeager way, let her think she'd half convinced you to go get an HIV test or a detox appointment or your GED. She acted like she even believed it herself, like it really was that easy, like she actually thought she could pick you up off the street like a grimy penny and wipe you clean and new. Remember that time you told her that it was your birthday, that you were turning seventeen, just so you could get an extra pair of socks? Then when it was your real birthday, you couldn't say shit.

Two cops come into the donut shop, leaving their squad car on the corner in the bus zone. One cop is burly with broad shoulders and a furrowed bald head. The other has a mustache like a misplaced eyebrow. The big cop orders two old-fashioned and a medium coffee. He knocks over a sugar shaker and it cracks on the counter. Bits of glass and gritty sugar pour onto the floor. The big cop says, sorry, and starts to pull out his wallet from his back pocket.

The donut shop owner waves him away, joking, "Excessive force, Jack, excessive force."

The other cop looks you over and says "How ya doing?" and you tell him you've been better. He says, "I can see that," and as he turns to go he says, "Well cheer up, you're too pretty to took so sad."

You try to smile like you don't hate his guts.

You think about that time the cop kicked you and Sammy awake and threw all your shit away. It was during that week your belly hurt real bad—it wasn't like hungry or like cramps or dopesick. When you finally staggered into the free clinic after washing your crotch with paper towels in the McDonald's bathroom, the clinician told you you had pelvic inflammatory disease. She gave you antibiotics and

painkillers and a voucher for three days in the shelter. But you didn't want to stay in the shelter without Sammy, even though he told you it was okay, maybe it would be better. So you slept in the park as usual and that was better wasn't it? All night in the sleeping bag with his arm around you like a wing, his rough hand gentle against your belly until the cops kicked you awake with their steel-toed boots.

You remember the solid thud in your kidneys, the one cop saying, "You're in violation of the park code," and Sammy saying, "Goddammit, man, please! My girlfriend's sick! She's sick!"

The other cop nudged with his steel-capped toe the burnt bottlecap cooker nearby that wasn't even yours, saying, "I'm sure she is, son, I'm sure she is."

They dumped everything out of your pack, poured out your pills and what was left of your forty from the night before. You remember how the one cop ground your pills into the dirt with his heel while the other cop said, "You're lucky we're not giving you a ticket for this." Sammy said no one had ever called him lucky before.

The donut shop owner sweeps up the broken glass and keeps an idle watch over the fryer, where donuts bob up and down in the bubbling oil like life preservers in a boiling sea. Then he glances over at your empty tray and your styrofoam cup, empty except for grounds. On the counter the coffee pots squat on the burners, emitting streamers of steam. You get up and ask him how much for a refill. Maybe he knows you're bluffing, maybe not, but he glares at you for a moment. Then his faces creases a little to one side and he says, "Ali, don't worry about it. Fill 'er up."

You don't remember the creases in your father's face so well as you remember the cracked lines in his black leather belt, the way his work pants sagged a little when he took it off. You remember the raw leather looped in two and the swooping sound it made in the air coming down and how you learned to claw your nails as hard as you could into your fist, because the belt couldn't hurt you so bad as long as you knew that you could hurt yourself more.

For three months straight after your father left, your mother cried. The fourth month after he left she got married to a motel manager. He didn't wear work pants, he wore brown slacks the color of dog shit, but they were held up with a cracked black leather belt. So that time you came home giggling from your first slug of whiskey, with hickeys all over your neck, that first time your stepfather slammed your bedroom door open and called you a little slut, that first time you watched him unbuckle his belt, you were almost smug. You thought you knew what was coming. But you didn't know, did you? No, not at all.

You and Sammy had both been drinking the first time you told him some of that shit, some of that shit you never tell anyone at all. You'd both been drinking and it wasn't cold out, but you'd had enough to drink to stop making you warm and start making you shiver. You sat with your legs pulled up and your head on your knees. Snot was coming out of your nose, you kept wiping it with the grimy sleeve of your thermal shirt. You sat there feeling like a stupid bitch for crying and Sammy sat next to you with his hand resting lightly on your shaking back.

When he slid his fingers under your shirt he said your name in a tentative questioning way, and you thought maybe he was going to reach around for your tits, tell you he wanted to fuck you. But instead he traced the scallops of your shoulder blades with his fingers and said, "This is where the wings are gonna grow."

The donut shop owner is humming as he uses the tongs to lift the fresh donuts into the case. Under the fluorescent lights the donuts are laid out primly on their metal trays, the sprinkled ones, the cream-filled, the cake, the glazed and the old-fashioned, the plump crullers, the apple fritters and the bear claws. Next to the donut case, pink boxes are stacked against the wall like empty presents.

Remember, it was only two weeks ago, when Sammy went to call his brother collect from the pay phone on the edge of the park? When he came loping back he was almost shy the way he told you, his sister-in-law said he could go and visit, and did you want to come? It was only on a trial basis but she'd just gotten a part-time job and needed help with the kids, and if it worked out you both might be able to stay. You pictured yourself suddenly on a

porch, wearing a red gingham dress instead of your filthy black jeans. Holding a baby, Sammy's nephew, on your hip, nuzzling the baby's soft skin against your check.

You let yourself believe it would really be that easy. That all you had to do was wait for the first of the month for Sammy to get his welfare check. Then the two of you could catch a bus up north. It would be good to have something other than whiskey to keep you warm, to keep you from getting bored. It would be good to be somewhere you didn't know where to cop, where to get clean rigs. Sammy said he didn't want to do dope anymore. He said it like it wouldn't be hard, like it wasn't a big deal. And it was true, he drank a lot more than he did anything else. He said he didn't shoot up enough to get strung out, but then again, where does a lush leave off and a junkie begin?

A man with a limp comes into the donut shop, edges over to the table next to yours. He pulls a crumpled handkerchief out of his pocket and unwraps it to show the customer sitting next to you a necklace.

"Yo man, check it. I got this chain, solid silver. Something nice for your lady. Your lady like silver, man?"

The man at the table laughs and says, "Sure she likes silver, but that ain't no silver. She'd kick my ass out the house if I brought her that piece of crap."

The man with the limp gives a wounded shrug and turns to you without much hope. "How 'bout you sister? Solid silver necklace?"

The donut shop owner looks over and says, "Hey now! Hey!" and points at the sign over the counter, "No Buying Or Selling Of Merchandise Inside Store."

The man with the limp doesn't bother to read the sign, he just throws up his hands and shuffles out the door, saying, "Sorry man, sorry. Just trying to talk to folks. I guess I didn't know it was a crime."

Remember how you sat in the park this morning watching the hippies play drums and the dogs nip and growl at each other? Waiting for Sammy to go pick up his check and buy the Greyhound tickets, and cop some dope for a final shot with the money left over. You had already done your part, wheedled the drop-in center lady into giving you some cans of soup and a jar of peanut butter for the bus. You didn't know what time it was but it seemed like it was getting late, so you walked back up to the drop-in center to see if Sammy had called and for once the drop-in center lady didn't have that stupid smiley look all over her face.

You imagine how the paramedics came, dressed in white, impeccable down to their shoes, and Sammy lying in the alley in his grimy hoodie, his face a ghastly blush of blue. You imagine them with their Narcan and their CPR, efficiently too late. You imagine them trying to resuscitate him, taking an extra thirty seconds to insert the special funnel into his mouth so that they wouldn't risk getting any of his germs. It strikes you as almost funny when you imagine this, since you would give almost anything right now to touch your mouth to his.

It's almost midnight now and all the other customers have left. The donut shop owner rolls out a yellow bucket on crooked wheels, swishes his mop around in yesterday's water, starts to swab the floor.

You wonder if the lady at the drop-in center thinks you're a bitch because when she clasped your hand and said, "Would you like to talk?" you just pulled your hand away, grabbed your pack and ran all the way down the stairs. But that was a whole morning and afternoon ago, and maybe she doesn't remember it happened at all. And maybe she won't even remember Sammy a year from now. He was such a small kid with a flop of dirty blond bangs always in his eyes, if you were a drop-in lady maybe you'd hardly notice he was there at all. And so many kids hop trains to Portland or New Orleans or go to jail or just disappear, what's one less kid with a flop of bangs always in his face?

When the donut shop owner flips the sign to closed, you hoist your pack onto your back and start the long walk back uphill to the park, just because it's there and you don't know anywhere else to go. You pass that comer where all the drug dealers peddle their wares to the down and out.

One of them catches your eye and strides a few steps alongside you, hisses at you, "Looking? Are you looking?"

You shake your head no but you want to tell him yeah. Yeah, you're looking, you just don't know for what. ◎

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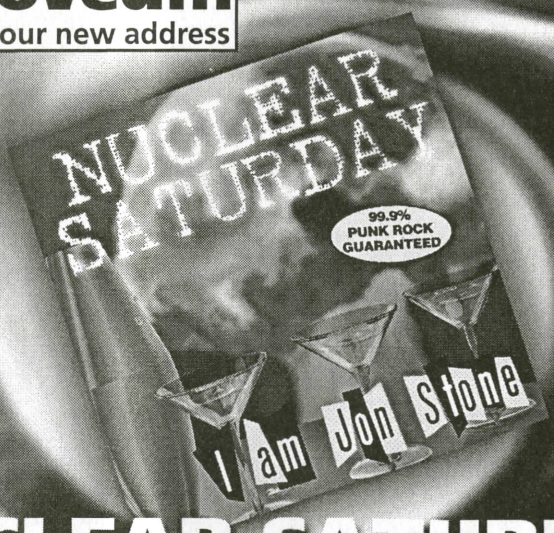

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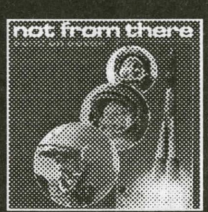

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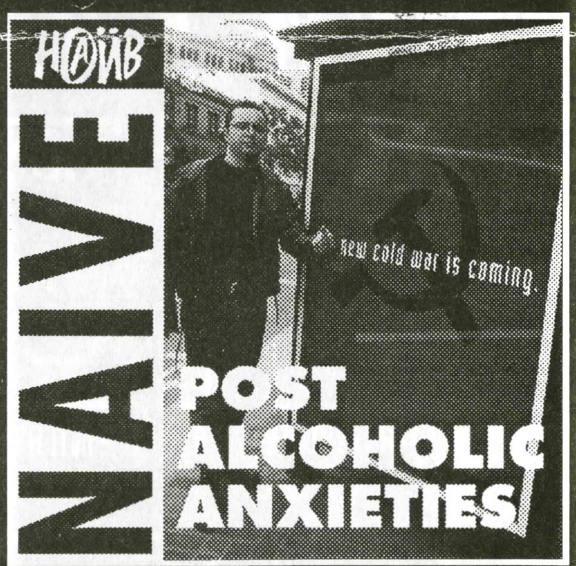

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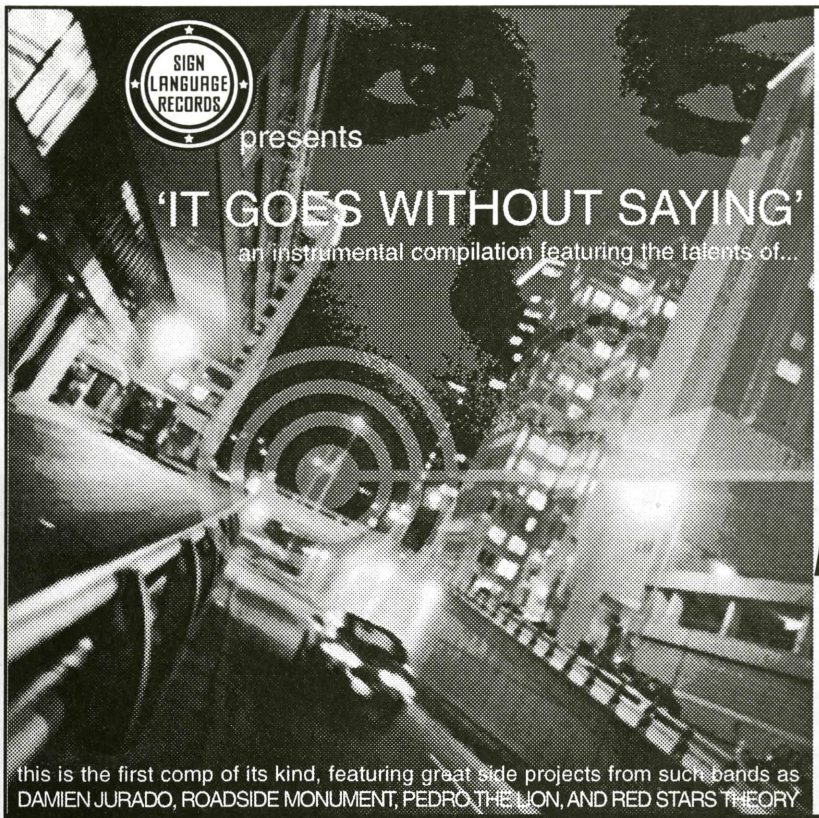

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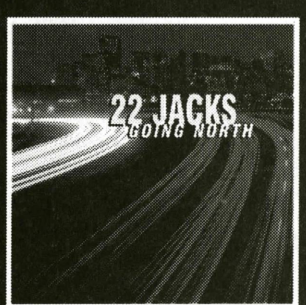

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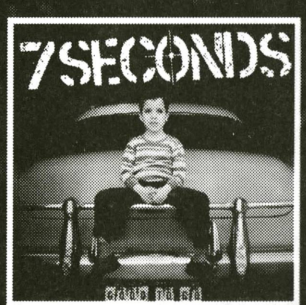

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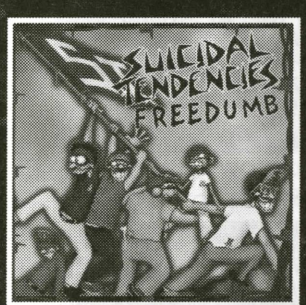

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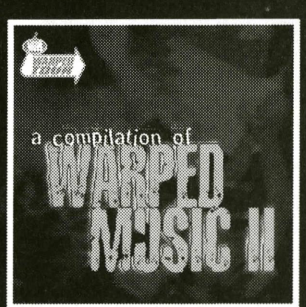

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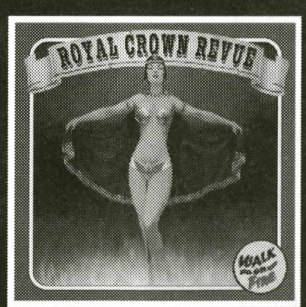

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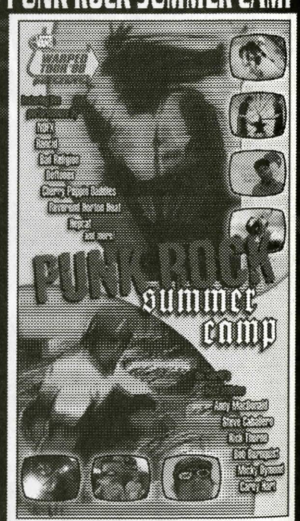

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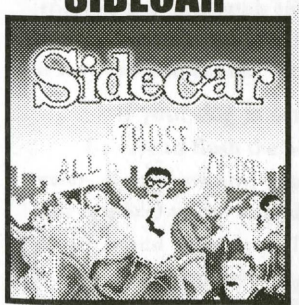

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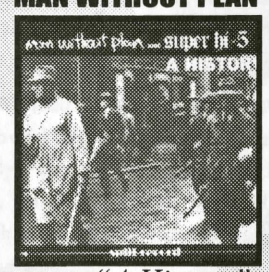

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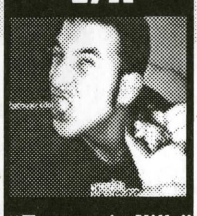

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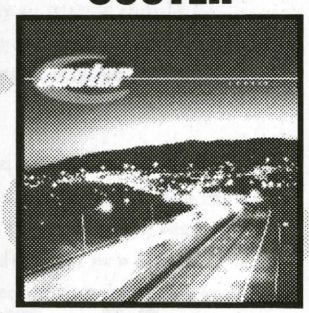

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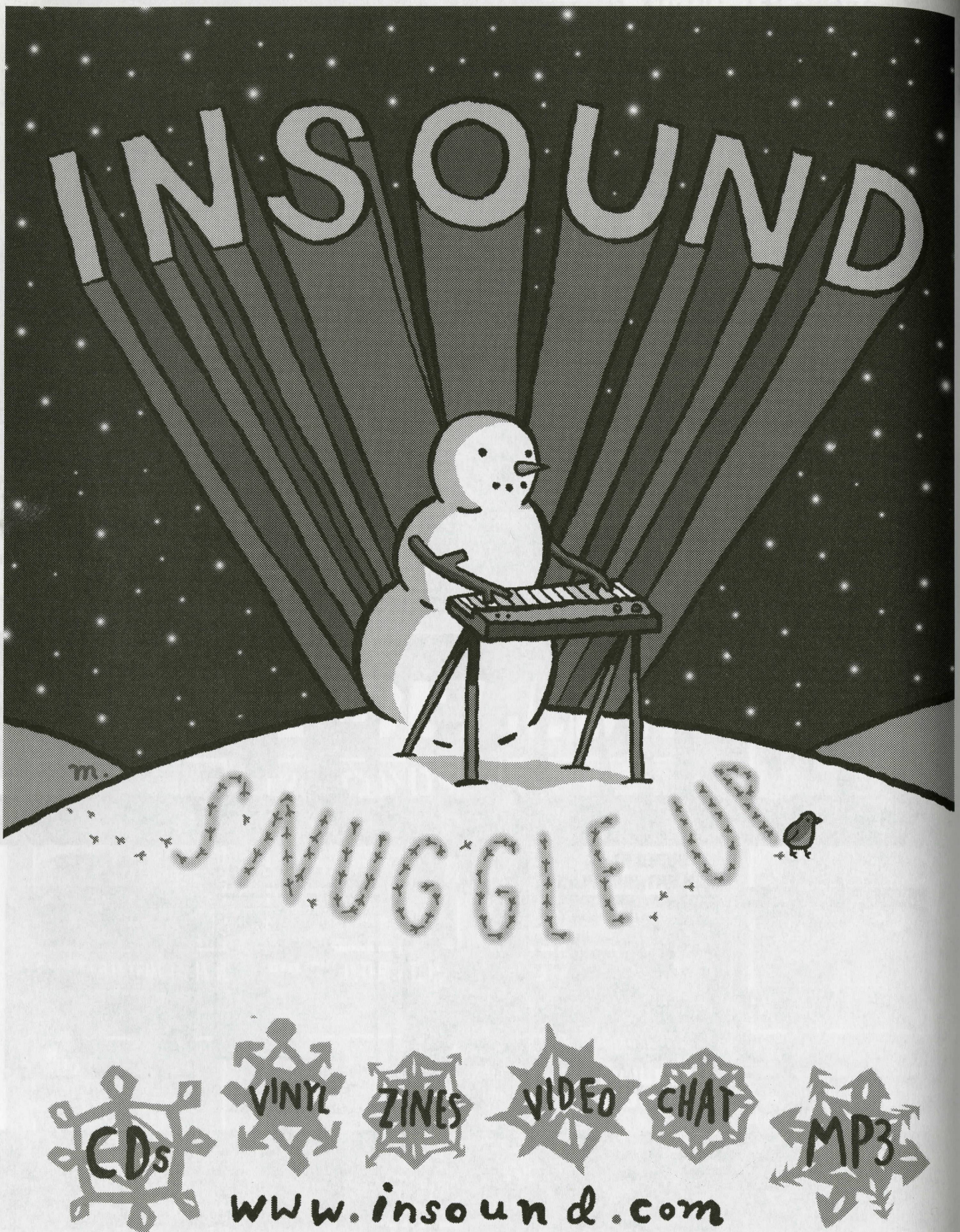
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DIY Dog Care

By Shawn Belcher

In this DIY file, I'm going to give a few simple, low cost things you can do at home for your dog. This is, by no means, meant to replace a visit to your veterinarian for a check-up, nor is it advice from a professional. I am an animal lover and work at a humane society. All the advice I'm giving you comes from experience—either with my own dog or from friends—but of course, use it at your own risk.

Nail Trim Boo-boos

When you can hear your dogs' nails tapping the floor this means it is time to trim! Usually this is pretty simple, but there are the times when you cut too far in and catch the quick. Because of this, you should always have a bowl of flour or cornstarch nearby when you get ready to trim. If you get a bleeder, you can dip the offending toe into the flour or cornstarch to stop the blood flow. Also, applying pressure with a tissue or toilet paper may do the trick as well.

Dead animal or Skunk odor remover

This is an oh-so-pleasant experience. My dog Corkie got off her tie-up one fall morning and ran off. We searched the area for her and came across a rotting, decapitated deer carcass. We didn't think much of it (besides that was disgusting) until we found Corkie and bribed her into the car. Whammo! The smell was nauseating. Believe me, I could go through life without that experience again!! Anyway, if this happens to you, here is a recipe for an odor remover.

You'll need:

1 qt. hydrogen peroxide
1 cup baking soda
a small amount of liquid soap

Give the dog a quick bath first, then mix the above ingredients together and apply to coat. Be sure to dry the coat as thoroughly as possible to avoid the peroxide from bleaching any fabric it may come in contact with.

If your dog is scratched or bitten superficially

Be sure to flush the wound for several minutes under clean water. If you have any, apply a betadine solution (can be found at a drug store) to the wound, followed by application of Neosporin or off-brand equivalent. This will decrease the chance of an infection developing in the wound.

A Natural Flea Repellent

This isn't a sure-fire thing, but I have seen this remedy around quite a bit. The use of Garlic in a capsule form in diet as well as vitamin B1(thiamine) reduces the risk of your dog smelling good to fleas. I would recommend one capsule a day with food.

Dog with gas problems

If you have a particularly gassy dog, you can buy some Beano and add it into your dog's daily meal. Also, make sure to avoid giving your dog table scraps, as that is a big factor in causing gas.

Prevention of Tarter build up and Gum Disease

Be sure your dog always has a nylon chew toy or rawhide available. Chewing on one of these helps reduce tarter, which in turn helps reduce the chance of gum disease.

Anal Glands

Don't let the name scare you, it isn't as bad as it sounds! This is something I deal with every couple of months with my own dog. What happens is, the anal glands get impacted and fill up with fluid making an uncomfortable situation for the dog. You will need some rubber gloves, KY Jelly or the off brand equivalent, and a strong stomach!!

Symptoms include:

Scooting butt on floor
Excessive licking of behind
Swollen anus
Straining to defecate
A foul smell near the rear

The key to treating this is to drain the fluid from the glands—I'm not going to be polite here: that means sticking your finger up your dog's butt. If you can't handle that (it's not as bad as it sounds), then get your dog to the vet.

Things get a little messy, so it's best to do this procedure outside if possible. If not, lay a towel or newspaper on floor.

Insert your gloved and lubed index finger into your dog's anus approimately 1/4" to 1/2" deep. The glands are located at the 4 o'clock and the 8 o'clock position. Apply **gentle** pressure to the inflamed glands and a liquid or pasty substance should be released. The color of this substance should be gray, tan, brown or black. If there is any blood present or strange color, this warrants a trip to the Vet.

I hope that this information can be of some use to someone out there. I know I was relieved to find out I could treat my dog at home for her anal gland problem as the trips to the vet every few months were putting a strain on my finances in a big way. Please remember, when in doubt, get it checked out—better to be safe than sorry. Also, I work for a Humane Society and have a lot of info available on behavior problems for dogs and cats if anyone needs some advice or information, please get in contact.

Shawn Belcher PO Box 722 Charlotte, MI 48813. My E-mail address is: snb45@hotmail.com

in sickness and no wealth

DIY HEALTH

I won't insult your intelligence by explaining the symptoms of an earache. My focus will be on middle ear infections (otitis externa), which is the most common kind among adults.

You can get an infection from a number of different sources. If you are sick with the common cold, influenza, or have a sinus infection, germs can travel up your Eustachion tube (the tube that connects your ear to your throat) and infect your ear canal. Besides germs, exposure to winter elements can bring on an ear infection too. And, for those of you who do not wear ear plugs at shows, loud music can not only damage your hearing, but also bring on an earache! PROTECT YOUR EARS AND WEAR PLUGS!

Before I go any farther, if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, **PLEASE notify your healthcare provider: High temperature, blood or pus discharge, dizziness, ringing in the ears, hearing loss, or if pain is severe or persistent.**

That out of the way, the following eight tips can help reduce and alleviate the throbbing of your normal, run-of-the-mill earache.

1. You can take **acetaminophen** (the equivalent of Tylenol) to reduce inflammation and pain. However, if you're congested and wish to take a decongestant, which will be beneficial to your ear infection, check first if it has acetaminophen in the ingredients, before taking more. You don't want to overburden your liver with extra Tylenol!

2. **Warmth=comfort.** Set your hair dryer on a low, warm setting. Hold the dryer 18-20 inches away from the sore ear. The warm air should help ease and alleviate the pain. You may also place a hot water bottle over the infected ear. Warmed mineral or baby oil placed into the infected ear will also ease the pain. Put 1-2 drops into the infected ear as needed. **WARNING: never put anything into your ear if you have a punctured or ruptured eardrum!**

3. **Avoid smoky environments**! For those of you who smoke, I realize you won't give up that awful habit just because you got one little earache, but at least stop until your infection clears up.

4. **Avoid allergenic foods** for the duration of your infection. Skip the following: white flour products, all dairy products, corn, oranges, peanut butter, and all simple carbohydrates, including sugar.

5. **Avoid blowing your nose**, and don't hold in your sneezes.

6. When washing your hair or showering, **avoid getting water and/or soap into your infected ear**. You can buy water-resistant ear plugs at the drug store for a few bucks. a sound investment if you ask me (no pun intended).

7. **Keep your ears warm and protected from the cold winter wind** by wearing ear muffs, a hat, or a scarf. You should practice this, even if you don't have an ear infection!

8. You can **chew gum** to open up your Eustachian tubes and alleviate some of that pressure, and promote drainage.

Herbs

1. If you build up your immune system at the first signs of an earache, you can usually head it off before the bacteria takes root if you start right away. I recommend **Echinacea** tea or alcohol-free extract. If using the tea, take 3 cups daily at first signs of an earache, throughout the duration of the infection. If you choose to take the extract, which is slightly more expensive, follow directions on bottle. Warning: Echinacea should not be used by those who are allergic to the sunflower family.

2. **Gargle 1/2 tsp. of salt along with 1/4 cup of warm water** as soon as you feel an earache coming on. For greater medicinal value, gargle with 5-10 drops of Tea Tree oil in 1/4 cup of warm water. Gargle 3-4 times daily. The salt and tea tree oil help to

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PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

My Aching Ear

by Angel Page

kill germs in the throat and promote healing by bringing blood to the Eustachian tube.

3. **Garlic oil** effectively treats ear infections. It has natural antibiotic properties, and the warm oil helps relieve the pain. To make garlic oil, finely chop one or two bulbs of fresh garlic. Place in a double boiler, (if you don't own a double boiler, you can place a sturdy small saucepan in a larger saucepan filled half way with boiling water, but be careful not to burn yourself!), and cover with an inch of olive oil. Cover the pot, and warm the garlic and oil over low heat for one hour, strain through a piece of cheesecloth (if you don't have a cheesecloth, you can use a couple of coffee filters doubled up, or a thin, clean wash cloth) and store the oil in a glass in the refrigerator. I suggest purchasing those small amber tincture bottles with the medicine droppers built into the top. They're usually a buck or two and you can find them at your local health food/herb shop. Warm the garlic oil by running the bottle under hot water, or place a small amount onto a metal spoon and heat over a flame until it is warm. Next, suck it up into a medicine dropper and then test it on the back of your hand, when the temperature is satisfactory, place a couple of drops into the infected ear canal and plug the ear with a cotton ball. Repeat every hour or as needed.

For greater medicinal value, add **Mullein oil** to soothe inflamed tissue and help remove excess ear wax. Unfortunately, this oil has to be prepared a week or two in advance. If you are interested, call your local health/herb shop and ask if they carry the oil. If you choose to use Mullein oil make a 50/50 mix of mullein and garlic oils.

For those of you who get an ear ache/infection every time you sneeze, you can make Mullein and garlic oil in advance with little work and preparation. For Mullein oil, take fresh mullein flowers and pack them in a jar unwashed. Fill the jar with olive oil, leaving a little room at the top of jar, so the cheescloth and oil don't touch. Cover the jar with cheesecloth and a rubber band. Let it stand in a warm place for 1-2 weeks. Next, strain and bottle it. Do the same for the garlic oil, but make sure you remove the outer layer of the cloves before submerging them in the oil (just like peeling an onion).

Supplements

1. **Manganese** deficiency has been linked to ear problems. The suggested dosage is 10 mg. daily. This supplement is usually combined with calcium, make sure you buy it separately.

2. **Vitamin C** is always a must no matter what your illness may be. It boosts up your immune system and fight infections. You can safely take Vitamin C up until you have diarrhea, then cut back 1000 mg. and that will be your own personal dosage. Dosages range between 3,000-10,000 mg.

3. **Vitamin E** is another great immune builder, and helps repair soft tissue. The suggested dosage to start with is 200 IU daily and increase weekly until you reach 800 IU daily.

4. **Zinc** is another great immune enhancer. Take 10 mg. in lozenge form 3 times daily for 5 days, then 50 mg. daily in pill form. DO NOT EXCEED THIS AMOUNT!

Aromatherapy

1. Take a cotton cloth and add a few drops of **lavender or chamomile essential oil**, then place over infected ear, then place a hot water bottle on top. Relax and take in the smell and warmth of the essential oils. Use as needed.

2. Gently massage around the outer ear with 2-3 drops of lavender, chamomile, and/or tea tree oil with olive oil. Use as needed.

3. Take a cotton ball and dab it into a mixture of 1 tsp. of warm olive oil and three drops of lavender and/or chamomile oil. Place treated cotton ball into outer ear. Use as needed.

Good Luck!

