

READ

No. 21 Summer/Fall 2002

magazine



THE
FEAR
ISSUE

Superdrag
Manifesto Jukebox
Dillinger 4
Jen Chapin
The Briefs

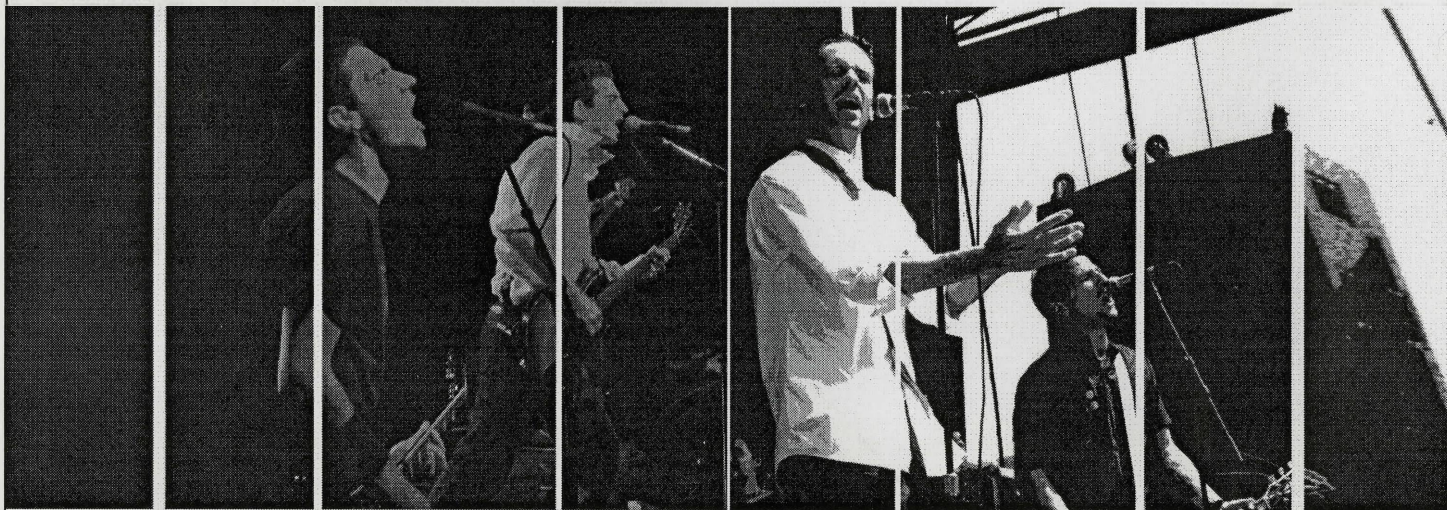
Midtown
MuchMusic's
Diego Fuentes
Electric Frankenstein
Kittenpants Insert!

The Sillies
Prevent Falls
Warrant's Erik Turner
Lisa Ortiz
MUCH MORE!

ANTI-FLAG

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STEREO
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VOLUME IV

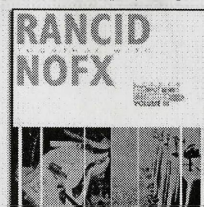


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9/20 | Clutch Cargo's • Pontiac, MI
9/21 | Metro • Chicago, IL
9/22 | Metro • Chicago, IL

9/25 | Avalon Ballroom • Boston, MA
9/26 | Irving Plaza • New York, NY
9/27 | The Nation • Washington, DC
9/28 | Trocadero • Philadelphia, PA
9/29 | Trocadero • Philadelphia, PA

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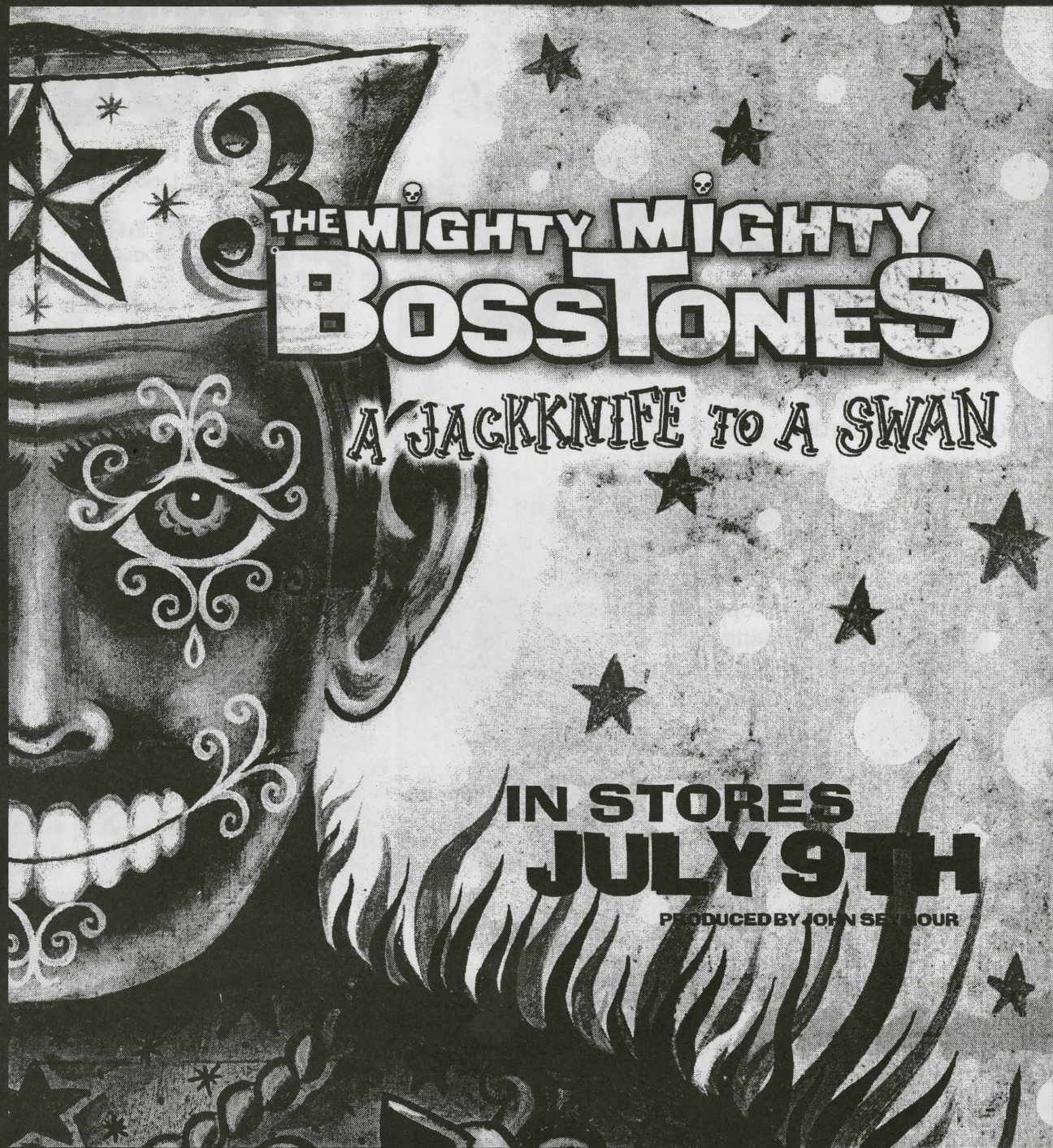
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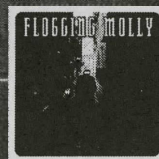
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READers

Send Us Mail! We Love Mail! Mail Us!

Hey, I found your website through DCSka and I must say you're magazine has some of the best (and funniest) interviews that I've read in a long time - esp. the one of Dave from the Slackers. It's so annoying that they're playing at Nation - I wish they'd go back to playing at the Black Cat. Anyhoo, if someone could please tell me how I could get a subscription and pay using Pay Pal I would greatly appreciate it :) Thanks a bunch! -Conri Mahoney

Yes, we have PayPal! Send \$10 to adamonkey@hotmail.com for a 4-issue subscription. Donations also accepted, though you can't write it off your taxes. But hey, you'll feel better about yourself.

hey editor, i was surfing around to solve a dispute as to whether or not bukowski hung out or ever was in boston and came accross a july 16, 2000 article on your page anyway, besides agreeing wholeheartedly that the bukowski bar in boston would have led to hours of regurgitation on the buk's part i was even more shocked to hear your references to him and philly, a town I've never known him to write about in my readings i'd appreciate any insight into where and how you came to associate him with philly and any info confirming his residence there as this article implies as a kind of secondary request i write shit and from what i've seen on your site you publish it, so maybe you could give me the rundown of your submission protocol SIR! anyway, i'd appreciate any info on that original q, thanks
—MB the brother nematode

Bukowski spent his infamous 3-year stint as a drunken bum in Philly. Just about all the stories that were melted into the Barfly movie originally happened in Philly. PS—Thank you for noticing we publish shit.

hey adam,
i was at the diner tonight and brought READ to show people and everyone loved the issue. They loved the Snap Judgments and was reading them out loud!! paul and i laughed our asses off for the Queen of the Damned snap.
rock on editor dude,
—Brian Goshen

I'd like this letter to get to Alicia Erlich, the writer of "Farscape is Far Out!, if you can do that for me. thanks! Farscape has never been one of the better sci-fi series on television. I'd much rather any day watch a bumbling capt. krik than any farscape episode. Since it came on I knew it was garbage, almost to the point the show "LEXX" is. Yes, yes, i know that is a great accusation. But it has never intriuged any ounce of intrest in me, or eneterained me in anyway. Furthermore, I dissaprove of how you suggest "Earth2" and "Space; Above and Beyond" as 'failures'. Those were the most promising science fiction series on network TV in the past ten years. they were only killed by the network move to more widely watched programming, such as the notion of "mature" cartoon humor, ala the simpsons or family guy. Eat that you farscape geek!!! :)
Kindly yours,
Evan Parker

Listen, people. Go speak your Klingon elsewhere. We run a non-fanboy operation here.

I NOTICED SOME OF THE NAMES IN THE SKA BAND NAMES - A PRIMER PAGE AND THEY WERE VERY OFFENDING. NAMES THAT BLASPHEME GOD, JESUS, THE POPE OR ANYONE ELSE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SHOULD BE REMOVED. ALSO ANY NAMES WITH PROFANITY OR HAVE ANY INNPROPRIATE CONTENTS SHOULD BE REMOVED. THANK YOU

—Nicholas, TsaxNick@comcast.net

Oh my gosh! You're absolutely right! I'm so sorry!! sob sob...

ok adam, it's on..you want to play, we'll play. i just got the new READ magazine and saw the lovely image you have of me, for my article. you're a dick. seriously. the article was bad enough, the picture was the icing on the cake. i'll get you back and you won't know when.

—Bryan Kremkau, disgruntled staff writer

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

The new READ is like the pathetic issue, all of use showing our dorkiest side with the crush articles. I hope the next issue will make us all look cool again. Make it the "i walk slowly to cool music pretending i'm in a Barry Sonnenfeld movie" issue.

—Christopher Campbell, disgruntled staff writer

Bryan and Chris, listen up. I don't not pay you to sit around and write emails. Get back to work, dregs.

Hey Adam,
Great new issue. Scar Culture, Kobe Tai and David Cross in the same issue. Awesome. What more could you ask for? Okay, here's my wish list for No. 21: Skinlab, Stacy Valentine and any of the members of Upright Citizens Brigade. Let's make it happen! Kidding....though that would be a pretty rad issue...
Rock on, Rian Turner, Century Media

i loved the gothic pick up lines! [from readmag.com] if any one were to say those to me i'd melt on the spot.its nice to know im not alone in my taste for the odd.its hard being a small-town freak.only perk is the graveyard down the street and the huge, beautiful crypt.-ravenlily
ps.to whoever wrote theese lines,i wish u lived near me-life would be more interesting.please contact me-id love to chat!

The goth pick-up lines are the most popular thing I've ever written, and that piece still receives the most fan mail. So we've decided to repeat the formula of success with punk pick-up lines, located a few pages away.

LetterFromTheEditor

As I attempt to wrap up this issue at 3:30 in the morning, many thoughts come to mind. First, I think they should make a Bollywood version of Dead Alive. Secondly, I think they should make lingerie for animals. And right now I'm thinking about how I wish I came up with the Schindler's List drinking game, though it's probably better that I didn't.

Well, the above paragraph is about the only personal stuff I have in this issue. To be honest, I've had a bit of trouble writing articles for this issue. Originally, I didn't want a theme for this one, because themes are getting pretty old. But my writers expect some guidance and they pushed me into a corner, so I finally said **FEAR**.

My writers were satisfied, but I couldn't write anything. I've already mentioned in past issues how in different stages of my life I was afraid of strangulation, the dark, apple juice, monsters, incarceration, and castration. Sure, I am/was afraid of more things, but writing about it seems so mundane. I mean, we've all had childhood phobias of the boiler room in our parents' basement, of angry dogs and rabid squirrels, of that crazy shirtless guy who walks around the neighborhood with a ladder. Why waste my time and your time by writing it all out?

I really wish I came up with something better than **FEAR**. Of course, a week before deadline, I came up with **LINGUISTICS** which would've been more interesting. Maybe next time.

But this issue is still pretty dang decent. We've got killer interviews with a bunch of bands I don't feel like listing here. We've got reviews up the wazoo. We've got pretty good articles. We've got a comic. Some old jokes. A spiffy table of contents. What more can you ask?

That reminds me, please give a hearty welcome to **Sean Carswell**. Sean does the popular punk zine **Razorcake** and writes



books n' shit. Also welcome back our sexy Mexi **Liz Ortega**, who writes for every punk zine on the west coast. We've got **Shawn Granton** of **Ten Foot Rule** in da hizzoo with a **READ**-exclusive comic. Let's not forget **Steve Hinckley** from the poppin' fresh zine **Schuell**. And as always, we've got various family members and the **Campbell Bros.**, tho come to think of it, I don't think Brandon did anything. Well, he contributed in spirit. And be sure to check out the newly overhauled and super stylin' **readmag.com**, designed by the brilliant and lovely **Bryan Kremkau** of the popular ska/punk site **Ska-PunkAndOtherJunk.com**.

We've also got another **Kittenpants.org** insert, back by popular demand. And on a serious note, I'm reprinting my **grandma's memoirs**, which she wrote before she succumbed to cancer. This short book is an absolute delight to read, and I recommend you read it. If you're reading this right now, stop. Go straight to that piece and read. Read closely, because I'll be quizzing you on it.

And don't forget to peruse the advertisements that some very nice labels placed, and then write to those labels and mention you saw their ad in **READ Magazine**. While some people

believe **READ** is made out of fairy dust and the dreams of happy children (they're only partly correct), it's actually dependent on the money of kind advertisers. So drop them a line and tell them that you read **READ** and love **READ** and you will buy anything that's advertised in **READ**.

Jesus, look at all this room left. It's 4:13 but I need to finish this. You know, since this issue is bereft of personal items, I shall do you the honor of telling you about my life now. I know, you can hardly wait. Well, the biggest event in the past couple of months was **Sherri and Nick's wedding**. Congratulations, guys, I love you both.

The next biggest event was **Rush at Jones Beach**. Aw yeah. It was, to use modern urban vernacular, "da bomb diggity, son."

Another biggie will be my long-awaited **graduation** from college. Seven years in the making, I will finally get my stupid-ass BBA in about four weeks. That is, if I pass my last two night classes, which are two of the hardest classes I've taken. I'm trying my best though, cuz I gotta get out of there...

I also got a promotion and title change at work, and I'm such a suit, it's not funny. I'm super busy now cuz my job is like all crazy like that, but it's cool being The Man.

So I've been pretty busy. Working all day, night classes til midnight, working overtime on the weekends... I haven't really been able to enjoy the summer and it's flying by without me partaking in any adventures.

But somehow another **READ** is wrapped up and ready to go, with much help from my amazing staff (thank you guys!!!). I hope you enjoy this issue. I hope it makes you smile or laugh or at least pleasantly fill your time during a long commute or hard crap. Please get in touch and let me know what you liked and what you didn't. Feedback is really important to us and keeps us going. Well, it's morning now and time for bed. I hope this issue finds you well. Happy **READING**! Best, Adam Liebling

In my stereo this week: MTX, Selby Tigers, Queens, Ramones, Rush, Cure, Rancid, Public Enemy, They Might Be Giants, Madness, Elvis Costello, The Jam, Primus, Skanick, Bluebeats, Peacocks, the new Bosstones, Bouncing Souls, Misfits, Beastie Boys, Dr. Ring Ding, The Clash, Infectious Grooves, Pizzicato 5, Entwine, Muffs, Iron Maiden, Sisters of Mercy, Minor Threat

Weirdest dream this week: I dreamt that I was staying in a bed & breakfast with all these orphans, and the person running it was Angelina Jolie, and Billy Bob Thornton was the janitor.

Food that made the stinkiest poop this week: The combo of meatloaf, coffee, paella, and vinegar n' salt potato chips.

Fave songs off the new Rush album: How It Is, Vapor Trail, Celling Unlimited, Out of the Cradle, tho I like pretty much the whole album except for **Sweet Miracle**, **Nocturne**, and **One Little Victory**

My biggest addiction this week: Literati, a Yahoo.com game that's like Scrabble. I've played over 400 games, with a 75% win ratio. I am the fucking Literati master. Booyaaaaa!!!

READ Issue #21 Notes

Articles I Was Going To Write For This Issue But My Girlfriend Shot Down:

Title: Me & My Tapeworm

Description: A fictitious (?) story about chronic stomach aches that lead to a gruesome discovery, and my eventual acceptance and love for this unwanted intestinal visitor.

How Jen Said No: "Don't be disgusting! Stop saying you have a tapeworm!"

Title: Celebrity Boxing: King Crimson vs. Yes

Description: Prog rockers go head-to-head in an 18-minute epic battle. Article to be written as an 18-minute epic song. Features a conflicted Bill Buford.

How Jen Said No: "That is really dorky. No one is going to want to read that. You're going to lose all of your female readers."

Title: Flatulence: Man's Natural Defense Against Cuddling

Description: Self-explanatory.

How Jen Said No: "Pssh, whatever. You're the gassiest guy I've ever dated. Everyone else likes to cuddle."

Title: Porno Reviews by Grandpa

Description: I'd ask my grandpa to review new pornographic films. It works because I want to do porn reviews to sell issues, but I don't want READ to become sleazy. This way, the porn reviews are done in a funny, ironic way.

How Jen Said No: "I think I saw that in another zine. And anyway, I don't want you buying porn."

Title: Orchestrating A Threesome

Description: How to slyly, carefully plan out a 3-some in a manner to make it seem like it just innocently happened.

How Jen Said No: "Okay, then I'll just go call up John Leguizamo and Denis Leary."

People I Wanted To Interview For This Issue But Couldn't Hack It

Person: Carrot Top .

Why: One of the most despised carbon-based life forms on the planet, and yet so strangely fascinating.

Spin: Completely serious questions about his political views and tips on dating.

What Went Wrong: No personal contact info. He hides behind a half-dozen agents like a goddamn prima donna.

Person: Jared from those Subway ads

Why: He lost 300 pounds and he's still a dork.

Spin: Funny/mean interview where I'd keep talking about all the delicious, fat-filled foods he must be missing.

WWW: I got lazy and didn't pursue.

Person: Godfrey, The "Make 7-Up Yours" Guy

Why: I like 7-Up and wanted to score free coupons. And I'm inexplicably insanely obsessed with Godfrey.

Spin: Fawning, fanboy interview. Would ask about every little detail on the making of those commercials.

WWW: Went to see him and Colin Quinn at a comedy club, but left early because the amateurs before him were so bad my kishkes cramped up.

Person: Dave Thomas from Pere Ubu

Why: Well-known guy in the art-punk scene.

Spin: Facetious questions about the Wendy's fast food franchise. Maybe ask how the afterlife is treating him.

WWW: Realized those questions are stupid, but couldn't think of anything else to ask.

Person: My tapeworm

Why: My tapeworm knows all.

Spin: Reverent, supportive interview.

WWW: There is no proof my tapeworm friend is real.

Misleading Sites

I'm totally sick of having to use search engines to find a certain site, so sometimes I type in a site name that seems correct. And hilarity ensues:

Site Name	What I Hoped It Would Be	What It Really Is	Site Name	What I Hoped It Would Be	What It Really Is
Ska.com	Huge online resource on ska music	Credit Suisse Group, financial services co.	Whitehouse.com	Press releases from the White House	Porn
Donuts.com	Huge online resource on donuts	CES Marketing	Asianpie.com	Recipes for those weird red bean pies	Porn
Sausages.com	Sausage recipes	CES Marketing (foiled again!)	XXX.com	Site for the new Vin Diesel movie	Porn
Punkassbitches.com	Punk ass bitches	Some lame blogger	Dick.com	Fan site of my fave author, Philip K. Dick	AAAGGGHHH!!!!

READ Blurbs

Old Joke Corner

A woman says to her friend, "My husband just came home with a dozen roses. Now I'll have to spend a week with my legs in the air!"

Her friend replies, "Why? Don't you own a vase?"

A man comes home to find his girlfriend with all of her bags packed and being loaded into a cab in front of their home. "Why are you leaving me?" he says.

"I'm leaving you because you're a pedophile!" she says.

"Well that's an awfully big word for nine-year-old," he says.

Q: What's the last thing that went through Dale Ernhardt's head?

A: The steering column

Q: Why would R. Kelly make a great hockey player?

A: He can score before the first period.

Two subatomic particles meet in a bar.

"Hi there!" says one, "I'm a proton."

"Are you sure?" replies the second.

"Yes, I'm positive!"

A penguin takes his broken car to a mechanic. While waiting, the penguin gets an ice cream cone. Then he goes back to the garage and asks the mechanic how things are going. "Well," says the mechanic, "It looks like you blew a seal." The penguin replies, "Oh no, that's just ice cream."

A doctor, a lawyer and a priest are having dinner together. Suddenly, the cook runs out of the kitchen, screaming "FIRE! FIRE!" The place erupts in panic as people rush for the doors, and the three guests leap to their feet.

Doctor: "The children! We've got to save the children!"

Lawyer: "Fuck the children!"

Priest: "Do we have that much time?"

Q: What's the national bird of Afghanistan?

A: DUCK!!!

A guy goes into a bar, orders twelve shots of whiskey.

The bartender says, "What's the occasion?"

The guy says, "Just had my first blowjob."

The bartender exclaims, "Congratulations! Have another on the house!"

The guy replies, "No offense, mister, but if 12 shots can't kill the taste, nothing will."

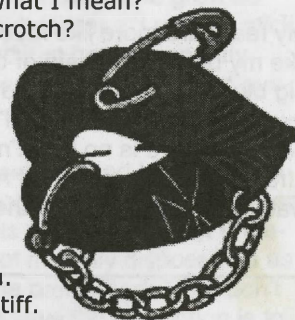
I stole some of these from Fark.com.

50 Punk & Ska Pick-Up Lines



C'mon, you knew it was only a matter of time...

- 1) You might be old school, but baby, you still look high school.
 - 2) Can I see all your piercings?
 - 3) I see you have a dog collar. Will you be my bitch?
 - 4) I like your plaid spandex pants, but I like myself in them better.
 - 5) Can I rip more holes in your clothes?
 - 6) Are your pubes spiked?
 - 7) Smash the state, but baby, don't smash my heart.
 - 8) My hair isn't the only thing standing straight up.
 - 9) Capitalism stole my virginity. Can I steal yours?
 - 10) You like piercings, huh? Well how about I pierce your anus with my...?
 - 11) You're only a riot grrl cuz you haven't experienced me yet.
 - 12) Can I go dumpster diving on you... if ya know what I mean?
 - 13) You're a squatter? How bout you squat on my crotch?
 - 14) Wanna find out why they call me crusty?
 - 15) I'm straight-edge but I got drunk looking at you.
 - 16) I love you from A to Zine.
 - 17) I had sex with all the Donnas, even the fat one.
 - 18) Are your pubes also purple?
 - 19) You put the snatch in the Bodysnatchers.
 - 20) The Specials? The only thing special here is you.
 - 21) My mohawk isn't the only thing that's big and stiff.
 - 22) I love the way you skank, you dirty skank.
 - 23) My head isn't the only thing completely shaved.
 - 24) I like pork pies, so how about I pork your pie?
 - 25) You're emo too?! Let's hold each other and sob.
 - 26) Would you like to lick the vomit off the front of my shirt?
 - 27) I may be nailed to the X, but I'd rather nail you.
 - 28) I'm horny for ska. Get it? Cuz ska's got horns? Y'know? Ah, let's screw.
 - 29) Do you like the band 7 Seconds? Cuz that's how long I last, baby.
 - 30) If you think I reek of sweat from skanking, you should see me in bed.
 - 31) Yes, I'm a skinhead author. I wrote The Oi! Of Sex.
 - 32) Hi, I'm in the Slackers.
 - 33) Wanna carve the anarchy symbol on each other?
 - 34) You are SO working class. Now work that ass!
 - 35) Aren't Dr. Frank's lyrics so romantic?
 - 36) I put the X in sXe, baby!
 - 37) I'm into hardcore... hardcore lesbian action, baby!
 - 38) I won't hurt you, baby. It's so small, it's been called a Minor Threat.
 - 39) Don't be Stubborn—Jump Up and show me your Moon.
 - 40) You're my Bouncing Soulmate.
 - 41) Hey ho! Let's go! No, I mean, you're a ho so let's go back to my place.
 - 42) You only read Maximum Rocknroll for the ads too??
 - 43) Nice Docs, wanna screw?
 - 44) We should have sex. Joey Ramone would've wanted it that way.
 - 45) Let's go beat up some emo kids!
 - 46) You're anti-Fascist, too?!!
 - 47) If I could rewrite the alphabet, I'd put N, O, F, and X together.
 - 48) You know, there's nothing more rebellious than anal sex.
 - 49) Wanna see my Buzzcock?
 - 50) Hi, my name is Adam. Would you like a copy of my zine, READ?
- (This last one never works.)



Too Much Paranoias

by Steve Hinckley

That doesn't really have a lot to do with anything other than I wanted to start out this column with a Devo reference. Actually, I lied. I was given the opportunity of writing about beer or phobias, and since I hate beer, the choice was pretty much a brick upside the head. And phobias usually go hand in hand with paranoia... proving once again that Devo transcends band status and is in fact... DEV-ine!

Okay, but seriously... A phobia is an unfounded fear of something. And just about anything can be given a textbook name and voila — a phobia is born. A lot of people have arachnophobia (fear of spiders). Quite a few suffer from agoraphobia (fear of big open spaces). And even the really f'ed up people have arachnagoraphobia (fear of spiders in big open spaces). But I'm better than all those schleps because my fears are undiagnosed and without a cool-sounding textbook name.

My fears are more like insecurities. I'm afraid people won't like my band. I'm afraid of those little porcelain dolls with the big blue eyes that shut and reopen. I'm afraid people are excluding me sometimes. I'm afraid I was actually adopted because there is no way I'm of my parents' descent. I'm afraid of Adam's constant references to Rush. I'm afraid I'll wake up one day to find the future is here and I was left be-

hind. I'm afraid I'll die young because I can't keep up with trends and technology (or have the desire to). I'm afraid I'll never find that special person fated for me. I'm afraid I'll get cancer since every fucking thing causes it. I'm afraid I'm becoming a hermit and liking it. I'm afraid of taking a big risk. I'm afraid of being addicted to porn. I'm afraid of my car crapping out on me. I'm afraid that my niece will grow up in a shitty world. I'm afraid I'll run out of things to say. I'm afraid to tell people to fuck off sometimes, because I might hurt their feelings. I'm afraid of pollution and global warming. I'm afraid I'll

get old. I'm afraid I don't know what I'm doing with my life or that I'll ever figure it out.

PARANOIA
PARANOIA
PARANOIA
PARANOIA

The list could literally fill the pages of this magazine, but the thing is — these fears, while completely legit, are everyone's fears. I mean, who isn't afraid of getting sick? Or of the uncertain future? Or if what they are doing is the right thing? Or of Adam's Rush references?

Seriously, these are fears we all have. So are we all phobic? Have we all been "diagnosed" with having unfounded fears? Or is it just society, messing with our heads? No, really... HELP! I'm afraid... I don't have the answers I need this time...

Editor's Note: Steve publishes the funny punk zine Schuell. Pick up your very own copy by sending a couple bucks to PO Box 4663, Lafayette, IN 47903. By the way, Steve is more obsessed with Devo than I am with Rush. He is a freak.