Sources

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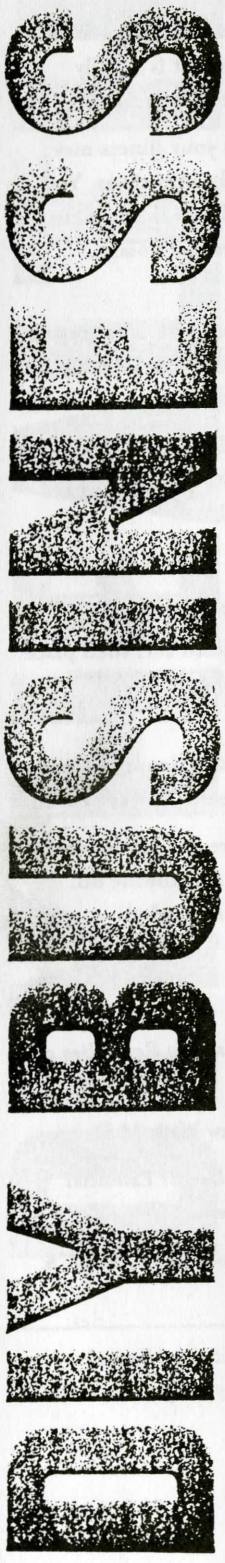
If you have any questions or suggestions, please write me at: Angel Page, c/o Makoto Recordings, PO BOX 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005 or via e-mail: angelpage@hotmail.com

fuck work

by Srini Kumar



For the last several issues I've been writing columns that talk about punk rock small businesses—how to start them, how to fuck up, how to make them grow. My goal was—and still is—to create a generalized toolkit that would let any punk start any business they wanted. But recently, I realized that I never did get around to stating my *purpose* in creating this toolkit.

"Fuck work" means so much more than "start a business." It means "take control of your productive self—do something creative for *yourself.*" It means "learn to *enjoy* your spare time." It means "if your job sucks, find a new one." It means "FUCK THE BOSS." All of these meanings flow from these two syllables. But to me, each and every meaning of "fuck work" is utterly revolutionary in a very real, personal, and non-violent way. This is why I think it's a powerful slogan for a new perspective on productivity, and why I've dedicated my life to spreading the "fuck work" gospel.

There are two definitions to the word "work," in my mind. One is entirely harmless, even salutary: the idea of "work" as "to function smoothly," or "to expend effort fruitfully." But there's another definition of the word that makes sense to anyone who's ever had a bullshit job: Work as pseudoproductive brainwashing and/or torture.

It is this definition of work against which "fuck work" is directed. "Fuck work" is a policy that demands that we all pitch into the effort of eliminating work from our workplaces. All of the unfun tasks need to be reworked to be more interesting and fair. We believe in collective organizations, of which small business is a notable example. And *that* is why I've been writing this column about punk rock small businesses—there is no better example, in my mind, of what amounts to a functioning commune.

To me, the best way of avoiding work as torture is to organize your businesses communally, through joint ownership and administration. This way, you and your friends can create things without exploiting each other, and you guarantee that everyone's heart is going to be in it.

Think of it this way: work is friction in the engine of life. Work, to me, is any pursuit that wears you (and your potential) down. Think of yourself as an engineer, because you're able to design (and re-design) your own life! With a little thought, if you step back far enough, you can picture your whole productive existence and learn to make changes that will improve your future. Engineers design their engines to be as friction-free as possible. You should design your life to include as little bullshit tyrannical work as possible. This—not wealth, but leisure and honest productivity—constitutes true happiness.

Look at most people who've been working for ten, fifteen years. Jesse from Operation Ivy called 'em "junkies running dry," and that's precisely what they are: trained sheep, consuming what's advertised on primetime, returning to work exactly ten minutes late every day, unable to figure out how to travel without a tour guide. Their weekends are booked with errands and entertainment; unable to reflect, they're doomed to inertial despair. Like cigarettes, caffeine and alcohol, work is a "typical addiction" of Americans. But listen to me—when you surrender your productivity to any addiction, you've lost a big chunk of your soul.

Now look at your own life. Is this the life you want to be living? Are you enjoying yourself? Are you working toward some kind of creative goal? What do you want the product of your life to be? (Woe be unto the erstwhile punk rocker who goes on to design ads for Nike!) Do you want to be busy or lazy? How much leisure time do you want? How much wealth? Let me tell you, friend, it's up to you. If you don't like your answers, change your life! While yes, some people in this world have advantages over you, you have the *same odds* of attaining happiness as anyone else. And odds are until you remove work from the equation, even for a day off to think, you're unlikely to attain your goals.

This isn't saying that you shouldn't have a job; it's simply saying that you must move nimbly towards occupations that interest you and in which you can thrive. Many people do decide to create their own occupations, which usually means starting a business of some sort (yes, even being a novelist is a "business"). There are many jobs that don't involve work—any job where you're *learning* something probably isn't work, any job that makes use of your specialization is probably pretty cool, etc.

But even if you've got an awesome job, beware! Work can creep into the edges of even the coolest job. If you're really dedicated to your sanity, you will remain ever vigilant to keep your workplace as work-free as possible. Don't just make sure you're having fun— make sure *everyone* is having fun. Sure, it's never going eo be perfect like that—we all have down days—but if you're proud of your cool job, you need to work hard to ensure it *stays* cool.

And for those thousands of you who hate your jobs, I've just got one word for you: THINK. There *is* a way out of wage slavery. Other people have figured it out. There is an answer to the puzzle of making a living that doesn't involve selling your soul at an hourly rate. And the

answer to the puzzle lies in your ability to turn off your TV at night and think about the puzzle. Harness your free time to accomplish the goals you've been ignoring, create something amazing, rally some friends together and watch your life totally change for the better. Or use that free time to find a job that won't fucking crush you. Either way, find your way out of the trap.

Finally, if you're going to school, don't waste all of your time studying! Learn about the real world. Think about what would revolutionize it—come up with a vision of something that you can make that'll show us *all* the way out! Organize with your friends. Learn about what makes people tick, what makes machines tick, what makes nature tick. We need something really cool to come out of this generation of students if we're to see the needed radical change in this difficult era, believe me!

People think they dis me when stating that I'm capitalist. But to me, creating an economic cocoon around the subcultural economy constitutes a boycott to capitalism itself. The only thing that can bring the machine down is its inability to hypnotize people into the thrall of the production/consumption cycle. A lot of the harshness of capitalism stems from its insistence that we all remain separated. Capitalism favors a society where separate bank accounts, separate cubicles, separate transportation and separate lives are the norm. As industrial capitalism invaded our culture through the media and advertising, our notion of community changed from "make friends with the Joneses" to "keep up with the Joneses."

I think, as punks, our understanding of our subculture makes us able to run businesses far cooler and more connected than ever before. What many non-punks who run businesses fail to remember is that their enterprise is inextricably linked to an entire ecology of enterprise. In other words, if you start a small business, doing it alone is a *choice*. Many people around you would probably be interested in working with you, if you'd only approach them. But that doesn't go with the notion of "business," does it? We're trained to identify businesses working together as "collusion," not the badass competition that Americans understand business to be. Consumers may fear businesses working together because they think that it harms them, but the reality is that it's the competition-focused capitalist chains that crisscross our country who have most damaged our lives—not small business.

I think that what makes us punk isn't some kind of anti-money bullshit. I think what makes us punk are our unleashed minds. I think it's our guts and determination and honesty. People in this scene put their everything into their creations, and all I'm saying is that through punk business, this energy is put to constructive use.

Anarchism was the ideological breeding ground for punk rock—its focus on building a radical community was well understood by early punk bands and organizations. Well, anarchism isn't merely about "protest." We all know that we can march and join hands all we want, but it isn't going to put food on the table, and it isn't therefore isn't aimed at *real* revolution—which, to me, is defined as "changing everyone's lives for the better permanently." Anarchism is about *building*. It's about creating a team, working together, being part of something larger than our individual selves. These teams may engage in protest, sure, but they may well decide to start an Internet company or punk rock record store instead.

To me, therefore, the most passionate protest against the current System is obvious—it's the utter boycott of capitalist goods and services in favor of goods created by our community. Look, we're humans, we need food, shelter and clothing, and it'd be fruitless for all of us to do it all individually. But if we're all friends—we're all part of a united subcultural front—and we spend the money to get what we need from our *friends*—doesn't that make you and your friends self-sufficient? In a way, doesn't that make you and your friends a commune?

I want our subculture to join up with other subcultures and create a real minieconomy, one that is *absolutely* different from the doomed economy of the mainstream. I am assuming that as a reader of *Punk Planet*, you understand the distinction between "free enterprise" and "capitalism," and I trust none of you will act like a dumbshit once you start a business. Well, if one of you starts a beverage company, and one of you starts a construction company, and one of you starts farming, and one of you learns how to put together a web server, hell, we could all go live on an island somewhere and build a new nation without suffering *any* setback in our quality of life!

But my point today isn't to rant about founding a new nation—I will leave that up to the politicians among us. My goal is to begin the process of teaching punks that our culture is truly something special. Punk rock changed our lives utterly, and in my case, it was the culmination of years searching for a real bridge out of my lonely childhood world. Our common interest in punk music, attitude and culture has kept us a creative, diverse and vibrant scene over all of these years. If we could only learn to work together, and could agree on some baseline agendas (like quit fucking polluting, etc.), we could impel some fantastic changes in society.

"Work together" can mean any number of things beyond mere transactions. (We are talking about type-I work, not the work as torture work). While, yes, buying and selling from punks (and boycotting capitalist businesses thereby) constitutes a type of work, how about punk businesses coming together to sponsor punk activities? How about punk rock stars contributing to the scene by building a common-access recording studio? How about helping other punks start businesses? How about donating to charities, giving political groups a place to meet, helping anarchists destroy a local slaughterhouse? As long as we stay focused on fuck work—avoiding work-as-torture by all means—and let our creativity be our guides, I can see a generation of kids more liberated than any generation ever before.

Good luck. And if you've found an entertaining and interesting way out of the trap of wage slavery, please email me at srini@unamerican.com and I'll be in touch!

things that go bump in the night

by Sheri Gumption

DIY SEX

Dear Sheri & DIY Sex,

I have a question and concern about something I saw about a week ago that has really been bothering me. Here goes...

A friend told me he had something really cool he wanted to show me. He puts in a video of a girl sitting in a chair pleasuring herself with a dildo. She's making all the usual noises, building up to an orgasm, but at the supposed moment of climax, she removes the aforementioned sex toy, and proceeds to excrete, no... shoot out this stuff. "Stuff" is the only word I can use to describe it. It looked to be the consistency of yogurt and the color of semen (maybe a little bit grayer) and there was a lot of it, relatively speaking. I would say a cup or two spurted out in two or three doses.

WHAT THE HELL WAS IT??? It couldn't have been healthy. I have asked a few girls I know, and they were as perplexed as I was. I tried calling a few gynecologists, but they thought I was some perverted deviant and hung up on me. Please explain what I saw if possible. I need to know if this could happen to any random female. I think I would become an eternal celibate if it ever occurred in my presence.

Thanks for your time,

Scott

Providence, RI

Well Scott, as they say, I've got good news, and I've got bad news. The good news is that what you saw that porn actress do was probably a virtuoso performance of a perfectly natural and healthy process known as female ejaculation. The bad news (if you want to see it that way) is that I can't promise none of your lady friends will ever put on such a show for you.

Before I give you dear readers a few hints on how to avoid or elicit such a display from your female partners, we should have a quick (if slightly dry) anatomy lesson. Because male and female genitalia grow from the same set of embryonic cells, many structures within our respective reproductive anatomies are analogous, and the way they respond to stimulation is similar. For example, the clitoris resembles the penis in both form and sexual response, if not always in size. The glands thought to be responsible for the fluid produced during female ejaculation are physiologically related to the male prostate gland, whose output gives semen much of its color and bulk; hence it's no surprise that the fluid you saw fly so spectacularly through the air looked a bit like semen. These glands are part of a larger conglomerate of nerves, erectile tissue (like that found in the nipples, clitoris and penis), and ducts located on either side of the urethra (the tube through which urine moves from the bladder to the outside world) known as the urethral sponge.

In the world of sexual legend, the urethral sponge is better known by its sexier code name: the G-spot. For those of you curious about finding it, try to locate a small ridge of tissue just past the pubic bone in the front your or your partner's vagina; this will probably be easier, and less like a trip to the gynecologist's office, if you do this exploring when the lady in question is already aroused. Try stroking or applying firm pressure to this spot (a curved dildo or vibrator might come in handy if you're not a contortionist). Many women will experience a sensation of having to pee immediately, which may fade to a feeling some find exquisitely pleasurable, and that others find annoying or merely so-so. Please give it more than one try, but don't to be too disappointed if you or your partner are in the latter group. Every woman is wired differently and has different preferences, and having a sensitive G-spot doesn't necessarily make a terrific lover out of anyone.

If, after some experimentation, you or your lady friend can count yourselves among G-spot aficionados, you may find that ejaculation occurs with continued stimulation of the area, with or without stimulation of the clitoris or other genitals. Again, if this doesn't happen, please don't be disappointed. Not all women ejaculate, and while some women report transcendent orgasms from G-spot stimulation and ejaculation, others don't. My personal experience has found the sensation to be quite distinct from the feeling of what I consider an orgasm, similar to the buildup and release of an extremely pleasant genital sneeze. And despite what Scott saw in his friend's video, not all women ejaculate like a scaled-down version of Old Faithful. Such dramatic waterworks usually require extremely well-toned pelvic muscles and an intimate familiarity with one's own sexual response; the average amateur nookie enthusiast probasly won't set any records for distance and volume without quite a bit of practice.

For those who consider eternal celibacy preferable to eye witnessing such an event, I can only encourage you to keep an open mind about the myriad wet and sloshy things which often accompany sex. Most women I know have enough trouble getting off regularly without worrying about whether their partner is going to find something about them disgusting if they let go and enjoy themselves. Despite the fact that G-spot stimulation is often accompanied by an urge to urinate, female ejaculate is distinct from urine, and really is no more inherently disgusting than semen, saliva or vaginal secretions. If you're still not sure you want to be doused by it though, simple etiquette always comes in handy; any woman who has experienced ejaculation more than a couple of times should be able to warn you to take cover before the great deluge. And if you do end up getting accidentally soaked, try to look on the bright side. As one man I spoke with put it, "I think it's great. You know for sure you did the right stuff. The proof is in the puddle."

(As usual I'm sure I don't have to remind you all to practice safer sex. I'm also sure you all know that means latex, plastic wrap, staying current of checkups and tests, and lots and lots of honest communication with your partner(s).) ◎

Questions about nookie, techniques, or the bizarre mating rituals of the North American punk rock love beast? Send 'em to me at PO Box 7564, Ann Arbor, MI 48107 or email diysex@punkplanet.com. Special thanks to my roommates and the boys from SF for all their enlightening and enthusiastic input on the subject.

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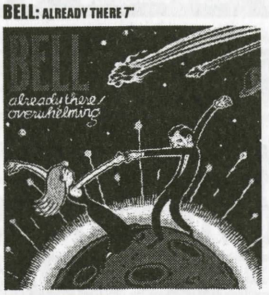

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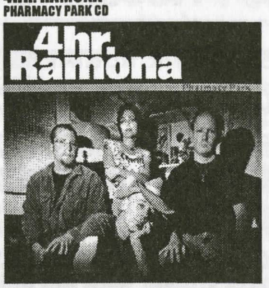

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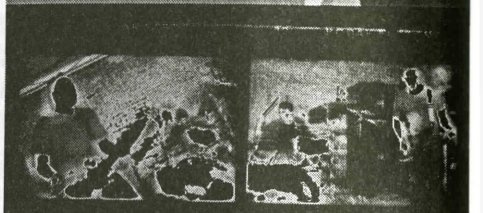

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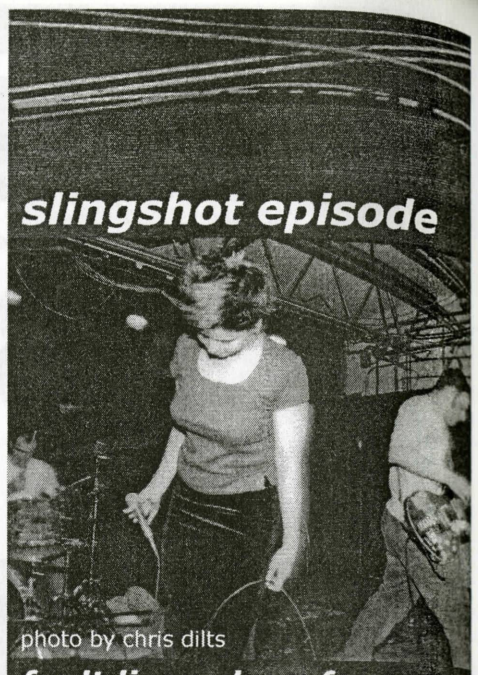

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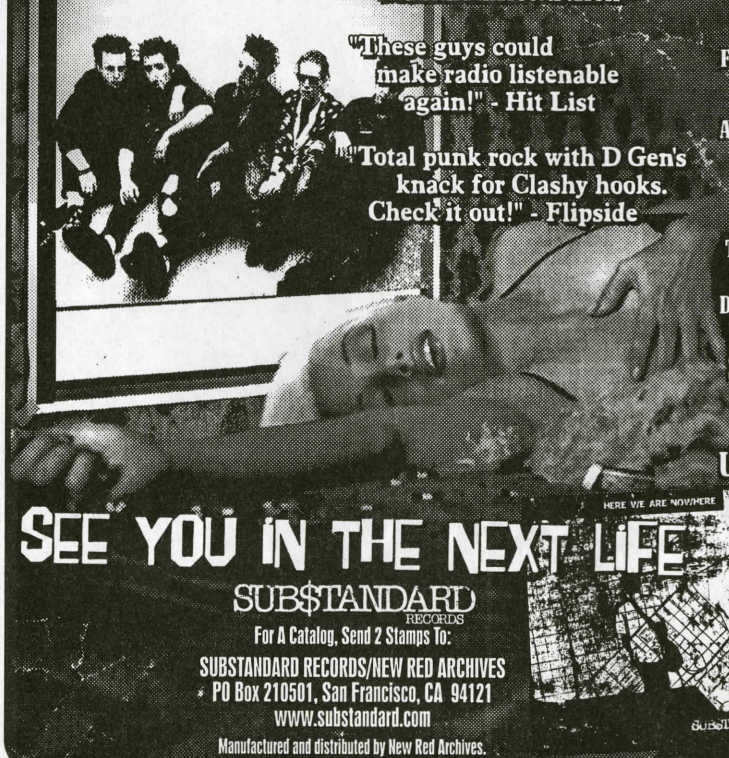

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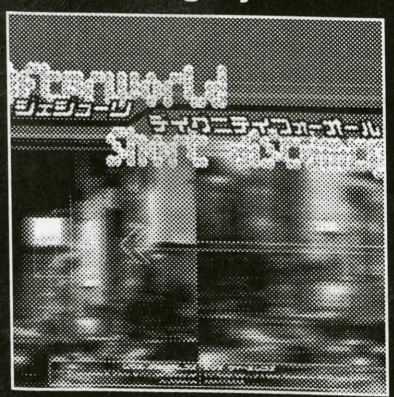

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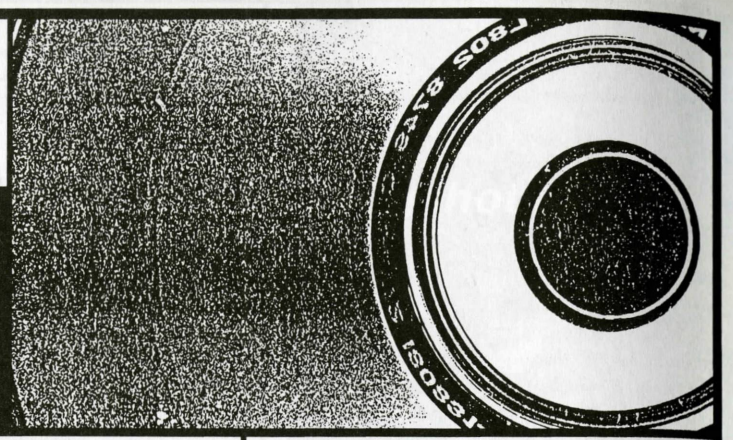

6FG - Devotion, CDEP I was ready to call this boring, unimaginitive MTV radio college rock crap with no singing talent, but I didn't want to be mean so I listened to it again. They still can't sing, which really hurts with this kind of music, but the music itself ain't all that bad. What's with the name though? (ed)
Squish Me Down Records P.O. Box 2061 Issaquah, WA 98027-0092

22 Jacks- Going North, CD You know those "punk" bands on MTV? This band wants to be one of them. Slick overproduced cross between Pennywise and alterna rock. Not to get to into labels, but this has nothing to do with anything punk at all. (JL)
Side One Dummy 6201 Sunset Blvd. Suite 211 Hollywood, CA 90028

30Foot Fall - Cartoons, 7" Pop punk Texas style. If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all. (dc)
Paranoid Records 11306 Normeadow Ln. Houston, TX 77076

The Aasee Lake - Two Song Introduction to a Suicide Note, 7" Welcome to PUNK Planet, where everyone now plays boring-ass indie-rock type stuff. Slow, monotonous, and completely forgettable. The title is right on; it makes me want to kill myself. It's on Nerd Rock Records, if that tells you anything. (BJM)
Nerd Rock Records, PO Box 5159, Louisville, KY 40205

Acheborn – Tuesday is Dead, CD "THIS IS ALL ABOUT PUNK FUCKIN' ROCK...," says the insert. This is some crazy shit. Screaming hardcore vocal sections are preceded by lengthy trick build-ups in a majority of the songs. The vocals are fierce, and the multi-language lyrics add to the power and cacophony. A lot of folks are sure to go nuts over this one. Cool packaging, too. (AE)
Trans Solar USA/Stick Figure Records, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

Al Perry/James Dead - Split 7" So this guy, Al Perry, plays this pretty rockin' song. Then this guy, Tex Caliber, comes up to Al and says "can I play one of your songs with you?" Al apparently says yes, and starts another band with another name with all the same people in it. It would've been cooler if they did a whole "featuring James Dead" or Tex Caliber, you know like in rap songs? Maybe not. Anyway, I'm not surprised this is from Arizona, it gives me a whole countryish punk thing vibe.(ed)
Dry River Bed Records 5425 E. Broadway Blvd., #192 Tuscon, Arizona 85711

All Systems Go! - S/T, CD Featuring two members of Big Drill Car and one from Doughboys, this band plays extremely radio friendly power pop that reminds me of Face to Face covering Sheryl Crow's "Santa Monica Blvd." Solos and all. The insert has the email address for both their management and their legal adviser but no lyrics. If this package sounds alluring to you... (DL)
Coldfront Records. PO Box 8345. Berkeley, CA 94707

Amendment Eighteen - All My Heroes Are Dead, CD Abrasive hardcore from southern California, complete with youth crew vocals and angst-driven lyrics about not giving up. Most of it sounds almost exactly like Youth of Today, circa Break Down the Walls. The singer is a tougher Ray Cappo, which doesn't help them avoid the comparison. At moments I am briefly reminded of Inside Out, so you get the idea. This is what the better Revelation bands sounded like ten years ago. Well done, but I already own those other records. (DL)
New Age Records. PO Box 5213. Huntington Beach, CA 92611

Americanfootball - S/T , CD Role playing is fun . Let's pretend I am the guy who put together the American football CD—Hey we could just make it all really white. Then we could make the letters run off the sides of the cover so it looks all messed up like somebody fucked up the whole cover of the CD. Instead of American football it could say "AMERIC anfootball" . That would be sweet. You guys got any old pictures of trees or snowy fields because we could put some of those in there and make them all off center too. We could leave the edges of the Kodak label on the photos and man that shit would look soooo good. God I am a design wizard. I should start a graphic design firm I could call it "holy shit I suck at making music or being creative." — Now back to the CD itself. They actually have a song called "I'll see you when we're both not so emotional." If being in a band really makes you so quiet and sad maybe you guys need to become magicians or circus clowns or something. Life can't be that bad fellas. (dc)
Polyvinyl P.O. Box 1885 Danville IL. 61834

Antarctica – 81:03, CD I hate the word retro. So even though this album totally reminds me of Duran Duran and Talk Talk, I will not call it 80's retro. It is in fact, an album recorded in the late 90's, borrowing atmospheric sounds from the early 80's, and having a swooning pop sensibility not unlike New Order. It is nice to see the emo-pop sound branching out into the electronica zone instead of treading on the same sound that has been growing stale for the last three years. 81 minutes deserving my recommendation! (SY)
File 13, PO Box 2302, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Anti-Heroes – Underneath the Underground, CD The Anti-Heroes are a street punk band that clearly hates American society. For instance, the first song on this album, "More Stupid Than Stupid", is about how horrible Generation X is. But isn't that the core audience of this band? The sound is fairly typical Oi! music, with shouted vocals, backup choruses, and fast repetitive instrumentation. This band may date back to 1984, but the history still does nothing to keep me from turning this off. (PB)
GMM Records, PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

Asshole Blues Players - Teenage Power Mother Fucker Kick It, CD Japan! Dude I'm telling you, I wanna move there! Very consistently, anything coming out of Japan is much more creative and cool than 90% of American shit on the market. Maybe living in a repressive society fosters rebellion and creativity more than living in a society like America where you can pretty much do what you want. I don't know. Anyway, the Asshole Blues players play dirty noise driven punk rock with horns and harmonica thrown in for good measure. There are only 5 songs on this CD, but they are all pretty good. I love the title of this album. It sounds like one of those weird Japanese translations that always come out sounding cooler than they were probably intended, like "happy super fun fruit" or something. Good stuff. (JK)

The Asteroid Number Four - In Apple Street, CD The first song on this 5 track is an awesome track of '60s garage psychedelia with clear hip vocals, a great chorus and mid tempo tight music. A flawless song. The rest of the CD is much to soft, pretty and sweet for your humble reviewer. Flutes and harmonicas (esp. played like this) are rarely appropriate for the almighty PP. I am sure their grandmothers are pleased with this CD. (MY)
AudioInformationPhenomena, 1625 Oakwood Dr., San Mateo CA, 94403

At The Drive In/The Aasee Lake - split 7" At The Drive In have made quite a name for themselves lately with their brand of infectious melodic music, incessant touring and always energetic live shows. Their song on this 7" doesn't disappoint. It's a great song, bouncing back and forth between slow pretty parts and nearly chaotic rocking out. The Aasee Lake, who apparently has at least one ex-member of Endpoint (although you'd never guess from hearing them), offers up one instrumental number that

floats smoothly along quite pleasantly. Bands from Louisville (like they are) playing rock this style have come and gone, sometimes to much acclaim. Hopefully this Louisville band will stick around while, as I'm quite interested in hearing more. (MT)
Nerd Rock Records, P.O. Box 5159 Louisville, KY 40205.

The Atomkis- Super Honky, CD You know the old saying, 'you can't judge a book by its cover.' Well it's not always true. What does this cover offer? Lets see pompadours, shaped sideburns, hollow body guitar, and an upright bass. You guessed it, rockabilly. This style is like ska or pop punk or any "style" I guess, you like it, you like it, you don't, you don't, and to the uninitiated it all kind of sounds the same. It does have a cool photo with space guns on the back. (JL)
702 Records, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504

The Bar Feeders - Jula Bell/Injun Ron, 7" I like this, it's regular normal straight ahead punk rock. This is what I expected to review when I signed up at PP. This isn't great, as in one of the most classic punk records ever, but it's a lot better then a lot of this kind of music going around, like Cleveland Death Sentence. (ed)
Fast Music 368 Broadway #511 New York, NY 10013

Bastard Noise / Pain Jerk - split 7" Three of the most unlistenable songs I've ever heard: one from either band and then a collaborative track. The Pain Jerk song is created out of static feedback which is bent to create a "song." The Bastard Noise track is easier to take, being a repetitive, rolling rhythm that soothes you a little, most probably because it comes after the Pain Jerk song. The collaborative song is a little thicker than the other two and has that same PJ feedback, but with the addition of screamed vocals. None of these songs are interesting and they are only experimental when compared to average rock music. They are completely assaulting, but not in a way that works towards expanding music or the listener's understanding of music. I hate the fact that Bastard Noise has almost become the quintessential experimental band to come from the hardcore scene. I can only assume this is the case because most people's knowledge of the genre is extremely limited. If you want to hear good experimental music made by people who have a firm sense of what they are doing, how they are doing, and are accomplishing their goal- check out PanSonic or Men's Recovery Project. The RPM on the 7" is intentionally unspecified because it doesn't make a difference what speed you play it at. I like it best at 45 because it ends quicker. (DL)
Alternative Tentacles. No address.