Jogging Can Suck It!

by Adam Liebling

I admit I have become pleasantly plump (one could say I am Rubinesque). I admit my clothes don't fit anymore: my pants dig into my waistline, my button-downs are close to bursting around the stomach and chest areas, I can barely get my boxers over my bubbly butt. And I admit that my stomach overhangs my lap when I sit down, and that I'm prone to violent attacks of flatulence, and that wiping myself has never been more arduous as new nooks and crannies offer opportune hiding spots for fecal matter.

But what am I supposed to do? JOG?

That's what my girlfriend suggested. Leave it to a woman to come up with such a simple, twisted plan that has no basis in reality. I dared not even humor her. I told her straight out that real men do not get up at the break of dawn, don't hideous sweatpants, and slowly run around the community so that neighbors can gawk and laugh from behind their darkened windows.

She countered with a wily incentive: If I jogged every morning for a week, she would reward me by performing an obscene and perverse act upon my body. Yes, a lapdance. However, if I missed a day of jogging, I would have to give her five foot massages. That is, massage her feet on five separate occasions. She doesn't have five feet.

Well, I'm against the unholy idea of jogging, but I'm willing to



put ideals aside for a lapdance. We shook on it. Let the torture begin.

Day One was a nightmare. I woke up at the ungodly hour of 6 am, splashed water on my face, pulled on my new sweatpants, tightly laced my new jogging sneakers, and faced the day like a witless baby chinchilla.

I started "jogging", though in my case it's more like "lumbering." Immediately, my calves revolted, cramping up and buckling under my weight and the exertion. I felt dizzy and nauseas. Halfway down my block, I felt I was going to pass out.

I slowed to a brisk walk, but that didn't settle my raging stomach, aching calves, and severe vertigo. I soon found myself leaning against a mailbox, panting for breath and praying for death.

I somehow limped back home and crawled back into bed. That was this morning. Later in the day, I noticed that this so-called "exercise" didn't help me lose any weight, and if anything, it almost killed me. I'll never jog again.

Editor's Note: I only like the first paragraph. The rest of this article sucks.

I have bad eyesight. This is corrected with lenses, mainly contacts because I can't afford glasses in addition to them. I can't really afford contacts either, actually, because I am poor and I have no insurance. But my vision gets worse as I get older, and for my birthday my mother forced me to see her eye doctor. She said that she would pay for the exam and new lenses as her present to me.

The Optometrist

Christopher Campbell



Now, some people have a fear of regular doctors. Many people have a fear of dentists. I've never had a problem with those guys. Sure, I'm worried that I might be diagnosed with a disease, or require some painful procedure due to inevitable cavities, but otherwise the visits are fun and exciting to me. I wouldn't mind having a checkup tomorrow if I had the money or medical plan to afford it.

The man I fear is the optometrist, or eye doctor. Well, maybe I don't fear him as a person, but I fear the eye exam more than any other exam in the world. At least with a physician there are x-rays and blood tests and the like to determine if I'm healthy. The dentist can see if my teeth are all right or whether I need some fillings. The only thing an optometrist has to go by is trust. How does he know what I can truly see or not?

I always find myself reading the vision chart with uncertainty. He has me read that one line that I can just barely make out. Is it a G or an O? Should I guess? Can he tell that I'm not sure by my voice rising? What if he thinks I can see the line perfectly? I have to explain that I was sort of squinting and guessing and maybe I need a new chart to try out.

Next is the large goggle thing where he flips the lenses back and forth asking, "This one...or this one?"

"Umm. Ummm. I don't know? They look the same? They're both bad? I'm sweating bullets! Get me out of here!"

I have such a tough time deciding which lens is better. And he doesn't know. There's no way he could possibly make the decision for me. I don't get to just sit there and wait for a diagnosis. I think my head is going to explode.

Eventually he reaches a decision based on my self-examination. He brings out the contacts, pops them in my eye, and I sit there wondering if these are truly the prescription I need. I pay for them and leave the office contemplating the clarity of my new lenses. I stare at signs while driving wondering when they should be coming into view and if I'm able to read them at the moment I should be.

I tell you, I'm a total wreck until I get used to them, forget about them, and put it all behind me until the next time.

This year was a little different, but still frightening. They have this new machine which can supposedly analyze your eyes and figure out an estimated prescription for you. I couldn't believe it.

"Well, it's only an estimate," the smiley doctor says, "and we still go through the other tests as a confirmation."

Wonderful. I thought that, finally, a breakthrough in science had come along that will take away that dependency on my answers. Nope. So we go through the usual chart and goggle mess as I get headaches and want to throw up. He comes up with the prescription. He says the new machine was very helpful. I wonder, how so? I pay the bill, walk out the door and play this game with my eyes to see if I can see clear in both eyes. The right eye is pretty blurry but I decide to let it go.

The eye does not gain clarity. I grow very angry at myself, not at the doctor, because, after all, it's not his fault. I drive out to the office two days later and whine until the doctor has a moment to see me. I explain my situation and he assures me that the prescription is valid. He brings down the goggle thing to show me how it would look with other prescriptions. I don't see any difference, better or worse, and so I trust him again. He tells me my eyes are very oily, especially my right one, and gives me some special cleaner. I leave, falsely acting satisfied.

The cleaner doesn't help. I go to the movies and grow so frustrated at my faulty eyes and faulty lenses. I want to stick my soda straw into my sockets and just be permanently blind, because it's either that or God grants me perfect eyesight again.

I drive out to the office after the weekend and I can see the doctor is growing annoyed. He brings me into the office, and now instead of being oily, he insists my eyes are just unbelievably dry. He has me try a pair of monthly disposables as an alternative to the permanents he prescribed. They don't change a thing. He is amazed. He says the last option is to go with the daily disposables which are about four times as expensive as the first pair. He says they are thinner and don't grasp the eye as firmly or something or other. Basically he means that they allow for more wetness. If they don't help, the only option is wearing glasses full time.

"I don't really like glasses, Doc, but what about this new laser surgery that's all the craze these days?" He informs me that laser surgery is dangerous with dry eyes and my eyes are uncommonly dry. I want a second opinion but not having money or insurance, I decide I'll wait until I have some.

I take the daily disposables, because they help the best so far and I can live with not having the greatest vision in the world. He firmly advises not wearing them for more than a day. I don't listen. I wear them for about a week, each. They're working out okay. I constantly have to put in rewetting drops, especially at the end of the day and often during movie watching.

I guess I'll have to see how long I can make these guys last. At least I don't worry about losing them as much and it's fun tossing them in the garbage when they become irritating. I guess I shouldn't be gambling so much with my eyes because they're so valuable to me, but I have a bigger fear of the optometrist than of going blind.

"Fish heads, fish heads, Adam loves fish heads!"

By Adam Liebling

That singsong chant has haunted my memories for over 15 years. It stems from Brandeis Day Camp, back when I was 6 or 7 years old. I was a quiet, shy, epileptic child, and so I was mercilessly ridiculed and picked on by seemingly the entire camp – my peers AND counselors. As a result, I'd try to be even more quiet and shy, and always trailed the rest of the group, clinging to the shadows.

The worst part of the day was lunch. All other times, I could find a way to be by myself, but at lunch, we all had to line up at the cafeteria and then sit down at a table in a big group.

Now every day, whatever was being served was always augmented with a little cup of tuna fish. These little paper cups were the same that pizza joints use for Italian ices. Little, cheap, paper cups with the flat bottoms. And they scooped the tuna with the cups and gave one to each camper along with the main meal.

But because these tuna containers were so small and made out of cheap paper, they'd quickly become oily and soggy and nobody wanted to touch them. Thus, the little cups o' tuna always remained untouched.

Since nobody touched the tuna cups, it became such a routine to ignore them that it was quickly forgotten why they were ignored. Two weeks into camp, one little tyke asked a counselor why no one ate the tuna.

"Because it's not really tuna. It's fish heads!" he said with gleeful malice.

"Fish heads?!! Ewww, gross!!"

And so, all of us really thought they were cups of mashed-up fish heads. Every day, one bully would pick out a smaller kid and try to get him to eat the tuna, pulling the poor kid's head back and squishing the paper cup into his mouth, singing, "Fish heads, fish heads, (insert kid's name here) loves fish heads!"

I clung even closer to the shadows.

One day, I was out by the sandbox and pretended not to hear the lunch bell. I hid behind a bush and waited for everyone to leave. But I started feeling guilty and abandoned, so after ten minutes I hurried after the group. When I got there, everyone was standing in a half-circle, facing me. Everyone – the 40 kids and the five counselors – were armed with cups of tuna.

I wanted to plead, beg them not to. I wanted to turn and run, or scream, or cry, or something. But I couldn't do anything. I was completely frozen.

A counselor asked me where I'd been. I stared at him, petrified. The counselor turned around and shouted the chant, and got everyone to sing along. Soon, almost 50 people were sing-

ing: FISH HEADS, FISH HEADS, ADAM LOVES FISH HEADS. Over and over again.

I turned to run and a cup of tuna splattered against my head. Then another. Five volleys hit me in the chest. More came flying at my arms and legs. More and more cups of tuna came whizzing through the air and hit their mark – me. Soon I was on the ground, crying, while those who had held onto their tuna cups were grinding them into my hair and face.

I think it was this episode that turned me off tuna for most of my life. I couldn't eat any fish for years, especially tuna, and I had only started eating fish again maybe three or four years ago, though in very small quantities.



Expensive fish.

Fast forward to last weekend, when my girlfriend Jen and I went out to celebrate her birthday. Jen wanted tapas – various Spanish appetizers – so we went to this popular place on the lower east side. While waiting for her chronically late friends to arrive, we ordered and drank two large pitchers of sangria (okay, I did most of the drinking). Her friends arrived, and we ordered a variety of dishes. Her friends seemed squeamish at some of the options ("Octopus? Eel? Ewww!"), and I was pretty drunk and stupid at this

point, so I decided to order something especially gross: the grilled sardines.

Now this tapas place is very, very dark. They give you a little candle, which is expected to radiate a cafeteria-long table. The poor lighting, combined with my drunkenness, blind hunger, and desire to gross out her friends, prevented me from actually seeing the sardines as I shoved them into my mouth. Part of the sardines tasted okay, but some bites of it tasted really, really foul.

To further gross out her friends, I offered the last sardine to Jen's younger sister. She shrieked when I put it up to her face. "Ewww! It still has its face!!"

Face? Uh oh.

I had eaten a dozen whole sardines, heads, eyes, bones, tails, and all. I quickly covered the remaining sardine with a napkin, then gulped down more sangria and closed my eyes, trying to erase the meal from my memory.

The night progressed and we did some karaoke and I drank more and more beer, wine, and cognac. By midnight, we had said our goodbyes and got to the subway. That's when the trouble began.

What followed was the most hellish and horrible night of my life. I would rather give birth to septuplets while passing a kidney stone the size of the Rock of Gibraltar than go through this night again. I could even barely relive it on paper.

We got on the subway and the world spun. It wouldn't stop spinning. It was going so fast, I felt my stomach going in one direction, my throat in another, my head in another. When I would close my eyes, the world exploded in dark clouds and flashes of light and it spun spun spun. When I opened my eyes, my stomach jumped and railed and sloshed around and my head pounded and the light was like a finger down my throat. I bit my tongue, my lips, the inside of my cheeks to keep from throwing up. Soon I had to chomp down on my arm, tight enough to almost draw blood, to somehow give myself enough pain to forget about vomiting. But the pain of biting down quickly wore off, so I had to keep chomping and chomping my arms and hands. I can only imagine what I looked like to the other passengers.

Jen looked over at me asked if I was okay. Her voice thundered in my skull, ricocheting throughout my body. My senses were frayed, beyond sensitive. She put her hand on my back and it was like a battering ram. I couldn't answer her because opening my mouth would be a grave mistake, so I gave her a pitiful look that said, "I am in complete agony, please don't talk or touch."

The hour trip home was the most excruciating experience of my life. I can remember every jostle of the train, every little bump of the cars over the tracks. I can remember the vibrations of the jostling covering me like waves, each wave making it more and more difficult to keep from spewing my guts out all over my girlfriend, myself, and five other passengers.

Somehow I made it. Well, I got off one stop early, because I was unbelievably close to the breaking point. I practically crawled the mile home, with poor Jen having to walk super slowly at my pace and stop every few feet.

I made it home. I made it to the bathroom. Nothing happened. I was so sick, I didn't even have the strength to throw up. I sat on the couch and it was like sitting on a roller coaster. I felt myself being lifted and thrown into the air and spun around and around.

Suddenly I heard that sing-song chant for the first time in 17 years. FISH HEADS, FISH HEADS, ADAM LOVES FISH HEADS. Over and over again, at excruciating volume. It was being screamed at me in the voices of 50 small children. The spinning became unstoppable and I felt myself flying through the air to the bathroom. I puked and puked into the toilet, the sardine head stench filling my life, making me puke more and harder, for what seemed like a small eternity.

When I got to the point of dry heaves, I felt another rumble, another internal twisting, another danger of spewing. But this time, from the opposite end.

I quickly propped myself onto the toilet, just before my bowels dumped out streams of diarrhea. It was like a leaf-blower full of shit, at full blast. The stench of sardines and loose stools was overpowering. I had to vomit again, and fast.

I didn't even have time to flush the toilet. I hurled my lungs right on top of the pool of shit and magma. My face was splattered with diarrhea. I threw up more.

The whole night, next morning, and following afternoon were variations of the same theme. Processed food, unprocessed food, bits of sardines, slushy gastric juices, and multicolored liquors mingled with urine and liquid poop in an evil brew of death. I even masturbated just to throw some sperm into the mix. It was about 15 hours later that I finally crawled my exhausted and spent body into bed. Luckily, the bed didn't spin and I quickly passed out.

I slowly started feeling better over the next few days, but every time I burped, I relived the sardine heads, and I would occasionally get a whiff of the cognac and sangria exuding from my pores.

Even now, I can remember the taste of the fish heads.

And I still hear the singsong chant of my youth that became a fulfilled prophecy.

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SKA, PUNK AND OTHER JUNK

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Bully's Total Fitness

Adam Liebling

For some inexplicable reason, there are people out there who tolerate – no, enjoy! – physical exertion. They like to sweat, gasp for breath, strain their body to the breaking point. They like to do jumping jacks, jog in place, and simulate the climbing of stairs.

My girlfriend is one of them.

And so, I found myself entering a gym for the first time in my life, with the good intention of buying her a 3-month membership for her birthday.

No, it wasn't like "Happy birthday, now lose weight." She had mentioned wanting to join a gym temporarily, figuring that since I had night classes for a few months, she wouldn't mind spending the evenings working out, instead of sitting at home in the dark, waiting for me and shaking with loneliness. Women, ay?

So I'm a good boyfriend, and decided to surprise her with a membership. And so, after a long, hard day at work and night school, I entered a fitness establishment – let's call them Bully's – and inquired about their membership plans.

What followed was something out of an absurdist horror movie. I was immediately trapped and detained, assaulted with a dozen different mind control techniques, and subjected to an emotional and intellectual beating that literally lasted hours. I'm not making any of this up:

Adam: Hi, I'm interested in your membership plans.

Cashier Girl: (blink) Our what?

Adam: Membership plans?

Cashier Girl: Are you already a member?

Adam: No.

Cashier Girl: Oh, so you want to be a member?

Adam: No, it's a gift for my girlfriend.

Cashier Girl: Hold on, let me get a manager.

And so it all begins. The barrage of mental manipulation seemed to be structured and in stages: **Admiration, Demolition, Demonstration, Humiliation, and Seduction.**

Admiration (whereby they build you up...)

Manager: (big smile and wide eyes) You're getting a membership for your girlfriend? Oh wow, that is quite an amazing gift. You are one incredible boyfriend.

Adam: Gosh, thanks!

Manager: She is going to love you forever for this. She is going to look great and have only you to thank.

Adam: Great!

Manager: You're a great guy. Let me shake your hand. (we shake) Follow me, please.



We entered his office and he shut the door and immediately asked for my credit card to process the down payment.

Demolition (...so they could smash you back down, leaving you defenseless and confused)

Adam: How much is the 3-month plan?

Manager: Ho-ho-ho! Not so fast; let's talk about what your girlfriend needs. We want her looking her best. She needs a personal trainer, right?

Adam: What are your pricing plans?

Manager: (getting angry) I'll get to the plans. Let's talk about your girlfriend first.

Adam: She doesn't need a personal trainer.

Manager: How do you know? Isn't this a surprise gift?

Adam: Well, she already mentioned in passing that she'd like a membership...

Manager: Oh, but then this is something she really wants.

Okay then, let's process your credit card...

Adam: What's the price?

Manager: (angry) I'll get to that soon. Be patient. I need to find out what's best for your girlfriend.

Adam: Well, she doesn't need a trainer. She just wants to use the treadmill and whatnot.

Manager: So she's not interested in learning to become fit?

Adam: (pause) I think she'll be okay on her own.

Manager: We have a lot of new equipment; a trainer could show her how to use them.

Adam: If she has a question, I'm sure she'll ask the person next to her.

Manager: (silent for a moment) Fine. No trainer. (silent)

Adam: (silent)

Manager: We'll put her in the group classes.

Adam: What?

Manager: We offer step exercises, Tae Bo, yoga, and dance aerobics.

Adam: I don't think...

Manager: Let me finish. We now have TWO difference dance aerobics classes – Ghetto Groove and Booty Shaker.

Adam: No, I think the treadmill is fine.

Manager: Do you even know what yoga is?

Adam: Yeah, of course.

Manager: And she wouldn't want that? Every girl I know wants to do yoga. If your girlfriend wants a membership here and asked you to come here, she obviously wants a trainer and these group classes.

(This went on for about a half hour, interspersed with him asking for my credit card. I slowly became mentally sluggish and zombie-like, preparing a hollow mind-state for the...)

Demonstration (whereby they cloud your mind to better their chances of grabbing your money)

Manager: Fine. No trainer. No group classes.

Adam: (dazed and confused) Okay, so what are your plans?

Manager: Not yet. We have to figure out what kind of program she wants.

Adam: She just wants to get tone.

Manager: Because we offer Massive Muscle Gain, Extreme Weight Loss, and Total Health. (He goes into an extremely lengthy discussion of the merits of each program.)

Adam: (mentally exhausted) Can she just have access to a treadmill or something?

Manager: Sure, but I thought you loved her and wanted the best for her.

Adam: (meekly) Treadmill's all she wants.

Manager: Okay, but let me tell you what else she gets with each program. (He went into a long spiel about vitamins, pills, natural supplements, and nutritional bars. I finally somehow convinced him to move on to the plan prices.)

Humiliation (still not making any of this up)

Manager: So let's see... that's 36 months without a trainer, group classes, or program... (types into computer) Oh, fantastic, you can get a great price!

Adam: Wait, did you say 36 months?

Manager: Yes, we only offer 36-month memberships.

Adam: (whispering) I wish you told me earlier.... 36 months is way too long...

Manager: (firmly) No, because she can use this membership at any Bully's. If you move in the next 36 months, she can...

Adam: But 36 months is a huge commitment, and I really can't afford...

Manager: (insultingly) You can't afford a low monthly payment?

Adam: (meekly) How much is it?

Manager: That's what I'm trying to tell you, if you would listen. I can get you a very low monthly payment. Only (click click click) 49 dollars a month. And she's going to have access to all our equipment, every Bully's in the country and in Canada...

Adam: (trying to do the math in my sluggish head)

Manager: ...and she'll be able to talk with our trainers if she needs any help, plus...

Adam: But, but, that's way too much...

Manager: (stops, looks at me shrewdly) You can't afford just \$49 a month? (laughs) For real? Hahahaha.

Adam: (flustered) Well, I mean, I can, but for 36 months...

Manager: So what's the problem? Is it the months or the money?

Adam: (tries to think) The combination of the two.

Manager: But it's only \$49 a month.

Adam: I'm sorry, it's too much...

Manager: Is it the down payment? Because I can lower that for you. Instead of \$250, we can bring that down to \$200. So if you want to just give me your credit card...

Adam: (wanting to cry) I'm sorry...

Manager: \$150?

Adam: (getting up)

Manager: You can't afford a small \$150 down payment? To make your girlfriend happy?

Adam: (sits back down) It's the duration and monthly payments.

Manager: Okay, hang on... (click click click) If she only goes to Bully's in the tri-state area, I could lower your monthly payments to only \$39 a month.

Adam: (softly) It's okay, thanks...

Manager: I can't believe that you're telling me that your girlfriend isn't worth \$39 a month. (laughs derisively)

Adam: Yeah, but that's still around \$1500. That's too much...

Manager: (condescendingly) It's paid over 36 months.

Adam: I realize that...

Manager: And the down payment is only \$150. That's pretty reasonable.

Adam: I agree, but...

Manager: Then let me have your credit card and we'll sign her up right now.

Adam: (swallows) Can I go home and think about it?

Manager: I can't promise you this great deal will last tomorrow. I can only give it to you right now.

Adam: I'd like to discuss it with my girlfriend first.

Manager: Then it wouldn't be a surprise, would it? I thought you wanted to surprise her. If you want to impress her, you sign her up now and then you can shock her with this amazing membership.

Adam: Yeah, I hear what you're saying, but...

Manager: (click click click) Okay, it's all ready, we're just a step away from signing her up.

Adam: (with glistening eyes) Actually, I really have to leave right now. And I'd like to discuss this with her.

Manager: (sighs with annoyance) Okay, but you're coming back tomorrow, right?

Adam: (thinks for a second) Of course.

Manager: Okay, wait here while I get my business card.

It felt good to be left alone after almost two hours of being insulted and aggressively pressured. I knew it was my chance to escape, but I was just too intimidated to move. I felt like I couldn't leave without Bully's approval.

The Seduction (my friend Matt told me this happened on an episode of *Friends* too)

After 10 minutes, the manager came out with an amazing-looking, hot, sultry girl, who looked very much like J-Lo. She came right up to me, like boobs touching my chest, and smiled up at me radiantly.

J-Lo Girl: You are so amazing, getting this membership for your girlfriend.

Adam: Thank you.

J-Lo Girl: (rubbing my forearm) She is going to be so excited. You really know how to make a girl happy. You will be giving her the greatest gift of all – the gift of health!

Adam: (flustered, mumbled reply)

J-Lo Girl: (grasping my forearm) You must come back tomorrow! We're having our Mardi Gras Night, so it's 15 percent off memberships.

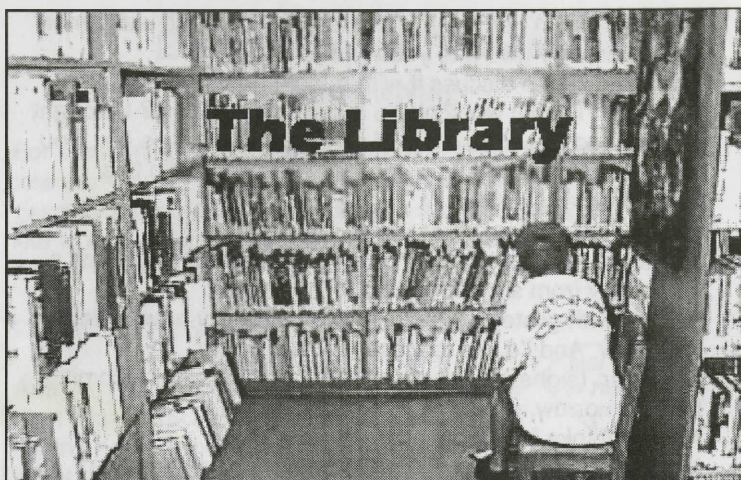
Adam: (mumbles) Sure, yeah...

J-Lo Girl gave me one last squeeze and one last radiant smile and then turned to leave, her luscious butt grazing my crotch area.

Manager: Here's my card. You ask for me. What's my name? (He had me repeat his name four times) You got it. What time will you be here tomorrow? 8? Okay, give me your number. I'll call and remind you. Your phone's broken? You don't have a cell? Fine, just make sure you're here tomorrow and you ask for me. We'll treat you right...

Soon, I found myself walking home, shocked to have been let free. I was absolutely exhausted and giddy from being out of such a high pressure, hard sell situation. I crumpled up the business card and decided my girlfriend was getting a DVD player instead.

Ten minutes later, I arrived at my apartment, opened the door, and collapsed on the couch, my mind and body shattered. My girlfriend came over to the couch, and stood over me, laughing. "I can't believe how tired you are, hun, just from walking the half mile home. You really should consider joining a gym with me."



[Editor's Note: A couple of years ago, I was the editor of an online teenybopper site. I had to write and edit all sorts of silly, cheesy stuff about college life, though I've never dormed but attended night school at a city college (and hated rich dorming preppy college kids to boot). Anyway, I was cleaning up my computer files and came across this piece that I had written at an attempt at subversiveness. So here it is for you, in case you ever decide to check out your college library (not freakin' likely).]

As much as you try to avoid them, sooner or later you'll be forced to enter your college library. Of course, it won't be on your own accord -- you'll have to do a group presentation or project and the stupid group will want to meet there; a girl you like (and with whom you promised to study) might want to meet there; it's cold and you don't have a place to live... There are countless situations where you may unwillingly find yourself in egghead limbo. So what can you do to make the most of it?

For beginners:

1. Snicker at anatomy books. For the truly immature, this can be the most fun experience at a library. Peruse the medical section and chuckle at the female anatomy pictures. Good exclamations to annoy your schoolmates are "Boobies!!! Boobies!!!", "That's a urinary infection!?", and "Where's her skin?? OH SWEET MERCIFUL LORD WHERE'S HER SKIN??"

2. Pick a fight. These people are your sworn enemies. They're the ones that make you look bad in school. Good grades, perfect attendance, good hygiene... Jerks, all of them. Learn em' a lesson.

3. Pickpocket. Library-goers are always leaving their backpacks and coats around, while they look for dumb books. Now's your chance to "permanently borrow" some cell phones and Palm Pilots. Sure, you only need one cell phone, but you can sell the rest for crack.

4. Read children's books with an intense, almost dangerous expression. This is fun. Pick up a children's book and read it out loud, slowly, but with frenzied passion. I used to do this with R.L. Stine's Goosebumps books. "AHH!!! The hamster is growing!! No.. No... NOOO!!! IT'S BECOMING A MONSTER!!!" and I'd roll around with the book, covering my eyes, spittle flying everywhere. A friend mentioned it's more fun to do this while holding a book that has nothing to do with your fit. For instance, he'd flail around with a Dr. Seuss book saying, "Don't go where the wild things are!!! DON'T

GO!!!" and then burst into tears.

5. Ruin the endings. Life is short and you gotta keep busy. But some people need help getting back on track. Thus, it will save many of your schoolmates' time if you tell them how their books end. And if you don't know the ending (i.e. you haven't seen the movie version), just make one up! And, never fail to mention that it's the worst book you've ever read.

Advanced:

6. Bring a karaoke machine. Everyone in a library loves hearing karaoke.

7. Sex in a private room. Incredibly, many college libraries have private rooms for people who are doing group work. So why pay upwards of 100 bucks on a motel room when you can get a couple of free hours at the library? Plus, they usually have a nice big conference table on which to get jiggy wit it. Here's the prob though. Most libraries are catching on, especially since most of us just leave the used condoms on the bookshelves, so now they require more than two people to sign in. This is easy to get around. Bring a buddy and kick him out once you've all signed in (or let him stay and take pictures, it's up to you.)

8. Eat the books. This takes practice and is recommended for only the expert library-hater. Here's what you do: Walk around the library, feigning utmost selectivity with the books you take off the shelves. "Yes! This one!" you shout excitedly when you pick out each book. Bring the pile of books to a table, sit down, and put on a bib. Then proceed to rip pages out of the top book, crumpling the pages into balls, which you then stuff into your mouth. Once in awhile, look around with a sheepish grin and say, "Good books!"



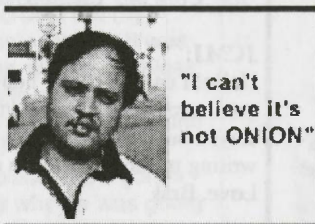
A heaping pile of stool

And now is our very first issue of our own Onion/Ironic Times/Satire Wire/ etc etc. newspaper... The READER!

LOCAL

Area Writer Rips Off "The Onion"

GREENWICH, CT—Thursday, an unidentified writer tried to pass off an article as her own material, when upon further inspection, local authorities determined it to be plagiarized. The style and content are said to be "almost identical" to that of articles made popular in the national humor newspaper The Onion.



While the author could not be reached for comment, her Accounts Receivable supervisor, Herbert Kornfeld, came to her defense: "Tha H-Dog heard about this alleged plagerization and my mind be reel in. Ya'll da biggest playta hata of all, includin them Accountz Payabo bitches. She just samplin those articles, like Puffy do. Yo, fuck this accusin' shit. I out."