Bell – A New Kind Of Rome, CD Woah—here's a style totally new to these ears. Jesus, the best description I've got would be 80% Fallouts/ 20% Seven Year Bitch. It's tough female vocals over what sounds to me like a Rickenbacker guitar/bass combo with great power and drive and great upbeat tunes delving slightly but seamlessly into a thicker, more modern sound on occasion which really adds something to the overall effect. I think I actually enjoy it more because they're expanding on a basic style without losing anything in the process. 1966 Pacific NW with a touch of 1991 from the same region—sounds strange but it works! Like their label says 'yeah, it's rock' and it sure-as-hell rocks—check it out! (RP)
Yeah, It's Rock PO Box 85775 Seattle, WA 98145

Beowulf Scantron Test/Utah! - Split 7" This is good solid indie rock record. BST reminds me of some of the Elephant 6 bands, real jangly and pretty. The singer's voice sounds like an instrument at first. It took me a while to figure out that she was singing. Utah wins this record though with a very catchy pop song that reminds me of a somewhat toned down cap n jazz, and with more in-tune vocals. Wrapped up with nice cover art, I give this record a B+. (RE)
Soviet Records no address

Bitchy – Black Socks And Happiness, CD More blistering punk, old school hardcore and garage from Thick Records, home of the Blue Meanies. And it's sort of the Blue Meanies alter ego with Chaz, Duff, Lance and Eric (from NIL8). Plenty of rebellion and aggression and if you like Speeddealer and Zeke this is just for you. (DJK)
Thick Records, 409 N. Wolcott, Chicago, IL 60622

Blanks 77 – C.B.H., CD One of the first noticeable things about Blanks 77 is the fake British accent. I say fake because it sounds way too intentional, but then I read that Blanks 77 are a "legendary English punk band." But they're from New Jersey? Irregardless of their home base, "English punk" is a pretty good descriptor for this average drunk punk band with lyrics about alcohol and dysfunction. Lots of choruses, repetition, and slurred screaming. I don't think a musical description is even necessary, though, because the group seems to be more about girls, drinking, and partying than anything else. (PB)
Radical Records, 77 Bleecker St. #C2-21, NYC, NY 10012

Blastcaps - S/T, CD The Blastcaps are a Toronto band that play fast Punk Rock characterized by soulfulness and solid playing/song writing. I liked this CD all the way through, my only complaint is that it ended too soon. This is a great CD for the repeat button. These guys have a neat original style that brings to mind no other bands. The quirky accented vocals are effective and the music is hook and break filled. These hooks and breaks will have you humming this shit all day. There is also a Naked Raygun cover of Rat Patrol that works well with this package. (MY)
POB 24036, 900 Dufferin St., Toronto, Ontario M6H 4H6, Canada

Blindspot, Acceleration Zero, CD Blindspot are a showcase of fun and energetic ska. Some songs are relaxed while others are manic. To be honest, there isn't a whole lot bands can do with this sound these days. However, Blindspot is fortunate enough to have a versatile group of musicians and lyrics that stray from lost love into areas of social and political nature. Ska may be better represented in the live venue, but Blindspot do a decent job of capturing the genre's party nature on record. (PB)
Tomato Head Records, PO Box 61298, Sunnyvale, CA 94088

Blood of Others/D.S.-13 - Split 7" Lyrics to D.S.-13's "Lady Die": 100mph, crashed into a wall/Died at 36, diediediedie. With tunes like that and "I hate Silverchair," how can we lose? Sizable Minor Threat influence (of course they sound nothing like them, though). Fast straightedge hardcore from Sweden - they yell in English. Blood of Others is slower, from Australia, and more political. (RB)
Organic Records, 3 Shinnick St., Dover Gardens, SA 5046, AUSTRALIA

Blush – The Night Sky, CD EP Moody but lush pop with dreamy vocals and enough distortion for the likes of college radio. Includes one quirky loop tune with voice-overs about the dangers of mosquitoes. Let's hope they haven't already run out of ideas. (DJK)
111 Records, 408 N. Bishop, Suite 108, Dallas, TX 75208

Boss 302 - Whatever Happened to Fun?, CD Whatever happened to good music? This kind of garage rock just bores me. It's just no fun at all. It's flat and normal and everything that is wrong with garage rock. I don't know, I guess when I think of garage rock I think of very spastic out of tune nuts music that is insane and fast and Boss 302 don't have any of that. Thumbs down. (RE)
Label Records 11151 Rodeo Circle Parker, CO 80138

Botanica - Malediction, CD Not a punk release. Not an emo or indie release either. I didn't expect to get a moody, almost gothy CD submitted for review in Punk Planet, but I certainly wasn't disappointed. Written and performed almost single-handedly by Paul Wallfisch, Malediction brings to mind the heyday of early 90s modern rock, an era to be welcomed back with loving arms. Kinda makes you all warm and fuzzy with nostalgia...ahhhh. (cak)
Checkered Past Records 1456 North Dayton Suite 205 Chicago, IL 60622

Boxcar Satan – Days Before the Flood, CD The sound of Boxcar Satan is a free-form noise continuum, with the various instruments playing all over the place at once. The slide guitar will stop-and-go as the jazzy drumming pulsates and the low, whisper-like vocals fade in and out. The group, not surprisingly, is influenced by post-punk noisemakers such as Scratch Acid and the Birthday Party. It is a strange combination of rock, punk, blues, and jazz; but the noise on Days Before The Flood is intriguing enough to at least qualify as late-night background music for periods of boredom. (PB)
Compulsive Records, Box 15440, San Antonio, TX 78212

Bozart - Kurth, CD This is a CD re-release of this band's first record. This release is only eight songs long but feels like it's a lot longer. I don't mean that in a bad way at all. These folks write beautifully written instrumental songs. The songs vary from melodic emo type songs, to fuzzed out guitar rockers, to quiet indie rock styled songs. These guys are all about writing great songs with great

Our review policy is very simple: Is your record on an independent label or self-released? We review it. However, that doesn't mean that it gets a good review. If a reviewer likes your record, you get a good review. If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congradulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

structure. I think that words or vocals would actually ruin the songs. Good stuff. (DM)
Frenetic Records PO Box 64034 San Francisco, CA 94164

THE BRADIPOS IV - INSTRO MANIA, CD Instrumental surf in the old 60's vein. Well done but not too exiting. Makes for good party background music. Fun. (JK)
Amerigo Crispi, Via I. Melone- P.zza Crocco 81022 Cassagiove Caserta-Italy

BRANNOCK DEVICE - WHERE THE HELL IS JOHNNY VIC?, CD Cool, clean guitars, driven bass lines reminding one of the late great, Minutemen, only with longer songs. Everything's kind of weird and experimental, but without the boring bullshit that surrounds most newer bands. Only seven songs, but I'm waiting for the next release which will hopefully be a little more vibrant and in your face. Who the hell is Johnny Vic? Question left unanswered. (AS)
Phantom Limb Recordings

BRETHREN – TO LIVE AGAIN, CD Brethren plays rote, metallic hardcore complete with heavy-handed lyrics, dog-paddle beats and slow mosh breaks. Exciting? Nope. (BB)
Ohev 1500 NW Ave #4 Boca Raton FL 33486

BROTHER'S KEEPER/DISEMBODIED - OXYMORON, SPLIT CDEP I still hate split CD's. Ok, that's done with. This CD rocked my poor emo boy bottom, and I loved it! I could never get into hardcore before, it seemed like everything I listened to was derivative crap, or rapcore stuff. This might be as well, there are certain elements that sound like every other hardcore band out there, like the singing which I hate. But these songs actually move, not like that chugga chugga stuff. But what's with the ten minutes of answering machine messages? (ed)
Trustkill Records 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

BUNJIE JAMBO - POTTY KARATE, CD Similar to the Voodoo Glow Skulls only overly perverted. I'm sure this band is huge but I can't get into the trash lyrics. Janeane Garofalo has a great quote which I most likely will butcher, " it's amazing the garbage people are willing to put in their eye, mouth & ear holes". The sad thing is I know the kids will eat this up. (JZ)
Grappler Unlimited, 5000 Euclid Avenue, Suite 211, Cleveland, OH 44103

BUZZKILL - HOUSE OF BAD TOUCH, CD Most of the songs here are of the noisy hardcore punk sort. There's some good variety here even within such a grouping; each song is different and you can't always tell what will come next. These guys are really tight and they have witty lyrics. Here and there they remind me of Murphy's Law, but their original sound shows itself in more than a few places. There are a couple of duds, but I definitely like these guys. My favorite song is "Springer," a song about Jerry's TV show that really stands out from the rest. (BJM)
Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco CA 94141-9092

BY A THREAD - THE LAST OF THE DAYDREAMS, CD Strong, post-punk music that Revelation is specializing in nowadays. The songs are a (good) interesting mix of muting, accents, and rhythm, but there is something about the singer I just can't get into. I think it would be a stronger package if he would push his vocals a little more and they were lower in the mix. It's a little weak the way it is now, and it's hard for me to get past feeling like he likes hearing his own voice (which is intensely annoying and what I consider to be gateway from independent and cheese-rock). You know the story with this label. This is one of their better recent releases of the genre. (DL)
Revelation Records. PO Box 5232. Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

CAPTURE THE FLAG – TIME AND AGAIN, CD Capture The Flag are the reincarnation of a high school pop punk band called the Oven Mitts. Now, the group may have changed their name to something more hardcore-sounding, but much of that high school pop punk sound remains. Granted, the melodic rock style of Midwestern indie rock bands does shine through at points. But, for the most part, Capture The Flag does nothing unique to remove themselves from the catchy pop punk genre. If anything, Capture The Flag not only reflect the fact that they are still teenagers but the fact that only teenagers are willing to listen to this stuff as well. (PB)
Conquer The World, PO Box 40282, Redford, MI 48240

THE CAUSEY WAY - WWCD, CDEP So, what would Causey Way do? Would they release an album full of Devo-esque songs? Would people listen when they exclaim "Science made me a Homo(sapien)?" Would the reviewer like it? No? huh. (ed)
Put It On A Cracker P.O. Box 2944 Gainesville, Fl 32602

CAVITY – WOUNDED, 7" I am real confused about Cavity's line up, especially after that release on Man's Ruin. Where has Rene gone? I fear the worse. But right now I hold in my hands, Cavity material with Rene Barge on it. Sure it might have been recorded in 1995 and 1997, but it is damn good. Is it an accident that Rene and Hyenas' vocalist John Brannon have similar banshee screeches? 4 songs and all are good including the cover of the Germs' Shutdown. One of my faves. (SY)
No! Records, PO Box 14088, Berkeley, CA 94712

CELL BLOCK 5 – KING OF CROWNS, CD This is fast paced, action packed no frills straight-ahead punk rock with slight rockabilly intentions. These guys don't fool around. Eleven songs are blasted through with no stopping. This reminds me of when punk before there was PC and bands wrote rocking songs without having a message but to have a good time. There 's even a tribute song to RKL on this. Fans of Boris, Verbal Abuse, Meatmen, should check this out. Hell, if you want to know what punk was about, check this out. This will be re-released on Industrial Strength Records. (DM)
Kranked Up! Records

CHARLES BRONSON - YOUTH ATTACK!! 10" For all of you who missed out and are sick of paying $40 on Ebay for the original, here is your chance to own a copy of this classic thrasherpiece. Well, maybe. Supposedly this record is only to be released and distributed in Europe. Sure, but you smart kids know which mail-order smugglers have this. Everything is present in this version from content to the poster. You even get a Charlie B sticker not available in the original version. This record sounds better then the LP, thank the Europeans for that. Does this thing even clock in over 10 minutes? Act quick and pick this gem up. 2 months from now half of you will be paying $25 for it on ebay and the other half will be sitting on 20 copies waiting for the auction to end so you can pay rent. (SY)
Coalition Records, Hugo De Grootstraat 25. 2518 EB Den Haag. The Netherlands.

CIRCLE OF DEAD CHILDREN – STARVING THE VULTURES, CD Here are saviors robed in cloaks of blood along with demagogues and bureaucrats at Sunday's service. God is selling your life and there are rivers of Yahweh's golden piss to swim in. Lovely. More metal music about death and punishment with vocals that sound like a 45-rpm record played at half speed. The band states that none of their songs are copywritten so they expect you steal their ideas and show the world how talentless and uncreative you are. I think that says it all. (DJK)
Willowtip Records, 103 David Drive, Butler, PA 16001

COLE – IDEA OF CITY, CD This is a moody indie math rock band. Cole plays music that tends to be a bit heavier then the average math rocker but will also continue with quieter traditional musical progressions that have helped from this genre. The vocals tend to be set back a bit and sound quiet and raspy at times. This is not a ground breaking release but compares well to preexisting bands out there. The kids should dig it. For those about to calculate, math rock salutes you. (DM)
Mood Food 1381 Kildaire Farms Rd. Suite 246 Cary, NC 27511

COLLECTIONS OF COLONIES OF BEES - S/T, CD Occasionally backed by drums, this is mostly solo acoustic guitar. I like this a lot. The guitar playing is solid and (s)he keeps the noodling under control. The stereophonic recording tricks add a new dimension to this, which is a definitive bonus over most guitar-driven records. If your willing to go out on a limb and get something that isn't another rock record that sounds just like the other rock records in your collection, this is a great choice. (DL)
The Rosewood Union. PO Box 20508. London NW8 8WT. England, UK.

COMPUTER COUGAR- S/T, 7" Very few bands in recent years have been as shrouded in secrecy as New York's Computer Cougar. With an ex-member lineup that I'm sure you know about and only a fabled demo released, the rumor mill placed them at the head of the pack before most had heard them. The first peak for the masses at them was a stellar track on last year's "Taking chances on chances" comp. After all of that here is their first seven-inch. The main problem with this record is that it is hard to live up to reputations. No this record isn't bad, in fact it may be one of the better ones released this year, but it could be better. The recording is fairly muddy and the vocals a bit annoying at places. But they know their post-punk history and it shows and if you are interested in intelligent punk rock you should pick this up. (JL)
Gern Blandsten PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661

COSMONAUTI - JUST SURF, CD You guessed it, another surf band. These guys are pretty good, with some very nice guitar work and some very straight ahead laid back surf music. I really liked that they use Vibraphone and Marimba on a few songs, and I liked their cover of "Secret Agent Man". Won't change the world, but good stuff. (ES)
No label address listed, the fan club address is: via Stamira, 15- 00162 Rome-Italy

COUNTDOWN TO PUTSCH- S/T, CD AND BOOK This is impressive. I don't know whether to call this a book/zine with a CD or the other way around. This band has put together not only a twelve-track CD, but also a 100-page book with in depth writing about all sorts of things. There is a lot of political talk in the book but its handled in an intelligent and down to Earth way, making it more approachable than the normal punk political diatribe. The music on the CD is almost as adventurous as the book, crossing genre lines between, experimental/avant jazz and screamy hardcore. It is unfortunate though, that they have to fall back on playing hardcore at all, because the songs where they open up and move into fresh waters are the most appealing on here. All around this is a well-done intelligent project that deserves some attention by any forward-looking punks out there. (JL)
The Mountain Cooperative, PO Box 220320, Greenpoint Post Office, Brooklyn, NY 11222

CREATION IS CRUCIFIXION – AUTOMATA, CD This is a spectacle to generate discourse on what has become known to some as progress. The debates around technology exist within the walls of academia and by representing these ideas to a new audience the band desires to renew the debate before rhetoric maneuvers itself to the center of thought. I have no idea what any of that means. Mostly metal noise with deep and low hell-fire vocals. Didn't frighten me one bit. (DJK)
Willowtip Records (DJK) 103 David Drive, Butler, PA 16001

THE CUTS - HEART ATTACK, 7" Lyres sound, this is good and not your older brother's Lookout Records. Wow! I really, really like this single a lot. Organ driven rock and roll. Yeah! (EA)
Lookout! Records

DEAD MOON - DESTINATION X. CD I am not a Dead Moon fan, but this album has stayed in my player for awhile and it is growing on me. Every time I here Dead Moon I picture some drunks in a bar singing to AC/DC. Its rough and its crude and there is a huge cult following. Really I should be fair, I can dig em at times, its just the vocals you will love or hate. This is their twelfth full length and my favorite part is that they do their own mastering and plating, they own their own mono lathe (that's DIY, you fuckers!) (EA)
Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

DEATH BY NOSTALGIA - THE SCHMEGMA EP, CASSETTE Don't let the "cassette" part deter you from checking this out...the quality is pretty darn good and the overall aesthetics are sweet. Oh, and the music's good too. Keepin'-it-real fast punk without all of the usual cliches and chock of full of positive lyrics. This being the first release from a relatively new band, Death By Nostalgia leave themselves a lot of room to grow without holding back too much. The dynamics could be improved by utilizing the nice contrast of the second vocalist and by chucking the misogynist final song ("All the girls in this town are either fat, taken or lesbian") but, hey, you can't take yourself too seriously, now can you? (cak)
NOLO Records PO Box 3312 York, PA 17402

DEATHREAT – S/T, 7" Oh my. Did somebody say hardcore? Did somebody say super-rad air guitar in your boxers while you do skateboard tricks in your bedroom hardcore? I did! ...and Deathreat served up eight heapin' helpin's. I'll never brush my teeth again for fear I'll lose the taste it left in my mouth. Super-intelligent social commentary lyrics to believe in to boot. Great sounding 45rpm 7". Fast and furious, just how it should be. They smack you upside the head with their 'boards and you beg them for more. Order this, and get the 12" while you're at it. In fact, call up (901)274-4445 and have them play in your backyard by your ramp next time they go out on tour. I'll come over, too; it'll be fun. (RB)
Partners in Crime PO Box 820043 Memphis, TN 38182

THE DENTS – THE END OF ALL CIVILIZATION, 7" The Dents are anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist and anti-fascist and they love you. That's pretty cool; you got to remember the love. That's what I always say. The Music is 1 2 Fuck You Hardcore Punk. This packs eight songs on one seven inch and not a bad one to be found. (JZ)
So Fuckin' What? Records, 253 Alexander Street, Apt. # 322, Rochester, NY 14607

DERAIL – PICTURESQUE, CD Man, this emo rock stuff is really lost on me. When I was younger and I was depressed or feeling overly sensitive about my lot in life, I did not write a song about it. I kept in my pants, junior. Nobody wants to hear your boohooing. I could not tell the difference between good or bad emo on a bet. It is all totally musically bland and uninteresting to me- kind of tuneless, kind of soft then loud, kind of tin ear wailing vocals, kind of slow to mid tempo, definitely tired. I was going to try to write some false novelty lyrics in an attempt to poke fun at Derail but they took care of that for me. "Maybe some day the world will drown in its own tears". They also mention pyrite and cubic zirconia in two different songs. (CJK)
Transit Music. P.O. Box 3617 Laguna Hills, CA 92654

DEXTER – THE WORST YOU CAN DO IS THE TWELFTH ROW, 7". I do not care what the label says, baby, I can not listen to this record at 33 1/3. It is just too damn slow. At 45 rpm, Dexter sounds like what would have been called psychobilly except for the fact that they have more of a surf vibe than the rockabilly thing. But either way, this band from Amsterdam would probably sell its soul to the devil to tour with the likes of the Cramps or maybe the Flat Duo Jets. The record is lofi and punkish but I am not totally convinced it is by necessity but rather a devotion to some sort of trashy aesthetic. It sounds like these cats are real players who are dumbing it down for the punk rock crowd. I would be more convinced by this band if they either really ripped or sucked more. (CJK)
702 Records. P.O. Box 204 Reno, NV 89504.

THE DICKEL BROTHERS - S/T, 7" Early folk or country music from the decades before the 50's. Really no joke - you may have heard em on a split single from the zine Multiball a while back. Empty really went outside the box, and it's a smart choice. I have been reading a lot about the early pioneers of pre-rock and roll and this is the stuff we need to read and listen to. When music was for music sake and nothing else. Oh well, you will probably hate it. Read some Nick Tosches while you listen to the upcoming full length. (EA)
Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

DIVIT - LOW SPEED CHASE, CD Here is a list of bands that divit sounds like, if you dig these bands you might like divit: Bad Religion, Pennywise, No fun at all , No use For a Name, Millincollin, Digger, Strung Out. These bands are more popular than divit. I bet divit likes a bunch of these bands too. maybe you and divit should hang out if they come to your town. They can show you how to jump really high and you can show them where to pick up billabong gear at your local mall. Wicked. (dc)
Coldfront Records PO BOX 8345 Berkley, CA 94707

DODGE DART – SO AMERICAN, CD When I took a quick glance at this CD's anti-American cover, I got all excited that this was a new Doc (Crucifucks) Dart CD! It's not. But this band is pretty fun anyway. This is a collection of 15 very short pop-punk songs that define the term "catchy." The songs "Jesus Ain't My Friend" and "When You're Not Around" have been stuck in my head all week, and I've only heard this thing three times! I usually listen to more aggressive bands than this one, but pop-punk doesn't get much better than this. Highly recommended. (AE)
Raw Power Records, 1636 W. 139th St., Gardena, CA 90249

THE DRAGONS - ROCK LIKE FUCK, CD This San Diego band offers a solid full length of bar punk rock with catchy riffs and decent vocals. An adrenaline charged Stiff Little Fingers instantly comes to mind during the first song, but the farther into listening to this I get the less it reminds me of SLF. Ten songs, with only one of them being a stinker (Sleep When I'm Dead). A good record. (MT)
Junk Records, P.O. Box 1474 Cypress, CA 90630.

THE DRAGS - 45 X 3, CD Here is your chance to own all the Drags' singles on one shiny disc. This is a must have for sure. I loved the last Drags' full length so much it made my top five last year. Like any band, on a singles collection you get all sorts of goodies, try a few covers: Baby Your so Repulsive or Six and Change. This is everything the Drags recorded while Keith was in the band, that didn't appear on the Estrus LP's. Simply put, absolutely essential. (EA)
Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

DRIFTS GET DEEPER/RENO KID - SPLIT, CD Both of these bands play mid-tempo songs with melodic vocals and personal lyrics. Drifts Get Deeper is from Kentucky and Reno Kid is from Germany, but songs about boredom and sadness are universal. This CD ought to suck, but works despite its triteness. Both bands' lyrics are above-average considering the classic subject matter, and there are enough surprises in the music to keep even the most jaded listener interested. (AE)
Nerd Rock Records, PO Box 5159, Louisville, KY 40205

DRUMS AND TUBA – FLATHEADS AND SPOONIES, CD Actually drums, guitar and tuba with some sax, vibraphone and trumpet. Split between Chicago, Austin and New York this trio ultimately creates dense layers of sound that includes everything from trad rock to funk riffs and improvisational jazz. And they've toured stadiums with Ani Defranco this year. One of the most unique bands alive. (DJK)
My Pal God Records, POB 13335, Chicago, IL 60613

EFFERVESCENT - BREAK IT DOWN, CD This is hard to review, because I'm not really into this too much, but I bet a lot of people would be. I'm not sure who I can

compare this to, and I might call it emo, but I am never too confident calling anything emo, mainly because I really am still not sure what constitutes emo. What I can say about Effervescent is that they are hard to define, and that is good. (JK)
Sabertooth Records PO box 27695 Golden Valley, MN 55422

EIFFEL TOWER – EIFFEL TOWER, CD At first I thought I was in for some wacked-out basement Casio keyboard damage from some reclusive weirdo (in other words, I was interested). But about halfway through the first song the cheesy synth-beat was being overrun by too-smooth vocals saying nothing interesting and I realized this thing was way too produced to be gnarly. Soon after this I came to the startling conclusion that this shit could easily be background music on the next Gap commercial—it's like if Smashmouth went to art school. I also can't help but picture this playing at some record store where the clerks are snide art fags with bad haircuts who wear ugly thrift store clothes and glasses with black plastic frames where the vinyl selection consists of two milk crates on the floor under the CD racks and I wanna yell at this fuck because this place sucks so bad and I can't believe I walked all the way down here for nothing and this fucking Eiffel tower CD keeps playing and....WOW! This CD is increasing my hatred of humanity exponentially—TWO THUMBS UP!!!!! (Hmmm, upon reviewing the preceding uh, review, I realized that some people might take offense at the term "art fag", this being Punk Planet and everything, so I apologize for using the word "art" in one of my reviews and I promise that I'll try to avoid this in the future.) (RP)
Monitor PO Box 2361 Baltimore, MD 21203

EMPEROR PENGUIN - EXTREME GAMING, CD Terrible song titles: "Phantom of the Gay Opera," "Glamour Hammer," etc. This is sleazy mid-paced psychedelic funk rock that I imagine would be OK to get stoned to. Either that or get in the mood to clean your house. It's the soundtrack to nothing I want to do right now. (DL)
My Pal God Records. PO Box 13335. Chicago, IL 60613

EMPEROR PENGUIN – EXTREME GAMING, CD Extreme mind-blowing. Extreme samples. Extreme humor. Extreme cool. Emperor Penguin's moog and bleep, lo-fi electronic funkathon provides for some of the best of the lot. (DJK)
My Pal God Records, POB 13335, Chicago, IL 60613

ENDEAVOR – DON'T DIE WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED 1992 - 1998, CD Out of the whole East Coast XXX Hardcore scene of the late 90's, Endeavor is one of the few worth mentioning. Perfect in every sense. Thought provoking lyrics and music heavy as a ton of bricks, this CD is sadly Endeavor's last release and collects all the 7"s and compilation tracks that are rare to the find. Also included for the computer geeks, like myself, is a Quicktime video on the CD interviewing the band and giving a retrospective with live footage. Fast and furious hardcore, and dare I say, essential. (SY)
Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

EULOGY - I HEAR VOICES, CD I am sure these guys do hear voices. This is disturbing, silly, and haunting. I would liken it to ones first day on a Psych ward. This band is really unique and original. I would call them experimental in the same vein as early Butthole Surfers, Helios Creed, Sockeye and Rudimentary Peni without sounding like any of these bands. This is very good stuff. The best thing I got this month. The art is noteworthy for its Nick Blinko like depravity. This is a totally DIY project from the 4-track recording (in unusual locales) to the art & staples. These people are AUDIO terrorists. The vocals drone (in a good way!) the drummer(s) are exceptional and everything else (there's quite a bit) is inventive. This CD is over an hour long! (MY)
Liberation Through Hearing, 224 North Camac St., Phila. PA 19107

EVERGREEN/GHETTO DEFENDANT #4 – SPLIT, 7" I'm taking a stab in the dark and guessing this is a split 7". It's all very unclear that this is even the correct record since I see zero information to let me know what's going on. So my logic goes that the side etched with an "a" from the United plant must be Evergreen and it sound like the noise right before a big storm. The side etched with a "b" should be Ghetto Defendant and it's a slowly winding to a frenzy rock groove number. I feel the power near the end like slow Fugazi song and somehow Jane's Addiction and Led Zeppelin show up later on in the song. (JZ)
Becoming Clear, 2046 Sherwood Ave, Louisville, KY 40205

THE EVERGREEN TRIO – NO TITLE, 7" Here's some emotional indie rock from London. At first I thought it was going to be the run of the mill, slower, pretty emo-rock music, which over the course of time I've seen so much of. Sometimes they all start to blend into one, and I was scared it was happening again, but the space sounds saved it. The man playing keyboard saved the day with interesting enough sounds to make this band one step different from the rest. If you like emo and space sounds, this 7" is worth a shot. (FH)
Rosewood Unit P.O. Box 20508, London, England NW88WT

EVERYONE ASKED ABOUT YOU – SOMETIMES MEMORY FAILS ME, 7" This is the soft, gentle, and casual indie rock that can fill show bills across the country but that can probably never fill clubs with people willing to listen to it. Despite the warmth and youthful energy, the music does very little to grab the listener, and the alternating male/female vocals are more irritating than harmonizing. It isn't that these five kids aren't trying, it is just that they aren't trying anything new. (PB)
Drawing Room, no address

FALL (THE SEASON) - THE '2 TO TOO MANY' EP, CD First song was straight up anarcho punk, yeah, ya know war and death, reminiscent of Conflict somehow, with some pseudo pretty parts thrown in for dynamic's sake. The other 6 tracks are lengthy voyages into emo territory that, while listenable, the overall lengthiness of the songs seemed to diminish their original intent. Also, its religious tinge and the anti abortion song, 'Silent Holocaust of the Unborn' has scared me away from future listening. (AS)
No address

FAMOUS MONSTERS - AROUND THE WORLD..., CD How many surf bands do you need? Well, only one - a bikini clad monster surf band. Collecting some of their early singles this CD is a keeper for your next beach party. Twelve songs and a bonus track of an actual Monster party! What can you say, I know this would be a fun show. (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE FAREWELL BEND - IN PASSING, CD Hey cool, I didn't know Bob Mould had a new band, tee hee. Oh I'm just teasing, despite there being some truly eerie likeness here to good ol' Bob's vocal style and Husker Du to a lesser degree. In Passing even boasts a song titled 'South For the Summer'—sounds a little like 'Celebrated Summer', yes? Hyuk. Heavy comparisons aside, The Farewell Bend are Brandon Butler and John Rejba from Boys Life, and Paul Ackerman from Giants Chair rocking out BBQ-style baby. And while this CD did not make my brain explode in any way, it was at least tolerable cooking music. "This record is palatable in the realm of sound that invokes an assault on the mundane pop rock that exists today." Bio sheets are funny. (PK)
Slowdime, PO Box 414, Arlington VA, 22210

FAVEZ- A SAD RIDE ON THE LINE AGAIN, CD The back of this package reads " We tried to make the following songs as slow and depressing as possible" Huh? What the hell? At first I thought it was a joke until I listened to the CD and they actually must have tried to make this as slow and depressing as possible. A suicide note is supposed to be slow and depressing, a fatal disease is supposed to be slow and depressing, music is not supposed to be slow and depressing. (dc)
No Address (darn it!)

THE FIGHTBACKS – CRY BABY, 7" These four guys make straight-up pop punk—circa the early 90s—without any attempts at innovation or even decent fidelity. It's too bad that the southern California pop punk sound has become as codified and institutionalized as '77 punk. This music is completely static. (BB)
12MFA, INC. PO Box 310 Cherry Valley, IL 61016

THE FIREBIRD SUITE - WAITING FOR YOU TO COME BACK FROM BARCELONA, 7" A short and sweet slab of vinyl by these four lads from Grayslake, Illinois. Kind of romantic, jerky indie-rock with lots of quite specific orchestration going on, cool transitions and sappy guitars. The singer's voice sounds a little like John S. Hall's from King Missile, but without the silliness. I'd be interested in hearing more. (PK)
1484 Cheriton Circle, Grayslake IL, 60030

FIRESIDE – THE FANTASTIC FOUR, CD When Fireside's rhythm section is churning away on some low-frequency riff, the result is reminiscent of early 90s metallic punk like Helmet and Quicksand. Still, there's a slickness to the production here that seems to be yearning for grunge-style superstardom. While these four guys definitely know how to molest a power chord into submission, the results ultimately sound a bit dated. (BB)
Crank! A Record Company 1223 Wilshire Blvd. #823 Santa Monica, CA 90403

FOREVER AND A DAY – WHERE HAS THE PASSION GONE?, CD Very wussy, very poppy pop. These 5 long songs have slight glimmers of charm, but are fairly bland. Not terrible, but nothing to recommend. One lyric reads "last night I worried way too much and my signs, they

never showed me I was in the right." I found that line impossibly hilarious for some reason. (AE)
Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 590833, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33359

FREE YOURSELF – THE HEAD OF TRUTH ON THE BODY OF LIE, CD I do not know what this says about anything but I was trying to figure out where this emo rock band is from while listening to the mid tempo tuneless vocal dissonant rock on this CD. The lyrics are partly in English, German and some language that has its own exotic looking alphabet. Are they from Finland? Norway? Iceland? I do not know because there is no address and I am not so hip to lands outside of the U.S. I was starting to think it was sad that it seems as if most non-American countries know more about our culture than we know about theirs. I have no idea what is going on in Europe and doesn't everybody speak English these days? Free Yourself have a song on this record, "America Lied", where they lash out at the Americanization of the world's culture. They hate Disney, Hollywood, the U.S. military and they even want to take a dump on the statue of liberty. They sing this song in English to the tune of rock-n-roll that was invented in the United States of America. At the beginning of 1999, I vowed to live a life completely free of irony. (CJK)
No Address.

FRENCH KICKS – S/T, CD This band, from New York City, belt out 4 songs on this CD EP. The songs have a "bluesy" feel to them in the way that the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion does, except these songs are slower... too slow. It almost seems as if they are barely dragging along at times, which is a shame, because I can imagine liking all four songs on here if they sped things up double time, especially on the first two songs. That is not the case though, and unfortunately I couldn't really get into this. (MT)
My Pal God Records, P.O. Box 13335 Chicago, IL 60613.

FRIENDS UNSEEN - S/T, 7" Subjugation releases another strong punky-pop record that fits neatly with their other releases. Two strong, female-vocaled songs with a firm pop feel that doesn't get too overwhelming, sappy, or derivative. Sweden has been turning out tons of good bands lately. Good job keeping a balance between raw and polished. My only complaint is that there isn't a lyric sheet. (DL)
Subjugation. PO Box 191. Darlington DLS 8YN, UK

FROM ASHES RISE – S/T, 7" A great hardcore record from Memphis. Flawless and seamless. This young label can't seem to go wrong. Along with the Deathreat 7" (Partners in Crime #1) and E-150, this is the best, thrashinest stuff I've had rumble my floorboards in recent months. These are probably the most exciting discs since "Youth Attack" and the MK Ultra/Seein' Red split. Geez, with this stuff and the new Spazz just out, it's gonna be a hardcore winter of discontent. Bring on the three feet of snow; I can huddle around my stereo listening to From Ashes Rise 'til spring. (RB)
Partners in Crime PO Box 820043 Memphis, TN 38182

FRONTSIDE – S/T, CD Frontside are a hardcore band with their guitars tuned down to D, some amateurish metal riffing that I sometimes like and personal lyrics. The below average sound quality of the recording really takes away from the songs, unfortunately. All the songs have a very similar formula - slow metal part, fast parts with vocals sung over them, slow riffy "mosh" part... The order might be mixed up a little, but that seems to be the formula they like. There are two vocalists, although I might not have noticed without looking at the booklet. The booklet also has pictures of young boys jumping, screaming, and with X's on their hands. Three or four of the best songs on here would have made a pretty good 7" single. Unfortunately, this is an 8 song CD. Oh well. (MT)
Sinister Label, P.O. Box 1178, LaGrange Park IL 60526.

THE FROSTED AMBASSADOR – S/T, CD What you have here is Circus Techno New-wave mishmash from this unit with no information and fill in the blank song titles. (JZ)
Kindercore Records, PO Box 461, Athens, GA 30603

THE GET-UP KIDS - RED LETTER DAY, CD With The Promise Ring getting all sappy on their new record (albeit sappy in a pretty brilliant way), it's good to know that emo's other grandmasters haven't forsaken their miserable roots. This new Get-Up Kids EP is what the genre is meant to be: break up songs. Loud and lonely, melodic and maudlin break-up songs. This record hits all the right notes, cathartic and catchy, dramatic and danceable. And even if she didn't rip your heart out and trample all over it, you've still got to appreciate lines like, "I wonder when I wander home, if I'll be fit to drink alone." (DAL)
Doghouse, P.O. Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623

GLUECIFER – HEAD TO HEAD BOREDOM, CD As I understand it, these Norway natives are on a mission to become the "Kings of Rock". They've already conquered most of Europe, and with Head To Head Boredom (plus several other releases, including a Sub Pop single and a split 7" with Electric Frankenstein) they begin their campaign in the USA. And "rock" is indeed their style – hard rock, to be exact. If you've heard the early Buckcherry singles on the radio lately, then you have an idea of where Gluecifer is coming from. Only Gluecifer is much rawer, with some punk roots, wailing guitars, and none of that polished rock shit. Just plain, grass roots explosive rock n' roll. (PB)
Devil Doll Records, PO Box 30727, Long Beach, CA 90853

THE GIRLS - THINGS ARE GETTING WEIRD TONIGHT, CD I guess this is kind of original, in that, rather than being bad, derivative music in one fashionable style, this is bad and derivative in several different styles. It starts with bad honky tonk rock, then moves into bad indie rock, bad beer commercial hard rock, and finally bad pop ballad. Also, there's something shady about the packaging, it looks very slick in a costly way, and there's no record company given. Sounds like a scam indie. (DAL)
1729 S. Halsted 2F, Chicago, IL 60608

GODOT – S/T, CD Four heartfelt songs by this indie-rock trio hailing from Williston Park, New York. Perfect hazy and sloping songs to accompany the thick summer heat. The lazy drums sound on 'Your Hands' is so nice and relaxing. They even unabashedly namedrop Curious George in a song title. The vocals are a mite lawnmower-esque for my taste but not bad overall. Nice lil' sampling of this band's sound on this EP. (PK)
Waiting For, 36 Dartmouth St., Williston Park NY, 11596

THE GODSHATEKANSAS, CDEP I've listened to this a number of times but can't seem to pin-point what exactly it is that they are doing. Heavy bass riffs, melodic guitar parts and vocals that are shouted with a little bit of melody. At times it feels a little like Fuel and other heavier post-punk east coast bands from the early 90's. It took me a few listens and I think this band needs to grow some more musically but they are definitely doing something good. (RE)
New Disorder Records 445 14th St. San Francisco, CA 94103

GREEN MEANS GO – HANGIN' WITH YOU, 7" Two songs of straightforward Garage Rockabilly that's really over before it really starts. Better than average but less than four minutes of music total. (JZ)
Flare Records, PO Box 423748, San Francisco, CA 94142

THE GR'UPS - BUILDINGS ARE THE PURTIEST TREES I'VE SEEN, 7" Recorded in 1993, the Gr'ups featured members of Blatz and personally I liked me better. Get this because before the Criminals existed this transition is essential stuff. The play between the male and female vocals are ground breaking and easily owe credit to John Doe and Exene of X. There is intelligence on this record if you are paying attention. (EA)
No! Records PO Box 14088 Berkeley, CA 94712

THE GR'UPS - S/T, 7" This must be a repress - on a different label. It's the classic record with Anna Joy & Jessie Luscious from Blatz, Matt Freeman (on guitar here) of Operation Ivy and Rancid, and Kamala on drums. (The name of the bass player doesn't look familiar.) East bay all stars doing a very worthy project that's a slight removal from what you'd necessarily expect from that part of the world. You can sense a bit of a rockabilly, or even *country,* rhythm underneath some of it. It's pretty good, but like I said, it's nothing new. This originally came out about six years ago. Blatz fans might want to snatch this up in case it disappears again. (RB)
No! Records P.O. box 14088 Berkeley, CA 94712

GUNSPIKING - S/T, 7" This Pittsburgh five-piece cranks out quite a few beats-per-minute with their spazzy, stop-start crust hardcore. Over the course of four mid-fidelity songs, the band's dual guitar counterpoint often sounds as progressive as their vocals are discordant. If it appears that GunSpiking grew up listening to a whole lot of bad hardcore, then they've also created something relatively intriguing in spite of it all. (BB)
27 Welsford St. #2 Pittsburgh, PA 15213

GUY SMILEY – ALKALINE, CD Over the past six years, Guy Smiley have conquered the Canadian music scene and slowly set their sights on the United States and Europe. In fact, over the past few years tour mates have included Ten Foot Pole, The Misfits, 22 Jacks, and H2O. With Alkaline, Guy Smiley have taken their punk/metal sound and fused it with a driving post-hardcore rock sound. The heavy guitars, driving bass, pounding drums, and mean-tempered vocals are still present, but the sound has a definite rock element on this new album. However, although the production quality is superb, it is still apparent that to truly experience the power and excitement of this band the live venue is the only way. (PB)
Devil Doll Records, PO Box 30727, Long Beach, CA 90853

GUYANA PUNCH LINE – MAXIMUM SMASHISM, CD This is the best parts taken from both Antischism and In/humanity. Chaotic hardcore with great lyrics. As

In/Humanity lyrics were always political and insightful, there was also a sense of humor at the same time. That feeling is present here. The guitar playing is similar to what Kevin was doing in Initial State and .Fuckingcom and it goes off even more. How much further down will his guitar tune? The rhythm section is tight, providing cohesion and in the end you have 10 great songs. Another fine Prank release. (SY)
Prank, PO BOX 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892

HELLWORMS – GLAMOROUS DRUG PROBLEM, 7" The Hellworms rose from the grave of Saturn's Flea Collar, which rose from the grave of Victims Family. Best I can tell this is the latest collaboration of guitarist/vocalist Ralph Spight and bassist Larry Boothroyd with Jihad Babylon on drums. They continue in the fashion of Victims Family with eardrum-blasting hardcore and they're loud as ever. The record was recorded in five measly hours at Goldentone Studios in Gainesville, FL. Includes three songs: "Best Laid Plans," "Microdot Stew," and "Glamorous Drug Problem" and comes in fold-out sleeve on orange and red vinyl. (DJK)
Let Them Eat Records, 3288 21st Street, #144, San Francisco, CA 94110

HER SPACE HOLIDAY – THE ASTRONAUTS ARE SLEEPING (VOLUME 2), CD This is Marc Bianchi's (Audio Information Phenomena) solo project and features dreamy, lush, hypnotic pop music. Perfect for that 3AM spin after a hard night out on the town. "The Astronauts are Sleeping Vol. 1" will be released through Skylaboperations. (DJK)
No Karma Recordings, POB 71203, Milwaukee, WI 53211

HER SPACE HOLIDAY - THE ASTRONAUTS ARE SLEEPING (VOLUME 1), CD This is the first of a two-volume set of experimental, lo-fi recordings by a fella named Marc Bianchi. The work has an appealingly mellow, ambient quality. At its best it's bleak, stark, and haunting. The first couple of tracks remind me of the soundtrack to a Hal Hartley film. The last track is a 20 minute live recording of Marc and his guitar in his backyard amidst fourth of July fireworks and evening background music. Spooky stuff. (DAL)
Skylab Operations, P.O. Box 4376, Salisbury, NC, 28145-4376

HERS NEVER EXISTED - A STATIC STATE OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, CD It would be pretty hard to review this twenty-five minute full-length without name-checking Slant 6 or Sleater Kinney. However, despite the aural resemblance, this female trio explodes in ways unheard from the aforementioned bands; their songs distort and sometimes flirt with early 80s hardcore, while still remaining melodic. (BB)
New Disorder Records 445 14th St. San Francisco, CA 94103

THE HIDDEN CHORD - S/T, 7" Yes, rock and roll ala Australia. This is great shit. Get this after you have worked through Radio Birdman and the Saints, etc. Both songs make a true classic rock and roll single. Way to go, and we look for more soon. (EA)
Modern Radio PO Box 8886 Minneapolis, MN 55408

THE HIDDEN CHORD – NO TITLE, 7" These guys kick so much ass! It's the perfect mix of in your face rock and pop. The songs are catchy enough to dance to and rockin' enough to make people want to rip their clothes off. I would recommend this to everybody. I have a feeling that The Hidden Chord could quickly become one of my favorite bands. Oh, and did I mention that it has some of the best design work that that I've seen in a long time. Order this now and cherish it! (FH)
Heart of Champion PO Box 3861 Minneapolis, MN 55403

I.C.U. - MAD TRUTH, CD So this must be the band that made the K records ICU change their name. It's too bad because this I.C.U. is terrible. I thought, from the dark and moody cover, that this might be good metal, but no I was wrong. The music is slow and sludgy and very alternative. Fuzzy guitars, bad solos, and slow, bad female vocals. Maybe this rocks some hessian kids world out there. I dunno. In my book it gets a big thumbs down. (RE)
Radical Records 77 Bleeker St NYC, NY 10012

THE ICARUS LINE - RED AND BLACK ATTACK, CDEP Scream, rest, repeat. I'm sensing an attempt at the Swing Kids in spots. It's not happening, though. Pretty decent, but not exactly very original. I'm a little bored with this stuff right now. Four screamo-emo assaults. (RB)
New American Dream PO box 265 Balboa Island, CA 92662

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE/KID CITY - SPLIT, 7" Two songs each from two good bands from Portland that no longer exist. IOA play one slow emo song and one song with cool screamed hardcore vocals. KID CITY is better and sound like Blatz in the crazier sections of their songs. Not a bad record at all. (AE)
Octopus Head Records, 532 Elmwood Rd., Pownal, ME 04069

INSURANCE RISK – HOW MUCH MORE, 7" Insurance Risk are a fast and furious hardcore group from Norway. If you listen to a lot of material from this part of Europe, you will understand the influence that early hardcore groups such as SSD have on the region. The shouted, often background-sounding vocals carry many tongue-and-cheek messages about such things as the hardcore scene itself. The group is no longer, but this 7" documents what they call "emotion in an aggressive way" (rather than "aggression in an emotional way"). (PB)
Crucial Response, Kaisersfeld 98, 46047 Oberhausen, Germany

INTEG2000/FEAR TOMORROW – SPLIT CDEP Well, Integ2000 is the reformed Integrity with a new name and a slightly more metal sound. I wonder if they'll have to change their name every year now. On this split, they have one thrash metal type song and one slow, plodding song with some faint noise in the background. Not quite as good as their older stuff. Fear Tomorrow play 3 songs of pretty good Integrity influenced hardcore. Fast, mean and chunky, just how I like my women. So if you like Integrity, you have 2 reasons to buy this. (NS)
East Coast Empire P.O. Box 7295, Prospect, CT 06712

ISIS – THE RED SEA, CD 3 new songs from Isis and a reissue of their demo tape, all on one shiny piece of technology. Isis have the heaviness and repetition of the Swans while keeping up the speed and sludge of the Melvins. Real pronounced hits with crazed guitar parts. Oh yeah, this is Aaron from the Hydrahead label's band. Does that mean since he puts great records, that he can also write great songs? Hey, smarts is smarts. The demo material steps back before their Mosquito Control recording and is almost reminiscent of EyeHateGod. A flawless release. (SY)
Second Nature PO Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138

JACKASS - WHERE TRUTH IS A BEACON, CD Strange name for a band like this. The name lacks pretense but the band is full of it. I won't call this indie rock; there is no rock to it, other than the fact that it is a band with guitars, bass, and drums. Souless, wimpy, pretentious indie music for people who have no taste. The beautiful and fashionable "indie rockers" of the world might dig this; it has no groove and one cannot dance to it. (BJM)
Smilex, PO Box 3662, Los Angeles CA 90078

JAMES DEAD - REVENGE, CD The riff that opens the album is sort of like the riff to "Hungry Wolf" by X, but not as good, leading me to think that the whole record would follow a similar pattern. As it turns out, they actually sound sort of like The Humpers, but not as good. A pretty generic and uninspired record. (DAL)
Dry River Bed, 5425 E. Broadway Blvd., #192, Tucson, AZ 85711

THE JAMONS - BEAUTY BRAVURA, CD Listening to this I was swept up by nostalgia and taken back across calendar years and freeway miles to the suburban sprawl of my youth. Why is this having such an effect on me, I wondered? Why is it making me think so vividly of high school? I took a second look at the cover, and it hit me. Holy shit, I was in this band! I don't know if Punk Planet has a conflict of interest policy, but I think I can be objective, especially since I only played guitar for a primordial version of the group for one afternoon about five years ago (I bailed before the band's first show at the now-defunct LA institution of Dizzy Debby's). Anyway, they've come a long way since then, coalescing into a tight, energetic foursome with some pretty well-crafted songs. Their creativity seems restricted by the ska-pop genre, which is getting pretty tired, but if you've got to play that kind of music, they play it the best way possible - unpretentiously, and unabashedly youthfully. Props to Brandt for sticking with it for so long and making it happen. (DAL)
Tomato Head Records, P.O. Box 61298, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1298

JEFF MUELLER - FOLD AND PERISH, CD Seven songs of minimalist acoustic, drumless dribble that make my early Donovan records sound like Chuck Berry. Quiet, brooding and insulting. How did this ever make it to a zine called 'punk planet'. One of the songs uses lyrics from a June Of 44 song, which I probably wouldn't have liked either. Best left to friends and family members as it only appears to be background music to my disturbed mind. (AS)
Monitor, PO Box 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203

JERK WITH A BOMB – DEATH TO FALSE METAL, CD I'm going to begin this off by being non-judgmental and telling what the sound of the band is. If you make a compilation with the Pouges, Bare Naked Ladies, and early Promise Ring, you get this band. When I say compilation, I mean it. They don't sound like the previous bands mixed, but depending on which song you listen to, it could sound like one of these bands. They really don't do any one of them justice either. With an album title such as

"Death to false Metal," I was expecting something a bit harder, only to be let down with what was described above. In a final note, the third track on the album is called, "Skagit County." I played this song for my roommate who happens to be from that very county, and he was sorely disappointed. The positive thing I can say is that I really enjoyed the layout of the album. At least that's something. (FH)
Seven Segment 1682 Frances St. Vancouver, BC V5L124

JEWELED HANDLES- S/T, CD Who the fuck do these guys think they are? Hippy jam music. I'm not kidding. Maybe they thought they were sending their CD to Funk Planet? (AE)
Sixgunlover, 3203 Overcup Oak, Austin, TX 78704

JIMMY & DEREK - THE WISDOM OF NATE BYRD 7" A disturbing fantastic bunch of music. Hand-packed four song vinyl. The band only has two members .I would assume that they are jimmy and Derek but it says they are "robodonkey" and "the beast" . Robodonkey plays keyboard and the beast plays bass, I think they both sing. Sound strange yet? It gets better. Three of the four songs are about girls named Beth not just one girl named Beth but three separate girls named Beth. The other song is called "tell me you like to get cranked" But that's not all. Along with the packaging they also included nude photos of this really ugly skinny red head guy who looks like he is about fourteen. Why? I don't know. But I do know the music actually rocks. No shit. How they make two instruments turn out such good shit I don't know but they fucking go off. It's not core or emo or punk or anything its just really weird and it is swell. I would love to see it live. Highly recommended. Plus it's only two bucks.(dc)
Freckles vs. Acne records 1602 Walker St. Greensboro, NC 27403

JOHN Q. PUBLIC/THE MUTHAFUCKIN BROWNS - SPLIT, 7" Both of these bands kick out fast and overdriven pop punk. Whereas John Q. Public offers sensitive Jawbreakeresque ruminations on relationships gone awry, the Muthafuckin Browns don black ski masks and cover The Misfits' "Bullet." (BB)
Middle Man Records PO Box 4606 Lafayette, IN 47903

JUMPIN' BEANS AND THE MOUSTACHES – STRYCHNINE, 7" The recording of this 7" sounds very unique and I'd like to try and explain how this result was achieved. First, the band went into their garage (as in garage rock) where their instruments and practice amps were set up. A cassette recorded was propped up on a chair to provide optimum sound quality. Then a band member, or perhaps a friend, cautiously pressed the "play" and "record" buttons simultaneously. The band played through their two songs, with a vacuum or air conditioner providing back up vocals, and someone pressed the "stop" button. They then put the unintelligible finished product on a record for me to enjoy. (NS)
Ball P.O. Box 152, Gardiner, ME 04345

JUMPIN' BEANS AND THE MOUSTACHES - AROUND AND AROUND B/W MEMPHIS, 7" If Chuck Berry was dead, he would be rolling over in his grave every time these atrocious covers were played. But since he is still alive and kicking, it is our duty as Americans to make sure that he never hears this rubbish. (cak)
No contact information

JUNIOR COMMUNIST CLUB - FREEDOM OF SPEED, CD Cool name for a band, it's too bad that they suck. Apparently this group did some music for a Volkswagen (is that how it's spelled?) commercial and their whole CD sounds like it was made to be used in car commercials. Vaguely techno sounding with a laid back, "buy cars" kind of feel, I would only recommend this to people who like crap. (JK)
Scientific Records, 231 W.96th St. Suite 3C NY, NY 10025

THE KENMORES – NOW OR NEVER, CD First of all, the back of this CD needs to go. It appears to be a picture of the band drinking "40's" and smoking "blunts". Come on guys. It's 1999. Well, if that picture was a throwback to earlier times, so is the music. These guys remind me of early 90's pop punk, like early Alligator Gun or Gameface. Although I've just compared them to 2 bands, they're pretty unique in relation to most current Nofx clones or "emo" pop punk bands. Mid to fast tempo songs without the galloping drums and well sung vocals that aren't nasally, whiny or annoying. I think I prefer their slower songs. Not too shabby. (NS)
Eugene Records P.O. Box 1981, Lexington, KY 40588

THE KENMORES – NOW OR NEVER, CD After the first listen, it became apparent that The Kenmores meet the same standards that other indie bands have easily achieved, but they do very little to break the mold. Melodic, catchy pop punk that has jumped to the airwaves (and even television sets) in the form of Lagwagon and others. It takes a lot more effort to make the punk sound appealing these days, and The Kenmores just don't seem to be willing to go that extra mile. (PB)
Eugene Records, PO Box 1981, Lexington, KY 40588

KEYSER SOZE – THE IMAGES WE SEE, CD This stuff is out there. Keyser Soze are all over the place with music styles borrowed from rock, death metal, grind, HC, and punk. I guess they have all the bases covered, huh? This is loud and rocking but doesn't do too much for me. Bands that expand ones sound is good, but when you're trying to get a hard hitting sound, a more focused direction is needed unless it is blended very well. These guys' next release will probably be huge. These guys are probably a powerhouse live though. But if you dig early Ex –Ignota with a bit of rock and HC, this may be for you. (DM)
Keyser Soze 1024 73rd Way North Minneapolis, MN 55444

KILLSWITCH, S/T, 7" Did I say that San Francisco punk was dead? Let me take that back! Killswitch is speedy punk with a nice raw edge which is quite an agreeable treat for the ears despite the somewhat lackluster lyrics. Imagine a world where Gwen Stefani is in a real punk band and there you have Killswitch. (cak)
Firmament PO Box 420484 San Francisco, CA 94142

KISS IT GOODBYE – CHOKE, CD EP Forming out of the ashes of Deadguy, Kiss It Goodbye put out a great album many years ago. Then they moved to Seattle and disappeared. Guitarist Keith Huckins, parted ways back east and a new guitarist was enlisted. Regardless, this recording has none of the intensity or riffage present on She Loves Me... Two songs are taken from the "Target Practice" 7" and are decent. I believe Keith still played guitar then. The other songs were recorded for a failed Sub Pop 7" with a new guitarist right before the band called it quits. Take away the great riffs that once defined Kiss It Goodbye, and all you have is another shitty metal band on Revelation. (SY)
Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

KISS THE CLOWN - PRETTY PARANOIA, CD Fifteen tracks of MTV ready, if MTV still played music, at-rock with somewhat punk leanings, complete with slower ballady type songs. Lyrically, personal and confused and seems to have more in common with Everclear than Green Day. This will not make lawn mowing in the suburbs any more pleasant. (AS)
Rotten Records, PO Box 2157, Montclair, CA 91763

KOKOSHKAR/ALLAH AKBAR OVERDRIVE - SPLIT, CD This split CD from Australia boasts two bands that never should have split he same album. Their sounds are so different and varying that the switch back and forth every other song just ends up confusing and disappointing the listener. I have to admit, I really liked Kokoshkar's songs. They would flow in and out of sounding like either Unwound or Sleater-Kinney. The combination of which make for some damn good moments. Allah Akbar Overdrive's sound was a false attempt at being metal or hard-core in some way. I just couldn't get into what they were doing. It's worth a shot for the Kokoshkar stuff. (FH)
Organic Records c/o Clarrendon Post Office, Clarendon, South Australia 5157

KOT - PORK FLAVOUR, CD Man, what can I say about this? Well, it's weird and it's Japanese, it has a picture of a ceramic cat on the cover and the first track is 22 minutes long and consists mostly of sounds of footsteps echoing in hallways and people muttering things in Japanese. The actual music which is on this is really pretty cool, very bass driven, with cool trumpet flares thrown in for good measure. While I can't understand a word he says, the singer has a good voice which is interesting even if you can't understand the lyrics. There must be something in the water in Japan which breeds weirdness and creativity, because stuff from Japan is always crazy but at the same time very very cool. Check this out if you get a chance. (JK)
Jivenska 1294, Praha 4, 140 00, CR

KURT – SCHESAPLANA, CD YES! Finally something that rocks! First off, the only thing remotely clueing you in to what's contained on this CD is the fact that it's on X-Mist—the packaging is stupid glossy postcard pictures of mountains and flowers—ugh. This is truly excellent catchy, raw interesting early 90' s-style hc—my best comparison would be a more-intense and powerful Universal Order Of Armageddon, which I think is really saying something. It never quiets or slows down, the songs just find their groove and beat you over the head with it, which is what punk rock is supposed to be about anyway. The lyrics are useless but who listens to this type of shit to obtain profound wisdom? Yup, melodic, rockin, interesting guitar bits but most importantly IT DOESN'T LET UP FOR A FUCKING SECOND—THIS RULES!!! (RP)
Kurt c/o Denis Erath Hoberten 9 78664 Mariazell, Germany

LANDSPEEDRECORD - THE CORPORATE SECRET, CD "Interoffice copulation the fax machine makes love to me, I didn't mean to lick your nameplate..." These are the

first words from this new wave singers big fat mouth. I could totally see these guys on MTV in 1982 in space outfits, unmoving with sunglasses and big hair. They cover the Three Shadows Pt. 3 by Bauhaus. I disliked this and it pains me to describe the music. The singer reminds me of the guy from the Talking Heads if that singer was higher pitched and pretentious. The music is struggling to get across emotion in a fucked up rock opera manner (Do you guys have a play set to this CD?) In other words it is unnecessarily tense and atmospheric when it is not cheesy new wave. Self Indulgence. Don't even get me started on the title track. (MY)

Resin Records, POB 5601, Washington DC, 20016-1201

LANGHORNS - CLUB GABARDINO, CD This three-piece hales from Sweden and plays some very fine instro surf music. I've received a lot of surf this month, and this definitely rocks the hardest out of them all. It's good to see a surf band that focuses on the music rather than on creating some stupid gimmick. Recommended. (JK)

Bad Taste Stora Sodergatan 38, 222 23 Lund, Sweden

LEGION - HELL AT LAST, 7" I really like this record but I am trying to figure out how many times I will listen to it. It is some great thrash core with doom ridden and religion-hating lyrics. The riffs are quite memorable and I can appreciate the speed. Legion are reminiscent of Logical Nonsense and that is praise. Still how many records like this do I already own? (SY)

Ugly Pop Vinyl, 2 Bloor St. West, Suite 100, Box 477. Toronto, Ontario M4W 3EZ Canada

LOS CRUDOS – CRUDOS LAST STAND, LP To this day, Crudos is the best band I have ever seen live, yet E-150 comes in real close. This is a bootleg of the last Los Crudos show at the Fireside Bowl in Chicago and it sounds like total shit. If you listen close you hear Crudos play an emotional and intense set, but this recording is barely listenable. The liner is an explanation of the show, and Martin's words are transcribed. The packaging looks good too. Yet even with the color vinyl, this thing has no reason to exist. It is no wonder that this is a total boot, and it is funny how the matrix numbers are scratched off, yet the kid put Martin's address on it. Pretty tacky and this boot gets no props from me. (SY)

Don't know, the usual online hardcore mail-order services?

LINSAY KILLED ENFOLD – THE FIRST IS THE FIRST...THE SECOND IS A NOBODY, 7" A new Per Koro release, home of the 7" for bands like Forced To Decay, Dead Beat and Lebensreform. This five song hardcore release at 33 rpm comes directly out of the old school where they taught the band how to sound the same on every song. Superb packaging though, including a song booklet and promotional materials. (DJK)

Per Koro Records, Marcus Haas, Fehrfeld 26, 28203 Bremen, Germany.

THE LOUDMOUTHS - GET LIT!, CD The Loudmouths are snotty, they are rude, crude and tattooed. Gotta love the attitude and the chops to back it up. Anyone who has had the chance to meet these two girls and guy would know how nice they really are. I have always loved their singles and this LP is no disappointment at all. We only get one cover, the Rocks. The first thing I always do when I get a Loudmouths release is to find out what they are covering. You probably already know if you will like this. (EA)

702 Records PO Box 204 Reno, NV 89504

LUCKIE STRIKE - HAVE YOU SEEN ME? 7" This is a decent 4 song 7" from this northern California band. This is what I remember Tilt sounding like, especially in the vocals department. I haven't heard anything from Tilt since their first record, so if they're a lot different not, the above comparison might not apply... but yeah. Rocking pop-ish punk with female vocals that are sung, not screamed. Four songs, one of the is instrumental, and one is recorded live (which almost makes this sound like a different band because the vocals are so screamed and strained). Not horrible. (MT)

Tomato Head, P.O. Box 61298 Sunnyvale, CA 94008-1298.

LUGNUT - ...LIKE THE DICKENS..., CD The year was 1989 and I was in my first year of college wanting to be the next Dick Clark. While doing my shift at the college radio station I came across something by the band the Swirling Eddies call "Hide the beer, the Pastor's here". It was my first glimpse of a foreign circle of music that was called "contemporary Christian" music. If they are the pioneers of all this hoopla, I have no clue. I was also made aware the music I enjoy is labeled "secular". It makes it sound dirty, huh? lugnut plays fast simple songs to stir up the hyperactive mosh-pit kids. There has got to be some real deep pockets in "God Rock". (JZ)

Screaming Giant PO Box 101, Dana Point, CA 92629

MALCONTENT - 1, CD I had no idea hardcore could be this....boring. I'm sorry, but this stuff is kind of pretentious and slow. I think they're trying to be emocore, but it's not working. The singing is terrible(ok I hate HC singing anyway, but this...) I think it's the feedback parts that get to me. I mean, technically it's an ok album, some of the guitar parts are actually quite nice, but when you mix it together....blah. But the lyrics to the last song "bleach" are funny, it sounds like they're making fun of Nirvana. (ed)

Malcontent P.O. Box 787 McMinville, OR 97128

MATT MATEUS - THE YEAR OF SINKING SHIPS, CD This is a full length CD of very pleasant, slow, sad songs. Matt Mateus used to be in an emo band called The Stella Brass. With this new project of his, he uses string accompaniment along with piano and guitar to set the somber tone that is prevalent throughout the whole CD. Nice. (MT)

Rosewood Union, P.O. Box 20508 London NW8 8WT, England, UK.