In a statement released later, the writer asked that all complaints be sent directly to her publisher, T. Herman Zweibel. —*kittenpants*

NATIONAL

Church, State To Merge

AUSTIN, TX—The two largest corporations in the US are seeking to merge into a giant, tax-exempt, for-profit entity. Brokered by President Bush, this deal could become the largest merger in the nation's history.

Poll: 80% Of Americans Willing To Give Up Rights For Freedom

WICHITA, IA—A Gallup poll shows that almost 80% of Americans are willing to give up their rights to feel safer. 73% of Americans said they wouldn't mind being detained indefinitely without reason or trial, 62% said they would allow themselves to be sodomized with a baseball bat by a government agent, and almost half were willing to give up their first born for government experiments. Said one respondent: "I never use that stuff in the Bill of Rights anyway. If it means protecting our great country and the freedoms it represents, then by all means take them away!"

INTERNATIONAL

Brazil Wins Some Girly Sport

SAN JUAN, BRAZIL—Most of the frivolous countries in the world were rocked by Brazil's upset over Germany in some girly sport. Watched by two billion of the lamest people on Earth, Brazil pleased their dumb fans by running around like a bunch of wusses, apparently outscoring their German pussypartin' counterparts. This sport, known as soccer to the only civilized country on the planet, is similar to American barroom favorite fooz-ball, but without the fun and excitement.

Germany Wonders Why No One Rooted For Them

MEIN DEUTCHLAND—Perhaps bitter about their World Cup defeat to Brazil, German soccer players are questioning why they received no fan support. "I just don't get it," said goalie Fritz Shloshenfren through a translator. "Why don't people like us?" he added, while strangling a week-old kitten. Offensive starter Hermann Weisse was also perplexed. "Almost two billion people watched this game, and not one wanted us to win. What have we ever done to them?" He then proceeded to turn his translator into a lampshade.

OTHER HEADLINES:

Catholic Priests To Institute "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy | Pilots Fight For Alcohol In Cockpit | "With Liberty And Justice For All" To Be Dropped From Pledge Of Allegiance | Saddam Hussein Pacing, Fidgeting | All-Star Game Ends In Boredom

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public To Decide On New Lisa Lopes Stamp

OMAHA, NE—One of the greatest cultural icons of our generation, Lisa Lopes of r&b group TLC, will finally be commemorated with her own stamp, says U.S. Post Office spokesman. Many designs were brought to the table, and officials are having trouble choosing between the two finalists: the young Lisa "Left-Eye" Lopes, with baggy pants and a condom in place of the left lens of her glasses, or the glamorous "Waterfalls"-era Lopes with shimmering ballroom gown.

Her classic look reflects her youthful activism on issues such as safe sex, AIDS awareness, and not being too proud to beg, say some. But other postal officials prefer the more modern, refined look, as being "hotter." Internal conflict has brought this debate into the public domain, who will be asked to vote for their favorite stamp on Monday.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Glaring Errors Found In The Scorpion King

HOLLYWOOD, CA—The stunning recreation of the life of legendary Egyptian warrior Mathayus may not be accurate, warn historians.

"While it is true that 5,000 years ago in the notorious city of Gomorrah, an evil ruler was determined to lay waste to all the nomadic peoples of the desert, and the few remaining tribes united under Mathayus' sword to defeat this vile leader, there are glaring inconsistencies between this film and the real events that took place," says Roberta Slacks, Columbia University's adjunct professor of history.

One of these inconsistencies in the film occurs when Mathayus (portrayed otherwise brilliantly by The Rock) infiltrates the enemy camp to eliminate the sorcerer and ends up saving her out of compassion. "It was lust," says Slacks. "In reality, Cassandra was this little hot Asian thing with soft, golden tanned skin and apple-sized tits, who spent most of her time bathing naked and swishing around her hair. He shupped her three ways and decapitated her."

At one point in the movie, Mathayus shoots arrows at a tide of enemies, who fly backwards about 50 feet and explode. University of Indiana's Professor of Middle Eastern Conflict and History, Nyu Rajmatan, claims that this could not have been the case. "Our records show that Mathayus was a terrible shooter. He really defeated these enemies by asking them if they can smell what he's got cooking, followed by his most deadly and popular move, The People's Eyebrow."

Director Chuck Russell defended the historic portrayals in his movie at last night's press conference, but promised to be more careful on his next project "The Mummy III: Are You My Mummy?"

Images of WTC Respectfully Taken Out of WTC Documentary

NEW YORK, NY—Jerry Bruckheimer's next movie, a docudrama on the events of 9/11, will respectfully not show any images of the World Trade Center, say producers. "We respect the feelings of the victim's families," says co-producer Jack Sidell, "and images of the Twin Towers will only exacerbate their trauma."

They have also decided to tape over scenes recreating the plane hijacking, the impact, the collapse of the towers, and the smoldering, gaping hole where the towers once stood.

Sources say the move to delete the controversial scenes was inspired by the History Channel's removal of all WTC images in their 1985 documentary "The World Trade Center: A Modern Marvel."

BUSINESS

Bush, Cheney Chuckle Over Corporate Responsibility Speech

UNDERGROUND BUNKER, WASHINGTON, DC—President Bush and Vice-President Cheney shared a deep-bellied chuckle yesterday while re-watching a tape of Bush's corporate responsibility speech. "Do y'all think they bought it?" asked Bush, giggling. "Who cares?" smirked Cheney, adding, "Hey, I like that look of indignation you had on your face." "Injun what?" asked Bush.

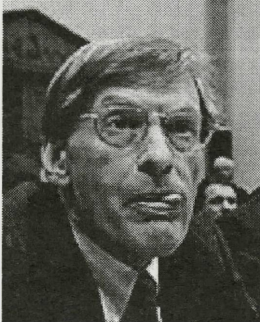
Rich White Men: Economy Is Fine!

From his posh penthouse apartment on the Upper East Side, a satin bathrobed Alan Greenspan comforted the nation. "The economy is just fine," he said while stirring a double martini. "Nobody should panic. There might be a little financial activity while my friends sell their stocks, but everyone else should go ahead and keep on buying." Mr. Greenspan paused to enjoy the aroma of a Cuban cigar from his private stock. "Mmm... Yes..." he concluded, smiling contently with his eyes closed.

SPORTS

Ted Williams To Be Preserved In Steroid Chamber

Baseball great Ted Williams will hopefully awaken from death in the near future stronger and more powerful than ever. "I not only want to preserve my father from decay," said son John Henry Williams, "but have him hit 500-foot dingers." The late Williams responded in an agonized wail from the depths of his decrepit corpse: "Peeeeeace... Let me be in peeeeeeeace..."



"You'll never catch me alive, nyah nyah. Pbbttth."

Bud Selig Wanted In Murder Of Baseball

The current commissioner of Major League Baseball and tool of Satan, Bud Selig, is wanted for questioning in the shocking murder of the sport. Baseball was found dead last week from an overdose of fan anger over strike talks, owner and player greed, high ticket and concession prices, designated hitting, the infield fly rule, and the mediocrity of the Mets. While seemingly a self-inflicted fatal wound, authorities believe Mr. Selig could have saved the sport, but instead, for some inexplicable motive, played a role in its demise.

HEALTH / MEDICINE

Study: Sperm Tastes Great!

Ladies, take note. Studies have proven that sperm tastes wonderful. And, uhh, it's also good for you! Yeah! In fact, studies have shown that women who ingest sperm, uh, live longer and healthier lives. And, um, are much more likely to win the lotto and have all their dreams come true. This is, like, proven medical science stuff. So ladies, just, you know, keep that in mind. Like, when you hang out with me.

RELIGION

Islam Is Really A Peaceful Religion, Says Terrorist

Pakistani militant and arms dealer Mustaf Rijabad is angry at the way the Western world views Islam. "Those who are quickest to judge Islam as violent are the ones who haven't even read the Koran," he says. "Throughout all of our ancient texts, from the Upanishads to the Bhagavad Gita, love and unity are emphasized, on practically every page. It makes me so angry to see you stupid, rich, fat Americans misconstrue our gentle and peaceful culture. I will kill you all in the name of Allah!!"

God Comes Back From Vacation To Find Place A Mess

"Jesus, can't I leave you kids alone for a thousand years without you turning this place into a mess?" bellowed God, upon returning to Earth after a brief vacation. "I mean, look at all this! You expect me to clean this shit up??" God then grounded humankind and told them to go to their room.

ASK BRAK

Dear Brak:

If a vampire corners you, do you use your celebrity to get out of the situation?

-Jon 'Corn Mo' Cunningham



JCMJ:

Hello! I came by your house yesterday but you were eating French onion soup so I stayed outside. Was that what you were writing me about? French onion soup. I like French onion soup. Love, Brak

Dear Brak,

What's this weird growth on my foot? Do you think it's some cancer? Can it be cured by eating more broccoli?

Yours Truly, Eric F.

Eric:

Hey, buddy buddy! I can't stay inside because my clothes are wet. I went swimming in the ditch. Space Ghost is mad. I'm supposed to swim in the pool but I'm cooking beans in there. They have to soak. I found a nickel, a spork and a wig in the ditch when I was swimming. Now, I have to stand in the driveway until I'm dry. Love, Brak

Dearest Brak,

Will you be my Mom?

Sincerely,

Little Boy

Little Boy:

Hey there, buddy buddy! Thanks for writin' me. I slobbered on your e-mail thingie. I'm sorry. Hey! Did you know that I used to have a sock full of beans? I couldn't keep it in the house, though. One day he hopped away and joined a traveling sock circus. He was known as Soggy, The Amazing Leaky Sock.

Love, Brak

Dear Brak:

I wrote a song about you. It's called I LOVE BRAK. It is sung to the tune of "Nobody's Fool" and has the same lyrics as "Nobody's Fool." I hope you like it, I wrote it just for you.

xo, kittenpants

Kittenpants:

Whatcha doing? Hey, whatcha doing? Hey!!!! Watcha doing? Is this green or yellow? I can't tell. I have to get dressed for a party. I'm going as a disposable cup salesman!!!

Love, Brak

ASK BRAK is a syndicated advice column that appears only on kittenpants.org.

FUN & GAMES

A) Four letter word for a woman: __ U N T

B) Something hard in your pocket: __ O C K

C) You don't want to wake up in: __ E M E N

D) It's very, very, very sticky: __ U M

Answers: a) AUNT b) ROCK c) YEMEN d) GUM

My Broke and Homeless Ass

by Sean Carswell

On my way to the Casablanca to see Helen, to have her feed me swill beer and deal out my weekly dose of rejection, I ran into Danny. It was purely by chance. He was on his way to a topless bar to hide from his girlfriend. "I may have to ship her ass back, Bart," Danny told me. "She's spinning her head around in circles and shoving crosses up her cunt again."

"You know you're going to the first place she's gonna look," I said. But he knew. That's probably why he was going there. "Let's get a beer somewhere else."

"I ain't going there," Danny said. He knew me too well. He heard the slur of my words; he saw the red in my eyes. He knew where I was headed.

"Then we're at an impasse."

We looked at each other. Traffic rolled down A1A; no breeze blew off the beach. Even as evening approached, it wasn't getting any cooler. It wasn't going to. I looked up at the sign for Miguel's. Until I did, I hadn't realized how hungry I was. But I hadn't eaten since breakfast, and it wasn't like I had food at home. Danny thought the same thing, so we went in.

Miguel's was a favorite haunt, good food but also the kind of place you could come into straight from the beach, barefoot and sandy, and it was no problem. One of the waitresses was a Cuban girl, probably twenty, with hair so black it sometimes looked blue, and a low, sultry voice. We stood by the door until we could see which section was hers, then took one of her booths. When she asked, I ordered a beer.

"We still don't serve beer here," she said. I knew that. I just ordered one so she'd remember that I was that gringo who always comes in drunk and orders a beer. I figured she could look at me in one of two ways. Either I was an idiot with no long term memory, or I was a hopeless romantic, knowing that the world doesn't conform to my needs but never giving in, always grasping on to the shred of hope for a better life, of a world where I can get a beer with my pork and rice.

"Coke, then," I said. Danny ordered the same. She left two menus and headed back for the kitchen.

Neither of us picked up the menus. "So Danny," I said. "The drugs ain't doing Sophie any good?"

He shook his head. "They were. She was fine for the first couple of months. She's fine when she don't drink. But the last few nights, dude..." He stared off. He didn't have to tell me. It was always the same story. Only the places changed. She'd spend a couple of months institutionalized or in rehab, then she'd come out the vision of an angel, soft-spoken, polite, friendly, and Danny'd fall for her all over again. It usually lasted about six weeks, then Miss Hyde would come back, and Danny would be right back where he started from. I think he liked it that way. At least she wasn't boring, and he could cheat on her six months out of the year. He just had to keep her from beating his ass too badly.

The waitress came back with our drinks and said, "You guys gonna try something different this time?"

"I ain't," Danny said.

"Me neither."

"Pork and rice?" she asked. We both nodded, and there it was. She was the same kind of hopeless romantic, grasping on to the belief that someday we'd try the beef or chicken or one of the sandwiches; one day we'd go for potatoes or mixed vegetables. Yeah, I started to think, we were made for each other.

"She told me she'd quit it all and straighten up if I could tell her what the meaning of life is," Danny said.

"The waitress did?"

"No, dumbass. Sophie."



"What did you tell her?"

"I told her I'd ask you and get back to her."

Ask me? If there were ever a low point in my life, I was there. Six months earlier, my girlfriend had heinously dumped me, and, during the course of that week, my DUI fines and other debts had built up to the point where I had to sell my car to pay them. Then my parents kicked me out of their house because they said it was the only way I was going to get my life together. I'd been living on couches from that point on. Then I got fired from my job of selling frozen meats. Then I got another job and got fired from that. Then it happened again. Then again until I finally ended up working for the county, watching kids for the summertime. And I was spending all my time and money at the lowest of dives on the beach, hitting on Helen the bartender and having no luck at all. If anything, I was the one person who didn't know shit about anything. To ask me the meaning of life was like asking Michael Jordan for tips on your batting stance. "How the fuck would I know?" I said.

"You wouldn't," Danny said. "But Sophie likes you. She told me that you're the smartest guy she knows."

"If all the people you know in the world are idiots, and one person is just a little less of an idiot than everyone else, he'd look like a genius, wouldn't he?"

"What are you saying?" Danny asked. "That we're all idiots?"

"No. Just me and Sophie."

This calmed Danny. He watched the waitress walk by and stared at her ass all the way to the kitchen. "So?" he said.

"So what?"

"So what's the meaning of life, Bart?"

"I don't know. Carbon?"

"Carbon?" Danny said. "That's the dumbest fucking answer I've ever heard."

I shrugged my shoulders. I wasn't going to apologize for

my lack of intelligence. The waitress came back to refill our sodas and tell us that the food would be ready in a minute. And there was something about the way she leaned over the table, breasts close to my nose and her eyes looking into mine so that I couldn't ogle. It got me thinking that maybe she was thinking of something. So I asked her the question: "What's the meaning of life?"

She stood up straight and smiled. "Everyone knows that." Then, she walked back to the kitchen.

"Well, there you have it," I said.

"Carbon," Danny said. "I can't tell Sophie anything that stupid."

"Well, it's a stupid fucking question," I said. "If you want to know the meaning of anything, look it up in the dictionary."

"You know that's not the answer she's looking for."

Of course I knew. All I could say was, "She ain't my girl."

The waitress came back with our food. We ate in silence. While we did, the waitress kept circling around our table. Every time she'd walk by, she'd look me in the eyes and smile. Every time we'd take a sip of our sodas, she'd come by with a pitcher and refill them. Four times she asked if the food was all right. I started feeling good about my chances.

I kept thinking about Danny's question, too, while I ate. Finally, I started sobering up a bit and returning to the belligerent state that I'd fallen into when I was at the beach earlier that day. "It wasn't a stupid answer, if you think about it," I said. "Because if you can bring everything down to atoms, all the world is a random collection of atoms, built on each other to form things, and the only collection of atoms that all life has in common is carbon. And if all we are is a random collection, then that's what we mean. And it seems to make sense that the only thing life is, is random. Random events and chaos."

Danny shook his head. I knew he wasn't buying it. I wasn't really buying it, either, but I wanted to be ready to defend myself if he called me stupid again. "I can't tell Sophie that," he said. "That would just make matters worse. Her life is too random and chaotic as it is."

"Well, hey man," I said. "So's mine, and that's the belief that keeps it going. I'm doing fine."

"I wouldn't call how you're doing 'fine.'"

I sopped up the last bit of spices and grease off my plate with a chunk of bread. "I would." I put the bread in my mouth, but kept talking. "Outside of the lamentable fact that I ain't been laid in six months, my life's pretty damn good."

"Oh, yeah," Danny said. "How much money do you have?"

I reached into my pocket and pulled out my wad. A fifty, six twenties, a ten, and a couple of ones. "I still have almost two hundred bucks left."

"How much do you have to your name?"

I smiled. "I still have almost two hundred bucks left."

"How much of that do you think you'll have Sunday night?"

I shook my head. "Hey, anything could happen. This could be the week I land on my feet."

"More likely it'll be the week that I have to let you sleep on my couch."

"But, see, you don't know because it's all random events and chaos."

Danny stood up. "I ain't buying it." He turned and walked to the bathroom.

The waitress came back at this time. She sat in the booth across from me, crossed her arms, and leaned on the table. A gold cross dangled in her cleavage. God liked me. "You were born here in Cocoa Beach, weren't you?" she said.

I nodded.

"I knew it. You have the look."

"What look is that?"

"You know." She stuck out her chest and threw back her shoulders. "That cocky look. Like you just out-surfed someone and no one saw you so you got to strut around to make news of it."

"I don't surf."

"That's good. That's points for you." She looked over her shoulder. Danny was coming back from the bathroom. "Tell me," she said, standing. "Would you like to be my escort to a picnic tomorrow?"

"I'd love to." I tried to hold back my surprise, to be as cool as I could, but after a six month dry spell, this was too perfect.

"Pick me up tomorrow morning. Ten o'clock. I'll draw you a map before you go." She smiled and seemed to look through my eyes. I tried to smile, too, but did a bad job of it. Then she walked away.

She gave me a map when I paid the bill and, from there, we went back to Danny's place, a few blocks away, where a party was in progress, and I went on to drink myself back into a stupor. Then, we went to a raw bar across from Miguel's. The only thing standing out in my mind about the night from that point on was the Magic/Pacers game and a guy sitting next to me who remembered me from my days at Tennessee, when I was a Division I athlete and kind of a great white hope, six foot tall and slow, but first team all SEC two years running and averaging just under seventeen points a game. He bought me a shot every time the Magic took the lead back, which happened too often. Everything after that was a blur. But I did blow a good bit of my paycheck, as prophesied.

I woke up the next morning on Danny's living room floor. It was about seven o'clock. The duffel bag I was living out of was my pillow. I grabbed a towel and some clean enough clothes and showered. No one else in the place was awake. The longer I stayed up, the worse I felt. The whiskey the night before had been a bad idea, but nothing compared to the tequila. Visions of vomiting came to me followed by visions of schnapps. I tried to convince myself that much of it was a dream, but I knew better. At least it wasn't me who vomited. Still, the painkillers given to me by that dude who bought me the shots marked the beginning of my descent and the end of my memory. And vomit could've easily fit itself into my morning. I searched out Danny's passed out body. Evidently, Sophie had found him because they were sleeping together in his bed. I shook him until he woke up, then talked him into getting up and drinking with me until I was supposed to go to the party with the Cuban goddess.

We found a bottle of Rumpelintz in the freezer and a couple of bottles of Busch in the refrigerator. Between the two, we had no problem making it until ten. Other passed out bodies scattered across the living room floor came to life and joined us at the table, but we wouldn't share our hooch. We all sat around, filling in aspects of the night before that others had forgotten. And I spent most of the time trying to bum a car off someone. No one but Danny believed that I had a date, even though I had showered. Danny wouldn't loan me his car, either. I guess he wanted a way to escape Sophie if she started to wig. My buddy, Jeff, needed his car because he was living out of it. Rick surfaced out of one of the bedrooms, but when I asked him if I could borrow his car, he told me to fuck off. He said that he'd given me a job and that was enough. He also pointed out to everyone else that I didn't have a driver's license. After that, no one was going to loan me their car. I finally decided to steal Sophie's keys. She was crazy, but she wouldn't call the cops. No one at the kitchen table tried to stop me. So, wearing the best duds my duffel bag held and carrying a healthy but inconspicuous buzz, I set out in my new Geo Storm to pick up my new love.

I followed the map into Snug Harbor, a family neighborhood up around Fourteenth Street. She lived at the end of a cul-de-sac in a two story house that was a little upper class for me. I knocked on the door. Her father answered, and that was my first problem. I'd forgotten her name, so I couldn't ask for her. I tried to make a joke of it. "I've come for your daughter," I said.

A look came across his face like he'd just finished having this nightmare, then he invited me in. Inside was a showplace, black leather couches and chairs, space age furniture, and a huge parrot in an elaborate cage that kept saying, in the father's voice, "I kill you. I kill you." The father sat me down and sat himself down facing me and said, "My son, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?"

"Yes. Yes, indeed," I nodded. What the fuck else was I going to say?

He looked at me for a long time to see if I'd crack, but I held up, met his stare. Then, he smiled and slapped me on the back. "You can have my daughter then," he said and laughed a

gruff and sinister laugh that he should've had patented. "Maria," he called out. "You must not keep the gentleman waiting."

That's right, I thought. Give the gentleman some respect, Maria. He and Jesus are tight.

Maria came out looking fucking hot in a black halter top and white shorts. I could see it was a situation that called for old world etiquette. I stood when she entered the room. I offered her my arm. I opened all doors for her. I figured I could keep it up until we hit the party, then gradually drink myself out of a buzz. Or get her to drink herself into one.

As we drove along, I did all the talking. I was very cautious, not rambling at all but measuring everything I said, trying to see what was cool and what was taboo, like did she smoke pot and how much did she drink and was it just a picnic or a party and just what were her views on sex on the first date. But it was all very subtle. If she were game, she'd figure it out. If she weren't, then I'd only seem random.

She answered everything monosyllabically. The only full sentences she put together were the ones telling me where to turn. She sent me north into Cape Canaveral, then west across the bridge into Merritt Island, north again up State Road 3, and when she leaned forward and said, "Take your next right," I knew I was going to the fucking Calvary Chapel. Dead center into the religious right.

I parked and walked around and opened the door for her, all the while trying to think of the quickest way out of there. I knew these bastards. They'd tried to save me before. I had a feeling that Maria's intentions were less honorable than mine. I was just trying to fuck her, not fuck with her eternal soul and worldly cash.

I offered my hand as she stepped out of the car, but she didn't take it. She walked a step ahead of me. I followed like a sheep. Or I guess like the flock. Anyway, she brought me into the white shining heart of it. She introduced me to a tall man, balding but with that long bang that he wrapped around his head so that it looked like it should look like he had a full head of hair. "Bart," Maria said to me, "this is my minister, Reverend Grisham."

Reverend Grisham grabbed my hand tightly, like someone was going to cuff me before he let go, and asked, "Are you thinking of joining our congregation, Bartholomew?"

Bartholomew? Who was this fucking clown and why did he think he could make my perfectly good name biblical? I wanted to tell him to fuck off, but instead I said, "Oh, yeah, I talk to God every day. It just seems right that I should do it in a church."

"I look forward to seeing you here tomorrow morning," he said.

I thought about leaning forward and whispering in his ear, asking if I could get at some of that blood of Christ that these places are so famous for, but he turned away. He had other souls to save.

Maria led me through more of the congregation, introduced me to the deacons, showed me all of the Chapel, told me of all the wonderful things the church had opened up for her. As she preached the word, my buzz faded and my hangover bulldozed in. I started to sweat so badly that I could smell the booze seeping out of my skin. More than once my vision shrunk down to the size of a pinhole and I thought I might pass out on the spot. The heat and humidity didn't help at all. I was dying in God's steam room. Then she dragged me out to the back lawn, where the food was set up, and where she introduced me to her boyfriend. Lucky for me, though, I knew him. Frank Willis, the one-time biggest dealer on the Island. He used to sell the cleanest acid in the area. He mixed his own speed. He had two acres in the swamps where he managed to raise the fattest Indonesian plants. He saw me and shook my hand suspiciously. "Maria," he said. "Would you mind getting us a couple of cups of punch?"

Maria smiled the smile that reminded me why I was sucker enough to get into this mess in the first place, then strolled over to the refreshment table. I looked around to see if anyone was within earshot. When I felt it was safe, I said, "Goddamn, Frank, am I glad to see you. I'm fucking dying here. Say, sorry about moving in on your woman. I didn't know. I'll back off. Don't worry. But look, bro, I'm so fucking hung over. Do you have anything to help me out? Please, man, help me."

Frank looked at me with no sympathy and said, "Don't use the Lord's name in vain."

"Goddamn," I said. "What's gotten into you?"

"The Lord." And then, for the second time in a day, a man asked me, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?"

"Fuck you, man," I said. "I need drugs."

"I'm out of that, Bart."

"Bull fucking shit," I said. "What about that sack you sold me a week and a half ago?"

"That was before Maria showed me the way. Maybe you should open your eyes and look around you. Your soul's at stake."

"Man, Frank, I can hardly stand hanging out with these people now. I sure as fuck don't want to spend eternity with them."

"You don't know how blind you are."

I didn't feel like arguing. It wouldn't do me any good.

"Maybe you're right," I said. I looked over at Maria, looking virginal with her little Christian sisters, pulling her whore for Jesus routine. And how I would've liked to fuck them all in their pristine summer outfits, but I always thought church a suspicious place to hound chicks. I reached into my pocket. I still had almost one fifty of my cashed paycheck. I separated the fifty from the wad and said, "Check it out, Frank. Half a bill for whatever fair deal we can make."

Frank looked at the fifty. He seemed to think for a minute. "Meet me at my truck," he said in a whisper.

He had ten hits of acid, a half full bottle of Vicodin, and a little more than an eighth of weed in the glove compartment. He gave me all of it for the fifty. "I know it's worth a lot more, but I'm out of this business," he said. "And I hope to see you rot in Hell."

I took it all indeed, and for the first time that day I thanked God, whoever She may be. "I hope to hell Maria's worth it," I said, then I hopped in the Storm to meet up again with my people.

I stopped at the Gas and Sip across from the Calvary Chapel, where I picked up a Gatorade and a pack of wraps. I rolled a pinner in the parking lot. It would be another thirty minutes of driving before I reached Danny's. My head just wasn't feeling any better. I lit the joint as I pulled out onto State Road 3. I washed down two pills with the Gatorade. I turned up the radio. By the time I reached the Cocoa Beach city limits, the world blended into a nice fuzz. So Maria turned out to be the evangelistic version of a Krishna in an airport. It was still Saturday morning. Danny was still having a party that day. So was the city of Cocoa Beach: the annual start of summer block party. With any luck, Helen the bartender would be there and be there drunk and I could turn the tables on her. It was her who I'd wanted all along. Not that Cuban priestess.

The sky was a light blue and the beach was something out of a poster in a travel agency. I'd made a score that would make my broke and homeless ass a hero. It may not have been the week when I was going to finally land on my feet, but I felt like things were definitely going my way.

When I parked across the street from Danny's, one crowd was sitting around an already tapped keg in his front yard, and another group was shooting hoops in his driveway. I stepped out of the car thinking, yes, indeed, this is my day. That was when Sophie tried to tackle me. She took a running leap and landed on my back, wrapped her arms around my neck and tried to bite my ear off. I managed to shake her without hitting her. Then, she started swinging at me, closed fist, really trying to fuck me up. Mostly, though, she just hit my arms and stomach until Danny pulled her off.

"You son of a bitch," she screamed. "You stole my car. You son of a bitch."

"No, no," I said. "You told me I could take it this morning. Remember when I woke you up and asked you? Told you I had a date?"

She looked up at Danny, who was still holding her back. Danny nodded. "He's telling you the truth." Sophie stared at Danny to see if he was lying. Even though he was, his face didn't betray him. When she finally believed him, she became suddenly

calm. So suddenly it was scary. Her face became a blank slate. She smiled, turned on her heel, walked back to the keg, and poured herself another beer.

I let that whole scene slide. I joined the others at the keg, where I told the story of my big drug score and everyone was pretty amazed. Scoring drugs at wholesale prices at the Calvary Chapel isn't the easiest thing in the world to pull off. Still, they all let me know that part of my problem could be that I buy drugs even at church. No one squawked, though, when I twisted up two more joints and passed them around the circle. I twisted the rest of the weed into four joints and fit them into the long bottle that the pills were in. I figured I'd go through that over the course of the weekend. The acid I'd keep until Sunday night, then unload it so that I'd have enough money to make it through the week.