THE MEDEA CONNECTION – THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE LP, CD Medea helped Jason and the Argonauts steal the Golden Fleece. Pretty exciting stuff. The Medea Connection is a rock band that fuses elements of metal and punk to make some of the best noise of its kind. There are plenty of melodies, vocals that remind of Jack Logan (really), and guitar shrieks and drum blasts that as a whole sound like a hell of a lot more than a group of just two. (DJK)

The Medea Connection, 242 Lexington St. #1, East Boston, MA 02128

MERCURY - WINTER, CD Mercury has created a fairly unparalleled musical universe: dark, brooding rock in collision with old analog synths. In their more aggressive moments, this quintet has a pronounced early 80s gothic rock accent, which is slightly reminiscent of the VSS (sans the irony). While in their quieter moments, Mercury incorporates Rachels' pianistic arabesques into their emotional murk. The overall presentation of this unusual music—cover art and packaging included—is impressive. (BB)

Sign Language Records PO Box 9 Puyallup, WA 98371

METROSCHIFTER – STRAWBERRIES, CD EP Louisville's Metroschifter is back with their fourteenth release in just five years. Lots of electronic sequencing and beats make for their most accessible record yet. Includes a long version of "My Old Kentucky Home". I think they're big in Japan, too. (DJK)

Doghouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623

MICROMARS – INTERNATIONAL POP MODULATIONS, CD "Hi. My name is Andre. Let me tell you a little about myself. I like swing dancing, hanging out at cocktail bars and going to museums. I'm really into France and French culture too. I'm a computer programmer right now, but I'd really like to work on my art full-time. I design sculptures out of old computer parts and things I find in the trash, or at rummage sales. I just made a really great piece out of a Garfield phone, some elbow macaroni and a tennis racket. Musically, I'm very eclectic. I like rockabilly, ambient, jazz, classical, all types of stuff. Oh, and I really like Micromars." Don't be this guy. (NS)

AudioInformationPhenomena 1625 Oakwood Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403

MILEMARKER - FUTURE ISMS, CD Pounding, nearly industrial sounding, mix of guitars, bass and keyboards with spoken/shouted vocals that could be better appreciated if they were higher up in the mix. Also contains some CD-ROM live videos that give you a better idea of what their destruction is all about. If the songs were just catchier, I could have really enjoyed this more. (AS)

Milemarker, 307 Blueridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27510

A MINOR FOREST - SO WERE THEY IN SOME SORT OF FIGHT?, DOUBLE CD All too often experimental indie music is too esoteric to be listenable, but this is not the case with A Minor Forest. A collection of the now defunct band's unreleased material, the songs are refreshingly unique without compromising the musicianship and songwriting that make this release so stellar. These guys have been compared to Slint on more than one occasion, but only because AMF's sound leaves you tongue-tied when trying to do it proper justice. (cak)

My Pal God Records PO Box 13335 Chicago, IL 60613

MOLOTOV COCKTAIL – UNITED COLORS OF POVERTY AND SHAME, CD This is the after school special version of punk rock. It is like the Dead Milkmen except that Molotov Cocktail is serious. This poser New York trio plays three chord, up-tempo, street and drunk punk. Ridiculous. This has absolutely no validity in 1999. The record has songs about MTV, China, the FCC, cops, TV talk shows, part time punks, the environment, TV again, alcohol, aliens and the scene. Is this a joke or I am just dense? I would be really embarrassed to get up in front of people and play such uninteresting music. I bet that the guys in Molotov Cocktail feel real rebellious compared to the other accountants at the office. The disc ends with a half hour loop of a Latin groove and a repeated utterance of the word "motherfuckers" that was more interesting than the entire rest of the record put together. The back cover art by Eric Roper is top notch. (CJK)

CBGB Records, Ltd. 315 Bowery New York, NY 10003

THE MONTGOMERY CLIFFS – MILLENNIUM: A POP OPERA, CD Pure pop spiked with 70s style power chords and vocals that recall early-period Elvis Costello. The Cliffs have advanced far beyond their debut "Andiamo." And this one really is a concept album and it works amazingly well. (DJK)
RPM USA Records, POB 10216, Baltimore, MD 21234

MONTH OF BIRTHDAYS - LOST IN THE TRANSLATION, CD This album blew me away the minute the first track began playing. Think mellower, later years Fugazi with female vocals, throw in some Joan of Arc and a touch of Blonde Redhead and you've got them. The vocals and lyrics are amazing and intricate. She has an incredible voice. As the album goes on, it just gets more and more interesting musically. They'll take you from a soft perspective and push you into a touch of solid rock without even realizing it. To only make things better, the packaging is fantastic. It's simple, but pushes the meaning of expression by printing everything in Braille as well as print. They follow this up by talking about the importance of expression on the inside. A worth while choice, check it out. (FH)
Subjugation, PO Box 191, Darlington, Dl138yn, England

THE MOPES - ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN, CD It has members of Screeching Weasel and the Queers in it, do I need to say anything more? (EA)
Lookout! Records

THE MERCURY PROGRAM / VERSAILLES - SPLIT, 7" I have been enjoying the stylings of The Mercury Program. Minimal and dynamic without getting boring, it's a trained skill. Only one song? Versailles remind me of Sonic Youth. Rhythm driven with noises and guitars laid on the top. Droning and good, Versailles is awesome. A good 10 minutes worth of music. (SY)
Boxcar Records, PO Box 1141, Melbourne, FL 32902-1141

THE MR T. EXPERIENCE - ALCATRAZ, CD MTX is back with another album full of pop songs to chew gum and nod your head to. Unfortunately, I'm nodding off listening to it. How long can a band make music like this without getting bored? I mean I appreciate good pop, but this feels forced, like they are still trying to do what they did good many years ago. The good thing about the album is the graphics. Lots of tinted photographs, which is a nice change from the white-washed look of the last album. (RE)
Lookout Records PO Box 11374 Berkeley, CA 94712-2374

MUTINY – RUN REBELLION, CD If you like Irish drinking music, you may dig this. Mutiny hails from down under and offers a punk rock solution to traditional styled drinking songs. Get the basic requirements: a full band that includes a fiddle, an acoustic guitar, a banjo, pissed lyrics about getting pissed brought to the listener by a pissed female and male vocalists. On top of the basics, you get good punk rock songs instead of listening to "Danny Boy" again and again. These tunes are something people would be singing along to with a pint, no doubt. This release is very well done and should not be passed up. (DM)
Hell's Ditch 2817 Newport Blvd. Newport Beach, CA 92661

NERO – THE DUNE CONCEPT ALBUM, CD I've never read Dune or even seen the movie, but I can't take sitting here and listening to this, though I do think these guys would be interesting live. It's fairly energetic jazzy indie stuff with time changes aplenty, and generally heading off in tightly controlled spasms. It DOES have enough power, in general, to at least keep my attention a bit and YES, ALL OF THE SONGS ARE ABOUT DUNE. Yup, this would have to be a live thing for me but, to quote the propaganda that came with it, it's "nothing devoted fans of Wire, Don Caballero, Ruins or King Crimson can't handle." Well it sure doesn't sound like Pink Flag to me but maybe you'll have a better idea of what's going on here than I do. Not as horrible as I would've guessed by the shit packaging, for which they should be publically horsewhipped in the town square at high noon (nothing personal, it's just a fetish of mine). (RP)
The Temporary Residence Ltd. PO Box 22910 Baltimore, MD 21203-4910

NICOTINE - PLEEEEEEZ! WHO ARE YOU?, CD I know your expecting me to just say ska and be done with it, but tough! Honestly, I like ska. I even enjoy some ska punk now and again, and that's exactly what this is. I first heard this band on the Asian Man Records comp., Mail-order is Fun, so I knew what to expect and I was not disappointed. They get a bit crazy at times, as in weird, but overall it's a good listen if you like happy upbeat kinda stuff, which I do. Oh, they do this cool version of Stevie Wonders' "I Just Called to Say I Love You." (ed)
Tomato Head PO Box 61298 Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1298

NOBODY'S HERO - OUTTA TIME, CD 22 songs in 72 minutes and I don't think I can bear more than 10 seconds of any one of them. Rock and roll sitting at the lowww end of the quality spectrum. Ouch. (PK)

NORA – THENEVERENDINGYOULINE, CD Nora produces intense hardcore that almost verges on high-velocity power violence sludge. The quintet's dueling guitarists emit dense, metallic chordings, while the aneurysm-bursting vocalist screams out lyrics about getting hassled by the man, consumerism and holding a grudge. Nora's sound blends the most scraping and extreme aspects of screamy emo with guttural metal. (BB)
Trustkill Records 23 Farm Edge Lane Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

NOT AT ALL – WE HAVE SKITS AND HIDDEN TRACKS, CD Catchy as hell crunchy pop punk. With this genre of punk comes songs about girls, being down, and other miscellaneous antics. Smoothed out vocals over slightly under-produced music. This is not a bad thing by far. If these guys were more polished they may end up losing their sound and sounding like everyone else. These guys tend to lean to the likes of The Cretins but are close to sounding like a Fat band. However, the La Bamba cover could have been left behind. (DM)
Not At All - (201) 349-1626

NOTAWORD – YOU CAN ONLY GROW SO MUCH, CD Really good emo-rock much along the lines of early Promise Ring or Braid. Though, they don't match up to either of those just because they're not that new anymore, but it's not so overdone that they're boring. The music flows in and out of being soft to driving, and the vocals take turns being poppy or emotional. They seem very tight and I'm interested to see what will become of them. A worth while choice. (FH)
Box Elder 1101 W. Chestnut 2F Chicago, IL 60622

NUZZLE - NO MAS, 7" It took a while for this 7" to grow on me but after much clinging to my ankle, I found myself wholly digging it. Two songs by this post-post-whatthefugever band here. Side A gives us 'No Mas' which conjures up scenarios full of drama, whiskey, and sparring cowboys. The words are spit out like venom and possess a bittersweet kind of feel. On the flipside, the sound shifts with 'The Word #2'. This side is relatively poppier with a successful quiet/noisy juxtoposition going on. Music to ride off into the sunset to. (PK)
Sound On Sound/Zum/Yakamashi, PO Box 4449, Berkeley CA, 94704-0449

NUCLEAR SATURDAY – I AM JON STONE, CD First song is a total All ripoff, the rest mimic Lag Wagon and Face To Face, right down to the song titles. The cover art is just crap, the vocalist sings flat and the lyrics are so trite that I doubt I could come up with shit this lame if I was trying to parody these bands. These dorks don't have an original thought in their heads. Cover also says "99.9% Punk Rock Guaranteed"—Christ, I don't know whether to laugh or cry....(RP)
206 Records 8314 Greenwood Ave. North Suite 102 Seattle, WA 98103

OBLIVION - SUCKERS FROM THE START, CD This really confused me, half of the songs sounded like pop punk and the other half sounded like hardcore/bad eighties metal? Then I liked at the insert and half the songs are covers of various eighties metal bands, like Iron Maiden and AC/DC. I was all set to give this a bad review, but then "Hamster Man" came on. The songs that aren't covers are pretty good lo fi pop punk, and this looks like it is a compilation of their singles and some live stuff too.(ed)
Sinister Records P.O. Box 1178 Lagrange Park, IL 60526

OFFDAY - ABDUCTED BY CRUSTACEANS, CD What the fuck? I really don't know what to make of this at all. The cover of this album has like a big lobster attacking a woman with a burning city in the background. It seems like this would be a concept album, but none of the songs really have anything to do with lobsters or anything like that, which is too bad, because that might have been cool. The music is basically bad pop punk rock and roll type crap that basically just annoyed the fuck out of me. Leave this on the shelf. (JK)
Pure Madness Entertainment, 307 151 10090 152nd Street, Surrey BC V3R-8X8

ONE LADY OWNER- THERE'S ONLY WE, CD This CD is made up of songs about cars and girls. Not the most original subject matter in the world. The music doesn't do much either in the way of originality. It falls somewhere between garage and rock and punk, not doing very much interesting at all. (JL)
Creation Records. 7 West 22nd St. New York, NY 10010

ONE WAY SYSTEM – WAITING FOR ZERO, CD This could very easily be SoCal punk if the singer sang about surfing, girls and hair dye. But these guys are from England (I think) and judging from their lyrics and record label, they probably attract more of a skinhead, old school punk rock crowd. Like I said, they play fast, well-played punk sung in the Queen's English, with lyrics dealing with personal issues and society. Songs

like "Real Me", "Search Your Soul" and "Believe Yourself" could have thousands of kids screaming along if Pennywise played them instead. It sure is a crazy world, man. (NS)

GMM Records P.O. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

ONEIDA - ENEMY HOGS, CD Oh yeah, these guys are CRA-AZY. This nuts electronic combo is living in their own world. Lots of weird samples, voice effects, and organs. I like a few tracks on here and I'm sure they would be fun to see live, but it all comes off a bit too campy for me to take it seriously. Not enough sass for it to be sassy and not enough wave for it to be new wave. I bet these guys have a huge fan club in...uh...north dakota. I don't know what that means either...goodnight. (RE)

Turnbuckle Records 163 3rd Ave #435 New York, NY 10003

OVER IT – S/T, CDEP For some, Over It might sound similar to the emerging rock sounds of the Get Up Kids or Hot Water Music. It is true that the group has the crisp guitars at moments that could cause one to draw such a conclusion, but all in all Over It have much more in common with Face to Face, Samiam, and Gameface than anything else. Soft, heartfelt vocals and melodic punk rock instrumentation create a pleasant yet not all too uncommon sound. (PB)

Negative Progression Records, PO Box 15507, Boston, MA 02215

PAUL NEWMAN/SONNA - SPLIT WAY TO BREATHE NO BREATH, 7" We have two bands here doing a single instrumental. "Both songs have the same title, because it sounded cool at the time." Goddamn these guys did me a favor, if there were vocals I would probably scream. In this format these tracks are likable. The music on the Paul Newman side is relaxing and subtle in a background music sort of way; it is driving, repetitious and very soft. It is very pleasant and contains electronic percussion. Very dreamy in an indie Rock sorta way. Now Sonna take everything and make it slower and more harmless. This is beautiful music that appeals to the lowest common denominator. This isn't necessarily bad. It is just a fact that your average person could derive a great deal of enjoyment out of it. Oh yeah Sonna is much dreamier. (MY)

Temporary Residence Limited, POB 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203-4910

PINBACK - S/T, CD By far the best record I got for review. Imagine Elliot Smith crossed with Three Mile Pilot. This album sits between both genres without being overly derivative of either. Pinback uses the typical rock instruments, plus keyboards, cello, drum machines, and a slue of various percussion devices, including a turntable. The vocals are great, and all the second vocal tracks fit seamlessly with the main vocals while remaining distinctive and catchy. This band's on to something original and great, you should get this album. (DL)

Ace Fu Records. PO Box 3388. Hoboken, NJ 07030.

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS – FUCKING FIGHT, 7" Well, flat out, this rules. These guys are one of my current favorite bands. When I got their first CDep, I was honestly blown away. Planes play dynamic, emotional hardcore with two singers who alternately scream, sing and whisper great lyrics. Combine the melody of Samiam, the rock of Hot Water Music and the range of Grade. If those other bands were small tools, PMFS would be like a Swiss Army knife, joining them all into a concise, perfect unit. Great on camping trips. I hate to use so many references, because I think this band really stands out. This 7" showcases their more powerful side with 2 great songs full of drive and gusto. These songs almost go by too fast, but luckily I just got their new CDep, so I have more to listen to. Oh yeah, they're awesome live too. (NS)

Dim Mak P.O. Box 14041, Santa Barbara, CA 93107

THE PROMISE RING - VERY EMERGENCY, CD This is much better than their last full length. Pop perfection and whining about girls. Face it, you love it whether you want to or not. It took about half a listen of the first track before the melody had carved out a permanent home for itself in my brain. And it doesn't let up beyond that; by the time you're into about the fourth or fifth tune you're pacing around and ready to call her up - you have a newfound romantic instinct. ...but what about the creepy bus driver molester man on the cover...he scares me. I can't sleep at night unless he's covered up somehow and can't watch me while I sleep. I know what he wants to do to me. (RB)

Jade Tree 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE 19810

THE PUSHBACKS - NO STRINGS ATTACHED, CD Good pop-rock from Minneapolis. To elaborate on the term "pop-rock:" the songs are straightforward pop with catchy rhythms and melodic hooks, and added to that is a rock and roll sound that adds a good punch. Kind or reminds me of Paul Westerberg or the Replacements at times. Production wise, the tone of the guitars is good (a rarity nowadays, it seems). The more upbeat songs are the better ones, but it's a solid effort overall. (BJM)

Veto Records, 27 35th Street West, Minneapolis MN 55408

THE PUT-DOWNS - NATIONAL BAND OF TEXAS, 7" Featuring an ex-Motard, The Put-Downs are straightahead punk rock, emphasis on the rock. They'd be good for some beer swilling and rowdiness. They're not too original, but I guess they're not trying to be. Regardless, they can rock. (BJM)

Turkey Baster Records, PO Box 222059, Dallas TX 75222

RACETRAITOR/BURN IT DOWN - MAKE THEM TALK, SPLIT CDEP Each band turns in three tracks of beat-down rumble & groan hardcore. At first I thought Racetraitor were somewhere between Acrid and Korn. Now that I'm all the way through their stuff I'm subtracting the Acrid. Smooth, polished, growling men with expensive amplifiers. They need to get less mechanical and replace that with a little true insanity. The weird girl on the cover and the dubbed-in eerie piano music aren't pulling it off. Burn it Down is even Kornier in spots - but actually they're better. Basically I wouldn't have been able to tell just by listening to it that this was a split CD. This isn't my cup of tea as I'm expecting it's not a lot of other PP readers'. They are pretty good at what they do, though, and I'm sure that their audience will well appreciate it. (RB)

RADIO 4 - NO TITLE, 7" This is awesome. So simple. So Gang of Four. Perfect. Don't be stupid, order this. (EA)

Gern Blandsten Records PO Box 356 River Edge, NJ 07661

RANDY-YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD BAND DOWN, CD Randy is a very strange Swedish band. At the root of things this is Punk in a MxPx fashion. This isn't weird, what is weird is the barbershop quartet harmonizing of every chorus, or the strong reoccurring Billy Joel influences (vocals & music), or the music that will just break into a Queen like section, or the strong political "revolutionary" lyrics on most tracks. As soon as I start to groove on this it breaks into an afternoon Las Vegas lounge act. This is a heartfelt attempt to break the generic Punk mold. Randy gets my respect for this, but I still don't like it. (MY)

Welcoming Committee Records, Box 3-905 Corydon Ave, Winnipeg, MB R3M 3S3 Canada

RED STAR BELGRADE - THE FRACTURED HYMNAL, CD Blues? I had a hard time with this one, so I let my friend listen to it. He said it sounds like Neil Young. I don't normally listen to this kind of music, so while I enjoyed it, it probably wouldn't be something I'd pick up on my own. They do have the blues/rock thing down pretty well, to me at least, and the acoustic songs aren't boring like some acoustic songs from other bands are.(ed)

Checkered Past Records 1456 N. Dayton.. 205, Chicago, IL 60622

REDHEADED STEPCHILDREN - PART OF THE PROBLEM, CD I wanted to avoid the obvious comment about this band being part of the problem, but Redheaded Stepchildren really don't do much of anything for anyone. Generic skate punk...blah. This disc came out about 5 years too late. (cak)

Eugene Records PO Box 1981 Lexington, KY 41588

REDRUM – S/T, 7" Standard hardcore punk rock with standard lyrics about rich people, religion, being punk, and poisoning the water. You-bad, me-good. The songs are fast and the vocals are half-screamed/half-sung. Next. (BJM)

702 Records, PO Box 204, Reno NV 89504

ROCKY VOTOLATO - S/T, CD Very folk-oriented songs with slight punk leanings. This will either hold your attention and make you weep or will put you to sleep. Drip, drip. (AE)

Henry's Finest Recordings, 16128 NE 145th St., Woodinville, WA 98072

THE RUSTY NAILS - NO MIRACLE IN RUINS, CD An interesting submission for Punk Planet: the Rusty Nails have bagpipes in just about all of their songs, which sounds pretty cool. The first couple of songs have some sort of a punk feel to them, but they are not really punk rock songs. After that, the songs slow down and the record loses its sense of urgency and gets boring. Assuming the singer and songwriter is Irish or Scottish, I'd classify this as some sort of Irish pop-rock or something. If this guy is not Irish, he's trying pretty hard. Songs average four and a half minutes. (BJM)

Coolidge Records, 157 Coolidge Terrace, Wyckoff NJ 07481

RETCONNED- SIMULANT SKIN INCLUDED, CD One thing I need to get out of the way before the rest of this review. The vocals are horrendous. Besides that this is awesome. The music here is mostly electronics with a

healthy dose of experimentation. There are both interesting sounds being created and songs being played. It falls somewhere between industrial and experimental, not really anywhere close to electronica, thankfully. (JL)
Stickfigure PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA. 30308

ROSELICOEUR – 730, 000 DOLLARS, CD I was never in band at school because an instrument was such a luxury and they didn't sell them at K-mart. My point is that I know there are piano, drums, guitar and maybe a harp on this, but I can't place the other ones. It's all set at a very relaxing tempo and by no means butt numbing. A very minimal amount of vocal sung in French, which I also don't speak. This is really great stuff, perhaps good music to play during video games. (JZ)
Partycul System, 5, rue Abbe de l'eppe 51100 Reims, France

ROYAL TRUX - VETERANS OF DISORDER, CD This was my first time listening to the music of Royal Trux. I had always heard good things about them, and I can now say that most of those things were true. On this album, Royal Trux mine many different musical styles, but most notably old rock and roll, sounding quite a lot like early Rolling Stones on songs like "stop" and "the exception" and "lunch money". Royal Trux do something that not many bands can accomplish, which is making music that is both accessible and challenging at the same time. Not a completely unflawed album, but worth checking out. (JK)
Drag City PO box 476867 Chicago, IL 60647

THE SASKATCHWAN TRIO- SONGS FOR A COLD WORLD, CD It seems that with the price of pressing CD's rapidly dropping bands are skipping steps like the seven inch and maybe even the demo and going straight for a CD. Not that this really matters, if a band is good they'll be good on whatever format, and vice versa. However, you would think that if someone was going to invest in putting out a CD, they might invest in a decent recording as well. The Saskatchwan Trio plays noisy, fast hardcore. The lyrics on this CD are actually pretty amusing which save this CD from being horrendous but the recording makes this record almost unlistenable. It sounds like it was recorded with a boombox in a garage. (JL)
E Radicator Records 37 Edgecumb Rd. W. Milford, NJ 07480

SATANIC SURFERS - SONGS FROM THE CRYPT, CD About two years ago, I would have loved this album. But as I've found myself delving deeper into the punk scene, being exposed to all different types of punk music, my tastes have expanded and actually left a lot of my roots behind. There's nothing new here. It's almost fat record-sish pop-punk, but not as polished. It's the same old thing, which isn't necessarily bad, but doesn't get me where it used to. I think all of you know what I'm talking about. I'll shut up now. (FH)
Bad Taste Records St. Soderg. 38, 22223 Lund, Sweden. $12ppd

THE SEARCH FOR SATURNALIA- S/T, CD I would enjoy doing a review without using the word emo. It's not that cool people. So lets just say that this CD ,like so many others, starts out with a crunchy Fugazi sounding rock which begins to wind down into a slow soft tinkering bit of noise. Is it good? Is it bad? Actually its just in the middle, and that's what I hate. None of these bands are horrible like a bad punk band or a bad hardcore band. They are just "nothing special" or "nothing new". Personally I would rather be bad. (dc)
614 south first street #218, Austin, TX 78704

SETI ALPHA SIX – THOUSANDS OF FEET ABOVE THE EARTH HE BELIEVED THAT ROCKETS COULD BE FLOWN TO THE MOON, CD And the winner for the longest title of a modern emo rock record is... Seti Alpha Six. This is a better than average emo rock record that did not get on my nerves while listening. I liked the record because the rocking contained within was much less wussey than your everyday indie emo rock. There was a point during the intro to "78 West" when I thought that Seti Alpha Six was actually going to rock out. How about that? This band kept the tempos brisk on each of their tunes and the more conventional chord choices added to the rock. The vocalist sounds like the dude from Pegboy so there was no whine to ruin it for me. This has more in common with the Foo Fighters and other modern rock stuff (they have an acoustic jam for crying out loud) than it does with punk rock- not that I care because I do not. (CJK)
Pinball Records. 977 Valley Rd. D3-329 Gillette, NJ 07933

SEVENDAY CURSE - AFTER THE STORM, CD Sevenday Curse from Massachusetts is a full on Death Metal band. There seems to be some hints to Black Metal as well. I wasn't able to consult will Felix von Havoc for the final word. I've been told I'm somewhat of a "baby rocker" and can't handle the real deal. I did listen to this over four times and found it to be a quality listen and will be passing it on to one of my metal friends. The main idea of the songs seem to be life is dark and evil and they shout and scream to let you know. I feel the burn, do you? (JZ)
Tortuga Recordings, PO Box 15608, Boston, MA 02215

THE SEWERGROOVES - SONGS FROM THE SEWER, CD Rather typical three chord power rock from Sweden. The Nomads they are not, but close enough to make said fans happy. This will probably grow on me, but right now it feels like something that you would find on MuchMusic of Canada and say, "This ain't too bad. " (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE SHITGIVEITS – FREEDOM FROM REALITY, CD Early 80's sounding punk. I could picture this band on Mystic Records or on some of the first couple Thrasher comps. It's fast and slightly under-produced, with lyrics dealing with the perils of society and everyday life. While I'd rather listen to older bands that these guys emulate, this isn't bad stuff. If you like to get drunk and fall down in your own vomit, I think you'll really enjoy this. The CD clocks in at 50 minutes though, so you may be passed out way before it ends. (NS)
Industrial Strength Records 2824 Regatta Blvd., Richmond, CA 94804

SILENCE WIELDS NO BEAUTY - BROKEN GLASS THAT YOU CALL SHELTER, CD Four songs on this EP. I don't know if this is hardcore, emo, or "screamo" (runner-up for most ridiculous designation of the year, second only to "math rock"). Perhaps this band combines elements of all three. There's actually some regular punk in here too. It looks like this band used to be called Plaid Monkey, but they have since opted for the more artsy Silence Wields No Beauty. I hear the influence of stuff from Jawbreaker to Jehu. The songs where they sort of sing are better than those on which they scream. Usually I don't like this stuff, but this is actually not so bad. The four songs get better as you go. (BJM)
No Shelter Records, 522 Atwood Court, Newtown PA 18940

SITUATION AT 1200 - DE-LUXE, CD You know it's getting pretty tough to review these fucking CDs. How many different ways can I describe this shit? The thesaurus doesn't have that many words for slow and sad. So since this only has 5 songs on it let me just run them down the line. Number one "crash" - jimmy eat world. Number two "Gemini" - the same jimmy eat world song. Number three " Parachute fails" - mineral music being played over a recording of someone talking really quietly. Number four "Al Rischa" - bad get up kids demo tape. Number five "Tranquility Basin" - a continuation of songs one and two. That's It. There is a blurry picture of a city on the cover. And they misspelled "tranquillity" in the song title. (dc)
Your Best Guess PO Box 64 Denville, NJ 07834

THE SIX PARTS SEVEN-...IN LINES AND PATTERNS, CD The Six Parts Seven must have some of the most beautiful music being played today. It's all instrumental and very soothing. When I listen to it, it almost makes me forget how much I love rock n' roll. Occasionally, they'll throw in some viola and it will remind me of that dog's slower stuff, minus the vocals, of course. It's damn good, and if you have a chance to see hem live, do so, they're amazing. (FH)
Donut Friends PO Box 3192 Kent, Ohio 44240

SKAM IMPAIRED - MONSTER THEMES FOR J, CD From the funny self-deprecating intro I assumed that these guys might make the genre of punk-ska a little more interesting than its boring self has become. However, that's not the case. They make some pretty good attempts at catchy tunes, like a weak Less Than Jake, but soon the album becomes repetitive and I found myself skipping tracks halfway through. (RE)
Whitehouse Records 830 Baylor Wissman Rd Lanesville, IN 47136

SKULL CONTROL - DEVIATE BEYOND ALL MEANS OF CAPTURE, CD I like this. It reminds me a lot of the Monorchid, probably because it is basically half the Monorchid, with Chris Thompson still on vocals and Andy Coronado covering guitar duties rather than bass. This definitely has the feel and spirit of classic old school punk rock, but it is still innovative, which is something not many bands accomplish. Recommended. (JK)
Touch and Go Records, PO box 25520 Chicago IL 60625

SLAVE ONE - S/T ,CD
BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : Yo, let's put together a band and put out a CD.
NATHAN FROM SLAVE ONE : That's a sweet idea but how can we be in a band? we don't even know any musicians.

BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : No problem man, nobody really plays instruments anymore all we gotta do is put out a record and we could just fake it when we play live like the monkees.
MATT FROM SLAVE ONE : Are you sure? That sounds kinda cheesy.
BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : No dude its totally okay . Music these days is all about electronics and shit.
MATT FROM SLAVE ONE : But I don't want to play electronica.
BRAIN FROM SLAVE ONE: Naw man that's not what I mean, all we need is some old metal tapes and we can just lift the music and dub over the vocals. I got a whole box of anthrax and slayer and shit like that and I know Matt used to be big into sepultura.
MATT FROM SLAVE ONE : Sepultura rules!
NATHAN FROM SLAVE ONE : But dude who is going to do the vocals? None of us can sing.
BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : Simple, I just got that new job at the zoo right? We could just steal a gorilla and hit it with sticks until it makes all kind of funny screams and grunts and use those for vocals. I think a gorilla would make a great singer. Then we could just put our names on the inside of the CD and what instruments we play.
DAVID FROM SLAVE ONE : Can I be the drummer?
BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : You can be whatever you want. Then we just rename the old metal songs, throw in some lyrics about killing and shit, and send it into punk planet to get reviewed as hardcore.
DAVID FROM SLAVE ONE : Can we call a song "bloodied body?" I love the sound of that.
BRIAN FROM SLAVE ONE : "Bloodied Body" That's great! This is going to be rad! Wait till we tell everybody we're in a band. . .(dc)
Slave One P.O. Box 11476 Fort Worth, TX 76110

SNATCHER/ANNALISE, SPLIT 7" Snatcher basically sound a lot like early Snuff but they're from Japan—I thought every band from Japan sounded like either Teengenerate or Gauze! Nevertheless, Snatcher are very good at this sound and I enjoyed their songs very much. Annalise really ARE from England and do two short numbers which revolve around things they've experienced and observations about 'the scene' , which I'm usually not in favor of because this music should come from inspiration outside of the scene so it stays original and doesn't feed upon itself....okay, rant concluded. These short songs actually remind me of a more-streamlined and simple (these songs don't have choruses) Dillinger Four in some ways and that's a very good thing. I'd heard lots of good stuff about Snuffy Smile and it was all confirmed with this record—great! (RP)
Snuffy Smile 4-24-4-302 Daizawa, Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo 155-0032 Japan

SPEEDEALER - HERE COMES DEATH, CD Don't let the awful cover art fool ya! A big improvement over their first album, tossing some slower bluesier stuff into their mix of hyper hardcore rock. Definitely something for fans of Zeke or the Quadrajets to check out. Super tight, well produced and meatheaded, but after listening to the other stuff that I had to review, Speedealer was like a RnR godsend. Formerly REO Speedealer, I guess they got sued or something. Quit making Furious George look like tough guys as they fight for their name. Strangely, though, appears major affiliated. (AS)
Royalty Records, 176 Madison Ave., NY, NY 10016

SPORTSWEAR - SPORTSWEAR, CD
The Haiku Review:

Norwegian Straight Edge
Youth Crew Hardcore. Excellent.
This Disc Fucking Rocks. (CJK)

Crucial Response Records. Kaiserfeld 98. 46047 Oberhausen. Germany.