Sitting around the keg, shirts off, sweating, telling tales in the front lawn summertime was perfect for a while. Time whittled away that way. After a couple of hours, the beer and weed and sun started to make me a little groggy and my plans that night were too big to be sleepy for, so I joined the game of hoops. A game to eleven and I hit eleven straight outside shots. Make it, take it. It really wasn't fair. The other guys didn't even get to touch the ball, so they banned me from the game. They left me with no choice but to take a nap.

At around seven, Danny woke me up. He told me that Sophie was dead set on going to the psychic before she went to the block party. Since I owed him for saving my ass in the stolen car incident, I had to go with her.

I crawled out of bed, slapped my face a couple of times, and said, "As long as I can bring beer."

The psychic was much cooler than I expected her to be. She was in her late twenties with curly blonde hair, a wraparound floral skirt, a plaid flannel shirt, and platform shoes that still didn't raise her to three eleven. She held out her tiny hand, and I shook it. "Do you mind if I drink beer in the waiting room while you two take care of business?" I asked her.

"Not at all, sweetie," she said. I headed across A1A to the 7-11 to grab a quart.

Sophie was in the back room with the tiny prognosticator for quite a while. I finished the quart and downed two more pills. The nap had killed my buzz, but it came right back, just like a faithful dog: feed it, and it'll make you happy. There wasn't much in the waiting room to look at, some New Age magazines, tie-dyed drapes, a framed picture of the psychic standing in front of the shop with Burt Reynolds. I walked around in circles, impatient. The sun was down, the night had cooled to about ninety-five degrees, but the ocean breezes brought it down to probably ninety. The block party had already begun, and I was itching to get there, to listen to the cheesy cover band set up in front of the Cocoa Beach PD, to buy a Polish sausage and beer from the Jaycees, to throw down my buck and try to dunk the mayor. And it would be the perfect night for romance amidst the insanity of the summertime heat, under the half moon, two blocks off the Atlantic. It was definitely my kind of night. The kind of night that kept me stuck to this coastline for so many years, and I was wasting it pacing back and forth, waiting for Sophie to find out what her future held. Shit, I could've told Sophie what was in the cards for her. She'd wig out at some point in the next three days, disappear for a week and a half or so, lost in the haze of a binge, then show up at her father's place greasy-haired and smelling like shit, eyes bleeding, and five to ten pounds lighter. She'd probably sell her car during that binge for three or four hundred dollars worth of crank. I'd have to go with Danny to work over the guy who bought the car and bring it back. Her father would send her to a shrink to decide which institution to stick her in, and that would be that. Right back into the cycle.

But that wasn't what the psychic was telling her. I was sure of that. I was sure that she was telling Sophie that she'd find love that night or riches or some shit like that. That's what I'd say if I was that psychic. That's where the money is. That's why Sophie went to her instead of me.

Sophie finally came out with the psychic and told her that I'd pay. I'd figured as much. Sophie's dad was loaded, and he'd give her anything she wanted but cash. I asked the psychic how much I owed

her.

"Twenty dollars," she said.

I handed her the twenty and said, "Did she ask you the meaning of life?"

"No," the psychic said. "Do you want to know what it is?"

"Do you know?"

The psychic grabbed my hand and turned it to look at my palm. She ran her tiny finger between my forefinger and thumb, across the palm. "Interesting," she said.

"What's that?" I asked.

"You have no life line," she said. She looked up into my eyes. "I can't believe you're still alive."

"No one can," I said.

"This is serious." She tilted my hand so that more light shone on it. Then she shook her head. "I've never seen this before."

"I probably just rubbed it smooth beating off," I said. I laughed, but Sophie and the psychic didn't think it was funny.

"I think you're going to die tonight," the psychic said.

"Then I better get some drinking in while I still can. Come on, Sophie."

Sophie didn't budge. She stared at the psychic. I grabbed her arm and dragged her out. Sophie followed, but like she was in a trance. I rushed her along, anxious to unload her on Danny.

We walked along A1A without talking. I could see the lights of the block party up ahead. I could almost taste the beer, smell the women. Sophie snapped out of it in front of the topless bar. She reached down, grabbed my hand, and stopped walking.

"Oh, Bart," she said. "You're gonna die."

I pulled my hand from her grip. "Not necessarily. There's five billion people wandering around this earth who were all born and haven't died. This could be our time. We could be the first generation of immortals. All of us stuck here together forever." I smiled. "That's a scarier thought than death, ain't it?"

"Be serious, Bart. You don't have much time left."

"Don't buy that psychic shit. What else did that broad tell you?"

"That I'd go on a bender in the next week and end up selling my car and land in rehab before the next full moon."

I looked up to the sky, the moon halfway to full. Like I said, that psychic was much cooler than I'd expected. The thought made me laugh.

"Don't laugh. You're gonna die."

"Get off it, Sophie," I said and started to say more, but then I felt her hand on my dick. She stood on her tiptoes and kissed my earlobe. I jumped back. She grabbed my hand again.

"Have sex with me, Bart," she said. "Right now."

It startled me so much that I couldn't respond. This was Danny's girl. I couldn't do it to him. He gave me a place to crash for free when my parents wouldn't. He was my oldest and closest friend. But shit was fucked up between him and Sophie. They cheated on each other so much that there couldn't be a betrayal because there was no loyalty. And something about the way she stared up at me with those big brown doe eyes and stood close to me with that tall, slender frame. Even if she was slender because of all the speed and even if the beauty of her eyes was because of the insanity behind them, she was so pretty in her cotton dress, and it was summer and hot, and I was horny, and there was no law of the universe to guarantee that just because six months had passed without me getting laid, six more wouldn't. But because of where we were, we'd have to go back to Danny's to fuck, and Danny wouldn't be there, but Sophie and I would fuck in his bed, and he'd have to sleep in the dried spot where I came, and if he went down on her that night, damn. So much raced through my head so quickly that I thought I'd pull a neuron. Fuck, ethical choices should be left up to ethical people and leave me out of the loop altogether. I pushed Sophie away.

"You have to leave me something, Bart."

"I'm not gonna die."

Sophie lunged at me and pushed me onto A1A. I jumped back on the sidewalk just in time to feel only the wind of a pass-

ing car. "Fine. Fuck you. I hope you do die. I'm going in to look for Danny." She disappeared behind the door of the topless bar.

"Have a good time," I said after she was gone. She wasn't really looking for him. She was hurt and embarrassed and, if I knew her at all, she would think that I'd rejected her not because of loyalty to Danny but because she was somehow deficient. She'd go in and surround herself with women and give up on men for that night.

But, hey, that was cool. Alone was just how I wanted to be walking into the party. No baggage, nothing holding me down. No one to freak out on me. That incident could slide, too. Just elements colliding and dispersing: nature. Thoughts that beer could soak up.

With every step, my enthusiasm grew. I checked out the cars on the street, recognizing some: my old basketball coach's, my ex-girlfriend's little sister's, people like that. Everyone showed up for this bash. There'd be chicks I'd known since high school, people I hadn't seen for years. My parents, probably. I was also sure that the lovely Helen would be out from behind the bar and maybe looking for love. It was the event of the season, and I was primed perfectly, ready to go. I turned west on Minuteman, towards the band, and headed straight for the beer concession. There was no line and my high school chemistry teacher was behind the counter. "Hey, Bart. Long time, no see," he said.

"Too long, Mr. Winters," I said. "Thought about coming in to see you a few times." Which was true, actually. Mr. Winters was a bright guy, deeply schooled in the mysteries too involved for the untrained eye. Every time I blacked out from booze, I thought about going in to see him. I figured it was a chemical reaction. If anyone knew how to avoid it, Mr. Winters would.

"What about?" Mr. Winters asked me.

"The meaning of life."

"That's easy," he said. "Carbon. What are you drinking?"

I grinned. "The biggest beer you got."

Mr. Winters poured me a thirty-two ounce draft. I paid, threw a buck in for the Jaycees, and said good-bye to him. Minuteman was crawling with people, so many that I couldn't pick anyone out in the crowd. I worked my way towards the band. If my crew wasn't hanging out around the beer stand, they'd be in front of the band doing some sort of silly dances. On the way I ran into a few people I knew. Not really friends, but people who I liked to see out on the town and enjoyed talking to if the conversation lasted five minutes or less. None of them knew the meaning of life. One had heard of my acid score and was looking to buy a few hits. I sold him three for fifteen bucks.

As I made my way through the crowd, I kept my eyes open for Helen. If there'd ever be a night for us, this would be it. She'd had the day and night off. When I was in the Casablanca a few nights earlier, she'd told me that she would be hanging out at the block party this Saturday. She'd also probably started drinking early in the day at the beach, which would put her in the perfect state of mind. She wouldn't hook up with me when she was sober and my drunk and homeless ass sat across the bar from her, drooling over her legs, asking her for the thousandth time what it was like meeting Hulk Hogan on the set of *Thunder in Paradise*, the late night cheese show that she'd been on one time for exactly as long as it took to walk in front of the camera in a bikini. No, nights like that were just prep work for when she hit the streets drunk and alone and looking for a friendly face, like I thought she was probably doing at that exact moment.

As I neared the band, I saw what looked to be the top of her head. It could have been anyone, but as I got closer, I knew it was her. She was dancing with some guy who I couldn't see. Doing the lambada to a Georgia Satellites cover. I figured I'd try to cut in, anyway. It all went back to carbon. Just because two elements were combined at one point didn't mean that they'd stay that way. Nature constantly rearranges itself. It could rearrange so that it was me and Helen bonding.

I weaved through the dance area until I was ten feet from her. That was when she kissed the guy she was dancing with. That was when I saw it was Danny. That motherfucker. He knew I was nuts about Helen. He could've had some loyalty to me. I held back for him. Sure Sophie was crazy, but she was damn pretty and there was little I'd've enjoyed more that night than fucking her. But I was loyal to my friend. I crossed no line. I figured there'd be a perfectly good woman

wandering around the block party. I hoped it would be Helen. I didn't figure this could happen. Fucking chaos. I turned and worked my way back out of the crowd.

All of it was getting to be too much for me. Shit builds and builds and I think it doesn't bother me, and then a point comes when I realize that I've been pissed off all along. Fuck the party. I was going back to Danny's vacant home to smoke pot and be alone. To let tomorrow come and let there still be money in my pocket and let things start to work themselves out.

Just before I got to the corner of Woodland and Minuteman, I saw a little girl standing in front of a booth, holding her mother's hand and pointing at a big stuffed bear. Her mother was trying to explain to her that she couldn't win the bear. It was impossible. The bear was just there for decoration. I stopped and checked the booth out.

It was one of those where you get three basketballs for a dollar, and the balls are about the same size around as the hoop. The hoop wasn't very far away, but the shot had to be right on. I looked at the girl and recognized her as one of my five-year-olds from camp. "Hey, Sarah," I said. "You having a good time?"

She smiled. "Yeah."

"I'm Sarah's camp counselor," I told her mom.

"The famous Mr. Bart," her mother said. "Glad to meet you."

"So you're trying to win the bear, huh?"

"It can't be won. You have to hit nine shots in a row."

I gave the guy behind the counter three bucks. I figured, what the hell. There was only one fucking thing in the world I could do well and that was hit an outside shot. The guy handed me a basketball. I looked down to Sarah. "Now don't get your hopes up, kid," I said.

Sarah smiled and bit her lip.

I took the first shot and sunk it. The guy handed the ball back to me. "Eight to go," I said to her mother.

"It's your money," she said.

I nodded. I hit the second shot. And the third, the fourth, and so on. Nine straight. I didn't expect it, but then, I never expected my basketball experience to help me out in the real world and there it was, putting a smile on a little girl's face. The guy handed me the big bear. I put it under my arm and started to walk away. "Nice meeting you," I said to Sarah's mom. "See you later, Sarah."

Sarah looked at me, stunned. Her smile turned into a frown.

"What is it? You didn't want the bear, did you?"

Sarah shook her head.

"Good," I said. "I'll see you later."

I turned and took a step, then figured I'd tortured Sarah enough. I went back and gave her the bear. Both she and her mother thanked me. I just smiled and walked back to Danny's place.

His house was across from a warehouse about two blocks off Minuteman. No one was there. A basketball lay in the front yard. I picked it up and took a shot. Sunk that one, too. All luck against me that day, but I still managed to sink twenty-one shots in a row. I flashed back to my days of college hoops, but that didn't make me feel any better. I still had a few joints in my pocket. I lit one up. As I smoked, I thought back to the meaning of life I'd given Danny. I started to like it. The only solace I could find was in thinking that it was all random. That I could stand and take another shot and it didn't matter that I'd sank the last twenty-one shots. There was no force or universal law stopping me from sinking twenty-two. I walked halfway across the lawn, far beyond where a three point line would've been, bounced the ball a couple of times, then set it flying for the hoop.

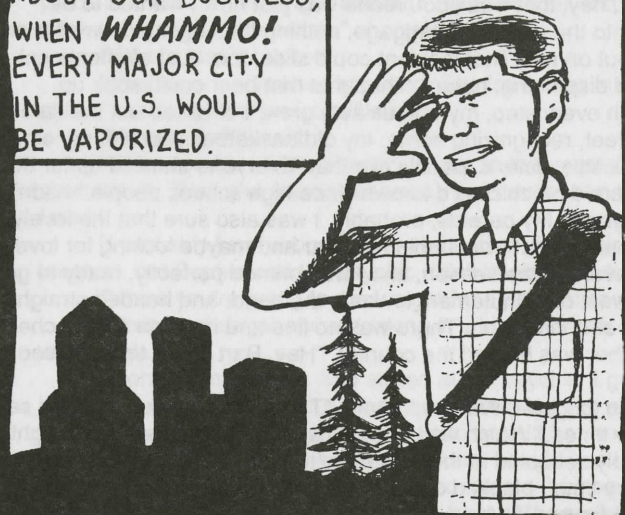
Sean Carswell edits the fantastic zine *Razorcake* (send 3 bucks a some stamps to PO Box 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042 for your copy!). His second book, *Glue and Ink Rebellion* is now available through Gorsky Press (gorskeypress.com).

party at ground zero

BACK IN THE EIGHTIES,
WHEN I WAS STILL A
YOUNG 'UN, I FEARED
THAT A NUCLEAR ATTACK
WAS IMMINENT.



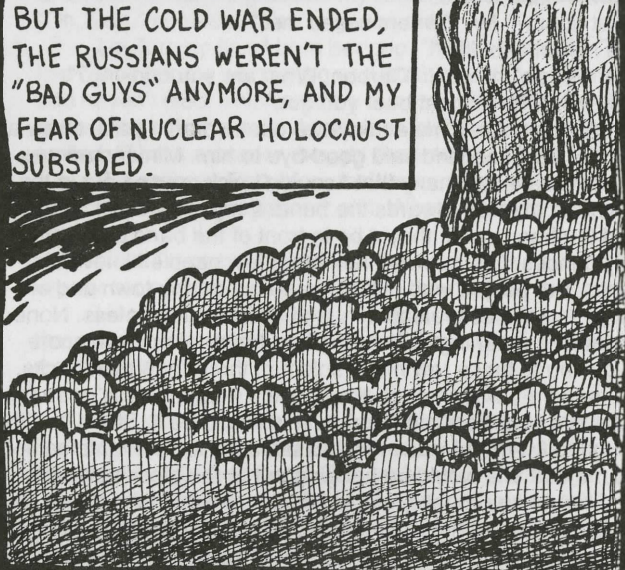
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WHEN **WHAMMO!**
EVERY MAJOR CITY
IN THE U.S. WOULD
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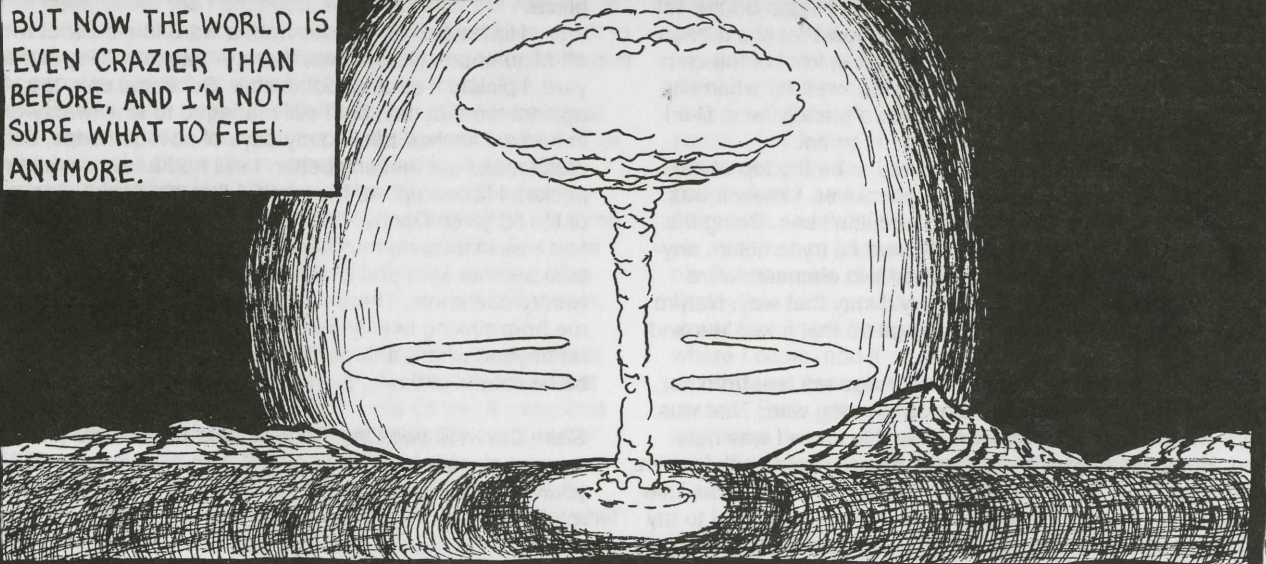
IN SECONDS, MILLIONS
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IZATION AS WE KNOW
IT WOULD DISSAPPEAR.



BUT THE COLD WAR ENDED,
THE RUSSIANS WEREN'T THE
"BAD GUYS" ANYMORE, AND MY
FEAR OF NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST
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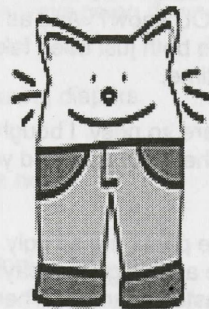
BUT NOW THE WORLD IS
EVEN CRAZIER THAN
BEFORE, AND I'M NOT
SURE WHAT TO FEEL
ANYMORE.



Hello! Welcome to the very special kittenpants section of READ Magazine. For those of you unfamiliar with kittenpants, we are a website (www.kittenpants.org) with a monthly-ish newsletter that encourages reader participation, submissions, and laughter--the kind of laughter you feel all over your body, including your "bathing suit area."

The kittenpants newsletter features regular contributions from READ Magazine editor, Adam Liebling, as well as other up-and-coming young talent. You'll also find celebrity interviews, TnA movie reviews, stories, comics, pictures of stuff, and more.

READ Magazine has kindly sampled some of our articles in the next few pages. Take a look, get a grip, wipe the gravy off your chin, and race on over to kittenpants.org. You know you want to. Yours truly, kittenpants



Insulting Intelligents

by kittenpants

inspired by Pete Humes of Punchline Magazine

When Pete Humes offered up "25 Insults That You May Use If You Are So Inclined" (see punchlinemag.com), kittenpants had only one response: more.

Without further ado, more insults.

Your feet smell so bad... your shoes would say, "Good Lord, Almighty!! Wash yo' feet, chile!" If shoes could talk. And if shoes were a Southern African American female stereotype from the 30s.

Your TV is so old, it has a dial. And it doesn't work. And if it did work, it would only get reruns of Happy Days, which is set in the 1950s! That's old!

Your cat is so dumb, he can't even spell "meow."

You're such a hillbilly. You think "THE HILLS HAVE EYES" is a documentary. About you.

Your knowledge of Journey is so insignificant, you don't even know the lyrics to "Wheel in the Sky."

Your C.H.U.D.s are so stupid. They live ABOVE ground.

Your coffee tastes so bad. Juan Valdez heard about it, and then shot himself in the face. And then his donkey also shot himself in the face.

Your taste in clothing is so outdated, you have to shop for a long time to even find stuff that you like. And when you do, it's totally out of style. And your mother probably should have aborted you in the first place.

Your pencils are not at all sharpened. You might as well use a pen.

Your boyfriend is so retarded. You probably have to cut up his food for him. And then chew it. And then spit it in his mouth. And then help him swallow it. And then wipe his ass when he poops it out. I must say, you are really dedicated to this relationship.

Your car is so lame. It doesn't even have power steering.

Your kids are so hairy. What are they, part wookiee? No seriously, are they? Because that would actually be cool.

You make the worst toast. What is so fucking hard?

Your breath is so bad. If breath was a flower, your breath would be the kind of flower a man buys for a woman he hates.

Your grandma is so old. When she was a kid, there were dinosaurs and leprechauns running the Earth. They formed a government based on liberty and justice for all creatures. Isn't that amazing - something so big and something so small, working together to make a better world for their children? And now they're extinct. And the only person who remembers them is your grandma. THAT's how old she is.

You are so completely non-photogenic. "Does your face hurt?" is a legitimate concern of film developers everywhere.

You are so fucking French. You walked down the street in Paris and baguettes followed you back to the hotel.

Your dog is so ugly. She looks as if she fell off the "ugly tree" and hit one or two of the ugliest branches, which made dents and bruises on her face and fur, and which are, ironically, the only beautiful things about her.

Your cell phone is so cancerous. When you watch "KINDERGARTEN COP" and Arnold Schwarzenegger says "It's not a tumor.." you have to yell back, "It IS a tumor!" Because you have a tumor. In your head. From talking on the cell phone. Haven't you been listening? Hello? Hel-looooo...?

Your cell phone service provider is so unreliable, you probably didn't even hear that last one.

You're so immature. You like to have sex with 8-year-olds. Wait, I guess that makes you a pervert. Wait, I guess that makes me a pervert, too.

You are so totally useless. If you were to quit your job, the only person who would notice is you. And your wife and family. And the guy that's hired to repossess your car. And the homeless guy you stab to death in a fight over a can of ravioli.

Your penis is so small. Or perhaps your breasts are so large, it only looks small by comparison.

Your web design skills are so inferior, it's like that year at the Art Institute was totally wasted on you.

You are so retarded. You've probably seen "VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN" a hundred times. And you're only distantly related to Eddie Murphy.

More insults...

You're so blind. When Stevie Wonder met you he was like, "Dude, you are totally blind." And you were like, "How would you know, Stevie Wonder? You can't see me." And Stevie was all, "I never said I was Stevie Wonder – how did YOU know?" And as it turns out, you've both just been faking it for a very long time.

You are so nosy. I bought some beeswax the other day, and you were all up in it.

Those pants are so ugly. Why not just make a big sign that says "I have horrible taste in pants!"? Then you could cut the sign into a pattern, and sew it into a pair of pants and wear the sign-pants instead of those pants.

You are such a geek. Everyone at the sci-fi convention knows your first name (Randy), last name (Gibbs), middle name (Sherry), Dungeon name (Ortho the Wise), Vulcan name (Spark), AOL login (NaNu_Ork182), dog's name (Buster), porn name (Buster Sherry), nickname (Spaz), band name (U2), other band name (Buster Sherry and the Virgins), novelist's pseudonym (Joyce Carol Oates), stage name (Harry Anderson), your Dad's name (George), your Mom's name (Ma'am), and your Hebrew name (psyche! You're not Jewish, Spaz!).

Your stand up routine is sooooooooooooo boring and unfunny. You are Tim Allen.

Your reputation as a "ladies man" has been hurt by the current economy, and your inability to hire escorts. Bringing your mom to parties probably hasn't helped much either.

You drive so slow. My grandfather drives faster than you. Yes, my grandfather is Mario Andretti, so what? He is still a grandfather and you are still a quadriplegic.

Your belief in God is so ridiculously fervent. Even God is like, "Jeez! Cut me some slack, 'Job'!"

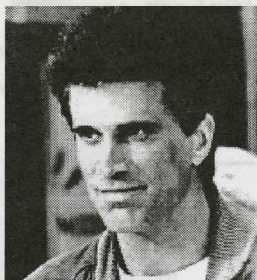
Your ability to shotgun beer is matched only by your inability to follow twelve simple steps.

Your bottled water is completely full of bullshit. Corporate, yuppie, marketing bullshit. And a touch of feces.

Yer so dum. Yoo kan onlee reed wurds that ar spelld fonetiklee.

You're so stoned. You're all "blaaagh!" ... and I'm all... "yeaaaaahhhh" ... and they're all like--Wait, no--I'M so stoned. Awesome!

The Time I Met Ted Danson



by
Matthew Tobey
Coeditor of
Haypenny.com
and *Kittenpants*
contributor

I'll never forget the evening I met Becker's Ted Danson. I remember it as if it were yesterday. It was the day before yesterday and my wife and I had headed out to our favorite restaurant, Chi Chi's. We were in the mood for some fajitas, margaritas and relaxationitas. Little did we know we were soon to meet the best bartender TV-Boston ever knew, Sammy Malone himself.

We pulled into the Chi Chi's parking lot and I handed the keys to the valet, Clint Eastwood, who quickly hopped in and drove off to park our car.

My wife and I giggled with excitement as we caught a whiff of the telltale Chi Chi's smells: nachos, tacos and burritos. But the smell of the different something-oses was nothing compared to what was to occur later that evening. I'm referring of course to my meeting with Ted "The Head" Danson. Settle down, I'm getting to it.

Upon walking through the doors we were greeted with a smile by the hostess.

"Welcome to Chi Chi's. How many for you tonight?" asked Julia Roberts.

"Two for non, please."

"Of course. Bobby, could you take this nice couple to table 23?"

"Certainly. Right this way folks." Robert DeNiro led us to the table, telling us that our server would be with us momentarily and asking if we'd like to start off with something from the bar.

"Two large Margaritas, por favor!"

"Coming right up folks."

While we waited for our drinks we intently scanned the menu. What would it be tonight? The Chicken Chimi? The Mexican Pizza? The Mexican Spaghetti? The lord is a bastard for creating such impossible decisions!

A moment later our server arrived.

"Somebody order a couple of margaritas?!"

"We did!"

"Hiya folks, my name's Oprah and I'll be your server tonight. We've taken the liberty of serving you your margaritas in the mouths of Michaels Jordan and Caine. Just give their shirts a tug and they'll gladly spit you a sip. Can I start ya'll off with an appetizer?"

"Large turkey nachos please," my wife said as I licked some salt off of Michael Caine's cheek and had him spit some margarita in my mouth.

Whether you know it or not, Chi Chi's margaritas are the best in town. Of course no margarita could ever possibly beat meeting my favorite "man and a baby", but how was I to know what was to come? For all I knew drinking that margarita was going to be the best part of my night!

Speaking of margaritas, they go right through me, so I headed to the men's room where the attendant, British Prime Minister Tony Blair greeted me with a wink, a smile and a tip of his cap.

"Evenin' Guvna!" the head of state said.

"Yes, hello," I replied as I approached the urinal to do my business.

I began to pee and suddenly realized that this was no normal urinal, but was in fact Michael Jackson and J.D. Salinger.

I finished up, flushed J.D. and the King of Pop and tossed Prime Minister Blair a quarter before heading back to the table.

I don't know if I've mentioned this yet, but later in the story I meet Ted "Fucking" Danson.

My wife had already started in on the turkey nachos, which were

served on the bare ass of John Travolta, so I dug in before she ate the whole darn thing.

"You folks ready to order?" Oprah asked as she came back to the table.

"We are indeed," I said. "I will have the Mexican Lasagna and my lovely wife will have the Mexican Fettuccini Alfredo."

"Coming right up," Oprah said, writing our order on Tom Cruise's face with a sharpened-to-a-point-and-dipped-in-ink Madonna.

Just as we were finishing up our nachos, one of the busboys/Baldwin brothers came into the dining area.

"Anybody here drive an orange PT Cruiser?" he shouted.

"I do," I said. "Is everything okay?"

"Not exactly, you'd better come see this."

My wife and I followed the busboy outside to the parking lot. We were half titillated and half frightened. What could be happening to our PT Cruiser? (I'll give you a hint: He was in "Cousins".)

We walked around one corner of the parking lot and suddenly before my eyes, I saw him. It was Ted "Toaster Thumbs" Danson and he was eating my car.

"I'm a huge fan sir, I absolutely adored 'Made in America!'" I said.

"Yes, you're my all-time favorite 'man and a little lady'," my wife added.

Mr. Danson looked up from gnawing on the fender of our PT Cruiser, let out a monstrous shriek and ran off into the woods with a tire and the driver-side door.

"That was Ted Danson!" I yelled.

"Ted Danson! Woo!" is all my wife could reply.

"Ted freakin' Danson!"

"Ted Danson! Woo!"

"Teddy Ted Dan-Dan!"

We went on like that in the parking lot for what must've been an hour. Elated and star-struck, we couldn't think about food anymore so I had our dinner boxed up and paid the check. With our car partially eaten, it was undrivable, so my wife and I snapped our fingers, jumped on the backs of Rose Kennedy and Jack Nicholson, respectively, and galloped toward home.

Hot & Black by kittenpants

You've heard the expression, "I like my men like I like my coffee: hot and black." Well, kittenpants wanted to know how other people like their men. This is what we discovered.

I like my men like I like my internet service: always going down.
Kasey Lange - Ft. Lauderdale, FL

I like my men like I like babies: bald and wearing diapers.
Harmony Letterman—White Plains, NY

I like my men like I like my telephone: off tha hook!
Teri Fox—San Francisco, CA.

I like my men like I like Manhattan in the summer: hot, and smelling of urine.
Cherie Ragsdale—New York, NY

I like my men like I like a good joke: short, funny, and slightly racist.
Sweetney Gribbs—Waco, TX

I like my men like I like my cat: covered in fur and feces.
E. G. Burgerstanz—Hoboken, NJ

I like my men like I like my luggage: brown with scuff marks all over.
Jane Wojohovitz—Chicago, IL

I like my men like I like my corpses: bloated and bloody.
Name withheld—Bridgeport, CT

I like my men like I like the LIFETIME channel: really into the Golden Girls.
Betty White—Los Angeles, CA

I like my men like I like Jerry's kids: handicapped and begging for money.
Precious Johnson—Didigotoofar, MN

I like my men like I like my cabbage: boiled in water.
"not" Queen Elizabeth—London, England

I H8 VNITYPL8S by kittenpants

Vanity Plates I would love to see.

IH8MYKID

KILLME

PERV

ITUCHBOYZ

WHORE

ABORSHUN

CRBLPALS

PPNURCOKE

ILITERUT

MYCATDIED

IJKOFFONU

H8 JESUS

TAINT

FONZ

SUICIDE

kittenpants.org

TnA Reviews

By kittenpants

Little Darlings

There's not much actual TnA in this flick, but the little fuckers talk about it alot - it's kind of like a movie version of FORVER by Judy Blume - lots of discoveries about sex and relationships, but set in a summer camp.

This film revolves around two camp rivals: Kristy McNichol as streetwise smart-aleck virgin, Angel Bright, and Tatum O'Neal as rich-priss romantic virgin, Ferris Whitney. The girls spend all summer trying to earn their fornication badges--each competing to lose her virginity first, at the suggestion, and constant goading of the camp pimp, Cinder (Krista Errickson of DOIN' IT and "HELLO, LARRY"), and the rest of their cabin-mates.

Angel chooses Randy as the object of her quest--a mildly retarded tough-kid-type, played expertly by Matt Dillon (MY BODYGUARD, OVER THE EDGE). He thinks she's a tease, because she's hot and cold and all over the place, but he eventually falls for her, after he finds out she was a virgin. Typical.

Meanwhile, Ferris selects an older man - camp coach Gary Callahan, played by Armand Assante (PRIVATE BENJAMIN). Even though he doesn't touch her, she lies about it, getting him fired, and causing all kinds of trouble. She eventually narcs herself out to the camp director, in order to save his job - then promises to return for some sex when she's 21.

LITTLE DARLINGS has plenty of 'the truth about sex' messages - like when Angel tells Randy 'I feel so lonesome now.' I'm sure it was required viewing for all the sex-crazed teens of its time - now it's just camp. I give it 3.9 stars.

Be sure to watch Tatum O'Neal in her other TNA masterpiece - CERTAIN FURY where the tables are turned and she plays touch junkie street kid, to Irene Cara's rich kid.

H.O.T.S.

My next TnA pick is one of the classic 80's TnA films of all times, rivaled only by PORKY'S and PRIVATE SCHOOL. Boasting a cast of actress/



models and Playboy Playmates (not to mention a post-Partridge but pre-bitter Danny Bonaduce), the movie couldn't be more pathetic in terms of script, finding new and inventive ways to show the naked people. It's a perfect example of true TnA.

Teased for being too poor to join a "real" sorority, Honey Shayne vows to get back at Sorority Queen Melody Ragmore the only way she knows how: by seducing all the men on campus, leaving none for the girls of Pi. And so H.O.T.S. is formed, an alternative sorority for the "outcasts" who just happen to be gorgeous model types. And the token fat girl.

Between parties and pranks, the girls finally decide to settle the score with a strip football game (don't look to H.O.T.S. for logic...). And though you'd think this is enough of a story, the movie manages to throw in a few subplots along the way.

The first of these involves two escaped convicts, trying to break into the H.O.T.S. house to find hidden stolen money. I was completely annoyed with this whole tangent, until, as a bumbling attempt to get into the house, one of them poses as a house-cleaning robot, complete with giant silver barrel costume, and vacuum extension arms. **Yes!**

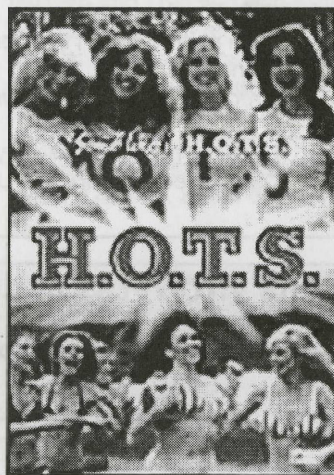
The second revolves around finding out just what H.O.T.S. stands for. In a previous issue I asked the readers to let me in, if anyone knew. I only got one response, from Holly in Pilot Point, TX:

"I don't remember for sure, but I think that the girls in H.O.T.S. told people that the letters stood for 'Help Ollie The Seal.' I'm not sure about the Ollie part though. But it seems like the letters really stood for something else. I can't remember that part."

Holly was right, and wrong. There is a scene in which, threatened by the dean, and accused of having a sorority that **Holds On To Sex**, the H.O.T.S.

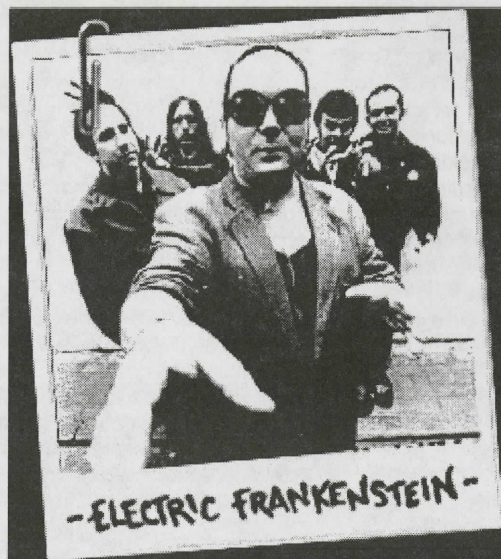
girls bring in their mascot--a live seal--and swear that they only want to **Help Out The Seals**. In the end, you'll find that the true meaning was right in front of you, all along.

Check out the escaped bear drinking moonshine in the attic, the parachuting wonder known as "Boom Boom Bangs", and of course, the housecleaning "Robot" who fascinates the girls in the bathtub. I give H.O.T.S. 4 stars for TnA and 5 stars for being ridiculous and no stars for believability. I hope they make a sequel, starring the robot.



Electric Frankenstein is a stunning punk n roll four piece from New Jersey. Combining all the multi-layered aspects of heavy rock n roll music with melodic-yet-wicked lyrics, Electric Frankenstein lives up to its sinister name. **Sal Canzonieri**, the band's songwriter and rhythm guitarist is the man responsible for creating and maintaining EF's enormous amount of voltage that runs through its being. **Steve Miller's** vocal onslaught is as devastating as it is satisfying. **Dan Canzonieri's** bass rampage is delivered with angst and fury. And old time EF drummer, **John Steele**, wraps it up with his damaging drumming. Their latest release, *The Buzz of 1000 Volts*, off **Victory Records**, is as raw and gritty as their previous efforts—but a hell of a lot more impressive. Sal Calzonieri was kind enough to take some time out to talk with me about the band and the Anti Rock Conspiracy. Rock!

—conducted by Liz Ortega



How you doing, Sal?

I'm doing okay. Just recovering from surgery.

Oh, wow. Would you like to reschedule? I wouldn't want to keep you from recovery.

No, no...I'm fine. I've been resting for 3 days. I like doing interviews — they're fun.

Excellent! I just received your new release, 1000 Volts...It's been said that it's the best release by far. Would you agree with that sentiment?

Well, the way the whole band feels is that it's the best-supported album. As far as best songs, we're still going. I don't think we've peaked yet. We're still developing and changing...we're strengthening our strengths and dropping off our weaknesses and just trying to sound the best we can.

In your opinion, what do you think are/were your weaknesses?

Sometimes it's hard to work with people that aren't as energetic. Me, Steve, and Dan are very energetic and want to go deep into the song-writing, what it means to arrange a song, what it means to have this part work with that part. We just didn't have everybody on the same page. That's why we have a change in the band—once again. We got our previous drummer back, who is a lot like us. Everybody plays multi-instruments now, so we're down to a 4-piece. Now we have people who are totally focused on craftsmanship and visuals. I think now we've been doing shows this way and the audience, they're enthusiastic about this album.

Each song has its own meaning and presentation, but generally, what gives a song that electrifying feel to make it stand on its own?

There's a certain persona that the band takes on—imagery wise. So, we thought we'd stick with the idea of Frankenstein...because if you read the book, Frankenstein is very intelligent. It's a lot of philosophy and a lot of, uh, dealing with angst. Being created, born right and not having a choice about it and then you're stuck in a world where you're getting many multi-emotions coming through you. But there's a lot of that in the lyrics. There is a semi political song on there, "America Lie" — that was kind of a homage to 80s hardcore. We've been seeing that come back and the kids are rediscovering it.

You see a lot of bands that often like to veer off their path. Take Slaughter and the Dogs for example. Their current album, *Beware Of...*, is a fucking awesome record. Now, that's a far cry from "Where Have All The Boot Boys Gone." That record is completely different. Now, do you ever see Electric Frankenstein progressing or completely altering your sound the way Slaughter and the Dogs and so many other bands have? I

mean, that to me is not so much a change to appeal — it's all about the progression and growth as musicians..

True, as musicians, it would be at this point, in personal development and even if they stayed together in the band or not, they should have been at this point. They stayed together and even separate they kept up with their music and their heart. That's what music is all about: the spirit, because when you're speaking, the world is coming through you. When you're a musician, the music is inspirational because you let yourself be an instrument for the world. And I hear that in that album that they just did. A natural progression and that's the real thing. That's what we're committed to. We really think it's phony to one day sound like Blink 182 and the year before you're heavy metal. Now, if you progress that way and it's a traditional thing—you can see bands experimenting and they're looking at different aspects of themselves. That's natural. But when you hear, oh, this is what other people are into. That's when a leader becomes a follower. Might as well be a cover band.

Sal, I wanted to touch on the Anti Rock Conspiracy. I remember asking your brother years ago about that, but he couldn't elaborate on the subject. He said it's your baby.

Well, it's a very real thing that's been going on for a while — the government is investigating and I've been asked to help investigate. What's been going on, you see, [they've] shot themselves in the foot because the in the music industry, the only thing that's selling is rock. What's been going on behind the scene, that's still under investigation, is that there's people in the music business that were trying to control the market during the 90s and push out rock n roll and rock n roll bands and bring in that new metal garbage. Um, the pop stuff is the pop stuff, that's always there. I mean Mariah Carey had hits in the 80s, that's its own thing and the pop people don't mix. [They] were trying to squeeze it out of the radio and the press and I have plenty of people in all aspects of the business come to me and tell me all this stuff they were told to do. A lot of them refused to do it. The more the industry was trying to tell them to stop doing that stuff, it wound up backfiring because people rebelled. We wound up being the fifth most written about band in the world, according to statistics, because of the Anti Rock Conspiracy. There's a lot of corruption going on in radio and in the press and in the music business itself. How contracts are set up, and what bands are signed, and then shelved to get them out of the way so that rock bands aren't allowed to get anywhere. Sure there was stuff on the radio like the Offspring and Blink 182, but I think it's because that was stuff they couldn't do anything about.

Well, Blink 182 had that already, as far as commercial success. So, it was inevitable for them to get major exposure like radio and music television.

Right. The big thing was that they were pushing everything else out of the way, at the expense of rock, and trying to push the whole new metal thing. There were a lot of bribes that went on, magazines have gotten in trouble and have had to move their main offices. They've gotten in trouble for taking bribes to put bands on covers. A lot of bands that people think are big, aren't really. There's a lot of deceiving reports about sales. Things that they said sold multimillions, they were only counting copies shipped and not copies sold. So, they were no where near that. It gets into all kinds of statistics and who is paying off who and whatnot.

Seems like you're very much involved in this...

Yeah, I really can't say much about it because it's all under investigation. 20/20 is doing a show on it and they interviewed a lot of people that are on the investigation with me and I know they are going to be on TV. We'll see what happens. When the investigation first started until now, the music industry just shot itself in the foot because things changed right under their noses. All the college stations this year, the new kids coming in are boycotting...they're playing old punk, old 80s, and indie music and it's like the way it was because they want nothing to do with the major labels. College kids are all on the internet and are savvy to what the problems are when a major label makes a band sell too many records before they make a dollar. There's a lot of stuff. There's a lot of things going on with chain stores. The stores were putting the major label records at the lowest prices and jacking up the prices on the indie records. The major label stuff wasn't selling but the indie stuff sells because it's only printed to a certain amount. So, they figured people were going to buy it anyway. That of course brought interest to the Department of Financial Crimes. It stemmed from that and the investigation got bigger. There's a lot of fishy stuff going on. They would have chain stores order a whole bunch of indie records and hold them and not put them out for sale. Then when they were low on money, they would ship them back, unopened. A lot of bands that they wanted to promote were told "We'll send you the stuff and you send us the other stuff back and we'll replace it with the record we want you to put on the shelves." That made the other record look like it sold a lot but they didn't tell you that they weren't sold. They were just shipped to those chain stores. It gets so complicated, I don't know how much you'd like to know about it.

Well, it does sound complicated but it's very informative. I think everyone should be filled in on what's going on in the music biz.

Part of the thing was buying space on radio. The songs you hear on the radio are paid for now. They're considered "commercial."

Now I know your feelings toward major labels and stuff. You're still with Victory Records, right?

I'm done with the contract after this record. We're moving ahead.

You've been with the label for a long time.

Yeah, we're just committed to the idea of independence. We do it yourselves and you can see that pattern with all the labels we've been on.

How about starting your own label?

A lot of bands want us to start our own label. (Laughs) They trust us better, I guess. It's in the future...right now, we're still building things until we're satisfied. I've been doing my part with the Fist Full of Rock n Roll compilations. I did some with Victory Records and some coming out on Devil Doll Records. I made a network on the internet and I have labels and bands and people in the music business that want to work together. I have A&R going on that I'm doing for everyone in this network. It's a big thing that's worked out great. Every band has gotten so much bigger since they've been in the network because they grew so fast on the compilations.

That's sounds like a very promising project. I asked your brother Dan this question: What band is the absolute pain in the ass to tour/play with?

What did my brother say?

He said Nashville Pussy.

Well, not the girls, they were real nice to us. When you're stuck living off your music, you become a music prostitute. You gotta cut corners to survive. So, instead of cooperation, it was competitive. And that sucks. You know who I didn't like playing with? Hole because somebody died at that show. We played with them in Sweden or something and Hole went on and Courtney told everybody that they could be a star and they should jump up on the stage. Well, that was irresponsible. Everybody rushed the stage and a 12-year-old girl was crushed

and nobody knew she was dead until after her whole set was done. No one has ever died in these Swedish festivals before, and to see a 12-year-old girl lying there dead was tragic to me and I felt like punching her [Courtney Love]. She didn't even care. She should be held responsible.

How long ago was this? I never heard about this incident.

This was the summer before last. They didn't even report it here.

Wow. What about the best band?

The Supersuckers. They put on exciting shows and the crowds are charged up. They love playing, they love the audience and they love the music. Social Distortion are the same way.

Speaking of being charged up, what gives you the drive to perform exceptionally? You mentioned that all the members have the same type of energy. What would you say contributes to that?

Honestly, it's the punk rock movement. We grew up going to CBGB's and seeing the Ramones and the Dictators and all the British bands. Everybody acted like it was the last show and the last time anybody could ever play and you really cared about being there. There was that connection between the bands and the audience. It was exceptional and I've never seen that again. We've seen the Ramones and the Dead Boys put on shows, going all out and you'd see the energy coming right out of their bodies. People told me it was like that five years before with the MC5. That's when

we decided to start EF. I said we're going to take punk and the high energy of the earlier time period and blend it all that together.

And you created a monster! The Electric Frankenstein. So, would you consider your music to be dark?

Yeah. It's loud and aggressive and melodic but it's got a bit of angst because of the Frankenstein thing. It's all about the power and the glory but also there's a bittersweet thing.

What do you besides music?

Well, I'm a writer. There's a book coming out on the band and the publisher asked me to write the text. It's a huge book. The first half of the book is about the whole scene and what's going on. I'm putting together quotes from different bands and people about what rock n roll means to them. The history of the band will also be in there. The second half of the book will have different art work. I'm writing a book on Chinese Kung-Fu. Then I have band practice and our families of course.

Are you married with children, Sal?

Yes, I am.

How difficult is it when you got out on tour and you have to leave your families behind for months and months at a time? Or do you take your families with you on the road?

Everybody brought (laughs) at least once...everybody had all this cartoon imagery of what it's like to be in a band. But you're spending more time traveling, then you do interviews and I like doing interviews, then you do the merch, then you do sound check, play a state, then pack up and go. It's a lot of work. So, everybody has got to see that we're not out there cheating or passed out somewhere.

Well, that's a good thing, I guess. Thanks so much Sal for talking with me. I'll see you when you play in Long Beach!

Yeah, thank you, Liz!

Visit EF at www.electricfrankenstein.com. Check out their latest album on Victory Records (www.victoryrecords.com).

Jen Chapin might be an educator and an activist, but she's found a medium to combine the two. In a passionate blitz of jazz, rock, and funk, she has helped pioneer urban neo-folk—and her music is as honest, reflective and intelligent as the folk performed by her father, Harry Chapin.

Interview by Adam Liebling

Should music be socially responsible?

Sure, it's nice when music has a positive message, or one that protests injustice and advocates for the righting of wrongs, but certainly all music shouldn't be that way. The Soviets tried to dictate their version of that approach and it didn't seem to work too well! I think music and all art should reflect a variety of perspectives and be responsible only to its own truths. The shame is that the music biz tends to filter out the diversity of viewpoints out there and instead focus on the banal, the inane, the angry, the lustful, and the nihilistic. (Well, I suppose that there is some sort of diversity there!) But there's a lot of other interesting stuff being made that doesn't get to the people.

How boring if we were all running around being "socially responsible" all the time! I think a fundamental goal of people fighting for social justice is to give people access to freedom to be whatever they want to be — that includes the freedom to be trivial and self-absorbed and sing stupid songs. That's part of life.

With all of the atrocities going on around the world (and domestically), why do you think mainstream acts aren't writing any protest songs?

Probably the main reason is that a good protest song is bloody hard to write. And a bad protest song is very easy to write. For someone like Bono, for instance, it's much easier (and possibly more effective) for him to go to Jesse Helms and George Bush to argue for debt relief in Africa — as he did recently — than to put the complexity of this issue into a song. This is obviously an issue he feels passionately about, and is willing to put himself on the line for — yet, how could he translate that passion into a rock and roll song? It's a challenge to write about things in the news or in history without being preachy, pedantic, or clichéd. I think it must be done subtly.

At the same time, I think our serious songwriters have wrestled with the more personal challenges that a suffering world presents. Maybe this was what Bono was alluding to when he sang "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." It seems that when a person gets to a certain level of fame and fortune, they have to face the fact that this status is not an end in itself — that we all need to feel a deeper connection to the community around us to be fulfilled. This is when some people fall into drugs or whatever, out of confusion when faced with a crisis of meaning. Or they take a good hard look around. That's certainly what my dad did when he started to become successful — he started to get involved in hunger and other issues. For George Harrison — as another example — the search was of a more personal, spiritual nature, but he also looked beyond himself, as his historic Bangladesh famine benefit and later philanthropy showed.

I think all the political, the social, the economic — all the things that make up the faulty structures of our society — are essentially rooted in the psychological. Sometimes social problems can be best



confronted by really looking to the inside, to what really makes us all tick — and act badly. And novelists and songwriters reveal these things better than most. Put it another way, as I think Aldous Huxley said, "Everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to change himself." Big problems come from a series of small individual behaviors.

Why do you think mainstream radio/MTV shies away from playing political songs?

It's hard to respond to this without being really boring, as there has been so much griping on this topic of late. Everyone knows the deal — these enterprises are businesses, and they are run by marketing people whose job is to make profits. I don't think it is necessarily true, but the dominant belief in that world seems to be that safe/bland is better for making money. Focus groups, polling, blah blah blah. The horror was in the months right after September when Clear Channel or one of those big radio conglomerates put out a list of songs they thought programmers should avoid — these ranged from the disco track "You Dropped a Bomb on Me," (which I suppose could be argued for as a potential offender) to a classic life-affirming tune like Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." That makes me terrified. That was just the kind of song we needed to hear then. Still do.

Early hip-hop was a great vehicle to fight for minority empowerment and social justice. Do you think hip-hop's message has been diminished in the past few years, due to the lyrical/visual trend toward sexism and 'thug life'?

Again, I think the songs are being written — there are tons of progressive, socially conscious hip-hop groups out there doing exciting stuff — they just aren't being signed or promoted by the industry. (Here's where I contradict my answer to the last question.) It seems that the music biz wants music to be bland and inoffensive unless it is rap — then they push the hardest and most aggressive stuff they can find. Why? I don't know.

Do you feel folk music is still relevant today? How can folk music survive?

It depends on what you mean by "folk music." I've gotten in the habit of asking audiences at "folk" venues how they define folk mu-

sic. No one responds. (Of course they could just be thrown off by being called on by the singer like it's a classroom!) Seriously though, is folk music a lone white person singing and strumming a guitar? Does it mean people in no-nukes T-shirts singing along? Is it about the message of the song? One person at a recent folk conference where I gave a workshop bemoaned the fact that, as he saw it: "Folk music has gone from singing about *WE* to singing about *ME*." Duke Ellington said that his music was folk music — coming from the traditions of his people—while most people call it jazz. I think folk is a word that evokes stereotypes and stale images before it connects with meaning. For me, folk music has an emphasis on meaningful lyrics and storytelling. I also see it as coming from traditions of regular people using music to come together, as opposed to classical music, which implies a lot of training and a structured performance. Of course, by my definition, most American music, which comes from the blues and African and European community traditions, is folk music. Even Hip-Hop is folk music, coming out of Jamaican "toasting" traditions and NYC education budget cuts that left kids with no instruments to make music with except for their own voices and turntables.

As well as a teacher and musician, you are also a Board Chair of World Hunger Year. Can you tell us about this organization?

WHY's work has always been focused on getting to the root causes of hunger — on moving from charity to change. We work on a national and international level to find and support the most innovative solutions to hunger and poverty — solutions that go beyond temporary aid to building long term empowerment and self-reliance in individuals and communities. Our biggest program, *Reinvesting in America*, is a network of over 4500 community-based organizations across the country who are models of programs that work, and work extremely well. We find, support, and replicate these groups by connecting them with media, funding sources, government, business, artists, and each other. It is a vibrant exchange of information and energy.

It's very fulfilling to work with WHY because we have a great staff who are really energized by the positive work we are doing. There are so many great people putting great ideas into action, so it's a pleasure to be part of that process—and the issues connect to all that I care about, from education to nutrition to environmental protection to ending racism, and so on. Certainly it's a nice break from the business side of the music industry, and it can be an inspiration for the creative side.

Our website at www.worldhungeryear.org is a great source of information.

I have a few personal questions, if that's okay.

No problem.

Your father died when you were ten. What do you remember about him? Did he instill a sense of social responsibility when you were young?

I have a nice bunch of memories that blend in nicely with the stories that other people tell me and the film and audio recordings we have of him. He was a larger-than-life presence, so the images are pretty vivid. He was touring most of the time, but when he was home he was a very involved and active dad — it was always an adventure — a hurricane of activity. He loved to take us on trips, small and large, and to do projects with us. I also got a taste of the adolescent condition of being constantly embarrassed by ones parents — he was always causing one sort of scene or another, and I was a shy little kid who was always trying to hide away from his loud, buoyant, overfriendliness -- "Oh, DADDY!" But I was also very proud of him.

A sense of social responsibility came from both parents — in all of those endeavors my parents were partners. It all seemed very normal

to me, that we would all try to do what we could to make things better. No big speeches to us about what we should do with our lives, just constant, committed action as an example. At least that's how I remember it — perhaps if I were older I would have gotten lectures!

Is being Harry Chapin's daughter sometimes a mixed blessing?

I can't really find anything to complain about. For one thing I have the gift of almost daily reminders of what my dad's life was worth. His presence in my life almost seems to get stronger every year as my involvement with WHY, music, etc. connects me to him. I feel very fortunate that so many people remember him so fondly and so often — it greatly cushions the loss.

Within the context of my music career, I have met and corresponded with dozens — maybe hundreds — of lovely people who have taken an interest in me and my music because of their memories of my dad. His legacy has given me a small but significant audience I normally wouldn't have had. And most of these people seem to appreciate that I am doing my own thing — people often comment that they expected me to be doing a straight-ahead singer songwriter thing and are pleasantly surprised that I have my own sound.

There was one nasty reviewer in Cleveland who commented something to the effect of that I had another thing

coming if I thought I could "get over on daddy's name," but... Well, I am who I am. It seemed like a pretty silly comment.

What did you think of Ugly Kid Joe's version of "Cat's In The Cradle"?

I think I only got to hear it once or twice on MTV. It seemed pretty honest and straight-ahead. My mom (who wrote the lyrics to the song) met the lead singer one time and he said the song had been very important to him growing up.

What do you love most about New York City? Could you ever leave?

I love the different communities and the way everyone interacts in such wacky combinations and juxtapositions. It's a rare and wonderful thing. I'm not planning to leave Brooklyn, though it's nice to get to have extended trips away. I hope to do a lot more touring, and then come home.

You are extremely active. What is the most fulfilling aspect of your life? (teaching, performing, social work?)

It's something parallel to what I said about NYC — I love the crazy combinations. Sometimes I wish I were the type of person who could be exclusively focused on music, and I also look up to those who are full-time committed teachers — they are the real heroes to me. And the work with WHY and other non-profit groups is exciting and valuable to me. But I think it's my nature to let the different lives cross over and feed each other. There's a synergy there.

What would you like to be doing ten years from now?

I've always planned to make music as long as I can. We want to have some kids too, so I'll see how that fits into the equation. I do hope to do some more teaching down the line, and everything else. I want to keep it all going.

For lyrics, tour dates, album info, and more information on Jen Chapin, visit her site at www.jenchapin.com.



Diego Fuentes will invariably walk down a rainy Toronto street, stopping in front of a dinghy bodega to tell about the next video. Fidgeting with his hands, he excitedly introduces the western world to the infectious J-pop of Puffy Ami Yumi, the goofy dance hit from the Turkish stud Mahir, or the latest reggae-tinged tune from France's Manu Chao. Diego is the super-friendly VJ of MuchMusic's ClipTrip—the only major music video show that showcases international acts, giving now-superstars Ricky Martin and Shakira, among others, their first mainstream exposure.

—Adam Liebling

How did you first get involved with MuchMusic?

Every once in awhile MuchMusic does a VJ search across Canada...

Like a national talent search?

Yeah, exactly, and I was the very first winner of that, back in '95. I had to submit a 5-minute tape and fill out a questionnaire. The year I did it, 900 people across Canada submitted tapes. From there, they picked out seven finalists, and gave each one of us the chance to perform live on the air for an hour. And from there, they just decided.

What were you doing before MuchMusic?