SRI - GRAVITY REMINDS ME, CD Female-driven power pop. No lyrics. The first song reminds me of "Seither" by Varuca Salt, and it goes on from there. This is straight radio rock crap. Not even college radio crap- just major label, Budweiser-sponsored concert material. It makes me cringe. (DL)
Blue Boy Records. 739 Manor St. PA 17603

STILETTO BOYS – ROCKETS AND BOMBS, CD The Stiletto Boys sum themselves up pretty well by stating their influences: the Dead Boys, Dickies, The Boys, and Radio Birdman. The late-70s style melodic rock n' roll and raw punk rock shine through in these exciting and catchy tunes. Harmonized vocals, clean guitars, steady drum beats, and bouncy melodies. It isn't clearly noted on this record, but the CD version of Rockets And Bombs is an anthology of sorts, containing songs off the Rockets And Bombs LP and three earlier EPs. (PB)
High Society International, St. Petersburger Str. 4, 18107 Rostock, Germany

THE SWEET THINGS – S/T, 7" This two song piece of wax offers the listener two different styles of tunes that work well with each other. The song "In the City" is very modern Velvet Underground-ish style but lacks too many lyrics. However its catchiness makes up for it. The second tune "Her Sad Little World" is reminiscent to 60's era pop rock that hints at the psychedelic and folk rock of bands of this era. This tune could slip into those Nuggets 60's collections CD almost undetected. Not bad at all. (DM)
Flare USA PO Box 423748 San Francisco, CA 94142

SWIVEL- TIME FRAMED IN REAL TIME, CD I'm going to give these guys the benefit of the doubt and assume they like to play music in the dark . That would make sense. Long fumbling slow cling clang music that really doesn't go anywhere because the musicians can't see what they are playing and can't tell where the other band members are. Once every three or four minutes the singer finds the microphone but he forgets to really sing into it. Then just as quickly he loses it again. And that's probably why they cant decide when to end the songs so they keep playing until they all get tired or maybe somebody gets a cramp or something. If they don't play in the dark well then this is just complete poo. (dc)
111 Records 408 N. Bishop Suite 108 Dallas, TX 75208

TANGER – S/T, CD This band kind of has that San Diego, post-hardcore sound going on. I had heard this band compared to Jehu (that's how the cool people say it) and when I consulted my roommate, he seemed to agree with that comparison. They remind me of Aminiature too. I asked my roommate if the vocals sounded like early Black Flag era Rollins at times, and he agreed. Then I told my roommate that this was a pretty good CD and he agreed. Of course, my roommate doesn't speak any English, so he just smiles and nods a lot. (NS)
Owned & Operated P.O. Box 36, Fort Collins, CO 80522

TOM DAILY - HAPPILY DECEIVING CULTURE, CD This is, for the most part, pretty straightforward college/alternative guitar rock. At times it reminds me quite a bit of Guided By Voices, but slower and mellower. I'm told that the guy behind this used to be in the Smoking Popes, a band that I never listened to but I know were quite popular a few years back. I can see people being into this, because it's certainly not bad... but it's not exceptionally good either. (MT)
Thick Records, 409 N. Wolcott Ave., Chicago IL 60622.

THE 'TONE – WIDE EYES AND NONSENSE, CD Only the cover of "Johnny Too Bad" might have clued me in to what lay in store here, which is British guys basically updating the Two Tone and punk sounds of twenty years ago and running them through an upbeat 90's punk filter. I hesitate to use this comparison, but I can't help but hear The Clash circa 78-79 in the combining of punk and Caribbean styles seamlessly, though based on the some lyrics (particularly "Pauline", about Pauline Black of The Selecter, natch) in think these guys might be older than the average new band. Picture what Less Than Jake would sound like if they had grown up in the UK instead of Florida—i.e. different takes on similarly-rooted styles producing similar results (GREAT MUSIC). This is very refreshing and a great surprise AND they actually mention The Lambrettas in the lyrics which is the icing on top since I consider "Beat Boys In The Jet Age" to be THEE best album of the mod revival. To sum up—this is mostly rockin fun stuff with bits of Two-Tone style thrown in occasionally—in other words, as opposed to what people think when they describe crap like Rancid as "Clash-like", The 'tone are the real deal with tons of personality and ideas and zero boring-rehash factor—EXCELLENT ALBUM. (RP)
Broken Rekids PO Box 460402 San Francisco, CA 94146

TRANS AM - FUTUREWORLD, CD Like the name of this CD implies, Futureworld takes you on a trip comprised of moody electronica and sci-fi indulgence served up in one rad package. Except this is no minimal blip-bloop affair, Trans Am totally rock out on this CD man. Like Tron meets Spinal Tap, or if Kraftwerk grew mullets. Song titles such as 'Cocaine Computer' and 'City In Flames' are fairly indicative of this album's essence, if you will. It's amazing how much imagery is conveyed in this music. I'm kicking myself for missing Trans Am live recently. I yam a bobo. But doo check out these guys. Robot rock is good. (PK)
Thrill Jockey, PO Box 47694, Chicago IL, 60647

T.V. KILLERS - HAVE A BLITZ ON YOU, CD The French have given us the T.V. Killers. I really thought I liked this band a lot, but this album disappoints me a little. Not as good as their previous outfits. The songs are good, but production doesn't punch or rock out the way I would have liked. Garage rock and roll that fits well onto the Estrus bill. I will still pull this out and listen to this though. I am probably being hard on it, cause of my interest in them. (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

TWENTY-THRID CHAPTER – AN EDEN FOR MACHINES, CD Let's just say that these guys have some issues with Christianity. Of course that's practically de rigeur for metalheads, right? And, yes—from the satanic cartoons on the cover to the low, grinding riffs and gravelly vocals contained therein—this music is very metal. (BB)
Ohev 1500 NW Ave #4 Boca Raton FL 33486

UMLAUT – UMLAUT, 6" I puzzled over this record for a few listens before attempting to commence with a review. The packaging and the music do not seem to correspond with each other. Audio enjoyment should not be so hard to come by. After pulling my junior detective kit out of the closet, I was finally able to match the lyrics and the million times longer song explanation with the corresponding song on this tiny piece of thrash. Umlaut rules. They claim to be from Finland but I do not believe it for one second. Their music is thrashy hardcore with more than a few double kick drum blasts of grind. The lyrical content of their songs is sweet and naïve political blah blah. How am I supposed to take the song "U.S. Out of North America" seriously? I can not but this record rocks none the less. (CJK)
CrimethInc. International Workers Conspiracy. 2695 Rangewood Drive Atlanta, GA 30345.

UNRUH – SETTING FIRE TO SINKING SHIPS, CD Unruh has created another gem. Taking everything we love about death metal and playing it with hardcore intensity, oh the riffs! Technical playing is only the beginning; the recording is huge without gloss tricks to cover any of the spite. Harsh vocals spewing out words of desperation and lost hope. I give Pessimiser much praise for putting this out. Don't hold back on getting this, starve if you need to. (SY)
Pessimiser Records, PO Box 1070, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

THE URCHIN - FIRST RECORDING BY THE BAND USING THE OLD WEAPON, 7" 1977 style Punk Rock with vocals & Bass straight off the first Rancid album. The Urchin is a Japanese 3 piece that is surprisingly effective at using the old weapon of a tried and true formula. I like this recording a lot but it is a bit odd how much they sound like Rancid considering where they are from. This is a one sided 2 song single. (MY)
$6.00 to Yoichi/Snotty Smile, 4-24-4-302 Daizawa, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, 1155-0032 Japan

VERMONT – LIVING TOGETHER, CD The dreamy Americana pop that oozes from this album may turn a few heads. With Vermont, Davey VonBohlen and Dan Didier of The Promise Ring pull themselves from their day jobs to sit down with guitarist Chris Roseanau (Loomis, Pele) and focus on writing songs that emphasize the lyrics and the mood rather than the frenzied and energetic rock. The instrumentation is simple, comprised mainly of acoustic guitar backed up by gentle percussion and the occasional keyboard. The beautiful, sparse, and somber sound on Living Together recalls the mature songwriting of Red House Painters or Elliott Smith. With the combination of heartfelt lyrics and peaceful instrumentation, Vermont provides an intimate and atmospheric album that will prove to be both relaxing and meaningful over and over again. (PB)
Kindercore Records, PO Box 461, Athens, GA 30603

WATTS - S/T, CD Move over Mono Men. Once they played their last shows it took seconds and we get a new incarnation - Watts. Beautiful Rock and roll, that is totally seventies balls out hard punk rock, ala Australia. Since it is cool to have loud guitars again, we get Jack Endino turning the knobs and without doubt this will blast off your turntable because of it. The opening track "Code America" is a masterpiece. Don't be foolish, this is not watered down one bit, (EA)
Estrus Records PO Box 2125 Bellingham, WA 98227

THE WEDNESDAYS – LIVE IN ALABAMA PRISON, 7" This is the standout release of the month, in my humble opinion. It's a live record from a prison! These guys actually snuck an oldschool recording device into a prison gig. The music is fast country-influenced punk. I bet these guys are great anyway, but the lo-fi live quality creates an energy level that would be hard to duplicate in a studio. This 4-song EP comes with an insert with statistics regarding racial disparities in state prisons. A disclaimer that they didn't play a prison for any political "this or that" is included, but I think they really just want to come right out and say it: PRISONS FUCKING SUCK!!! Check this neat record out. (AE)
Arkam Records, 223 Ford Court Apt. #3, Auburn, AL 36830

WHERE FEAR AND WEAPONS MEET - THE WEAPON, CD This is pretty standard hardcore, fans of the genre will probably dig it, but it doesn't break any new ground. The playing is tight and suitably fast, with some good drum lines in particular. I like the call and response on "the man who knew too little," and wanted to hear more original devices like that to spice things up. The lyrics are pretty weak throughout. (DAL)
Revelation, P.O. Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

WILL HAVEN - WHVN, CD They're on Revelation and the little rap sheet they send in boasts of supporting dates with the Deftones and Limp Bizkit, and that it's a "sonic pummeling of metal-hardcore-noise." If that doesn't tell you enough, I'm not responsible for that. Cannot type...need...to barf. (RB)
Revelation Records PO Box 5232 Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

THE WUNDER YEARS – PITSTOPS ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED, CD The Wunder Years are yet another band on a "mission". By celebrating youth, they are attempting to spread their belief that we are in a "rotting world" moving towards an "unpredictable outcome". But when is an outcome predictable? The music is a combination of naïve hope, frustration, and a lot of questions. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have hope that things will change, but people should focus on changing themselves before setting their aims on causing a counterculture. Anyway, the music is a combination of melodic punk and pop rock. Some songs are soft and gentle with tender vocals, while others have a lot more angst and building instrumentation. Not bad for a couple kids taking their hand at modern day rock n' roll. (PB)
Tomato Head Records, PO Box 61298, Sunnyvale, CA 94088

YOUR ADVERSARY – PLEASE OPEN AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE, 7" These folks can do it all—fine male and female vocals over great, raw rocking catchy punk/hc with variation, power and style. Cool packaging that looks just like an invitation to some fancy-shmancy affair d' elegance. I'm not a real authority on this type of 90's stuff but I'm gonna go out on a limb and say this reminds me stylistically of some Avail/Hot Water Music stuff I've heard but better because it's looser and rawer and really not particularly derivative of anyone (there—now I hope they sell ten thousand copies of this goddamn single cuz it's fucking awesome.) Your Adversary is My Ally! Yeah! (RP)
Your Adversary PO Box 1289 NY, NY 10276

ZYMOTICS - (EDDIE'S RANDOM BOMBING), 7" Holy Japan Batman! Once again the Japanese sneak up on me with a killer single. Totally Teengenerate, with even more 77' thrown in. The Zymotics have three blasting tunes that you will flip over and over. I am glad they sent two copies so I can wear one out. Killer songs: (Eddie's) Random Bombing, I'm a Plastic and Break the Radio. (EA)
Answer Records Hase Bld No.2 B1 5-49 OSU 3 Naka-Ku Nagoya City Aichi 460 Japan

V/A- 5 YEARS OF PANDEMONIUM, CD This is a label sampler from Pandemonium Records. It features a track from almost every band they have put out. All of the bands fall somewhere in the noise/avant hardcore scene. For a label sampler, this CD has some decent tracks from Ronruins (the Ruins with a guitarist), God is My Copilot, Unsane, and many more. If you like any of the above mentioned bands or are looking for something to scare you this is a good choice. (JL)
Kinetic Vibes BP 64, 13192 Marseilles Cx. 20 France.

V/A - THE BAY AFTER, CD 21 songs of new SO CA bands covering old classic Punk/HC (SO CA) bands like Black Flag & the Descendents. Most of these tracks try to copy the Originals rather than transcend them. Why do we want to hear a band do a luke warm representation of a classic band? Having said this there are some very tight bands on this that deserve your attention-DSFA, Fishsticks, Smut Peddlers, and Prop 13. Fans of the Minutemen/Mike Watt should take notice that Mike Watt sings Party With Me Punker & Mutiny in Jonestown with Agrokulcher. This would have been cooler if the bands performed originals. (MY)
Raw Power Records, 1636 W.139th St., Gardenia, CA 90249

V/A – BAY AREA SKA, CD This compilation does contain 21 songs from San Francisco Bay Area ska bands, but it is in no way representative of the entire Bay Area ska scene. Rather, this compilation is comprised of roughly four songs from five different ska groups – Blindspot, Monkey, Flat Planet, Slow Gherkin, and Janitors Against Apartheid. As far as the music, it is a fairly good representation of more traditional ska. A lot of ska these days is mixed with loud guitars or other rock elements. But this compilation is filled with pleasant, low-key tunes and is a nice reminder of where the ska sound on the airwaves today came from. (PB)
Tomato Head Records, PO Box 61298, Sunnyvale, CA 94088

V/A - CHOICE CUTS, CD Sampler compilations are usually a safe bet if you know that you're into the type of music that is sampled, and this CD is no exception. Trustkill and Ferret records, who concentrate mostly on hc/metal/sxe bands, collaborated to put this out together. This economi-

cally priced CD features 24 songs from many of the releases on both labels. Some songs are really good (i.e., Dillenger Escape Plan, For The Love Of, Disembodied, Burn It Down, etc...) while others are really bad (i.e., Brothers Keeper), but overall this is a good CD. (MT)
Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge, Tinton Falls NJ, 07724.

V/A - DA2000, CD This compilation features artists on the Double Agent label, hence the name. This is a pop compilation, and when I say pop... I mean POP...! Straight up guitar pop, euro synth pop, and acoustic singy pop stuff are the styles most prominent. The only name I recognize from the track listing is Rose Melburg, who I believe used to be in Tiger Trap. Her song is my favorite here (if I had to pick one), but none of this stuff is really up my alley anyway. (MT)
Double Agent, P.O. Box 400082 Cambridge, MA 02140.

V/A – DCide: The 40, 2XCD Jesus God! 2 CDs and over 140 minutes of terrible DC music. If you think Dischord has lost its edge, this comp will restore your faith. You got Jewel wannabes, Sade wannabes, Digable Planets wannabes, Monster Magnet wannabes, alternative rock, dance music, rap metal, rockabilly, ska. Everything except punk. Well, there's one song that sounds like Tilt and one song that sounds like the Replacements, but this is pretty much a collection of 40 songs that can be thrown in a hole somewhere. This may be the worst compilation ever. Hey, I'm as diverse as the next guy, but this is Punk Planet, not Poop Craphole. (NS)
DCide P.O. Box 32258, Washington, D.C. 20007

VA – Loco Diablo Underground Sampler Vol. 4, CD The bane of the record reviewing industry- the compilation CD. I can see the point if you are putting out a record to document some type of thing, whether it be a geographic or aesthetic brotherhood, but the random collection of bands you have never heard before with no shared anything besides the desire to be on a compilation with other bands that nobody has ever heard before has got to go. This compilation seems to be even worse as it has ads inside the single panel CD cover for the printer and the CD pressing plant. This is a sham. Does anybody go out and buy these things or do the bands pay to get on them and then get a certain amount of free copies to sell at shows? Anyway, the sixteen bands on this record play punk rock- poorly. I will mention the comical thrash of the Holy Whores, the rough around the edges hardcore of Lugano and the Helmet styled groove metal of Stronger than Seven as worthy of note but I fear that I am not doing these bands any favors by associating them with bad scam comps. If you want to be a part of the problem, contact... (CJK)
Loco Diablo Underground Band Collective. P.O. Box 332 Thomasboro, IL 61878

V/A - Music To Listen To Music By, CD There is over an hour of music on this comp highlighting bands on Cold Front records. Cold front is operated by one of the editors of the Hitlist Mag. We have 25 songs here with some pretty well known names including the Vindictives and Krupted Peasant Farmers. Most of this, in my view, is by the numbers pop punk that The Kids love. When one gets to the last six songs the illustrious Sin City Series take the CD in another direction. This is dirty Punk/Hardcore by the likes of Electric Frankenstein, Toilet Boys, Jonescrusher and the delightful (REO) Speedealer. The Sin City tracks make this CD a worthy find. (MY)
Cold Front Records, POB 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707

V/A - New Disorder Records, CD This is a compilation of bands that are associated with New Disorder. It includes bands like: The Pist (with an out of print song), The Criminals, Jack Acid, American Steel, Soda Pop Fuck You (which gets my vote for the worst combination of four words), and more. Stand outs include DBS, The Criminals, American Steel, Rumor 39, and the Pist. (RE)
New Disorder Records 445 14th St. San Francisco, CA 94103

VA - Pedal Faster Bicycle Rider, CD Compilations must be one of the hardest things to review. There's not going to be much difference between each one. Some songs are good, some are bad, whatever. Sadly enough, this one runs the gamut of the typical compilation. I really loved some of the songs on this album, The Wicked Farleys and Adam Voith being my favorite. Likewise, I didn't like some of them and the rest fell in between. Over all, it fell into the better than most category as far as emo/indie rock comps go. (FH)
Accident Prone 306 n/w El Norte Pkwy. Pmb. 305 Escondido, CA 92026

V/A - Reproach (Negative Approach covers), 7" Since I grew up on Detroit/Michigan punk rock, Negative Approach was in my vocabulary very early on. Here we got eight bands covering Negative Approach songs and they do a great job. Its been awhile since I have listened to this stuff, but Drop Dead, Man is the Bastard, Spazz, Chokehold are bands that I have liked and do NA some justice. The other four: Kops for Christ, Voorhees, Unoin of Uranus and Rupture all are new to me. This is one of those things that you already know if you want. (EA)
Ugly Pop 2 Bloor Street W. Suite 100 Box 477 Toronto, ON M4W 3E2 Canada

V/A - Screaming Giant - Pizza Comp, CD I don't like to be the bad guy here but this really gives me the creeps. Several slivers of music under the punk rock rainbow sung in glory of Jesus. This is not what chafes me the most. I think there are some great hymns that are inspirational even to those who are not religious. I don't think Rock and Religion need to be absolutely oil and water, small doses I can stomach: anything more and your either preaching to the choir or my hand. Bands like Sicko and MTX are plenty wholesome. In this compilation you hear similar sounding artists singing a whole different tune. If you check these reviews for something like this, don't let me stop you. I pray I don't get any more of this to review. (JZ)
Screaming Giant Records, PO Box 101, Dana Point, CA 92629

V/A - Snapshot, CD Ever since the fall of Gilman Street and the MTV-ification of Rancid and Green Day, it has been pretty clear that ol' Cali isn't what it used to be. But you have to give the kids credit for trying. This comp showcases some of the ummm....talent? in the (626) area...not exactly the East Bay, but not much more exciting. Generally, a smattering of speedy punk, and pop punky bands with a few variations on the theme, all of whom are destined to forever be opening for someone better. There really isn't too much worth writing home about on this one. (cak)
Slanted I 1817 E. Hollywood Dr. West Covina, CA 91791

V/A - The Shortest Distance: A South Florida Compilation, CD Had I known that so many good things were going on in the very bottom of the country, maybe I would have actually deflected from the dying Northeast by now. This is perhaps the best "local scene" comp I have ever had the pleasure of experiencing. From the absolutely beautiful indie stylings of Chris Carrabba to the ska goofiness of Poopy Pants, these Florida kids know what's up in more ways than one. Unfortunately, as soon as a group of kids decide to put out a comp to document their thriving scene, it usually fizzles out like a sparkler on the fourth of July. But since most of us aren't going to Florida anytime soon, it doesn't matter what happens...at least we have a collection of some pretty amazing songs. (cak)
Fiddler Records PO Box 330667 Miami, FL 33233

V/A – The Spirit Lives On: A Tribute to Raybeez and Warzone, CD Suffering Succotash. It's a tribute record to the deceased hardcore hero. Twenty-seven bands doing Warzone covers plus a Warzone track. All in all it is a pretty decent compilation and I could sense the involved affection for the music and dedication to hardcore. The stand out tracks are Days Lost's "We're the Crew", Mushmouth's "Open Your Eyes", Phanatik's "Crazy but Not Insane", Strong Intention's "Under 18" and Dogfight's "In the Mirror". (CJK)
Hate Core Records. c/o Justin Cook PMB 287 1075 Broad Ripple Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46220

V/A - Welcome to the Bay, CD A compilation of songs from reactionary, moronic, and mediocre Bay Area bands. The jacket says, "None of that pop punk or P.C. crap that you would think that you would get from the Bay Area! You have to realize, "the Bay's not so gay!' (and that's not being homophobic)." Thanks for the disclaimer, guys, but call back when you have a valid critique and learn to write songs. A couple of decent tracks among the 32 on the record, particularly contributions from The Process, The Forgotten, and Benumb. (DAL)
Industrial Strength, 2824 Regatta Blvd., Richmond, CA 94804

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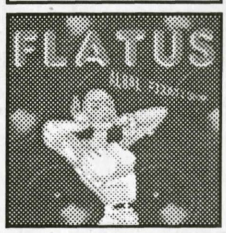

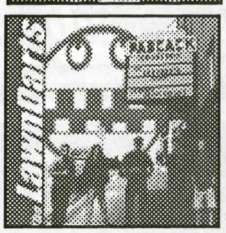

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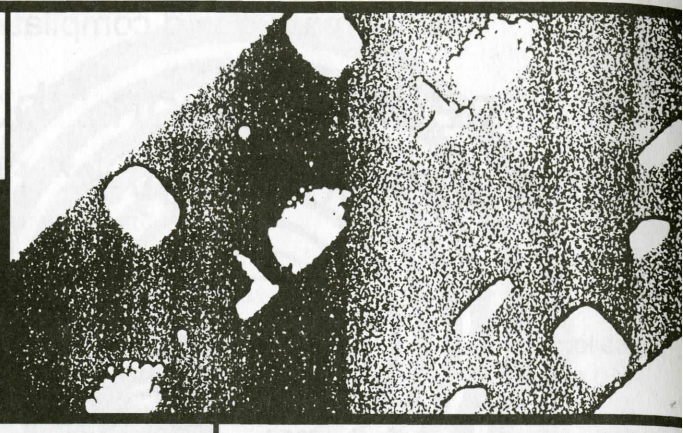

It's June as I'm writing this and it's been almost two months since I've traveled anywhere, which has been great in terms of having a life, but bad in terms of seeing what's happening in the underground film world. So the reviews here are the of art house releases that I've seen that rock. If they've already played out in your town, or if you don't have a local art house, look for these on video—they're what indie films should be.

Drylongso by Cauleen Smith. An honest, super low budget film about a young black art student who learns how to define her place in the world through her friends, her community and her art. Pica rents a room from her partying, selfish mother while holding down a dangerous job of posting fliers at night. When she actually makes it to her photography class, she alienates the other students and frustrates her teacher from her lack of "slickness." She doesn't even use a 35mm camera, instead she snaps a series of Polaroids of young black men because "they are becoming an endangered species." I love films that deal with women and their struggle to become artists. What is so great about *Drylongso* (traditional black slang for the word ordinary) is that Pica creates her own form of expression instead of following what a photographer is supposed to do. She uses her experience and her life to create something totally new. In the meantime, she hangs out with her new friend, Toby, who dresses in homeboy drag after a traumatic boyfriend incident. Both girls are such great characters. They're not perfect, well dressed examples of teen-hood. They're confused, intelligent, complex people who have a lot to deal with—like the disappearance of so many young men in their lives, distant parents, and violence in their neighborhoods. Luckily, the film doesn't come off like a flimsy morality tale or a gansta-esque Girlz in the Hood. I like how the mother figure isn't demonized and the art is so funky and beautiful. One of the characters is played by one of the guys from *Midnight Voices* and his performance is tender and sympathetic and he's foxy to boot! I saw the film twice and picked up more and more each time.

Cauleen filmed it in West Oakland, which plays a big part in the film. The love and support of her cast, crew and the community helped make this film happen, despite the initial hardship of filming. Cauleen has said that in *Drylongso*, Pica has a "potluck spirituality" where she knows about her heritage and religion, but goes more on her instincts than on rules. This seems to apply to Cauleen's approach as well. Her film reminds me of Allison Anders' work; how she portrays her characters as three dimensional and lets them wander along in their lives, yet telling a good story. This film was a big hit on the festival circuit and is traveling with the Dockers' Classically Independent Film Festival, which normally makes me ill. In October *Drylongso* will be featured on the BET (Black Entertainment Television) channel, as well as on the Sundance Channel, so make sure to catch it if you have cable.

Sugar Town. Speaking of Allison Anders, she has a new film coming out in October. She made it with her ex-boyfriend, Kurt Voss, who she worked with on her first feature, *Border Radio*, which was about a bunch of LA musicians. In a cool cyclical turn, *Sugar Town* explores aging musicians as well as other types in LA's entertainment industry. Now, when I see all the dumb bands coming back for a reunion tour trying to cash in on their success, I laugh and make mean jokes. But *Sugar Town* adds a whole new dimension to the phenomenon and shows us the type of people behind the VH-1 "Where Are They Now" segments. John Doe (from X, also in Border Radio) is a struggling musician trying to keep his growing family in their hippie Topanga Canyon house. His wife is pregnant and is probably the sexiest gal in the film, showing off her extremely pregnant stomach with halter tops and her amazing breasts while she takes a shower. I think it's the first time I've ever seen an actual pregnant woman in a narrative film and it's cool as hell. She's a complex person—not the butt of a joke or a reflection of man's fear of responsibility. And, her unborn baby is even listed in the end credits. You also have John Taylor from Duran Duran (!!) as a washed up rock star who was huge in the '80s and Rosanna

Arquette, his wife-actress who is making the transition from playing sexpots to "mother roles." And Jeff MacDonald from Red Kross is convincing as a whiny junkie. There's a ton more people in this film and some great story lines. The only person who sucks is Ally Sheedy, who comes off as a one dimensional emotional punching bag. Otherwise, the issues raised in *Sugar Town* are subtle, powerful, and absolutely true. I actually wished that the film was longer.

Lovers of the Arctic Circle. For an excellently sappy love story, check out this Spanish film about two star-crossed lovers whose paths lead them from Finland to the Arctic Circle. The story alternates from points of view from Otto and Ana, both palindrome names (spelled the same backwards and forwards). They meet as children when their parents fall in love and grow up together. The film is constructed out of a series of poetic coincidences, the kind that leave you gaping in wonder instead of groaning at their obviousness. The fantastic quality of the story sets it up like a fable. This is one of the most beautiful films I've ever seen; the cinematography is breathtaking so if you can see it in a theater, go for it. The sexual tension between Otto and Ana is excruciatingly hot and the performances from both the children and the older versions of the lovers is seamless. Motifs such as planes, teaching, hearts, fire, same names, television and buses weave in and out of the film creating a rich subtext. Although this film is in Spanish, it transcends the language barrier. It had a limited release in art houses a month ago and has played a lot of festivals but hopefully you can find it on video because there just aren't any good American romances out there like this one. I don't think I've seen any romance film as good, and as devastating, as this one, period.

Run Lola Run by Tom Twyker. Speaking of foreign films that transcend language, check out this explosion from Germany. Lola has 20 minutes to get 100,000 Deutchmarks (German money) to save her boyfriend otherwise he will be killed. Think of it as the best video game movie ever. Everything about this film rocks: the script is tight as hell, the cinematography is wild and creative, meaning something instead of solely working flashy style (unlike Natural Born Killers), the actors are engaging, and its music is a perfect compliment. Lola is a tough character, but the film shows a tender side to her as well. She is consumed with love and will do anything to save her boyfriend, yet there is something about her will to save him that makes her a strong presence in her own right. I guess everyone wishes they had someone as dedicated as Lola to come to their defense. This film was a huge hit in Germany. Girls are copying Lola's punk red hair and the techno-esque soundtrack has gone gold. The director, Tom Twyker, is a total film geek. He worked at one of Berlin's coolest art house movie theaters for years, and watching all those films paid off. He studied philosophy for a few years so he would have something to make films about and he taught himself music on the computer so he could score his own films (he did the soundtrack with the help of two big shot German music guys whose names I don't remember). I wonder how this film will do in America. It's got so much energy and style and it's got a punk edge to it, yet people of all ages seem to respond to it. Already there's a film hipster backlash 'cuz there's so much good word of mouth on the film but I saw *Run Lola Run* not knowing anything about it and it completely won me over. I did a more in-depth article on this film for *Ray Gun* magazine so if you want to know more check out the June issue.