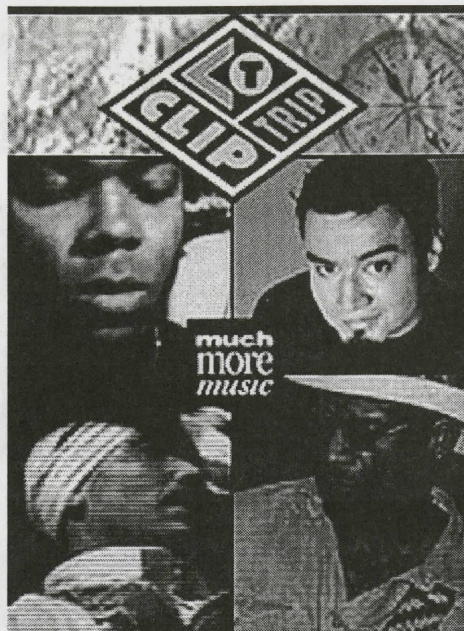
I was and currently am an actor, but I guess I was a waiter at the time.

What were some of your roles?

Small parts like in *The Ladies Man*, and I got a pretty big part in a movie with Jaime Fox called *Held Up*. And lots of Movies of the Week. (laughs)

Is it tough to audition for roles while living in Canada?

Yes and no. So many productions come up here — called "runaway productions" in Hollywood, because of the strength of the American dollar versus the Canadian dollar — so there have been a lot more opportunities. And I guess there's some sort of agreement where a certain number of actors have to be Canadian. And I've been lucky because American productions in Canada write more for Hispanic characters than Canadian productions do. It's not so much the roles than the character names that are written. An American writer will write "Mr. Gomez" whereas a Canadian writer will just write "Mr. Smith." But it varies, I've played so many



roles from cop to criminal. So it's not so much the character, but the character name that opens up the opportunity for me to audition.

Was there anyone you were shocked to find out you'd be working with?

I've had some great scenes with Paul Sorvino, and I've worked with Tim Allen, Jaime Fox, Will Farrell, Tim Meadows. The last thing I shot was a film with Meg Ryan, but unfortunately I didn't have any scenes directly with her. I did see her outside of her trailer from a distance...

But no sexy love scenes?

Not yet, unfortunately.

So are you really into world music? You're knowledgeable about all the bands on ClipTrip, but your bio mentions you're mainly into alternative rock...

To be honest, and I've said this and I don't really think it's a shame, but I wasn't too much into world music before I started ClipTrip. But that's one of the reasons why I love hosting the show, because for me it's an education. I've really benefited from it, as much as anybody who watches the show.

Do you usually research the band before you announce their videos?

Yes, of course.

Is it more difficult to plug world music in Canada, since there's a mandatory quota of Canadian music on the radio? Do you find that the Canadian audience isn't as receptive to outside music?

No, on the contrary. The unfortunate thing about ClipTrip is that nobody knows it exists, because the time slot here in Canada is like 12:30 in the afternoon on a Monday. In the States, it gets good exposure because it's

Sunday night and more people are at home instead of going out. We probably get as many requests from American viewers as Canadian viewers. Many people here just don't know the show is out there. We get lots of letters saying "hey, I just caught your show for the first time, I love it..."

But it's been out for like 7 years, right?

It's been out for more. It's been out close to fifteen, I think. I took over the hosting job seven years ago. But Canada is very multicultural. Toronto and Montreal are two of the most multicultural centers. We get a lot of attention from people in those kinds of cities. I also get a lot of emails from northern BC, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg, all over the country, because they don't have radio stations that would have this kind of stuff. For them, this is their only escape into world music. I don't know if world music is hard to plug, but it's always been a problem with me to promote the show, because the powers that be don't think it's worth it, and gave it one of the worst time slots.

Why is that?

I don't know. Station politics, who knows.

Do you think that ClipTrip gets the casual viewer into world music, or is it more like preaching to the converted?

It's hard to know. We get a lot of emails saying, "You know, I've never seen this kind of music. I came across your show while channel surfing and loved it." And then we get these aficionados writing in, who know way more than I do. I think it's an equal balance.

Do you get any complaints?

The biggest problem I face when answering viewer mail requests is that we are a video format show, and people forget that not every world music artist has a video. So we get complaints, such as from yourself, that we play too much Latin music. That's fine, but that's the market that has more videos than any other in music. And so I would love to play any given artist from, say, Africa, that isn't well known. But we can't, because it has to be a video. That's why we sometimes do features on artists that don't have videos but are still pretty cool. We'll interview them and we'll get some of their live performances on the show.

Do you ever get a band offering gifts or to fly you to their country to interview them?

Nothing like that. We have in the past done co-productions with travel industries and once with the Spain tourist board, we once went and did a show in Spain. And in conjunction with Putumayo world music, they sent us to Atlanta, where they were doing a North American tour with some of their artists on the label. But the biggest co-production in the last few years was with the Canadian government. We did specials on

Peru, Guatemala, Brazil, Kenya, and Egypt. All showcasing music and culture, but also development projects being sponsored by the Canadian government in these countries. And those were really cool trips. And again, just really educational...

Plus you get to check out some neat places.

Totally. My last trip, which was about two years ago, I was in Kenya and Egypt for one week each.

Must've been beautiful.

Unbelievable. The safari... Anyone who is reading this, if you ever get a chance to travel, Europe will always be there. The safaris won't. Some of the animals won't. Take the money and do that first.

How much does MuchMusic dictate which videos are played on ClipTrip? Do you have any power over what's played?

I'm not the producer of the show, but I've done more hands-on producing as the years have gone by. Some of the features that have been cut, I've done. It's not run with an iron fist, really. If I want to play this video, we play it. But there is a certain mandate for ClipTrip. It's an international show, but that doesn't mean we're going to play videos from European artists that are known or are played on the regular radio market. Like, you requested AC/DC. That's not something we would play, even though they're from Australia. Too modern, too rock. Stuff with a little Latin flavor, or world music samples, some of that squeaks by. But mainly we try to keep to the world stuff. Shaggy, for example, he's got the reggae vibe, so he'll slip in more easily than AC/DC.

So you've actually interviewed Ricky Martin before he got big.

Yeah. I interviewed Ricky Martin when he was touring with the album *A Medio Vivir*, or maybe even before. And it's kind of funny, because when he came, he did this little showcase at a small jazz club, and there were maybe 200 people. But he was still pretty big, because the Latin market in Toronto is huge, and his mall signing was mayhem — women fainting and having to be pulled away. But when it came to interviewing him, it was really easy and laid back. The next time he came, we asked for an interview and they said no, that we had to be part of the press conference. And I was a little ticked at that, because you know, when no one was playing your stuff before, we were there. And now you're huge and you won't speak with us.

Did he have a boyfriend when you first interviewed him?

I don't know, I was never one to speculate. He was a very cool guy. Very nice and friendly. I didn't get the gay vibe or anything.

He didn't hit on you?

No, but he was a super nice guy.

Who would you like to interview that you haven't already?

Peter Gabriel. I recently interviewed David Byrne and that was cool.

Was David Byrne weird?

No, you know what? I kept hearing gossip that he wasn't very talkative, that he's weird and quiet. But we had a great time. I had him laughing, he was telling me stories, it was all good.

Have you ever done an interview that went very poorly?

Oh yeah, many of them have gone poorly. Some people just don't want to talk. Like the worst was Cesaria Evora. She's a huge singer around the world; she's from Cape Verde. Great singer, but she didn't want to speak at all.

Would you accept a job with MTV if it were offered?

Yeah, of course! I wouldn't be against anything that would broaden my horizons, and if MTV or VH1 had the idea of doing a ClipTrip styled show, I would continue to do that. Because like I said, the show for me is very education, I enjoy the music, and it would be good to expose more people to it.

I think this is a program MTV or MTV2 should have.

Like I said, we get a lot of American viewers, who say "we want to request this video because it's something I'll never see on MTV or VH1." I emailed you about the snafu of ClipTrip in the US not being given any new shows. The person whose job it is to send over the new episodes wasn't doing his job, he thought somebody was doing it, and I was really angry because we have a really good, loyal viewership from the US. And I was fuming, I was absolutely fuming, and I've never been that mad about something work-related.

What happened? He just forgot to send the tapes?

Yeah. The person who was initially sending ClipTrips to Much USA, that person's job was split into two. And the two people who took over his job, one thought the other was sending them over. And it just fell between the cracks, and these things just happen.

We thought you were on a really extended vacation or hiatus or that the show was cancelled.

Exactly. A lot of the American viewers thought that, or that the season was over and we'd have new episodes in a few

months. But we've been continuing to make episodes, they just haven't been sent.

Would you rather have a full-time VJ job at MTV for a year or date Shakira for a month?

Date Shakira for a month. I'd do it just to date Shakira ONCE!

Would you rather go out with Shakira for a month or have a threesome with the Puffy Ami Yumi girls?

Oooh... good one. Puffy Ami Yumi. I lived in Japan for six months, and I really love Japanese girls. Besides, it's one more person. But if it was either a threesome with Puffy Ami Yumi or a threesome with Shakira and Paulina Rubio, I'd have to take Shakira and Paulina.

So you've been around. Does Japan have the hottest women in the world?

The hottest women in the world live in Seville, Spain. I've been to Chile, Japan, Bahamas, Barbados, Mexico, Cuba, Kenya, Egypt, Prague, Guatemala, Brazil. The women of Seville are just... unbelievable.

I've heard that about Brazil too.

The girls of Brazil are really pretty, especially in Rio, but Seville women have the nicest asses in the world. My cameraman and I were just going nuts.

Send me a reel! I'm sure you guys took tons. Okay, my last question is... HOW COME CANADIAN BEER SUCKS??

Are you kidding?!! Have you even had Canadian beer??

No, but I'm sure it sucks.

No, no, no. Canadian beer is some of the best in the world, especially the microbreweries. You know, that's so unfortunate that in the States Budweiser rules. I mean, those are terrible. Like, Sam Adams I guess is pretty good down there, that's only mediocre here. We've got so many great breweries and microbreweries. You gotta come up and do a story on beers.

I'd love to. Will you show us around to all the breweries?

Absolutely.

Great, we'll see you soon!

ClipTrip airs in the US on Sunday nights at 10 pm. Check out www.muchmoremusic.com for more info.

Note: After this interview, Diego scored an interview with Shakira who kissed him on the cheek! READ Magazine salutes you, Diego!

Detroit's legendary '77 punk band...

The Sillies

Ben Waugh (right) tells us about the Sillies reunion and the time he gave Johnny Thunders the shock of his life.

—Adam Liebling



What's so legendary about you guys, other than you once shared a stage with MC5?

Our huge breasts. I'm a 38 double "D" myself. We also invented speed metal back in '77, but we meant it as a joke. The LA bands at the time didn't "get it". Listen to "Break Loose". I was also the first singer in the world to use a headset mic onstage. I'd forgotten and Ron Asheton of The Stooges and Destroy All Monsters reminded me years later. There's even a picture of me using it. This was back when Madonna still lived in Detroit and hung out in the bar we took over in order to have some place to play. Later on, she used a headset mic, but she did all those dumb disco songs and basically ruined the headset mic concept. When is she finally going to do a punk rock album?

How come there's barely anything recorded from you guys? And don't give me none of that "we were too dangerous for the record executives" bullshit. You could've put out your own records, you know.

There was lots recorded, but we just didn't release much. By the time we finished some of the studio stuff, Bubble Gum Mania was sweeping the U.S. Preteen bands like The Knack and Romantics were all the rage. Plus, we weren't a bunch of rich kids living off Daddy's money. I worked 12-hour days, seven days a week in 100 degree temperatures, stamping out car doors to finance the band to begin with. That's one reason I weighed 120 pounds. Car factories are for sissies now. I hear a lot of them are even air conditioned. When I did it, there was always somebody somewhere passing out from heat exhaustion. Hah! Kids these days have it too easy!

Your greatest hits CD is called "America's Most Wanton." By 'wanton', do you mean hard to control and lustful, or the Chinese pork dumplings? Why would you be America's

most Chinese pork dumpling?

You haven't seen me lately. Have you ever tried to pork a dumpling? Don't answer that! Plus, we're delicious when we're swimming in our own meaty broth. As far as "hard to control" goes, irritable bowel syndrome is nothing to sneeze at.

"America's Most Wanton" spans your 25-year career. But there's only like a dozen songs, roughly one song every two years. What's up with that?

There was less than that! We had to finish a bunch of things that were half-done! Also, twelve Sillies songs is twelve too many. This whole thing was just an excuse to sell T-shirts. And what lovely T-shirts they are! Why not log onto www.The-Sillies.com and order several for Grampa, your dog, and that irritating neighbor you've been meaning to get even with! They're 100% heavyweight cotton, double dyed, and they smell like shit!

Where were you guys during the 80s and 90s?

What kinds of jobs did you hold while waiting for the big reunion?

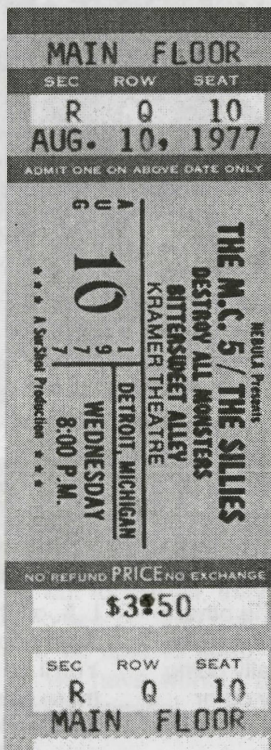
"Jobs"? What is "jobs"? Hey! I'm straight! Go get your kicks somewhere else, sailor! Somebody actually talked us into reuniting in '89 and we did it for several months, but we played in Detroit and that's enough reason to stop playing for good. Then in late '92, Kurse-Ten called me to play drums and guitar in a German language 60's cover band. I fell hopelessly in love with her dorm mate and was so desperate to be near her, I even reformed The Sillies as an excuse to be near her. I was THAT desperate! That lasted until she moved to NYC in mid-'94. That's when Warner Brothers called, but I wasn't interested with her gone. I spent the next seven years praying for death, but God wasn't letting me off that easy. Then, late last year, Jim Ransweiler of Scooch Pooch e-mailed me and asked if we had any unreleased material. He saw us playing on April Fool's Day 1990 in a striptease joint and I guess he never got the bad taste out of his mouth. You can blame Jim for this CD, the tour, and this interview.

So back in the day, you've partied with Rob Tyner, Wayne Kramer, Johnny Thunders, Richard Hell, Handsome Dick, that fat Pere Ubu guy, et al. Tell me some crazy stories.

I never knew Richard Hell or Handsome Dick. I did do a show with Pere Ubu on their first tour but never talked to them. Sting once complained to me about my p.a. in our punk nightclub and I just told him he played too loud and J. Geils sounded great on it, which was true. I paid The Police \$200 and

they drew 50 people. I think they were able to get more for a show later, but they were lucky to get that at the time.

My fondest memory of Thunders was when we toured Canada together. He had stolen my gloves when I wasn't looking and somebody told me. I made sure he gave them back. Then I accidentally flipped the ground lift switch on the amp we were sharing. It caused a massive electrical shock if



you touched the mic stand, so I made sure I didn't touch the stand. Johnny always sang with his lips right on the mic. After our set, I settled down in the front row to enjoy the performance. It was easily Johnny's best ever, though it was pretty short. I wish to God it was on video. Johnny had been a little difficult at the beginning of the tour, but he was nice to me again after that night. What a guy!

Wayne used to call me up and want to go to the beach or to shoot baskets at the gym. What a jock! I admire his energy, but "athletics" for me is carrying all that damn band equipment. My legs ache for days after every show. I'm built like a sparrow and have had to carry around all this heavy shit, most times by myself. One more reason I switched from drums to guitar, but I end up carrying both.

What's the craziest shit you guys have done?

Form a band. Did you say craziest or stupidest?

How come you never OD'd?

I never did drugs, which is one big reason I didn't "fit in" with the music business people. That and I'm not gay.

Did you ever score with Patti Smith?

I first met her in Chicago. She invited me to play sax for her on her first Detroit show ever, and when I got there, sax in hand, she just sort of stared and made excuses. I had practiced the one damn song she had sax on over and over. That was it. Her son will be playing guitar for her on her next tour. Everyone tells me he's a great guitarist. I just ran into him at my favorite hardware store. I hadn't seen him since his dad's funeral in '94. He's really nice. You'd like him.

You had some females in your band, right? Was that, like, cool? Uh huh huh huh.

Okay, so I may have had some ulterior motives when I first formed the band, but all the Detroit bar bands had this big macho thing going and I wanted to do something totally different from them and from all the other punk bands. Imagine The Ramones or The Sex Pistols with female band members. Can't, can you? Nobody was really doing that at the time and I wanted to be different from every other band. Unfortunately, we were.

What do you think about the punk scene these days? Is it tame compared to the late 70s?

I won't know until we do the "SILLIES GO WEST" tour in July. What makes the shows fun is the audiences. You can't play to a bunch of Amish deaf-mutes and expect to have a lot of audience participation. The Sillies was always an immensely entertaining band, but interacting with an audience is where the magic lies. I

hope the L.A. Coliseum show is fun. It holds 92,000 people and at least a dozen of them should be good listeners. My 81-year-old Uncle Don Weischmann will be playing sax with us on "Sex For The Handicapped" and "Lesbo Love" on that show. He played with all the greats of jazz including Chet Baker and I never knew it. He's cooler and more punk rock than Johnny Rotten will ever be. We also have some strippers who will be dancing onstage with us for that show. It ought to be fun for the audience. Funny thing is, I find fun to be extremely depressing these days.

What is The Sillies place in punk history?

Somewhere below the bottom rung. Money is all that counts, though I actually get occasional fan mail from places like South Korea and Brazil. I heard from a beautiful girl named Desiree recently. She lives in New Jersey. By the time we play there, she will have moved to Boston. Man, what chicks will do just to be near me!

If Rush is the greatest band of all time, why bother attempt to be in a band?

If Rush is the greatest band of all time, why do they sound like a hockey-playing, ice-fishing, plaid jacket-wearing, CBC-watching version of Yes, minus the good songs? The only truly great Canadian band was Teenage Head, and though they had platinum records in Europe and Canada, nobody in the U.S. ever heard of them outside of Detroit and Buffalo. They did "Wild Child" years before Iggy did and they did a much better version of "Cock In My Pocket" than The Stooges. Iggy should really tour with them as his band, using some of their songs.

Can I be an honorary Silly?

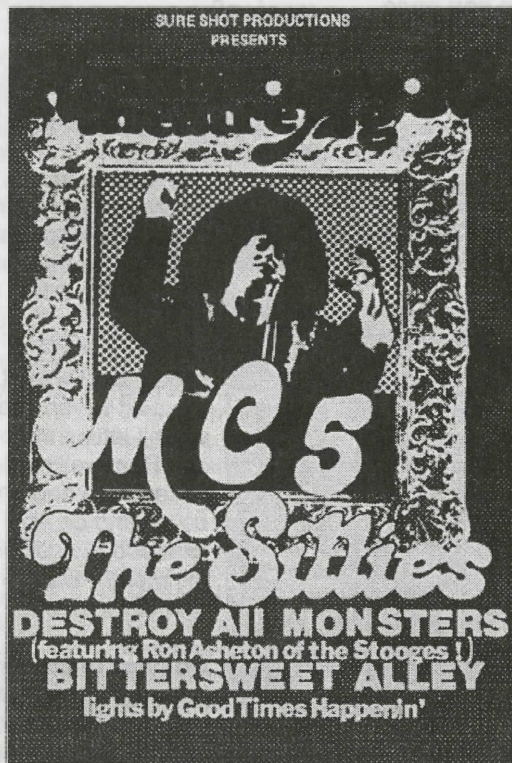
You can be lead singer, as far as I'm concerned. You couldn't do a worse job than I do.

My readers are refined, cognac-sipping, tweed jacket-wearing connoisseurs of fine art. What can you say to them to get them to buy your new album?

Think of it as an investment. We put over 30 photo image files on the CD itself plus live concert footage. It's a limited edition. A copy of our only 45 went for \$10 on eBay recently. That's a return of 500%. At least two band members are dead and one is in a nursing home. I'm flying into

L.A. on the 4th Of July from Detroit, the city with the largest Arab population in the world. Chances are, I'll never make it. You'll be pretty damn sorry you didn't buy a T-shirt when there was someone still alive to mail your order. It's kinda like the Beatles "Butcher cover" album. You never know what's going to be valuable until it's too late. I put all my money into Wheeler & Woolsey memorabilia. If Ted Turner ever gets off his stupid drunken ass and starts showing their movies again on TCM, the prices will skyrocket. Too bad I love 'em too much to sell any of it. But when my plane goes down, my ex-girlfriend will be a rich woman!

The Sillies new one is "America's Most Wanton." Log onto www.thesillies.com or www.the-sillies.com for more info.





Erik Turner of Warrant

Interviewed by Adam Liebling

Are you excited about the tour?

Very excited about it. We haven't worked much since last summer. You know, when you're working a lot you want time off, and when you have a lot of time off, you look forward to working.

Do you guys get along well with Poison? I heard they're like real assholes.

No, they're not. I've known those guys for a long time and they're actually very cool guys. They have their show and they run their backstage the way they want to run it.

I heard they have all sorts of backstage guidelines and rules or something.

Nah, they're not assholes. They're cool. I consider Bobby a very good friend. And Rikki Rocket just airbrushed one of my guitars. We get along good.

How's fatherhood treating you?

I love it. It's definitely a lot less sleep, but it's an amazing experience.

Is it more different being on tour, now that you're more settled down with a wife and kid?

Oh, it's a lot different. I used to sleep all day, party all night. Now I golf all day, go to bed around one or two.

You don't party anymore?

I'll just have a couple of beers. I don't like to get stupid and get so drunk I don't know what I'm doing.

Is Warrant more like a job now?

No, definitely not a job. You can't call what we do a job. Technically, it's a job, but it doesn't feel like a job.

Does it bother you that this tour is packaged as a nostalgic thing?

Not at all. I don't really worry about ego stuff like that. To me, it's like people are coming out to see us, they're paying money to see us, and that's truly a blessing. To be able to keep working as long as we have without a hit record, it's almost criminal.

Does it bother you, though, that you're expected to play the same songs over and over again?

That's just part of the business. People are paying the money and they want to hear certain songs. But we play a mixture of new songs and old songs. It's a balance.

Is it tough writing songs, given the dichotomy of what you want to write and play and what your loyal fans expect?

We always just try to make the best warrant album we can. We record the songs that we really like and hope our fans like them too.

Is there a new album in the works?

Jani's written about seven new songs for a record, but he's been recording a bunch of solo stuff, and then we're starting the tour, so I don't see anything coming out this year. Possibly the end of the year. We keep talking about it, that we hope to start recording a record in November.

On your own label, right?

I wouldn't really call it our own label. We only put out a cover record of some songs we covered [Under The Influence]. We had a lot of fun making it, and we released it to coincide with the tour with Poison last year. It was fun.

Will your wife allow you to tell some crazy groupie stories?

Well, I don't really have any of those anymore. Those were the old days, and there's been a lot written about that, I'm sure you can dredge up some stuff.

So all that's in the past?

It's in the past, you know? Good times were had by all, but it's not a part of my life anymore.

What would you say was the most insane thing that ever happened to Warrant on the road? It doesn't have to be groupie-related.

The most insane... I don't know. Strange things happen everyday in a rock band.

Since Warrant is pretty clean and sober these days, what do you guys do on tour to pass the time? I heard Great White plays a lot of Scrabble.

Golf and a few beers makes for a good day on the road.

Which do you feel is the most underrated Warrant album?

Probably *Ultraphobic*. I thought that record was really, really good.

I was surprised to learn that you also paint and do graphic art and web design. How did you get into that?

Well, I have a lot of time on my hands, so I took some art classes, went to computer school. And now my cousin and I do freelance web design. Mostly through word-of-mouth; it's not really a business or anything. We might have a couple of busy months, or we might have a couple of months where we don't design anything.

What kinds of music are you listening to these days?

I've been listening to a whole lot of different stuff. Mostly local radio stations.

What do you think about today's metal scene? Doesn't it seem that for hard rock to be successful in the mainstream, it has to either be shocking or incorporate hip hop?

I think hit songs from new bands is what the industry wants. One-hit wonders is all they seem to care about today. Not much artist development these days, that I see.

What do you think of Rush?

I loved Rush as a kid growing up. Great band.

I heard a rumor that "Cherry Pie" contains sexual innuendos. Is that true? I thought you guys just really liked fruit-filled pastries.

No, that's not true. Just watch the video.

Will do. Do you have any phobias or fears?

I'm not crazy about skydiving.

What is Warrant's place in the history of rock n' roll?

The ultimate party rock band.

Really? But you seem so sedate. Have you always been this chill and laid back?

For the most part, yes.

Warrant is online at www.warrantweb.net. If you need graphic design work, or cool cover art, check out www.erikturner.com.



Q & A - Prevent Falls

Conducted by Adam Liebling

You guys are proof that being an emocore from New Jersey doesn't have to suck. What is in NJ's water that breeds so many crappy emo bands?

This last year or so has been proof that way too many east coast bands are jumping on the screamo bandwagon. We are way too often lumped into this category, but I like to think we have more of a post-hardcore feel. Our songs are undoubtedly emotional, but it's more or less melodic anger rather than some staged melodramatic screaming. Breakthrough New Jersey bands such as Thursday have produced great, classic albums, but have also spawned an "emo clone" movement. Overall, more bands have to find their own sound and everything will get better.

Do you think we could Prevent Falls if we got rid of Slick Shoes?

Only if we extinguish the rising tension between U.S. and China over the exploitation of children in the workforce.

Equal Vision are some nice folks. You don't plan on screwing them over, do you? What do you think about all these majors scrambling to sign emo bands?

EVR is definitely a comfortable home for us. We have zero inten-

tion of screwing them over. as for the whole major label thing, it seems like the A&R guys realized that they're missing out on a whole market of kids who see through the whole Kid Rock/Creed bullshit. Mainstream music has never been half as pathetic as it is now. Fuck that. Support your local scene.

What is your biggest fear?

Getting my hand or fingers cut off. It sounds weird, but it's my biggest fear only because it would keep me from ever picking up a guitar or drumsticks. Singing is cool, but I'm really in it for the music itself.

I believe that people who don't like your music are a bunch of pussies-farts. What can you say about people who don't like my magazine?

Yeah, some people don't like us right now because we don't scream and cry enough. Also, everyone traded in their NOFX records for the latest in screamo fashion, so nobody really knows how to respond to us playing songs with punk beats. If people rag on READ Magazine, just take the damn thing and give them paper cuts with it.

Check out Prevent Falls' new album **A New More Shattered You** on Equal Vision Records (www.equalvision.com). Visit the band at www.preventfallsonline.com.



midtown

On my never-ending search for good music, I stumbled upon a band I knew nothing about. **Midtown**, a band from New Jersey, surprised me with their intense emo-rock sound that I usually dismiss at the drop of a dime. I played their latest release, *Living Well Is The Best Revenge*, and was hooked in a matter of seconds. Everything from the 3 man vocal ambush to the charging guitars to the elevating bass lines and captivating drum beats is appealing and addictive — it's no wonder why they landed a major deal with **MCA Records** (Blink 182, New Found Glory, etc). I recently saw them perform in Los Angeles and was completely won over—they played an amazing set that changed my ill feelings toward this style of music. The band is currently on tour supporting Face To Face and will soon be hitting Warped Tour for a three week long stint on the main stage. I spoke with **Gabe Saporta** over the telephone and we engaged in a lengthy conversation. Here's what he had to say. —conducted by Liz Ortega

Hey, Gabe! How are you?

I'm doing all right. The album came out on Tuesday, so...

Oh, that's cool. We'll talk about the album a bit later—and I know you probably want to talk about yourself but nobody cares—let's talk about Midtown.

(Laughs) Oh, ok. But I thought I was going to interview you?

Yeah, maybe later. So, tell me—Midtown is pretty big on animal rights and stuff. How do you tie your opinions or view about that in your music?

Well, we mention some things on stage, but we have literature at our shows. For me, growing up, what attracted me to punk rock wasn't only the music, it was the ideas and the fact that I could listen to music and get so much more meaning and importance than the entertainment that was on TV. For me, punk rock was always about intertwining music and politics. I think there has to be an understanding that there's something more besides the music. What I think makes underground last is the strong foundation in other things like the culture and ideology that supersedes that. I think that's what's important. We want to be able to influence people in a positive way, the same way we were influenced when we were younger.

Do you think fans understand the intensity and intelligence in your music?

Well, I'm sure not everyone is on the same page as we are. I know that so many people have told us that they've become vegetarians because of us. That's great! That's what we want to do is influence people's lives in a positive way.

Are you vegan?

No, just strict vegetarian. I don't drink milk.

We would get along great, Gabe!

Are you vegan? Vegetarian?