Edge of 17 by David Moreton and Todd Stephens. God, any film that references Stevie Nicks in the title grabs my attention. This film is a groovy new wave story about the summer that Eric, this 17 year old gay kid, comes out and discovers his sexuality. I felt like this film transcended queerness and brought back that God-awful feeling of being young and totally confused about sex. The film starts out with Eric and his gal pal Maggie working at an amusement park restaurant for the summer before their senior year. Eric meets hunky Rod and hormones fly everywhere. This film was obviously shot on a low budget but I got so caught up in the characters that I stopped noticing really fast. Eric looks like a total dork—his gay look is major new wave faux pas but I overlooked that too because I could totally identify with him. Maggie is amazing. She's awkward but funky and sexy but sweet. She's a real girl and she's not reduced to fag hag status; the film lets her be a person. I also liked how Eric's mom is complex and interesting, as most mothers in films are so boring and never have their own personalities. Geez, for a gay film, there sure are a lot of cool women here. Also, Lea DeLaria, the semi-famous comic who hosts that show "Out There" on Comedy Central, totally shines as the dyke mother hen who makes Eric's journey a little less lonely. I didn't get off on any '80s fetishism the way I did with *The Wedding Singer*, even though Annie Lennox is referenced several times, but it's nice to have an '80s film that focuses more its characters than its soundtrack. Well, Toni Basil's Mickey plays along with the opening titles so I guess there is some '80s fever going on here, but it's the writing and the acting that really make this film special. ◎

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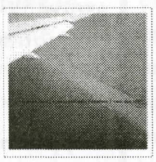

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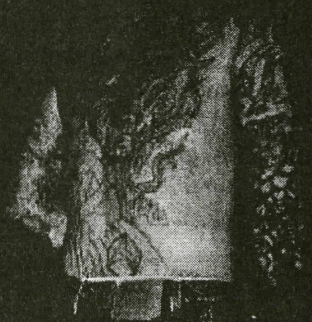

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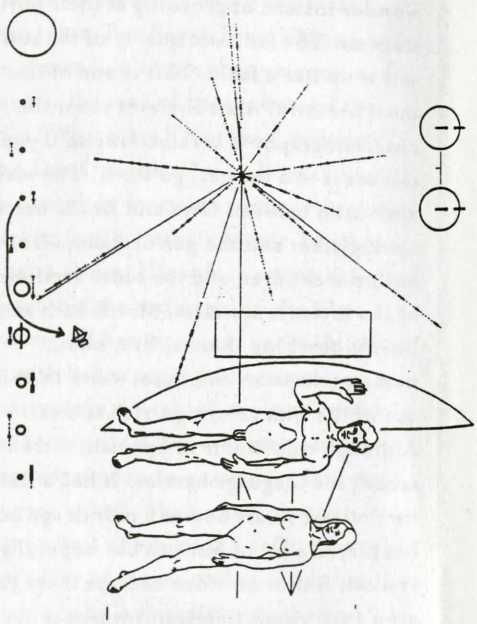

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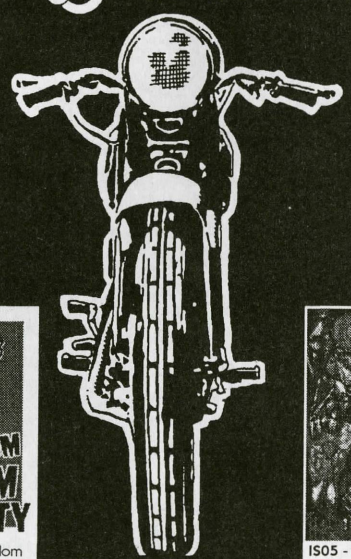

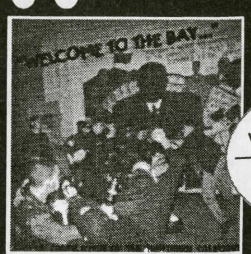

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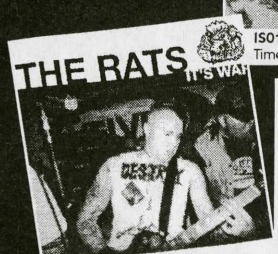

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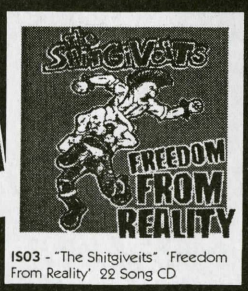

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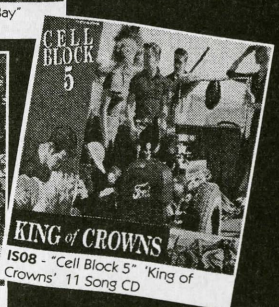

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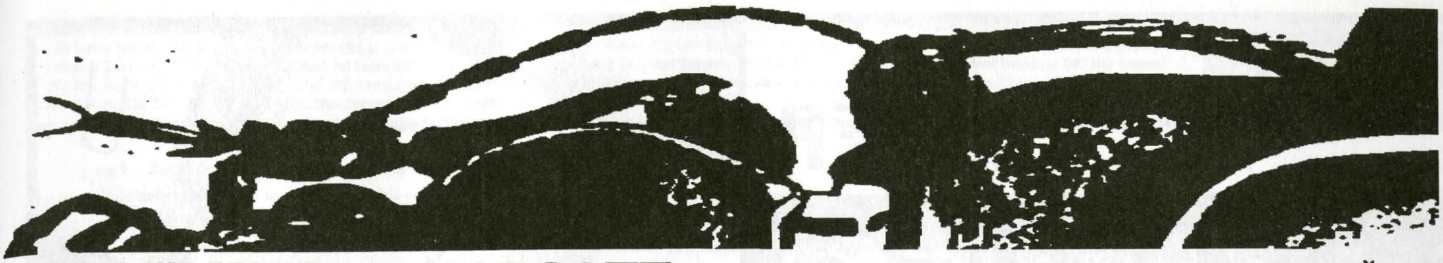

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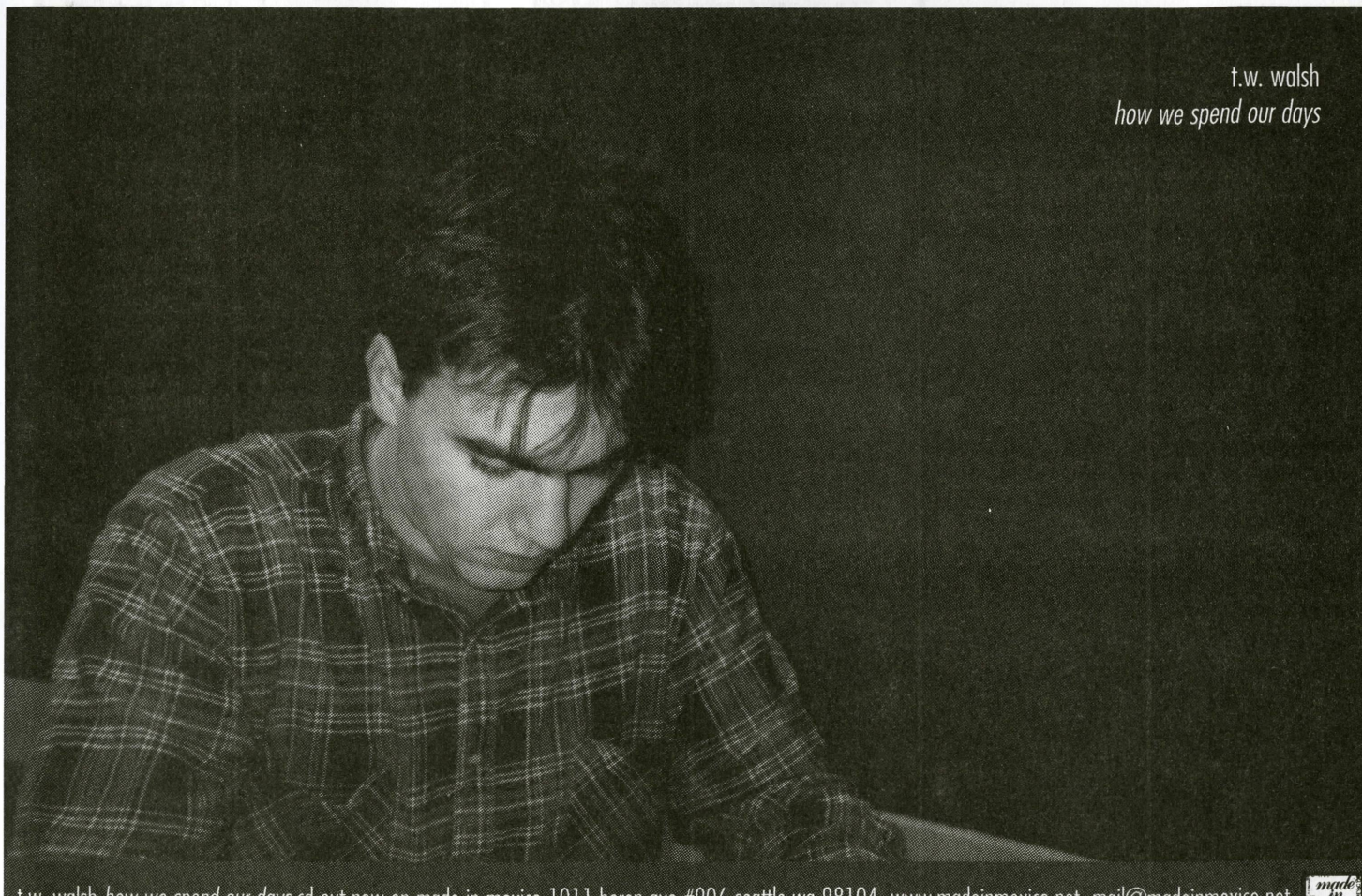

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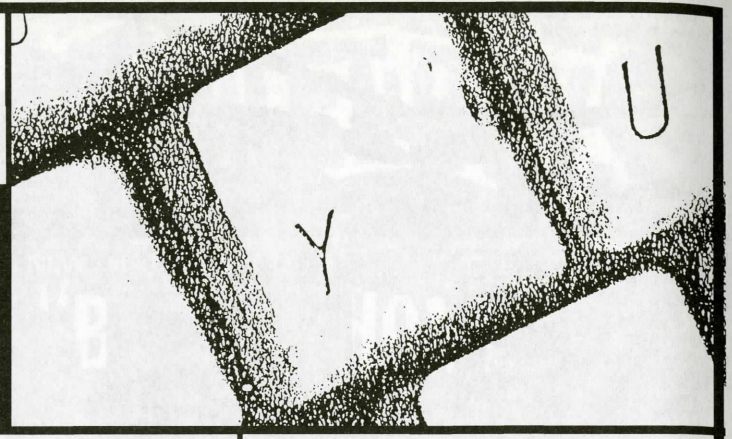

Abus Dangereux Face 62 Juillet 1999

Straight European music magazines, as a general whole, are way slicker than their American counterparts. Compare Mojo to any American rag and you will realize that there is really no comparison. Terrorizer vs. The Pit. Straight No Chaser vs. Stress. Abus Dangereux vs. Magnet. Chalk one up for the home team. Magnet wins, although this mag is pretty decent. This is a French indie rock magazine with a glossy cover, adventurous layout and a free CD. Written in French, the magazine has Andre Williams on the cover and an interview with Pavement among the other smaller features including a review of the Radiohead movie (awesome). Vive l'anarchie. 81/2 X 11. Glossy. Pro. (CJK)

$5. Abus Dangereux. BP 21, 33151 Cenon Cedex France

Ache #1

Man, I wish the first issue of my zine had a story by Aaron Cometbus and an interview with Ian Mackaye (for the record, issue 6 of my zine had an interview with Joe and Guy, but no Ian, and I spent a summer in Berkeley searching for Cometbus at the cafe and the post office, to no avail). Beyond those superstar appearances, the best part is an interview with former zine editor Otto Buj that's pretty interesting. There's a lot of extraneous material like movie reviews, an interview with Catharsis that goes on for 7 small-print pages, and a heavily overwrought account of living in Mexico. Despite its uneven composition, Ache shows a lot of promise, and once the editor grows out of his tendency to overwrite (we all went through it), it'll be a great zine. (DAL)

$2, Armen Svadjian, 167 Cortleigh Blvd., Toronto, ON, M5N 1P6, Canada

Action/Sty Zine #29

C'mon. Let's Go. Alright. This is a split zine with writings and photos split throughout. The photos made it for me, some of my favorite bands: Real Kids, Bobbyteens, Bitchshcool, and a whole bunch of others. Whether you like MRR or not you shouldn't ignore Icki. Send em' two bucks will ya. (EA)

$2 PO Box 11906 Berkeley, CA 94712

Alarm Clock #37

The all Detroit (basically girl) band issue. There is little appeal for this zine outside of Michigan, but this is good stuff if you want to know more about this scene. Lots and lots of reviews of shows and records. (EA)

$1 Allen Salyer PO Box 1551 Royal Oak, MI 48068

Athena's Scapegoat #5

I could go through life a lot happier knowing that zines like this were not being made. Very bland interviews (despite the cover's declaration that they are "in-depth") with Neurosis, AFI, DRI, and Good Riddance. Twenty-four of the zines 80 pages are photographs of the author's friends. Who cares? If the pictures were good, and nicely presented that would be another thing. They are poorly copied and typical. About the only thing I enjoyed was the stick-figure comic. All in all, a big thumbs down. (RE)

$1, 1210 W. 68th Terr. Kansas City, MO 64113

Back to School Guide 99-2000

An extensive (32-page) quarter-size zine about the problems of compulsory schooling, told from a student's perspective. It's well-written and touches on topics that most "school sucks" type zines don't: most teachers aren't brutal authoritarian, the potentials of home-schooling, suggested reading. Any type of reading like this (e.g.- writing taking an obvious oppressor/oppressed slant) tends to oversimplify the problem, but BTSG handles it well and rarely goes over the line. If you're in grade school, this would be good to have. (DL)

$1? PO Box 2624. Portland, OR 97208-2624

Beer Can Fanzine #3

This zine has a loose affiliation with beer drinking and a decent mix of punk rock music coverage- from power pop to hardcore with its focus being your hedonistic garage punk rockers like the Sinisters and the Dwarves. The zine has your typical interviews and reviews with an interesting contest where you have identify 50 pictures of New Wave girls and their respective bands. Neat. I am all together not too excited by this type of thing anymore. I do not drink beer or any other alcoholic beverage. I think that bands whose primary objective is to get fucked up and rock out are a waste of my time. I do not party. I know a ton of people who are into this type of thing and Beer Can Fanzine is a good read for the morning after hangover but I have a difficult time endorsing this lifestyle. 51/2 X 81/2. Newsprint. (CJK)

$1. Beer Can Fanzine. P.O. Box 14371 Portland, OR 97293

Boy/Girl

At first I dismissed this zine because of the poor binding, typical zine layout, lots of rough drawings and hard to read type, but once I started on the Girl side of this split zine, I was totally engrossed. The author, Shy, speaks about her experiences working in not one, but two sex shops. One being the healthy, educational and nice kind and the other being the dirty gross kind. Guess which one she managed. Yeah. Then there is an awesome interview with a woman named Cream. Shy and Cream have an incredible conversation about the pros and cons of being a stripper, the effects of porn versus the worlds mainstream view of sex, how women are empowered by dancing, and more. Then she talks about her abortion in great, fascinating detail. There's a lot more on her side as well. The Boy side is just as good. He tackles similar issues, as he too works in a porno store. He reveals that he has a baby girl and that he and the mother are separated so he never sees his child any more. I totally recommend this zine. (RE)

$2.00?, Left Bank Distribution 1004 Turner Way East, Seattle, WA 98112

Brazen Hussy comics

This embodies everything that's wonderful and terrible about anarchic self-publishing. When brazen hussy is good, it's great. The childhood stories in here are hilarious, poignant, and bizarre. The interludes, about hitchhiking and going to the diner, are beautifully drawn and pretty spooky in a David Lynch/Eightball sort of way. At the end, though, just when the characters start to get intriguing, it's over. You really wish there was more substance, because it ends up seeming superficial when it shouldn't. It's pretty great while it lasts, though, there's some real talent here. (DAL)

Caroline, P.O. Box 13105, Gainesville, FL 32603

Breathing Iced Tea Mix #6

This is the rebirth issue. After taking a year off, BITM returns. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this zine, it's a personal, coming of age outlet. A musician who deals with working temp jobs, not having his girlfriend around, and dealing with the people in his surroundings can be found within these pages. I can relate to this zine and it's little anecdotes from these chapters of BITM. However, I wouldn't brag about this collection of experi-

ences. But if the next issue comes my way I would definitely read it with some interest. It's not a bad zine by far, it's just not a really fast mover. (DM)

139 N. Main St. Ambler, PA 19002

Cheappornandbadfood 1.3

I think that's what it's called, anyway. This guy's a total wus. It's a travel journal, but all I can really make out is complaining about airports and weather. Once in a while cultural differences are touched on, but he might as well just be at home. Half the journal entries are about the author's napping and writing schedules. The highlight was his dilemma about whether or not he had the guts to buy porn. Huh?? (RB)

Fungus, PO Box 188602 Sacramento, CA 95813-8602

Chimps #6

Layla throws fuck to the wind with another issue of her highly articulate and in-yr-face zine. I l*u*v it. Punk rokk nostalgia. criticism of the scene, international mayhem, an interview with Kim Thompson, action born out of boredom and vice versa, the ladies crime cartel, and so so many rad thoughts it is unbelievable. The Layla destroys all worlds—in print, rock and fotobooth bysteria. While her writing style may seem abrupt to some, I think it is excellent and in a league all of its own. Sassy ladies across the land fucking shit up = love. (PK)

$2 + stamp; 9612 Rosebay St., Anaheim CA, 92804

Chokehold #2

Chokehold is one of those zines that somehow manages to combine a wide variety into one zine without becoming too incoherent. Chokeold consists of political articles, letters, and personal journal entry type things. The only thing I didn't like about this zine was it's size, which is just small enough to make it hard to read. Oh well. Dope! (JK)

Chokehold, PO box 188602 Sacramento CA 95818 8602

Chokehold Vol.3

This is a zine's zine. There are two zines here packaged together, both of the same name and issue number. The outer zine is a collection of zine reviews and interviews with other zines. The inside Chokehold bares forth opinions about zines, why zines should be trusted over mainstream media, and messages from a message board/mailing list about zines. Eventually it gets to personal opinions, feelings, and a ton of journal entries. When reading through this, I could have sworn some of the pages were out of order. Whether this was the intention or not, I don't know. However there is a lot of material inside this package. 44 pages alone in the inside issue. Check it out, it's worth the price of admission. (DM)

($1, stamps or trade) PO Box 188602 Sacramento, CA 95818-8602

Commodification

Seven scathing rants about how fucked up our culture and way of life is. Entertaining just as long bouts of depression should be and yet it's still insightful. (AS)

Al Burian, 307 Blueridge Rd., Carrboro, NC 27510

Complete Control #5

A sociological and anarchistic view of the decline of Richmond, VA's historic downtown area and the efforts to save what is left. This is sure to be of interest to residents of Richmond and the surrounding area, but is also a nice reference point for people trying to fight the same problems in their own hometown. (cak)

PO Box 5021 Richmond, VA 23220

Counter Theory #1

A news print scene from Florida that seems like it is written by high school kids (but not in a bad way). It follows the basic PP/MRR premise of columns, interviews, and reviews. The columns I find to be a bit immature and unimpressive, but still interesting. It seemed like the authors needed to expand their thoughts a bit. The zine boasts some really good interviews thought. Fugazi, At the Drive In, Atom and His Package, and Sub City Records are just a few they are including this issue. Not a bad read, if you want more misc. music info. (FH)

$1 Counter Theory 12850 St. Rd. 8411/10 Davie, FL 33325

Decades Of Confusion Feed The Insect #22

He's done TWENTY-TWO of these goddamn things? This is stupid photocopied art-for-art's-sake drawings and collages that completely suck—this looks like an art class project put together by a bunch of second-graders. The only thing remotely interesting here is his story about meeting Cyndi Lauper at a record store in New York. This guy has a picture of Cyndi Lauper TATTOOED ON HIS HAND—if that doesn't tell you how wacked he is, nothing I say will help convince you further. Cover says this thing is "worth every cent"—I'd say it's worth NO cents. (RP)

$2 Justin K. Hollanduerr c/o DOCFTI 224 N. Camac St. Philadelphia, PA 19107

Decades of Confusion – Feed the Insect #23

This is one of the weirdest and yet most entertaining short stories I've ever read. There's enough science fiction, horror, paranoia, and creative word usage to keep you interested. The first half of the zine is the story and the cast, and the last half is drawings that I assume go along with the story. Very peculiar to say the least. (FH)

$1 224 North Camas St. Philadelphia, PA 19107

Devolution summer 1999

This thing has more words than any zine I've ever seen for the size of it. That is a good thing. He starts off with a little history of the scene he's part of, and his place in it. There's a rant about bands that sport the "former members of" tag, and we've all been burned by that one at one point! A show review of a three day hardcore/metal fest, with a bunch of metal bands I don't care about. Also some stuff about breaking up with his girlfriend, which must have been hard to write.(ed)

one stamp/trade; Matt 950 Main St.-Box 1881 Worc. MA 01610-1477

Double Bill The Final Issue

William Burroughs, the writer of Naked Lunch, Junky, Queer etc. was a life long heroin user and misogynist. He is also well known for shooting his wife in the head while showing off for friends - apple on the head type incident. Double Bill is dedicated to exposing what a worthless human being this beat writer was. They are also eager to sing the praises of another Bill, Bill Conrad (I didn't ID the name either) who was the lead actor in the TV series Cannon. Tell me these are not unusual topics to explore in a 40-page zine. The zine is well made and researched with interesting anecdotes about both Bills. Where the zine falls short is in explaining how William Burroughs was a bad writer. (MY)

Double Bill, PO Box 55,stn. 'E', TO, ON, Canada m6h 4e1

Double Down #3

Huge 15"x12" zine that is absolutely on target. The layout may be the best of a zine I have ever seen, the size really helps out in this department. Look at the list here: Coop (top notch artist), The Make-Up (top notch band), Tiger Mask (top-notch club), Pinball (top-notch past-time), etc. Do you see a pattern - its simple - if you surround your zine in eye-catching layout with a big-ass size and fill it full of great content and we get the David of zines (well that's a little much). (EA)

$5 PO Box 194264 San Francisco, CA 94119

Filling The Frame #2

This is a photo zine collecting pictures of bands that the collaborators find moving. There is very few comments made in this so as not take away from the pictures. Lyrics are printed over the pictures of the featured bands to help convey a feeling (I guess). Some of the bands featured are Braid (A series of photos featured paying homage to the demise of this band.), Jets to Brazil, and Michigan Fest 99 featuring Snapcase, Hot Water Music, Grade, and Barrit among others. Not a bad collection. Thick glossy paper cover to boot. (CJK)

(Free/send stamps) 3909 Central Ave. Western Springs, IL 60558

Food Geek #1

This is a small (4"x5") 20 page zine dedicated to all things food related. I found this to be a very cool effort. It is laid out with well done cartoons and drawings that perfectly compliment the recipes (Pico de gallo & tofu Spam) and writings. If you are into cartoon art and cooking, this is essential. It is a bit pricey for its size but I do believe that future issues will find it growing into a great zine. (MY)

$1.00; Carrie McNinch, POB 481051, LA, CA 90048

Frame 609 #3

A collection of form letters the author has sent to his friends from September through December of 1998. Interesting from a voyeuristic standpoint...it's kind of like digging through someone's desk drawer, but it's easy to become a bit spent after the first few pages.

$2, 184 Oak Hill Road Concord, NH 03301

Fuzzy Heads are Better #7

Not the best issue of FHAB, but still worth the correspondence. Send Patti a nice letter and a couple bucks, some stamps and a little piece of your heart. She has the goods, and she will deliver. Read her column in Punk Planet and you will understand where she is coming from. Get it, got it, good. (EA)

$1.50 Patti Kim Box 68568 360A Bloor St. W Toronto, ON M5S 1X1 Canada

Half Debutante #1

This short zine is out of Gainseville, Fl. I can't get enough of that state musically, but as far as the zines go, I haven't seen one that has super-impressed me. This is no exception. A tour diary of her journey through the Appalachians was interesting but something was missing for me to really get into it. I did like the anecdote about the bear and food, as I have experience camping and being in woods near large animals. Then there is a short bit about radical cheerleading, which is cool if you ever get to see it. There is some stuff on the Hardback, a now-closed club that ghosted many amazing bands, some thoughts on her sister's death, a tattoo artist and a couple more random thoughts. (RE)

PO BOX 13105 Gainesville, FL 32604

Hanging Like a Hex #12

I am not a modern hard-core listener these days, but I am sure that the Hanging Like a Hex folks are. Nice clean layout, with a smashing color cover. I got into the text and found it to be a little pretentious, like most zines covering said genre. I will say that the writing is good and I would suggest this one, I really liked the Burning Airlines interview. Having interviewed J. Robbins myself I can tell you that he isn't a hard interview and that really helps. The Neurosis interview is a little more challenging and it seems that they are up to the challenge. Features a 7" with Nora, Hermon Dekalb, Eternal Youth and Every time I Die. (EA)

201 Maple Ln. N. Syracuse NY 13212

Here Be Dragons #6

This is a straightforward, folksy political hardcore fanzine. No interviews, which is a nice change. We have a tour diary, reflections on landlords and capitalism, what it means to be a bottom-feeder, LINUX vs.Windows, articles on mountain lions and invasive plants, and a bunch of other short pieces. I liked the appreciation of the old IWW songster Joe Hill always good to see a sense of history in punk zines. I wished they had done more with it, though, and maybe looked at how his influence, and the tradition of unorthodox American radicalism in general, led to punk as we know it. HBD has a warmth and a good-natured, personal feeling to it, but a lot of the writing is pretty dry. They could trim down a lot of the material. (DAL)

HBD, P.O. Box 8131, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Ideas is Matches #2

I'm so happy, a zine from Ireland! Lots of thoughts on DIY and feminism, and a surprisingly interesting article on DIY hygiene products. Also a nice story about renting places to live, with some good tips to insure you get a good place to live. But my favorite part of this was the travel diary, some time ago she came to America to do some travelling and it was interesting reading about how this country looks through the eyes of someone who doesn't live here.(ed)

$2ppd; 57 Woodview, Lucan, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Impact #22

This is a political zine with music reviews. These guys are concerned with informing the reader how to be a radical without having to wear a badge. These guys are also proud about their beliefs and their ability to express it. Some of these folks seem to have done their homework and the background to put up a reasonable argument based upon their beliefs. I give them a standing ovation. Then there seems to be some contributors who seem to be self proclaimed great communicators that appears to be better then most. Another story is one of political prisoners. The information received is limited to that of large text information one could get from handouts and goes unchallenged. I see the reasoning behind this, however a challenging view with the writers counterpoint would make for a more successful article instead of just regurgitated information. Also hearing about the "unconstitutional" pee pee test debate again is tired. It is an invasion of privacy yes, however what do you have to hide. There are also other topics that are covered. However this is a free speech zine that does not represent Impact as a whole, just the writer. I feel as if I want to debate with this zine instead of review it and get informed. Maybe it's doing its job. Maybe... (DM)

4 stamps; PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd. Orlando, FL 32817

The Inner Swine Vol. 5 Issue 3

Entertaining and humoring zine with plenty to read about what pisses the writers off, but I have my own problems too. Do you want to hear about them? Jeff Somers definitely wants you to know his name. (AS)

$2, 293 Griffith Street #9, Jersey City, NJ 07307

Inside Front #12

Oh man....here you've got the worst aspects of Profane Existence, MRR and HeartAttack rolled into one big newsprint piece-of-shit. First off, it's supposed to come with a 6" record of Refused covers by Umlaut—I didn't get it but that's neither here nor there. The introduction made me laugh and sets the tone for this whole misguided excursion—it's the story of the last Refused show which was this (apparently) highly-political and influential hardcore band (funny—the CD I've got of theirs features AC/DC and Motley Crue covers—I guess the revolution will not be metallicized, eh?) who affected the editor very deeply (I'm not even gonna repress my smirk). Anyway, this basement show in a house was shut down by three small-town cops (who he describes as 'no better or different than rapists'!!!) and our narrator explains how helpless he felt when 100 kids who were supposedly in some total frenzy of guitar-amplified pseudo-revolutionary fervor just stood there and shuffled out—DO THEY SEE THE IRONY IN THEIR IDIOCY????? This fucking thing is packed with everything I HATE about politics in punk rock, but add to that the drawn-out neverending-wordiness factor (they average about FOUR record reviews per PAGE) and you've got a textbook in how to bore the living fuck out of me. The last page has a commercial for ANARCHY for crying out loud!!!! This shit is only read by people who can't actually think for themselves and need their brains filled up by someone else so they can nod their heads and go along—REVOLUTION IS GREAT AS LONG AS WE PLAY BY YOUR RULES, RIGHT?! I wish they'd come up with a pill you could take to increase your common sense cuz I'd be writing these assholes a prescription—I'm gonna go BURN this fucking thing. (RP)

CrimethInc. 2695 Rangewood Drive Atlanta, GA 30345

King Cat #55

If you haven't read King Cat before, you are missing some really good stuff. King Cat is a comic zine made up of simple, short, slightly dreamy introspective stories that are always fun to read. John Porcellino's simple artwork is perfect for the stories he writes, and proves that you don't have to be a great artist to do a good comic. Awesome! (JK)

Spit and a Half, PO box 881 Elgin, IL 60121 $2.00ppd

Klusterfuct #4

This zine is comprised of mostly short stories and a couple of long lists of things to do. The writing isn't too interesting and the layout is non existent. Its not very thick making it a quick read, but that may have been the best thing about it. (JL)

No price, PO Box 2142, Vacaville, Ca 95696-2142

Lunchmeat Daydreams #2

All right, basically, Lunchmeat Daydreams is one of those comics that try to be all artsy and deep, but basically comes off just not making any sense. I really wanted to like this, but it was just to incoherent. The artwork is very stylized and hard to follow, and in more than a couple frames I just couldn't tell what was happening at all. Someone obviously put a lot of work into this so I feel bad knocking it. Oh well. Bogus!