No, I'm a carnivore. I love meat.

Oh, well, I grew up eating meat three times a day. I'm Hispanic...

Are you now? So am I. Where are you from?

Uruguay. Do you know where that is? Hablas Espanol?

Si, soy Mexicana.

El Espanol Mexicano es muy diferente del que yo hablo.

Si, el Espanol de usted es mas erotico y muy sensual.

(Laughs) It's very romantic...

Yeah, not our Spanish, it's very—

Crude!

Are your parents originally from Uruguay?

My great grandparents are from Europe. They came to Uruguay, and my parents, brother and myself were born there.

Are your parents accepting of this whole band thing?

My parents are very open-minded. They came to America and went to school—I come from a family where they're all about school and getting good grades and stuff. So, my dad was very disappointed when I left school to join a band in the beginning. But now he sees how it's very serious and how it's a real thing, he's much more happy for me. When I first left school, he was like "When are you going back? When are you going back?" He just knows I'll be able to go back whenever I need to accomplish what I want.

So, you didn't finish school, right?

No. I'm eventually going to go back to school to finish. I have two more years and a couple credits. I'm less than halfway there. I have a plan.

Oh, you have a plan? What if you meet that lucky girl and get married?

Married? That's crazy! I'm 22! Even if I get married, I'm still going to go to school.

How did you hook up with MCA?

Drive-Thru Records does distribution through MCA. MCA was really our only place to go.

And you have a new record that's out, *Living Well is the Best Revenge*. I really like it! I'm not familiar with your previous material, but I can honestly say that it's probably a great album. It has that pop punk vibe...

Oooh, I hate that word.

What? Pop punk? You don't think it's appropriate? How would you describe your music?

Rock n Roll. We're a rock n roll band.

Sure, why not. What are your songs based on?

Basically, the songs are based on observations that I make about the world, or people, or things that have happened to me. A lot of

the songs are based on negative situations, but there's always a positive twist to them. That's what inspires them. I enjoy a good time, but I don't really write about it. It's when I'm feeling down when I need to have a creative outlet—it's a catharsis for it, to be able to write a song and turn a negative experience into a positive result.

Is that motivation for you, when you're feeling down and shitty? Do you think it makes you feel more inclined to write?
Exactly, because when you're bummed out, you don't feel like doing anything. So, you need to have a creative outlet to get out of that slump. When you're happy, you just want to live your life and enjoy being happy. Writing a song is like stepping out of life and observing what you feel and what you see.

Where are you physically when you write these songs?

I lived in a college dorm room, so I'd be in my room by myself just banging stuff out until something comes out and sounds good and sound how I want it to feel. Just come up with melodies and fitting words that express my emotions. For this last album, most of the album I wrote while on tour on long drives, in between cities, in the middle of the night.

Most of your songs kind of tap on the whole stay true to yourself, friendship is important, and apparently, love.

We definitely have love songs, but they're not positive love songs. I never write love songs about being happily in love...they're songs about girls but they're more about "Hey, bad experiences happen. Screw it! You'll learn from it."

Now, I don't mean to sound like I have every damn right to barge into your love life, but are these songs about one girl or just past experiences that you've had?
Just one girl...

Does she know that you're using your relationship as the foundation of the song? How does she feel about that?

This was a girl I was with when I was in college--before we even started the band. At first, she thought it was sweet and actually, on the old album, there's one song. But then things started going well and we had a good time playing those songs at shows and singing songs that were serious--in between having a good time. She thought that I was exploiting her and taking something that was meaningful and taking the meaning away from it by playing it to so many people that knew nothing about it. It became very difficult. Now, I don't really know what she thinks about it. She tells me that she doesn't even care because they're just words and doesn't mean anything. Other times, she knows the songs are about her and she likes it. But then other times, unfortunately, the songs on this album are meaner than the ones on the other album--so I don't know. But that's the thing, I wrote these mean songs because I was upset and now I feel like I'm over it.

Was punk music all you liked while growing up or did you fancy other styles of music?

When I was like 8, I really liked Bon Jovi. The first Bon Jovi song I heard was "Bad Medicine." Then I got New Jersey after that. Then I got Slippery When Wet and I liked that album better. "Living On A Prayer" is such an amazing song. I got into Guns N Roses, but I was a fan--I liked music but it didn't have anything special for me. Then Nirvana came out and that changed my life. I felt that there was so much more to music. Kurt Cobain, his whole thing, the ideas he expressed and the whole anti-rock thing. Nirvana came out and I felt like I could relate to them. I felt like he was a real person who had struggled and I can relate to that.

Negative rock--grunge rock. Eeesh.

Yeah, grunge rock. The first punk rock record I bought was Bikini Kill. Then, before that, it was all grunge and alternative stuff like the Breeders, Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr. But the passion that Nirvana played with, the realness of it... it didn't feel like I was watching a show or watching someone putting on act. I felt that that was a real person you can relate to and they were doing something I can do as well.

What are you listening to now?

This band called Christensen from Kentucky, who are just amazing. There hasn't been a band like Nirvana for a while. A band with a Kurt Cobain personality, that has struggled, or has the right ideas...that is political and moral and stand up for things. It's almost like there was so much resistance in him making it in the business. He cared about other stuff other than becoming famous. I also listen to Jimmy Eat World, Saves the Day, and a band from Sweden called The Soundtrack of Our Lives. They are an amazing band.

Before you get on stage to do your thing, how do you prepare to deliver such an exceptional performance?

I don't prepare to be on stage--mentally. Well, sometimes, it depends if I'm nervous. I try to relax and I guess I kind of meditate. Usually, I'll do a warm up vocal to stretch out because I'm always sore afterwards. When I'm playing, I'm either in one of two modes; I'm either so into the music and so crazy and I withdraw into myself and go totally ape shit. That's what I enjoy the most but the performance isn't as good because I'm going too crazy and I'm fucking shit up. There's other times when I restrain myself and I feel more of a performer. Usually, I'm so drunk to my head, I'm in my own world. If there's a lot of energy in the crowd and people are singing it totally motivates me. It's always different and it's always the vibe--we really feed off the vibe.

Gabe, do you consider yourself to be a dark person? Are you complex?

I definitely think I'm...I guess. I have to say

I have a lot of philosophies and ideas that are thought out...I am emotional. The thing about emotions to me is that there's a time and a place to express them.

Do you ever get sick of touring and being away from home so much? Doesn't it bother you that you can't really do normal, everyday things?

It definitely drives you crazy not to have the spare time to do the normal things like just sit at home, watching a movie. But I'm not complaining.

After the tour, do you get to go home or are you going overseas? Didn't you go to Japan some time ago?

We're going to Europe afterwards. I love it there. We played Japan once when we first started. Our album came out in Japan like a week earlier and it sold 12,000 copies in one week. That's crazy, we're like number 8 on the charts.

Yeah, you guys are probably like the fucking Beatles in Japan. Are you guys approachable?

We're approachable but I guess we don't look approachable. I've been told a lot of times that people don't want to talk to me because I look...

Like a snob? I'm kidding.

I mean, I'm really tall...I'm 6'5"

Holy shit! You want to marry me?

How tall are you?

I'm 5'9" and I'm a Virgo, baby.

Oh, that's not tall. Well, I'm really 6'4" and a half. One time this girl said "What's your fuckin' problem? Why do you say "6'4" and a half"? That's for people that are short and want to sound taller. You don't have to rub it in people's faces that you're tall." So, I get to be 6'5".

Gabe, what's your advice to all the bands out there trying to make it?

I think back at all the hard work we put into it and it made me realize that anything you want to do in life, if you're passionate about it and you work hard for it, you can accomplish anything you want. I just hope that we can help serve to be an example to what people can accomplish. Every band in punk rock serves as an example. That's why I liked bands like Nirvana and Guns n Roses--they were inspiring and everything.

I was never into Nirvana.

What! You're crazy! Now we can never get married.

(The interview continues, but this time around, Gabe interviews me and things get a little too hot and heavy. Needless to say, I ended the call with a huge smile. I wonder what he charged per minute?)

Visit Midtown at www.midtownrock.com

The Briefs

After just a few long years in existence, Seattle-based punk rockers, **The Briefs**, have managed to keep the wet, wild, rock n roll fun alive. Now on **Interscope Records**, the Briefs are able to reach a larger audience with the re-release of their full length, **Hit After Hit**. The members of The Briefs are as animated as their wardrobe. Their New Wave motif gives them an abundance of animation and allure. Lead guitarists/vocalists **Daniel J. Travanti** and **Steve E. Nix** bring forth a riveting blend of catchy punk and glam rock to any audience. **Chris Brief**, who sports the fashionable eye goggles and utility tape all over his head and body, impresses the crowd with his incredible spunk and dynamic drumming. Bassist **Lance Romance** woos the ladies with his wild bass playing and high impact aerobics. So, what could you expect from four bleached blonde studs with incredible sparkle and style? A lot. By Liz Ortega.

Who are the Briefs?

Daniel J. Travanti: I play guitar and sing
Steve E. Nix: Vocals and guitar baby!
Chris P. Briefs: I play a drummer...
Lance Romance: Lead bass/sing...if they let me.

When did the Briefs emerge?

Dan: Ask Lance...
Lance: Not that long ago....
Steve: 2000.

Would you describe yourselves as a punk band with a rock n roll flair or vice versa?

Steve: A punk band at a rock-n-roll fair. No, just punk.
Lance: Carnie punk at the fair...
Dan: I'd say a punk band. Rock-n-roll flair is for bands like Molly Hatchet.
Chris: We're a punk band who like to wear helmets.

Your style is impeccable--have you ever been mistaken for a New Wave band?

Lance: I don't think we've ever been mistaken for a band.
Steve: Once this guy on acid and MDA came to our show cause he thought it was a "NEW RAVE." He danced all funny and someone hit him. He was bloody.
Dan: And that's how we met Chris....
Chris: Do I have a booger in my nose...???

Have you ever covered 80s tunes during any of your performances? If not and had the opportunity to do so, which song would you play? I think you guys would play "Video Killed the Radio" amazingly!

Chris: If Bob Seger, the Dalai Lama, or Dolly Parton haven't done it then we don't need to either.
Lance: Thanks...I'd like to cover anything by Molly Hatchet...
Steve: We used to do "Pillbox" by the

Joneses and "You Are In My Vision" by Tubeway Army.

Who is the main songwriter? What motivates the ideas for your songs?

Lance: I'm the main songwriter...my ideas are self-motivating.
Chris: No, I write all the songs and I always will.
Dan: Without a doubt, I'm the absolute main song writer and all my songs are motivated by Quaaludes.
Steve: Motivation...well, clever stuff, dumb stuff, interesting stuff....not like that terrible emo shit. I could never write a song whining about how my girlfriend left me and the world ought to pay attention to me and understand and sympathize. And I'm the main song writer...dammit!

Would you say your songs portray the more facetious, fictional side of the Briefs or do all these songs relate to your personal lives?

Dan: There's more then a little truth in those songs, especially "I'm a Raccoon".
Chris: We are a political band and our word is law. If Steve says he's a raccoon, then he's a raccoon.
Lance: No, just personal body parts.
Steve: Take something uninteresting about our personal lives, then add lies until it becomes interesting.

The song "Knife," what is that song all about? Are any of you in abusive relationships? Or are you into kinky shit?

Lance: A dull knife and a sharp girl...I love violence...its the only thing I'm good at.
Steve: Years ago, I used to do the kinky shit. I was getting into hot cars and Cleveland steamers, chili dogs and all that stuff, but when your messin' with shit like that and violence enters the picture, enough is enough.
Chris: Our band is an abusive relationship. Steve likes kinky and Lance like shit.
Dan: I always thought Knife was about silverware..?

For the drummer—is there a special type of tape you like to use to wrap around your body? What's the purpose for the bondage?

Chris: I like double sided tape and like my grandpa used to tell me "If it don't fuckin' hurt, it ain't worth doin', now get off my lap."
Dan: Originally, he wanted to wrap himself up with ribbon and play in his underwear.
Lance: Or play with his grandpa....

What do The Briefs do aside from rock n roll?

Lance: Beat people up who sleep late.
Chris: Buy records, eat frosted mini wheats and sleep til Lance calls and wakes us up.
Dan: I like to drink ice cold diet coke. This allows my brain to freeze and then see into the future....tomorrow it will be sunny.

How many albums/splits/singles do you have out?



The Briefs sure are zany.

Dan: 1 LP, 1 split with the Spits and a few singles. A lot of people think that "Poor & Weird" was our first single but really it's not. Our first 45 was one with "Shut Up You Stupid" b/w "I'm Sorry I Said That", we only pressed 50, and they're all gone.

Let's talk about your live performances...is there a special regimen of some sort you partake in before any shows?

Steve: I smoke cigarettes, chew gum and drink Dr. Pepper
Chris: Dan likes to be hugged, so he walks around until he feel he's had enough, and Lance stands up against a wall so Steve and I punch him in the stomach until his nose bleeds.
Lance: I prefer hugs from Dan.

If you could play anywhere in the world, where would it be? Who would you want to share the stage with?

Steve: Denmark, I like Denmark and I would like to play with Rod Stewart and his band.
Lance: Steve wants to play with his Rod...
Chris: Canada.
Dan: A Turkish prison, and the entire cast of Cheers, pre Woody.

What is the primary goal you wish to achieve as musicians? Besides the hot women and the money.

Steve: Write good songs, tour the world, make good records, eat.
Chris: So there's more to it? Well, I am kinda sick of all the money but then again paying girls to go out with me isn't cheap and my parents wont do it anymore.
Dan: Ummmmmm
Lance: Did you say "hot monkeys"?

Visit the Briefs at www.thebriefs.com



Sam Powers of... **Superdrag**

Sammy Powers... is that your real name?

I was born Samuel David Powers. Not many people actually call me 'Sammy' though.

Sammy Powers? For real?!

No kiddin. I've got three older brothers and the second to oldest is Lucas Austin Powers. That's no kiddin.

Really. Interesting. Let's lay the cards on the table. You were on Elektra for awhile. You became famous. Then something happened. What happened over there? Give us the straight dirt, bub.

Well, although that was before my time in the band (I joined in 1999), I feel like I know the story well enough because it's been written about quite a lot. First record was supposed to be licensed to indie label Sub Pop. After record is completed, mixed and mastered but not yet released, John writes second record and band sends 4-track demos to A&R guy. A&R guy flips out over "Sucked Out." Band goes into studio in NYC to record Sucked Out and plan drastically changes. Now they're not licensing record to Sub Pop and Elektra is working the record. Sucked Out is very successful and helps sell over 150,000 records of *Regretfully Yours*. So the band records second record, *Head Trip In Every Key*. Band does not rewrite "Sucked Out." Label not happy. Record is "experimental" with a different and very much a "studio" approach as opposed to the first which was mainly the live set. Label does not

promote record to amount to anything. No video is made, no single is pushed. Honeymoon long over. Record Three is started. Band wants to produce record themselves. Label send band to studio to record. Band records studio quality demos for what will eventually be part of *In The Valley Of Dying Stars*. Label doesn't hear a hit. John continues to write. Label still doesn't hear a hit. John writes more songs. Label wants something more emotionally direct. This is after songs like "Ambulance Driver" and "Unprepared" have been sent to the A&R guy. So this situation isn't going to do anyone any good. We get out of our deal with Elektra and finish recoding *In The Valley* and get back to playing rock music in rock clubs.

Major labels always ram the band in the poop chute. So you guys were caught up in a whirlwind of videos, MTV appearances, major press coverage... In that time, did you manage to score with any hot celebs? What sorts of sordid tales can you tell us?

Plenty of celeb sightings, but it was all pretty innocent stuff. Except that the original guitar player, Brandon, once sent Warren Beatty a drink called a Dirty Ol' Whore. How's that?

Sounds like a skanky drink. Now you guys are from Tennessee... Is that near Toronto? What do you think of Rush?

There's a bar here in Nashville where I live called the Gold Rush. It's pretty much a rock/metal bar and it hasn't changed in 15 years and the clientele hasn't either. There are probably a lot of dudes who'd love to talk about Geddy and Co.

Do you fancy yourself a fan? Cuz I don't hear it in your music. How will you incorporate Rush into your next album?

We'll let Don write all the lyrics.

Speaking of albums, your new one is called *In The Valley Of The Dying Stars*. Is that an allusion to George Harrison? Who do you think will drop dead next: Bob Dylan, Mick

Jagger, Paul McCartney, or Roy Orbison?

Actually, our new one is called, *Last Call for Vitriol*, but I think the title for *In The Valley* more represented the feelings of where we were at the time than anything. Also, Roy Orbison died in 1988. I wish McCartney would stop making records, but I certainly wouldn't wish death on him.

Does it ever suck being the bassist? I mean, bassists don't really do much and you can't hear them anyway.

No. Bass players totally kick ass. Here are some of my faves in no particular order: John Entwistle, Tommy Stinson, Chris White, Pete Quaife, Mike Watt, Rick Danko, Gerard Love, Paul Simonon, Tom Petersson and Bill Wyman.

I heard that Superdrag is really a front for Big Tobacco. What other crazy rumors about your band can you neither confirm nor deny?

No comment.

Would you have sex with Courtney Love if she paid you?

Umm. NO!

What is your definition of punk rock?

Music made on your own terms, on your own dime and for yourself. It's a philosophy, not a genre.

I have to go eat sushi now. Do they have sushi in Tennessee?

Yes. I had some last night.

Any last words I can mull over while my weak Jewish stomach attempts to digest fake crabmeat and raw eel?

Thank you, Adam! I look forward to seeing the interview when it's done. Cheers!

Superdrag follow in the footsteps of Supertramp, Superchunk, and Supergrass by being a good band with the word "drag" in their name. Check out their latest album "Last Call For Vitriol" on Arena Rock Recording Company (arenarockrecords.com). Visit the band at superdrag.com.

It Seems Like Only Yesterday

by Edy Haft

CHAPTER 1

I was born the fourth child in a family of five children. Since I was the first daughter after three sons, my parents looked upon me as a little princess. However, my regal status did not last very long. When I was five years old, and just old enough to enjoy being spoiled, my sister was born. And so my throne was now taken over by a beautiful, golden-haired, green-eyed baby whom we all adored.

My father, Isaac, was a very religious man who ruled his family with an iron hand. Whenever my brothers got into mischief, or did something wrong, he would smack them, and truly, that hand felt like it was made out of iron!

My mother, Rebecca, was the kindest soul in the world. When she heard my father raise his voice and realized that he was going to hit one of us, no matter in what part of the house she would be, she always managed (just in time) to get between my father and the child about to get punished. She would stand there, with her hands spread out, and say, "You are not going to hit my child!" My father would then answer, "All right, I can't get to you now because Mama is in the way, but just you wait until tomorrow." Somehow though, by "tomorrow", Papa always seemed to forget.

Papa and Mama were both born in the same town in Russia, in a city called Shepetovka, he in 1896, and she in 1898. As a child, Mama had a very pretty singing voice. When she was twelve, Mama had the lead part in a school play. The town's priest happened to be in the audience and enjoyed Mama's performance immensely. It was almost Christmas time, and he still had not found a child with a voice fine enough for the leading role of Mary in the Church's Christmas pageant. He felt that at last he had found the child for the role. The priest decided to call on Mama's father the following day to ask his permission to allow Mama to play the part of the Virgin Mary. When my grandfather, who was a fanatically devout Jew, heard of the priest's plans, he almost had a fit. Needless to say, not only did Mama not sing in the church, but she never sang in public again.

Mama was the oldest of nine children, which included a set of twins. Due to her mother's perpetual condition of pregnancy, Mama learned very early in life how to care for infants and small children. She also learned the responsibilities of cooking, baking, and cleaning for a household that was continually getting larger.

Papa's childhood was the complete opposite. He was the thirteenth child in a home with fourteen children. By the time Papa was born, most of the older children were adults. Papa's father was a successful businessman who had two stores in which food and hardware were sold. Because his father's enterprises were doing so well, and the fact that the older brothers helped in the stores so he didn't have to work, Papa was known as a playboy.

Mama was seventeen, and Papa was nineteen when they met. Mama was walking with a friend, who introduced her to Papa when he encountered them on the street. Because of her beauty, Papa was immediately attracted to her, but she was not interested in him at all. She had heard stories of how spoiled he was and disliked him as soon as she met him. Papa was very persistent, and so were Mama's parents. They kept reminding her of what a good, rich catch he would be. Although Mama remained aloof, Papa kept calling on her until he was taken into the Russian army in 1916. The war was raging in Europe and before long, Papa was sent to the front. After months of fierce fighting, Papa was wounded twice, once in his right leg, and the second time near his right eye. Recuperation was slow, and it was nearly 1918 before he left the hospital. Because of his wounds, he was considered a hero in Shepetovka.

The facts that Papa's parents were considered monetarily comfortable, and Papa was now a hero, made Mama's parents all the more anxious for her to marry him. When Papa was finally fully recovered from his wounds, he continued his courtship until Mama consented to marry him. They wed in February 1919.

CHAPTER 2

My parents came to America from Russia in 1921. It was just three years after the Russian revolution. Life for the Jewish people of Russia under the reign of Nicholas the Tsar was not an easy one. However, when the Bolsheviks won the revolution and killed the Tsar, life became unbearable for the Jews. As there was no established government yet, rioting and killing ran rampant.

My father owned a dry goods store. One day a group of Bolsheviks, came into the store and threatened to kill my parents if they did not turn over their money and jewelry to them. My mother and father gave the Bolsheviks the money in the till. The Bolsheviks said that it wasn't enough and they poured kerosene on all of the merchandise. Then they said that they were going to kill Papa. Mama, thinking quickly, said that if the robbers would wait in the store, she and Papa would go to their house and bring back all of her jewelry to them. Ignorantly, they agreed. Mama and Papa ran home and gathered up their six month old son, Joseph, who was being minded by Mama's mother, Grandma Bobsey. Grandma Bobsey and my parents took a horse and carriage and made their way to Warsaw, Poland. On the way to Warsaw, they had to travel through a dark forest. Robbers came after them, but somehow they managed to flee from them.

With the little money that they had managed to gather before leaving Russia, Mama, Papa, and six month old Joseph were able to gain passage on a ship going from Warsaw to America. Grandma Bobsey made sure that Mama boarded the ship safely. Then she

took the horse and carriage back to Russia and lived there for the rest of her life.

The little amount of money that Mama and Papa brought with them allowed them to board passage to America in steerage. Hundreds of refugees were huddled together in makeshift beds. While on board, little Joseph caught the whooping cough. No one was allowed into the United States with any communicable disease. My parents were distraught over this fact, worrying that if the authorities knew that the baby was ill, they would not be able to enter the country and might be sent back to Russia. When the ship docked at Ellis Island, the men had to line up on one side of the building, and the women and children on the other. Papa kept watching Mama's line move slowly up to the examining doctor's office. His heart was beating faster and faster with each step that Mama took, worrying that the authorities would detect Joseph's condition. Finally, when it was Mama's turn to be examined, her quick thinking saved the day. She put the baby to her breast and nursed him so that he wouldn't cough. The doctor did not want to disturb the baby, so he quickly examined Mama and passed her. My father, on the other hand, was so nervous by that time, and his heart was beating so rapidly, that the doctors thought that he was having a heart attack and kept him in the hospital on Ellis Island overnight! That was the first of their many hardships in America, but they wouldn't trade them for anything back in Russia.

My parents left much behind and underwent many hardships by coming to America. Fortunately, they left before the war. World War II brought devastation to the Jewish communities throughout Europe. Six million Jews were slaughtered for only one reason - they were Jewish. Now, whenever I read or see films about the Holocaust, I say to myself, "There but for the grace of God, and for the bravery of my parents, go I."

(In 1992, a bronze wall was built around the property on Ellis Island. This wall contains the names of thousands of refugees who passed through Ellis Island to enter America. Rebecca and Isaac Kislin's names are etched on this wall.)

CHAPTER 3

Like thousands of other Jewish immigrants, Mama and Papa settled in the Lower East Side of New York. Having no money for an apartment of their own, they moved into the four-room apartment that was already occupied by Mama's grandmother, Mama's widowed uncle, and his small son.

Papa tried desperately to find a job, but jobs were very scarce, especially for newly arrived foreigners. Mama was more fortunate. She found a job sewing dresses in a factory. She worked from early morning until late afternoon, six days a week. She worked on Sundays, but would not work on Saturday, the Sabbath. When she left work, she did the shopping, came home and did the cooking and cleaning up after dinner, then washed all the laundry by hand in the bathtub. (There were no washing machines then.)

After many frustrating months of trying to find employment, Papa finally got a job helping a relative with house painting. This became Papa's occupation for the rest of his life.

Two years passed since their arrival in America, and Mama became pregnant with her second child. One day, toward the end of her ninth months, Mama realized that there was no milk left in the icebox. She told Joey to stay in the apartment with her grandmother, and said that she was just going around the corner to the grocery and would be right back. While in the store, she met some of her neighbors. They asked her many questions about Grandma and the family. They also asked her how she was feeling, when was she due to give birth, and did she have a good midwife ready to come at a minute's notice, because they could recommend a good midwife, etc. Three quarters of an hour elapsed before Mama left the grocery store with her bottle of milk. When she turned the corner from the store, she saw a crowd and a police car in front of her house. She started running faster and faster. When she got into the hallway of the house, she saw that Joey's head was stuck in between the rails on the banister, and the policemen were sawing through the wooden rails just above his head. He had stuck his head through and couldn't get it out. Mama fainted, and my brother, Benjamin, was born an hour later.

With Papa now working part time, and with two children, my parents decided that they now needed their own apartment. They moved

to Schenk Avenue in the East New York section of Brooklyn.

When Ben was eleven months old, Mama found herself in that delicate condition of pregnancy once again. On a day nearing the end of the ninth month, Mama hand washed her laundry and proceeded to hang it on the clothesline outside the window of their second floor apartment. The line was stretched from the rear window, across the backyard, and was attached at the other end to the second floor window of the house that backed up to our yard.

Mama was lost in thought as she continued to load the line with wash. As she neared the end of the clothesline, she gave the clothespin an extra hard push, and the heavily laden line broke. Mama, still holding the clothesline, was pulled out from the window and fell with the clothes into the yard below. By a stroke of luck, she had missed the cement portion below, and landed on the earthy part of the yard. The woman living in the house on the opposite side of the yard, saw Mama fall, and ran down to the yard to help her. Our family doctor was immediately called, and my brother, Solomon, whom we always called Sam, was born that afternoon.

CHAPTER 4

Finding the English language too difficult to master, Mama and Papa spoke only Yiddish to the children. However, the children, picking up English from other children in the streets and in school, replied to Mama and Papa in English. So, Mama and Papa spoke only Yiddish, but were able to understand English. The children spoke English and were able to understand Yiddish. At home, my parents called us by our Jewish names. Joe was Yussel, Ben was Ben Zion, Sam was Zalman, I was Yiddis (for Edith), and my sister Hilda was Goldy.

By the time Sammy was born, Joe was ready to start school. On the first day of kindergarten, Mama put on Joey's best clothes, combed his hair, and gave him last minute instructions. She told him, "Remember Yussel, be a good boy in school and listen to the teacher." Then she walked the block and a half to school with him and left him at the gate, turning away swiftly so that he couldn't see the teardrop wallowing in the corner of her eye.

Upon entering the classroom, the teacher told the children to take any seats that they wished and begin taking attendance. She started calling the children's names alphabetically and came to the K's. She called out, "Joseph Kislin," but no one answered. Again she called out, "Joseph Kislin," and still there was no answer. She looked around the room and saw a little boy slumping down lower and lower in his seat. She pointed at him and asked, "Are you Joseph Kislin?" He replied, "Oh no, I'm Yussel."

CHAPTER 5

Mama gave birth to me at home because she couldn't afford to go to a hospital. When she began her labor pains, she told Papa to go downstairs to the candy store and telephone her cousin, Izzy Shaw, the doctor. By the time that Dr. Shaw arrived by trolley car, the baby was just about ready to enter the world. After I was born and Mama was resting quietly with the baby in her arms, Papa made glasses of tea and sat and talked to the doctor. They talked about the old country, the new country, how all of the relatives were feeling, and how difficult it was to make a living. Then Papa made a big production out of reaching deep down into his pockets, and asked the doctor how much he owed him. The doctor replied, "That's all right Isaac. When my house needs a paint job, you'll come and paint it." Papa then took two nickels out of his pocket and told the doctor, "At least let me pay the trolley car fare." Dr. Shaw took the ten cents and went home, a poor doctor with too many poor relatives.

On the following day, Mama was up on her feet, cleaning the house, cooking, and taking care of her growing family.