Hurrancanrana Forehead 50 Juniper Crescent Brampton, Ontario Canada 16s1k'1 $1.50

Lunchmeat Daydreams #1

I'm hoping this is weird for the sake of being weird, because if this person thinks there's a meaningful plot in all of this... It's a comic, sort of. There's almost no dialog. You can't really even make out what's happening in a lot of frames. The stunning climax leads us to the sight of a canceled protractor pull and a canceled human caber toss due to bad hot dogs that are made out of chopped up persons I believe. (RB)

$1.50; 50 Juniper Crescent; Brampton, Ontario; L6S 1K1; CANADA

Monochrome- Laser, CD

There is something about this record that makes its awesome that I can't put my finger on. Sure Monochrome is playing music in a common area, falling between emo and indie rock, but they do it so well it doesn't matter that there are so many other bands doing it too. The emphasis here is on the music with a number of mostly instrumental songs. The more vocal oriented songs are well written melodic songs with awesome vocals. I found that it was a great record for just putting on to read to. (JL)

Trans Solar Records. PO Box 02 35 29 10127 Berlin, Germany

Mud in My Veins, Grass in My Feet, Blood in the Sky, Cows in the Creek #1

This is a small book about the same size as a CD case. It is made by twin sisters, one who wrote the ten poems in it and one who took the pictures for it. The layout/packaging is nice; I must say I like the artistic vision of the project. The poems are a lot about sex and human relationships. It's on the expensive side, which I'd attribute mostly to high printing costs. (BJM)

$6 Evil Twin Publications, PO Box 332, Williams OR 97544

Multiball #17

C'mon, need I say more: Pinball, Punk rock, The Kinks, Paul K and the Weathermen, and more pinball. More life in a nutshell. Thank you once again Multiball, along with a fine 7" featuring Fireballs of Freedom and Bellrays to boot. Too much for one zine. (EA)

$4.50 Multiball PO Box 40005, Portland, OR 97240

My Letter to the World #16

This zine is a combination of personal and music zine styles. The first half begin off with a description of the author's trip to London. It explores all of the different experiences and dilemmas that she went through while she was there. After that, it turns into a long show review, interviews, and record reviews. All in all, not a bad read, and it's chock full of so much information and writing that it has the ability to keep you entertained for hours. (FH)

PO Box 40082 Berkeley, CA 94704

the pAper chAse - ...and the machines are winning

This is math rock. When you hear this term bands like June of 44 and Slint should come to your head. This is what you should expect but you'll get a more chaotic band. Set back echoey vocals, addition noise set in for ambience, and somewhat melodic and haunting guitars help set the mood. This is math rock leaning towards the likes of Cap'n Jazz. This would be worth checking out if you dig the bands mentioned. (DM)

Magister Ludi Records PO Box 470112 Tulsa, OK 74147

Pear Shaped #3

A personal zine from an American lady working as a teacher in Japan. She is Punk Rock and a good writer to boot. I found the writing to be witty and enlightening especially her discourse on Japanese toilets (heated seats/blow dryers) This zine contains comics, reviews, small articles on Kathy Acker and the Hi Fives and an interview with Donna Jackson (founder/director of the Australian women's circus) This editor had problems getting contributions for this issue, I am sure that she would appreciate submissions. The price of this is $1.00 (or trade) but I'd send $2.00 or at least an International Response Coupon. (MY)

Mia Ellis, Yamamura Haitsu 203, San-No-Machi 8-24, Tsuruoka-Shi, Yamagata-Ken 997-0028, Japan

The Poison Ivy League #1

Oh, there's so much here it's hard to know where to begin. This zine is only twenty some pages long but reads like a book. Not only do we have extremely insightful, good writing, there's also cool lists (Long Island: A to Z), college life and rock'n'roll. Note that this is very different from your run-of-the-mill zine. Note how it lacks interviews and reviews (except one good and fresh movie review), but instead creates its own world of knowing-growing-girl perfection. Lesley is very interesting and has got stuff to say that we want to read about. As if all that isn't enough, the format is wonderful: a mix of handwriting, type font, drawings and stamps. Bottom line: total sweetness. (RB)

I dunno, send a buck or two to: Lesley Arfin, Hampshire College Box 16, Amherst, MA 01002

Poser #1

A very interesting zine about the male gay community in the punk scene. It covers topics such as safe sex and being the "fag at the punk bar". On top of this, it comes with loads of comics, various pictures of naked or posed men, and a pornogami, which is a cube you hang from your ceiling. This one is titled, "fellatio cubed." It's definitely an interesting and fun read, and if gay issues in the punk scene is relevant to you, then this might be the zine for you. (FH)

PO Box 1457 Bentall Center Vancouver, BC V6C2P7 Canada.

Quadroceptive Infinitation #5

Hi—I've just started college, I like pop-punk, nothing interesting ever happens to me and I don't have a single idea in my head—will you buy my zine, please? (RP)

$1 RR#1 Box 1168 Nescopeck, PA 18635

Reporter #1, #2, #3

Absolutely the best looking comic zine I've ever seen. The art is amazing, especially the backgrounds. In the first one he even tells what materials he uses, which is helpful for all you wanna be comic artists(myself included!) The only problem I have is that it's super confusing. I don't know who the characters are and why they're doing what they're doing. That said, the story in #2 (a boy falls for a ghost girl) is the most coherent tale of them all.(ed)

#1, #2 are $2, #3 is $3; Reporter Comic Books P.O. Box 10952 Portland, OR 97296-0952

Rude International #4

This isn't a zine, this is a full-fledged shiny periodical! Chock full of in-depth interviews with Anti-Flag, Jesse Michaels of Op Ivy and Bad Manners, plus articles on Rude Boy culture, reviews and of course the gossip pages, this is by far the best skinhead/rude publication since the Skinhead Times but without some of the nasty politics. (cak)

$3.50, PO Box 391302 Cambridge, MA 02139

Skyscraper #6

A great layout to say the least, and this magazine is thick. You would think that with near 200 pages it might be full of ads, but I see it is full of content. Great interviews from the likes of Red Monkey, Subpoena The Past, Godheadsilo, and cover stars Tristeza. Definitely a west coast flavor to this magazine. There is also a brief article on Internet Music Sites. It would be cool to see them expand on that idea and even make a column of it. Also included are the usual staples of reviews. Take a couple days to make this a read. (SY)

Skyscraper, PO Box 4432,Boulder, CO 80306

Second Thought #4

Photocopied and stapled in the corner like a middle school book report with content of the same quality, Second Thought doesn't really have a reason to be distributed. A few bad poems, some bad jokes taken from random websites and "well, duh!" editorials do not a zine make. Can you spell "fodder"? The editor of this zine probably can't...maybe she should consult with her spell-check next time. But it's free so who can complain except the trees? C'est la vie. (cak)

Free, Leah Schonberg 30 Waterside Plaza #29J NY, NY 10010

Shredding Paper Fall 99'

Normally I skip by the glossy cover, thick, filled with way too many reviews - style zine. What caught my attention on this one? Basically, an interview with The Muffs and Man or Astro-Man? Both of these interviews make this zine worth your purchase. The interview with Kim of The Muffs is so excellent I read it twice. Good writers, like David Hill and his column on Punk Bootlegs. Buy this one. (EA)

Shredding Paper PO Box 2271 San Rafael, CA 94912

Signal To Noise

This is titled as the journal of improvised & experimental music. It is a professional job with excellent photos and layouts. I don't recall seeing a music magazine with photos this crisp and clean. An Interview with Bill Harkleroad from Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band as well as many others. Live reviews and lengthy detailed music reviews to make for a quality read. (JZ)

416 Pine Street, Burlington, VT 05401

Signal to Noise #12

Signal to Noise bills itself as, "the journal of improvised and experimental music" and while I have heard of almost nobody that this magazine interviews, I still found it all very interesting. This issue features interviews with Bernie Worrell, Roscoe Mitchell, Chris Speed, Eugene Chadbourne and a bunch of other avant garde jazz types. This is definitely a very well researched and well written magazine, but unless you are into this kind of thing, you probably won't want to pick this up. (JK)

102 Quarry Rd. Suite #24, South Burlington $2.00

Skin Alley #2

This is one of the funniest zines I have read in a very long time. This issue of Skin Alley features a biography of Eddie Rabbit, the country singer responsible for such hits as "I love a rainy night" and "drivin my life away", CD reviews of easy listening CDs, and some of the funniest mock ads that I have seen in a while. One ad is made to look like a Sears catalogue, but all the pictures are taken from war torn places like Bosnia. One picture, of a boy in a coffin reads "boy's suits 50% off", and another, of a man running with a gun reads, "Entire line of Jogging Accessories 30-50% off". Also included in this issue is a story about the lost last episode of Who's the Boss and a story about a man who has plastic surgery done so he looks like Kenny Rogers and can get free chicken at Kenny Rogers Roasters. Very Funny, Very Good. Bitchin! (JK)

John A. 5476 Glenville Circle, Virginia Beach, VA 234464

So Fuckin' What?

Very much along the line of what you got in Profane Existence. Sadly I reviewed this last, I could have used Dedly Daego's article on The Christian agenda in punk rock called "where do we draw the line?" If you are thinking of picking up this up, I like the way you think. (JZ)

253 Alexander Street, Apt. # 322, Rochester, NY 14607

Spank #27

Typical MRR styles clone, that has proven that they can deliver. I think I am burnt out of this style of zine or maybe Spank isn't is good as it was issues back. Seventy pages of punk rock including a decent Kiss Offs interview. Not their best issue. (EA)

$3 Spank 1004 Rose Ave. Des Moines, IA 50315

Spank #26

Big ol' think zine filled mostly with interviews and zine/record reviews. This issue features interviews with Anti-Flag, the Rondelles, Retriever, Endering Records, Faster Tiger, Blue Tip, and Jimmy Eat World. Nothing we haven't seen before, but if you like the bands interviewed you should pick it up. Nifty! (JK)

Spank 1004 Rose Ave. Des Moines IA 50315-3000 $3.00ppd

Sponge Monkey #8/#9

This is really just one issue of Sponge Monkey, but it is considered a combination of issue eight and nine. This issue of Sponge Monkey features interviews with Mix Master Mike, Judah Bauer of Jon Spencer fame, the Amazing Royal Crowns, Jets to Brazil, A Minor Forest, as well as a bunch of reviews and some pretty good columns and stories. Overall, a pretty cool zine, with lots of cool stuff. Radical! (JK)

Sponge Monkey 416 Jeff Davis Street, Waveland, MS 39576-3226 $2.00

Squat Thrust #3

Wow! Lots of stuff in this one. This issue of Squat Thrust has an interview with director Roger Christian, some fun letters to companies, recipes, short prose, games, reviews, and some hilarious rip offs of Family Circus comics. I really enjoyed this zine a lot. It has a very wide variety of material inside, and everything is quite funny and/or interesting. Rockin! (JK)

Squat Thrust, PO box 141497 Gainesville FL 32614 $1.00 + 2 stamps

Stay Free #16

"Stay Free is a non profit magazine exploring issues surrounding commercialism & American culture." This 60-page magazine contains very professionally written articles jam packed with info that The Man doesn't want you to know about. One article that grabbed me was about a push to have advertising via radio in public places. Imagine sitting on a bus and having to listen to corporate adverts. I only found one article that I was not interested in which is exceptional for a magazine of this size. This is a very important read; I recommend it highly. (MY)

$3.95; POB306 Prince St. Station NYC, 10012

Subdrive Magazine Vol. 1.02 Aug./Sept. 1999

I was slightly thrown by the Boston scene report at the very front of this zine as this is a Long Island, NY publication and is geared accordingly. This magazine has some very pedestrian reviews and articles about some very pedestrian bands such as the Scofflaws, Youth Brigade and Blink 182. This mainstream coverage did nothing for me although I was pleasantly surprised by the DJ Krush review. If you can get past their Warped Tour coverage (snooze) there is an interesting article concerning the birth of the Skull & Bones- a Yale secret society that has produced a good number of power brokers throughout the years including one President George Bush, and a narrative where some gentlemen get busted for open containers outside Maxwell's in Hoboken, NJ. They say that they are looking for writers. Perhaps I will submit some thoughts on free legal and otherwise parking in Hoboken, NJ since they claim that there is "Fewer vacant parking spaces in New Jersey at any given time than at a Jack in the Box parking lot". I think I can help you. 71/4 X 101/2. Newsprint. (CJK)

Free. Subdrive Magazine. C/O Dave & Elizabeth P.O. Box 757 New Hyde Park, NY 11040.

Take A Stand #2

Don't be confused by the name, this is not a straight edge zine. Includes an interview with Old Time Relijun and various other rants/stories that mix beer drinking with personal dealings. (AS)

$1 ppd., c/o Travis E. Litman, 0615 SW Palatine Hill Rd. #1074, Portland, OR 97219

Ten Things Jesus Wants You to Know #21

Since this has been around for awhile, you probably already know this zine. Typical layout, with columns, reviews, interviews, live shows, etc. Unlike most zines of this format, Ten Things is a winner. Simply put, there are many quality writers with columns that probably not done last minute. Better than most, I find myself reading this one from front to back every issue. (EA)

$3 8315 Lake City Way NE, PMB #192 Seattle, WA 98115

The Underground

Somehow I am the one who ended us with the Religious works this issue. If there have been tidal waves of Christian material sent for review before, I must have skipped over them. "Jesus loves me" I have already been informed, thanks. Pro-Life/Anti-Choice. Reviews, interviews & poetry located within. I find it ironic that anything dealing with religion could be labeled "Underground". On many levels that's both funny and full of it. (JZ)

366-A W. Nebraska Ave, Dinuba, CA 93818

The Underground #16

A Christian punk zine. Hmmm.... I don't get it. Interviews with bands, Within and Exist. Short scene report and some record reviews. (AS)

The Underground, 366-A W. Nebraska Ave., Dinuba, CA 93618

Unshaven Chi #1

This is a surreal but slick comic book, full of stories about cereal. The presentation is nice and the art is very good. The overall package is pretty professional in a Hate/Fantagraphics sort of way, although the layout gets frustratingly busy at times. The stories have a certain charm, and if you're a die-hard cereal fan, you'll appreciate all of the obscure characters from commercials and boxes and ads that the artist has brought back to life. Non-cereophiles might find it cloying after awhile, though. (DAL)

$2, Ben T. Steckler, P.O. Box 7273, York, PA 17404

Uprising!

This newsprint publication found it's way to my PO Box here in town before I received a second copy for review. So I was already charmed by the fact that they passed it on to little old me out of the blue. It's issue number five for these folks from Michigan that seems to be a wonderful resource for the Toledo/Detroit and surrounding area. If you are in this area it's time to belly up and get involved with this project. The focus seems to be on catchy tuneful punk rock and I like what I see. The Donnas are on cover of this issue. (JZ)

PO Box 2251, Monroe, MI 48161

Zipper #7

This a mini-zine by a girl named "Zip". It consists of short articles that address political issues that she is interested in. There are articles in here on herbal abortion, self-image, drug addiction, why the curfew sucks, why school sucks, critical mass, and more...This zine doesn't stray far from typical zine territory. But, she's young and she's excited and she's venting her thoughts the best she can. I can only hope that she gets better in time. (RE)

625 SW 10th #482-C Portland, OR 97205-2788

Zipper #8

Zipper is a zine by a kid for the kids, Action kid style. Sure its stuff that's been said, done before but that doesn't mean its bad. Lots of energy and inspiration showing throughout. Writing about youth liberation, curfew laws, school, Halloween, menstruation and more. If this sounds like what you'd be into drop a line. (JL)

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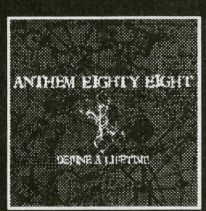

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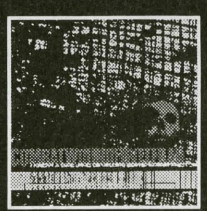
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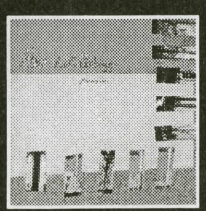
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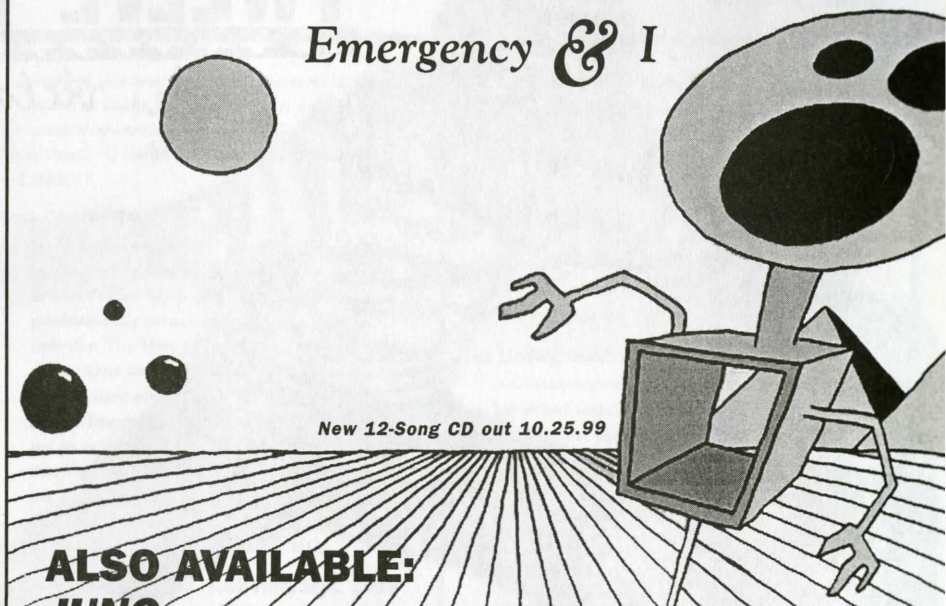

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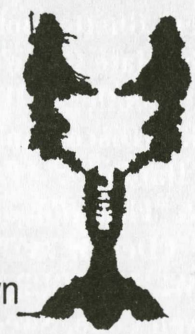

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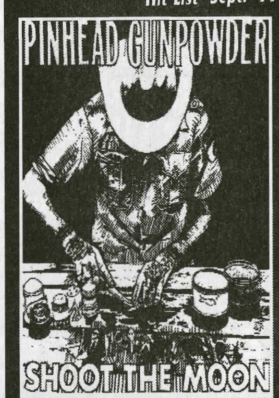

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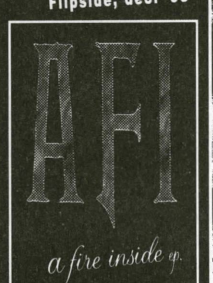

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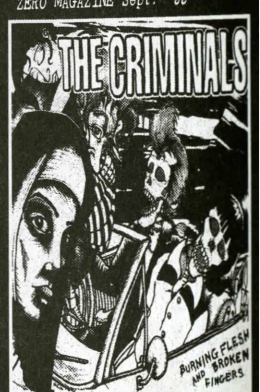

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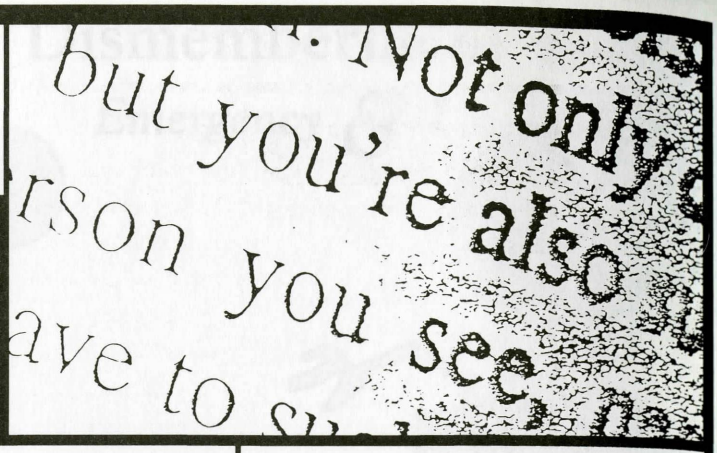


Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass

C.S. Walton
Garrett County Press

An obsession with the depraved, deprived and addicted in literature is a trend that comes and goes; if it's not here now, you can bet it will be around the next corner. Few have the maturity to write about such subjects without romanticism or sentimentality. Or spite. Or pity. In Orwell's "Down and Out in London and Paris," his first-hand accounts are uncommonly no-nonsense and straightforward. C.S. Walton's *Ivan Petrov: Russia Through A Shot Glass* walks us through days, weeks, months and years with a self-declared alcoholic in the former Soviet Union. The tale is told with humor, grit, and a frightening sense of inevitability.

From the beginning, we know that Ivan will be a drunk. We know that things will get worse before they get better—that is, *if* they get better. For the most part, the tale is told with such entertaining specificity that knowing the outcome doesn't diminish our enjoyment of the story one bit. Every time Ivan sobers up, we know that he will get drunk again. And so he does. It's only a matter of time—it's a roller coaster, only not so exciting.

Meanwhile, though, the infinitely cyclical nature of addiction is beautifully mirrored by the grinding boredom and futility of life in the Soviet Union for all its citizens. The threat of imprisonment is an ever-wagging finger in the face of every man, woman, and child. It doesn't work as a behavioral deterrent, though, because most people just figure they're going to prison eventually no matter what they do—it's only a matter of time. Not to mention that "freedom," such as it is, isn't all it's cracked up to be anyway.

Ivan and his cohorts are treated with a drug called "Antabuse" (which, by the way, is still used in this country). The idea is that if you drink while taking Antabuse, you will get violently ill. Well, duh. If you're far enough into the woods that you're being treated with Antabuse, a few things are certain: one, you know you will be violently ill if you drink; two, you know you will be violently ill if you don't drink; three, you know you need a fucking drink. Drinking has ruined your life and is on its way to killing you. Do you need one more reason not to drink? Not really. What happens is that people take Antabuse and drink anyway and sometimes they die. If they don't die, they keep drinking. Ivan suffers every fate common to an alcoholic: injury, illness, loss of family and home. He sobers up occasionally but it never lasts long. Ivan doesn't really need one more reason not to drink, but he could really use one good reason to stay sober.

Ivan sums it up beautifully this way: "It is not true that people only work for money. If someone is paid to dig a hole every day and then fill it in again, it might work for a while but in the end he will rebel; that is why 70 years of communism produced 200 million thieves and drunkards."

The book is full of gems like this, as well as a fascinating array of strange and extreme characters. Toward the middle of the book, though, it becomes very clear that Ivan is destined to go around and around in the same futile cycle. The almost existential lack of light at the end of the tunnel makes a lot of sense, but it also amounts to a dip in energy and a loss of tension. Further, the epilogue seems tacked on; it begins a brand new story which doesn't come to fruition. Finally, I had a question about the use of "shot glass" in the title, and, indeed, the use of the word "glass" at all. Up until the end, this is a book about bottles. In the epilogue, Ivan tells us that all Russian street drunks have a personal drinking glass which they keep as their own, but up until that point, glasses are hardly mentioned.

Having said all this, however, I still cannot recommend this book enough. It's a good story, beautifully told. Also, it's from Garrett County Press. They are the guys that brought us *The Best of Temp Slave*, and this is only their second release. It would be a huge understatement to say that they're off to a damn good start.

—Leah Ryan

Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture

Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss, editors
Blackwell Publishers

Books like this scare a lot of people off. There aren't any pictures; the cover looks like something a tenth-grader would describe as "dorky;" and many of the sentences are long and difficult. The same could be said for many academic books. Yet when the topic is something as immediate and intensely felt as popular music, the problem is exacerbated. Bruce Horner's article on "Discourse" confronts it head on, explaining the apparent incompatibility of popular music and academic study:

"The assumption producing this nervousness about studying popular music seems to be that we must keep each discourse separate, that only one must rule, and that we ourselves must adhere in our identities to the beliefs and ways of talking of only one of these: one must be either a fan or a scholar, an archivist or a musician. The interests of one not only cannot change, they must not 'spill over' to contaminate the other."

It's a good point. But even as he critiques the policing of discursive borders, his language is reinforcing the wall he wishes to tear down. So is mine.

I'm not sure that's such a bad thing. After all, there's nothing more embarrassing than watching an overly educated scholar try to sound hip. Maybe the best solution isn't tearing down the wall, but putting in a window. The way to do that is to make the abstractions of scholarly prose concrete by rooting them in something specific. The best essays in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture* periodically descend from the clouds to inform us of the author's personal experience, like this passage from Robin Balliger's article on politics:

"Recently, at the college radio station where I work, a young politically minded DJ was pulling CDs out of the current rotation file and mentioned that he wasn't playing anything with a barcode!"

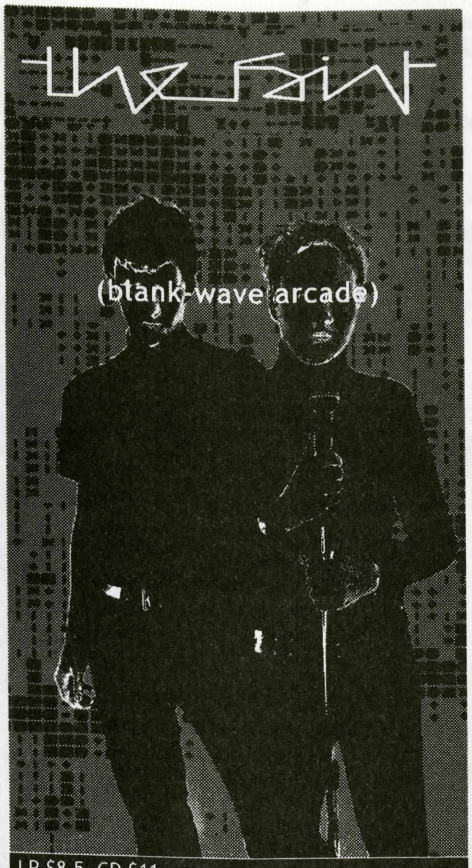
The real challenge, once the window is in place, is to make it double as a mirror. It's hard to convince your average music lover to interrupt his pleasure in order to interrogate it. Reading band interviews is one thing, reading a lengthy discussion of the role interviews play within the music industry is quite another. As anybody who has read an unfavorable review of a favorite artist will attest, it's not particularly comfortable to have your taste called into question. To have to think about that taste analytically—how it categorizes you, what helped to produce it, where it may lead you—can be truly exhausting, at least at first. Even when you're used to the process of self-reflection, it's rarely easy.

So why bother? I'm sure a lot of you would be asking that question after struggling through ten pages of *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. The only answers that make sense are variants on the ancient Greek injunction to "know thyself." You're passionate about music, it makes your heart race, gives you goosebumps, music compels you to bounce around on the furniture. In short, it promotes a lot of activities—and let's not forget about fucking—that short-circuit your consciousness. Because you're bound up in the heat of passion, it's hard to get a critical distance on your feelings. If you want to know why you love some songs and hate others or are curious how your taste preferences translate—or don't—into politics, then you have to find a way of confronting your feelings about music as if they were somebody else's.

This is where Horner and Swiss's anthology comes in. Once you find your depth in the book's prose—skipping over parts that don't interest you, using your expertise to get a foothold in passages that you really want to understand—you'll find yourself thinking "That's not me!" a lot. It's at precisely those moments that you're most likely to learn something about yourself. Reflect on that defensive reaction and you'll discover the key to your own ideology. In the article devoted to this topic, Lucy Green makes a point likely to piss off a lot of *Punk Planet*'s readers, writing that the argument that "certain 'popular' music can be autonomous" is ideological. "It is not the style of the music itself, or even its economic position, but the content of the claims being made for its superiority that make the position ideological." In other words, independence comes at a price. Then again, so does *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. But at least the editors have been nice enough to provide a website you can visit free of charge www.multimedia.drake.edu/keyterms. Have a look before you buy the book.

—Charlie Bertsch

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we recieve will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.



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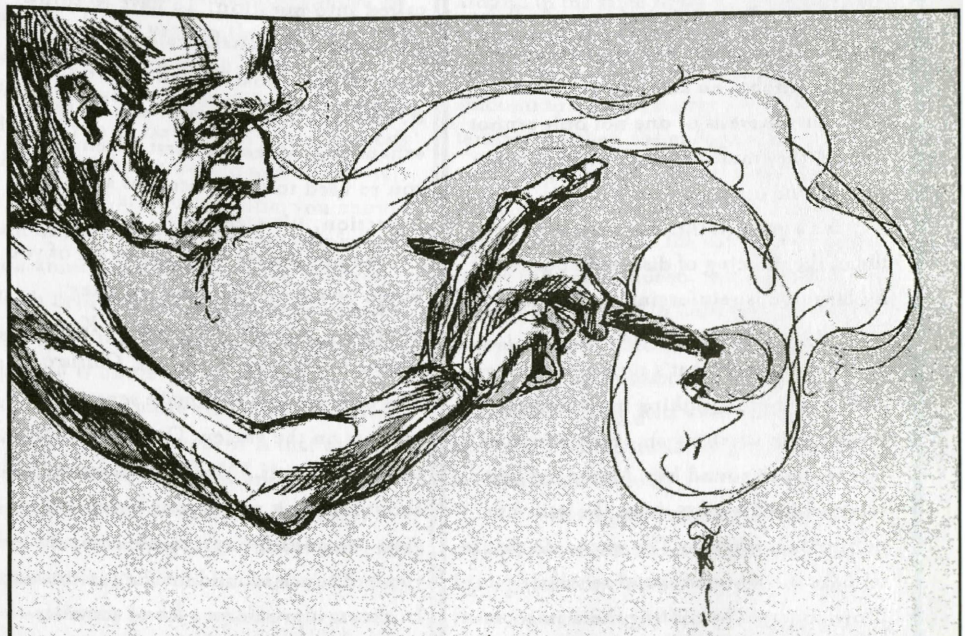

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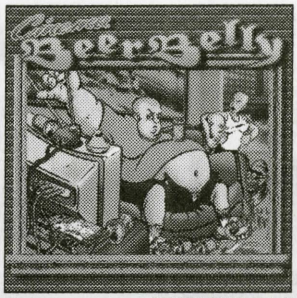

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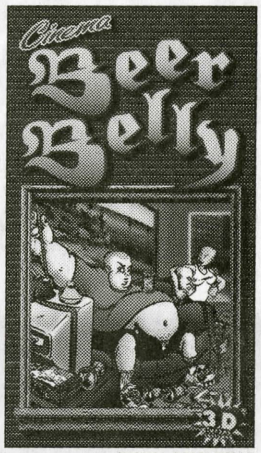

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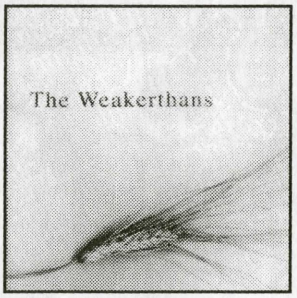

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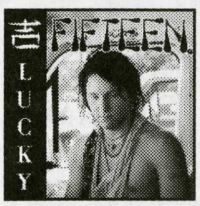

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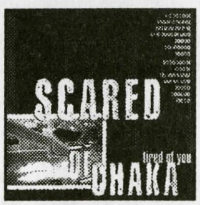

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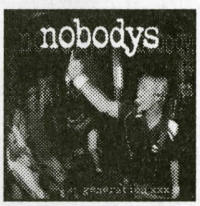

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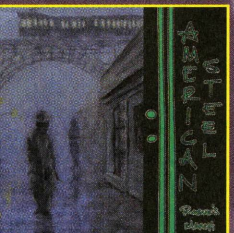

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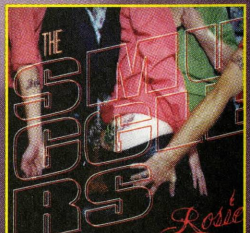

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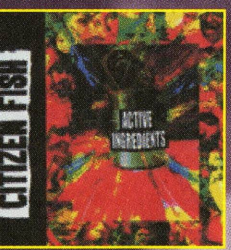

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