When Mama was in her late months of pregnancy with Goldy, Papa heard that the nearby hospital now had a free clinic for maternity patients with financial problems. Papa checked with the hospital, and when he made certain that it really was free, he insisted that Mama go to the hospital to have her fifth baby. Mama said that she did not want to go to the hospital because they would keep her there for a week. How could she stay away for seven days and leave four

children home without a mother? Papa soothed her fears by saying, "Don't worry about a thing. I will ask my cousin Lena to come for a week to take care of the children." This was truly the biggest mistake that Mama and Papa ever made. Mama went to the hospital to have her baby and Papa's "old maid" cousin Lena came to stay with the children. Lena didn't stay for a week; she stayed for four years!

Lena was a penny-pinching spinster and when she saw how much money she was saving by staying at our house, she went back to her room at the boarding house, packed her few possessions, and brought them back to our house while Mama was still in the hospital.

On the third day that Mama was in the hospital, a very nice looking doctor came through the ward, and asked all of the new mothers what names they wanted to put on the birth certificates for their babies. When he questioned Mama, she replied, "I want to name her Goldy after my grandma." The doctor, in his slightly Jewish accent, said to Mama, "You can't name her Goldy. It is a Jewish name. In America, you have to give a child an English name." Mama answered, "But that's the name I planned to use. I don't know what else to call her." The doctor smiled and calmly assured her, "Don't worry Mrs. Kislin, I'll put down an English name on the birth certificate."

When Mama received the birth certificate just before she left the hospital, she insisted that she had received the wrong one. When the doctor came in to make his rounds, my mother informed him of the mistake. The doctor said, "There's no mistake. Remember I told you that I'd write in an English name for your little girl? I gave her the same name as my daughter... Hilda." To this day, our family and friends call my sister Goldy. The only time that she was ever called Hilda was in school and at work. In fact, we all had completely forgotten that Goldy's legal name was Hilda until the day that Mama registered her for kindergarten and had to bring her birth certificate along.

By the end of her week's stay at the hospital, (and after the longest rest she ever had), Mama was ready to come home to our small four room apartment on Church Avenue in the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn. We had moved into this apartment soon after I was born and Mama and Papa lived there for the next 27 years.

The entrance door to the apartment opened into a small foyer. The kitchen was to the left of the foyer. It was just large enough to accommodate a table, four chairs, and Mama's treadle Singer sewing machine. Five horizontal rods were suspended from the ceiling of the kitchen. On rainy days, Mama would hang the wet laundry on the rods. Then she would pull a rope attached to a pulley and the rods would go up to the ceiling with the laundry attached.

The bathroom was directly in front of the entrance door. It was so tiny that if two people were in it at the same time, one would have to stand in the bathtub. The dining room was to the right of the foyer and held a massive mahogany table with six red velvet chairs, and a large china closet in which we stored books. Mama's "fine china" consisted of dinner and soup plates, and cups and saucers in three different patterns. These were obtained free from the local movie house, one piece at a time. The glasses were from Yahrzeit lamps (memorial glasses). The first time that I ever drank from anything other than a Yahrzeit glass was when Mama won a raffle prize of six glasses at the Ladies' Auxiliary of the *Young Men's Shepetovka Society*. (There was not one male member under 60 years old!) The dining room also contained a large console mahogany radio and a mahogany phonograph that had to be continuously wound by hand in order to keep playing.

On each side of the dining room wall was a door leading into each of the two bedrooms that faced the Avenue. One bedroom was the boys' room, which contained a three-drawer dresser and two twin-sized beds. Mama's and Papa's bedroom held a double bed, a dresser, a chifferobe (armoire), and my crib.

While Mama was in the hospital, Joey slept with Papa in the big bed. Ben and Sam slept in one twin bed, Lena in the other twin bed, and I slept in the crib. Now, the big day had arrived! Mama was coming home with the new baby. When Mama entered the apartment with the precious little bundle in her arms, she was perplexed. She had neglected to figure out where the baby was going to sleep. If she put her in the crib, where would she put me? After looking around the house, an idea came to Mama. She opened the bottom drawer of the dresser and emptied its contents. Then she lined the drawer with a small blanket. This became the baby's bed. Of course, these sleeping

quarters for the baby were supposed to be temporary, but Goldy slept in the drawer until she was four months old and began to outgrow it. By this time, there were two chairs placed in front of the dresser each night in case the baby turned over just a little too far.

On the same day that Mama came home from the hospital, she took it for granted that Lena would pack up her things and return to her rented room. Lena made no attempt to leave us. Night fell and as Mama got the boys ready for bed, Lena still did not go. Mama and Papa were ashamed to ask her to pack, and Lena said nothing about moving. Finally, Mama told Lena that she was tired and was going to bed. Mama thanked Lena for staying with the children and told Lena that Papa would take her home. Lena said, "But Becky, I *am* home. I moved in with you." Mama asked, "But where will you sleep?" Lena answered, "With the two beds pushed together, there's enough room for the three boys and me." Mama and Papa looked at each other but could not say anything. After all, how could they put Lena out in the street with no place to go? Things were never the same in our household again.

To say that the boys' 9' x 10' bedroom was overcrowded would be a gross understatement. With the two beds pushed together, Joey slept on the end of the bed pushed up against the wall. Ben slept next to him. Sam slept next to Ben, and Lena slept on the other side of this bed. Joey was now almost thirteen years old. Ben was ten, and Sam was eight and a half. Not only were they crowded in bed, but the boys also felt that it was undignified for them to sleep with a woman. Because she was so ugly, my brothers and I called her "Lena the Hyena." And worst of all, she snored! Joey felt that something had to be done about this situation.

Ben was a very quiet boy. He was the personification of the saying, "Don't bother me and I won't bother you." However, Joey and Sammy were the complete opposite. They were always teasing and fighting each other. After a few nights of these cramped quarters, Joey decided to put his plan into action. At about 10 p.m., after Lena had squeezed her way onto the bed next to Sammy and was just about to fall asleep, Joey reached over Ben and gave Sammy a jab in the ribs. Sammy, not one to take a punch lying down, reached over Ben and gave Joey a sock in the stomach. That did it! They started fighting right over Ben. Ben opened his eyes, yawned, and said quietly, "Please fellas, let me sleep." Sammy and Joey rolled over onto Sammy's bed and kept fighting until they knocked Lena off the bed and onto the floor. She started yelling, "You bad boys! Wait until I tell your father!" She then rushed out of the bedroom, through the dining room, and headed towards Papa's bedroom. Papa, upon hearing her footsteps approach his room, whispered to Mama, "Oh! Maybe she's coming to tell us that she's moving out!" Lena stormed into Papa's room shouting about how bad the boys were and how Papa should come and beat them up. Papa answered, "Lena, wouldn't you be more comfortable if you moved back to your old rooming house?" Upon hearing this, Lena quieted down and replied, "Oh, I'm very comfortable with the boys. Please just ask them to be a little more quiet." Feeling defeated once more, Papa went into the boys' room and found them lying peacefully in their beds looking like three little angels. Papa felt like kissing each of them, but instead, in his most stern voice warned them to really go to sleep or next time he would come in with "the strap". Papa then returned to his bedroom. Lena crept back into bed with Sammy, Benny yawned, and Joey turned around to face the wall, already plotting his next scheme in his attempt to get Lena out of his bedroom.

When Papa returned to bed, he said to Mama, "Becky, tomorrow we will try to sell the dining room set. Then we'll take the money and buy one of those kinds of couches that open up at night into a bed because I don't think that Lena will ever move out."

The next day, Mama went food shopping and told the grocer, the butcher, the bakery man, and the fruit store man that we were selling our dining room set. They told their customers and all day long we had a steady procession of people going through our apartment looking at the furniture. Of course, it was a well-known fact in the neighborhood that Mama was an excellent cook as well as a very hospitable hostess. No one came into our home without being offered a cup of tea and something to eat. I don't think that there has ever been, or ever will be, so many prospective customers for any item as there were for that dining room set. It seemed as though Mama

served tea and cake, latkes, knishes, strudel, kugel, and blintzes to the entire community on the dining room table that day. We finally got a buyer for the furniture. The buyer asked four neighbors who had been sitting and feasting themselves all afternoon to help him move his newly bought furniture. Out went the massive mahogany dining room table and the six stuffed, red velvet dining room chairs. Mama had to finish serving the rest of the "prospective" buyers four at a time around the kitchen table.

The following day, Mama and Papa took the money that they had received for the dining room set and went to the nearest Salvation Army depot. They purchased a fairly decent looking secondhand couch that opened into a double bed, two oversized stuffed club chairs for our new "living room", and two additional kitchen chairs. With the dining room set gone, we now had to squeeze around the kitchen table to eat our meals.

When the couch arrived, Ben and Sam were given the privilege of moving to these new sleeping quarters. Lena was in her glory with an entire bed of her own. Joe now had his own bed also, but he was still grumbling under his breath about having to share his room with a woman. (Especially one who snored!)

At first, Ben and Sam were elated with their new bed. But the enjoyment did not last very long. After everyone had been in bed about an hour, Sam and Ben came into Mama's bedroom and complained that they couldn't stop scratching. Mama went back with them into the living room. After one look at the new couch, she almost fainted. The sheet was covered with bedbugs! Mama took the two boys by the hand, led them back into their bedroom, made Lena push the two beds back together again, and Sammy and Benny once again squeezed into the beds between Joey and Lena.

It took Mama over one week of intense cleaning with kerosene to kill off the bedbugs. She wouldn't let anyone smoke in the house during that time for fear that the kerosene fumes might start the couch on fire. After two weeks, when she was certain that there were no more bugs, she allowed the boys to bed down on the couch. The smell of kerosene lingered on the couch for as long as we owned it.

The luxury of the comfort of the double couch was short-lived for Ben and Sam. Goldy swiftly was outgrowing the dresser drawer. When Mama saw that Goldy's feet were starting to hang over the end of the drawer, she decided that it was time for the big switcheroo. I moved out of the crib and Goldy moved in. Ben and Sam moved out of the living room, and Lena and I moved there. The twin beds in the boys' room got pushed together again, and Joe, Ben, and Sam once more shared these accommodations. We weren't settled down in our beds for more than a half hour that first night when we heard a scuttling sound from the boys' bedroom. I heard Ben in his low sleepy voice plead, "Please fellas, let me sleep."

CHAPTER 6

Papa was a very prudish man. He never allowed the children to walk around the apartment in their underwear. In order for the boys to get to the bathroom from their room, they had to go through the living room where Lena and I slept at night. The boys slept in their underwear, and it never failed that as soon as the three of them were snug in bed, one of them either forgot to brush his teeth, or got the urge to go. Not having the luxury of owning pajamas or bathrobes, and too tired to put their pants on, the boys tried to make it across the living room in their underwear without Papa catching them. With our prudish upbringing, it would be a cardinal sin for me to see the boys in their underwear. Each night, one of my brothers would walk up to the bedroom door, stick his head out, and in a demanding voice say, "Edy, cover your eyes. I'm coming through." He would then ask, "Are your eyes covered?" I'd answer, "Yes." I would listen to the footsteps and when I'd figure that he was halfway through the living room, I would say, "I'm peeking!" Even though the room was in total darkness and I couldn't see a thing even if I did peek, he'd fly the rest of the way through the room until he reached the bathroom. Then, he'd shout, "I'll murder you tomorrow!" I'd reply, "If you murder me, I'll tell Papa on you, and he'll murder you back." By morning, it would all be forgotten. The following night, we would go through the whole routine again. (I never got murdered!)

Mama usually went to the bakery early every morning and bought bread and cake that was left over from the previous day. This way, she paid less than half price. We learned very early in life to appreciate stale bakery products. One morning, Mama did not feel too well and didn't go to the bakery. Towards the afternoon, Mama realized that she would not have any bread for supper. She asked Joey to walk the block to the bakery to buy a loaf of bread. Joe did not want to go. He made all kinds of excuses, such as that he had a lot of homework to do and that his feet hurt. Actually, he was ashamed to ask for yesterday's bread at the bakery. That night we had no bread for supper, and Joe's conscience bothered him. He went to bed early to try to prove to Mama that his feet really did hurt.

During the night, when everyone was fast asleep, Mama was awakened by the doorbell. She looked at the clock and saw that it was 3 a.m. Petrified, she shook Papa until he awoke and said, "Isaac, someone is ringing the bell and it is 3 o'clock in the morning." Papa got out of bed, took a hammer for protection, unlocked the door, and looked out. There, in the cold hallway, he saw Joey standing in his underwear shivering. Papa opened the door wider and asked, "Yussel, what are you doing out there in the middle of the night?" Tears filling his eyes, Joe replied that he was dreaming that Mama was sending him for bread. In his sleep, he unlatched the lock on the door (which automatically locked again when the door closed) and walked out into the hall. The cold winter temperature of the hallway awakened him, and he found himself locked out of the apartment in his underwear. From that day forward, Joey never refused to run an errand for Mama again.

Running errands became a very lucrative business for the children in our family. Times were really bad. Papa's house painting business was hitting an all-time low. Now, so soon after the Depression, the last thing that people were spending money on was to get their house painted. Telephones were scarce. The social status of a family depended upon whether or not they possessed a telephone in their apartment. We lived next door to a candy store that had two public telephone booths in it. These two phones provided telephone service for the families living within a four-block radius. After school, my siblings and I would wait around the candy store praying for the phone to ring. When one did, we would make a mad dash to answer it. We would ask the name and address of the person to whom they wanted to speak, and then take off like a bolt of lightning to the person's home to call the person to the phone.

The tips for this service generally ranged from a penny to a nickel, depending on the distance that we had to run from the store to the house. Since very few of the apartment houses had elevators, the tip also varied upon how many floors we had to climb to tell the party that he had a phone call. Sometimes, if the person ran out of his house so fast that he forgot the change for a tip, he would tell the candy store man to give us a three cent ice cream cone and to charge it to his bill.

On a busy day, we could make as much as a quarter apiece. Then we would march upstairs and hand Mama our tips. For our hard work, Mama would reward us by giving us 3 cents apiece to buy each of us a sour pickle at the corner grocery store. This was worth all of our hard work because buying a sour pickle was a luxury to us. Sometimes, if Mama had some empty milk bottles available, instead of giving us cash, she would hand each child a bottle and tell us to use the 3-cent deposit refund money to purchase our pickles.

Off we'd go, each tightly grasping our empty milk bottle. When the grocer saw us coming with the bottles, he knew exactly what we had in mind. He took the bottles from us and then allowed us, one at a time, to dip our arms into the big wooden barrel filled with half sour and sour pickles in a briny liquid. We would reach deep down and feel around for the biggest and fattest pickle we could put our hands on. Usually, we took so long that the grocer became impatient and yelled, "Time's up!" We knew by the tone of his voice that he was getting angry, so we'd grab any pickle and quickly pull our arms out of the barrel. Many times I felt cheated because my brothers grabbed bigger and fatter pickles than I did. We walked out of that store with dripping wet arms, smelling of garlic and cloves and sour pickles.

When we finally left the grocery store, we would all sit down and squeeze together on the big wooden milk box that was right outside of the grocery store. This box contained blocks of ice to keep the

filled milk bottles cold. Then we would start to leisurely nibble away at our pickles. We would nibble so slowly, in fact, that we would hold contests to see who could make his pickle last the longest.

While we were gradually devouring our succulent treat, we watched the trolley cars go by. The trolleys stopped at every corner to take on and discharge passengers. The milk box was situated in such a spot on the corner that when a trolley car stopped to let a passenger off, we could see the person standing in the doorway of the trolley car. We always managed to find something funny about each passenger as he was disembarking from the trolley. Anything unusual about the passenger, such as the odd expression on his face when the doors opened, or the way his hair was combed, or the manner in which he helped his wife off the car, would set us off laughing. If the man or woman almost tripped while getting off the trolley, we would end up hysterical!

By this time, it would be getting dark and Mama would stick her head out the front window and call, "Children, it's supper time." We gobbled up the rest of the pickle, jumped off the milk box, and raced to see who would be the first one into the bathroom to wash the smell of garlic, cloves, and sour pickles off his hands and arms.

Occasionally, on a day when the telephone answering business was not so profitable, Mama would give me only a penny. She told me to go to the candy store and pick out my choice of any piece of candy in the store, provided that it only cost a penny.

Now, this may not sound like much of a problem, but to me this presented a tremendous dilemma. There was such a large variety of penny candies that I just didn't know which one to choose. One popular choice was a long strip of paper with small, round, pastel colored candies which resembled little buttons pasted onto the paper. If I ate one button at a time, and sucked on it slowly, the candy could last me all day. I was never that fortunate however because my brothers invariably would each tear off a piece of the strip from the bottom, and share my candy. I never walked out of the store with more than one third of the strip of candy for myself.

Another selection was a round tin dish, about two inches in diameter and shaped like a pastry tart. This dish contained a meager amount of creamed candy and a small tin spoon with which to eat it. The spoon was sharp around the edges, and I always came out of the candy store with a cut lip when I purchased this variety of candy.

There was also a small waxed candy in the shape of a bottle that was filled with a sweet colored liquid. First, we had to bite off the top of the wax bottle. Then we drank the liquid. The empty waxed bottle could be used as a whistle. When we got tired of using it as a whistle, we would chew on the wax, like chewing gum, until we became nauseous. I didn't choose this candy too often.

One of my favorite sweets was a long stick of black licorice. It could be licked until it softened, and then it could be stretched to twice its length. I was usually so engrossed in seeing how long I could stretch the licorice, that I wouldn't notice one of my brothers (usually Sammy) sneak up on me, grab the bottom of my licorice stick, and pull off a big piece. He would casually walk off, pulling and stretching his piece of licorice stick, while I sat there crying for Mama.

A penny could also purchase a chocolate Hooton bar, which was a cheaper version of the two-cent Nestle's chocolate bar with almonds. Out of all of the goodies, there was one box of candy that held me spellbound. I was inevitably drawn to spend my money on the contents of this box. It contained what we called "Picks". These were small, round, chocolate covered candies with cream filling. The color of the cream inside the chocolate was what was interesting about it. If you chose one and bit into it to find that it contained a white filling, well, then all you had for your penny was this small piece of candy. But, if the candy had a pink filling, then you were a winner, and could have your choice of any five-cent candy bar or nickel box of candy in the store. The box of picks contained three layers with about twenty picks to a layer. Out of the twenty pieces, only two had pink filling, so that the odds were ten-to-one against being a winner.

The child who was lucky enough to be a winner became a celebrity. The word spread like wild fire that someone won a pick. Kids from all over the neighborhood came running to the candy store with the hope that the winner would buy something for the nickel that could be shared with everyone.

I don't think that I ever walked out of the candy store without having to share my candy with someone, whether willingly or by force

(by my brothers.) Naturally, nobody else would dare touch me. As soon as they threateningly came near me, I would warn, "I'll tell my three big brothers on you." They would never bother me.

The owners of the candy store were an elderly couple. They had no children of their own and somehow took a liking to me. As I got a little older, they allowed me to work in the store after school, straightening out the boxes of candy in the showcase and making sure that the top of the counter was always kept neat and clean. My salary for this work was ten cents a day, plus the tips I received for answering the phone calls. What temptation there was for me to stick candy in my mouth or pockets, but I never did. Mama had taught us that God was everywhere. I felt, whenever I was tempted to take something, that God was behind my back watching me and would in some way punish me. So, I guess that it wasn't that I was really so honest, I was just afraid that God would catch me.

CHAPTER 7

Thursday was Mama's big shopping day. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, Mama shopped in the local stores buying a minimum amount of food, just enough to last us through the day. However on Thursday, Mama went shopping for the Sabbath. Even if we practically starved for the rest of the week, there always had to be lots of food for Shabbat.

Mama felt that the local merchants were asking too much money for their wares, so on Thursdays she went shopping on Belmont Avenue. Belmont Avenue was located in the heart of the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. In order to get there from the heart of East Flatbush, Mama had to take the Church Avenue trolley all the way to the depot, which took about thirty minutes. She would get a free transfer ticket for the Rockaway Avenue trolley and ride this car for another half hour until she reached Belmont Avenue. Until I reached school age, I accompanied Mama on this weekly excursion to help her carry home all of her bargains. Belmont Avenue extended for about five city blocks. On each side of the avenue, pushcarts were lined up one next to the other, each facing the street. The pushcarts were pushed so close together that one could hardly tell that there were stores on the other side of the sidewalk behind the carts. Each pushcart and store was filled to capacity with all kinds of wares. Anything and everything could be purchased on Belmont Avenue.

Bargaining was always expected with each purchase. Though prices were low, the customers habitually tried to buy the item for less. Many times I had seen Mama walk out of a store because the owner wouldn't take off a nickel. Just as often, I had seen the owner call her back, and they would compromise on a three-cent discount.

As soon as we reached Belmont Avenue, we would go straight to the chicken market. All of the chickens were freshly killed and were hanging upside down from hooks. Their legs were tied and their heads hung lopsided because their throats had been cut. This is what differentiated a kosher chicken from a non-kosher one. If it was killed by having its throat cut, it was a kosher chicken.

Mama would feel around the feathers on the stomachs of all the chickens until she found the fattest one. With a fat chicken, she got the most for her money. She'd make a mental note of which hook this chicken was hanging on, then she would start in with her shpiel. She picked up a few chickens, looked them over, and told the butcher how terrible his chickens looked today. He would answer that they were beautiful. She would hold one up and remark, "This one has something wrong with his feet," or of another she would say, "This one is too skinny." After continuing like this for at least fifteen minutes and knowing that the butcher was getting impatient and weakening, Mama then took down her choice chicken from the hook and said, "Look at this chicken. It's full of fat. What are you going to do, charge me for all the fat that's inside? I'll tell you what, give me a good price for the chicken and take off some money for all the fat that's inside, and I'll do you a favor and take it off of your hands. Not everybody is going to buy a chicken that's full of fat. I'm really doing you a favor."

The butcher weighed the chicken on the scale and told Mama how much it cost per pound. Mama could figure in her head to the penny how much the chicken would cost. Then, with a deep sigh, the butcher would give her fifteen cents off the price because of the fat in the chicken. Mama would pay the man and walk away proud.

From this one chicken, Mama made a feast. She made a great big pot of chicken soup with matzoh balls. She then took the chicken out of the pot, leaving the feet, neck, heart, and pupick still in the soup. Then she would roast the chicken. From all of the chicken fat, (for which she saved fifteen cents), she got a whole jar of rendered fat and a bunch of gribenitz, small pieces of chicken skin rendered in with the fat. Mama cooked everything with chicken fat. It also was a treat to put some on pumpernickel bread and rub the rind of the bread with garlic. Delicious!

After purchasing our chicken and a small piece of meat on Belmont Avenue, we would make haste for the fish market. After all, Shabbat wouldn't be complete without gefilte fish. I was fascinated by the fish store. The case that contained the fish was about four feet wide but ran the length of the store. Water was continually pouring into this case, which was filled with all sizes and shapes of live fish swimming back and forth. Mama would point to the fish that she wanted and the man ran up and down the length of the case with a net trying to catch her fish. Most of the time he caught a different fish and tried to pass it off as the one to which Mama pointed, but Mama was never fooled. She never left that store until the man caught her original fish. The fish man didn't like Mama any more than the chicken man did, especially when she started to bargain with him. After he was thoroughly broken down by her bargaining and he deducted a few pennies from the price, he would hit the fish lightly over the head with a wooden mallet to quiet it, and then wrap it in newspaper. Mama would pay the man, put the fish in her shopping bag, and off we'd go to buy fruits and vegetables. Mama would hand me the shopping bag to hold while she squeezed the fruits. By this time, the fish would recover from his slight blow on the head, and start wriggling around in the bag.

Once, a fish awoke after being hit over the head. It worked its way out of the wet newspapers and jumped out of the shopping bag. Then, it went flip-flopping around in the middle of the street. Mama held up her hands and stopped the traffic while I kept running after the fish. Each time I grabbed it, the fish slipped out of my hands. Everyone stood watching us. Mama finally bent down, grabbed the fish, hit it over the head with her pocketbook, and threw it back into the shopping bag. She carried the bag after that, and filled it with soup greens, carrots, vegetables, and fruit, all piled on top of the fish. After we were loaded down with as many packages as we could possibly manage, we headed for home, tired and proud of all the money Mama had saved.

By the time we reached home, the fish was starting to act up again. Mama took everything out of the bag, filled the bathtub with water, and put the fish in the tub. No matter how dirty any of us were, nobody took a bath on Thursday nights because we always had a fish swimming in the bathtub until Friday morning.

On Friday mornings, Mama was up at the crack of dawn. She had to pluck and clean the chicken before everyone arose for breakfast. After breakfast, when Papa left for work and the children went to school, Mama soaked the chicken and meat in a pot of water for an hour. After taking the chicken and meat out of the water, she placed them on a wooden board, sprinkled coarse salt all over them and let them stand for another half hour. All of the salt was then washed off and the kosher-slain chicken was now kosher for cooking. A fresh pot of water was put on the stove, the chicken, carrots, and soup greens put into the pot, and chicken soup was on its way.

During the hour and a half that the meat and chicken were koshering, Mama mixed flour, eggs, oil, salt, yeast, and baking powder together, kneaded the dough, and made round balls which she inserted into oblong baking pans. She put these pans into the oven, brushed egg over the top of the balls of dough, and baked them for about half an hour. What emerged from the oven was a delicious soft bread called challah. Mama then proceeded to make more dough and baked a cake.

While the chicken soup was cooking and the bread and cake were baking, Mama put the meat into a pot with a lot of cut-up onions, salt, pepper, garlic, and paprika. This made a very tasty pot roast with plenty of gravy. There wasn't too much meat to eat, but we were quite content with dunking big pieces of challah into the gravy to satisfy our appetites.

Last, but certainly not the least, was the cooking of the fish. First,

the fish had to be killed. When the water was drained from the bathtub, Mama caught the squirming fish with her hands and placed it on a board in the kitchen. She hit it over the head with her wooden rolling pin and proceeded to cut it open and clean out its insides. Then the fish got chopped with eggs and seasoning, rolled into small round balls, and cooked with onions and carrots. Mama made the most delicious gefilte fish that I ever ate.

All this time, Lena was still fast asleep (or pretended to be). She waited until a little while after she heard Mama finish chopping the fish, knowing that this was the last food that Mama put up to cook. She would then enter the kitchen and ask, "Rebecca, can I help you cook?" Although Mama was used to this weekly routine, and was quite annoyed at Lena's deliberate laziness, she calmly answered, "Thank you anyway, but I just finished."

Lena also had a phobia towards house cleaning. She continually had an excuse for not helping Mama in the house. She said that she was allergic to dust, and got an irritation if her hands were put into water. This automatically eliminated her washing dishes and floors, and cleaning the bathroom. She also asserted that the lemon oil with which Mama polished the furniture was too strong for her sensitive nose and made her sneeze.

On beautiful sunny Fridays however, Lena did volunteer to help Mama in another way. She took Goldy outside in the carriage, and rocked the baby as she basked in the sun. While Lena was getting a suntan, Mama scrubbed out the bathtub for Papa's hot Shabbat bath, washed and waxed the floors, changed and laundered all the linens, and polished the furniture. As I grew older, cleaning the bathroom and polishing the furniture became my responsibility every Friday.

At sundown on Fridays, with the house sparkling clean, and the pleasant smells of the cooked and baked foods lingering in the kitchen, Mama lit the Sabbath candles and thanked God for all of her blessings.

Papa had a heart of gold. He was forever finding poor, little old Jewish men who were homeless, orthodox immigrants and bringing them home to share our Friday night dinner. We never knew who would be sitting at the table with us after Papa would return from the synagogue. Some of these men smelled so bad that the children would hold their noses until Papa gave us dirty looks. These old men had one thing in common. They all came half starved and ate everything that they could grab. Papa never asked Mama if she had enough food for them. He knew that somehow Mama would make the food stretch to accommodate all who were there. Many times Mama gave half of her dinner to the transients, but she never complained to Papa and he never knew that Mama gave up her food.

Once, one of the long-bearded men told Papa that he had no place to sleep. When Lena saw that pitiful look in Papa's eyes, she immediately took Mama and Papa aside and told them that if they allowed that man to sleep in our apartment, that she was leaving. What temptation that was for Papa! He could finally get rid of Lena. But blood is thicker than water. The old man left, and Lena remained.

On Saturday mornings, Mama made us what we considered the most delicious breakfast of all, grated white radish and onions, with chicken fat and gribenitz. If you think that this is a peculiar breakfast, then I should explain at this point the reason for this odd menu. Papa and Mama ran a very religious home. The turning on and off of electric lights was strictly forbidden from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. We had a small wall light burning in the kitchen all through the Sabbath. This was the only light permissible after the gentile janitor came into our apartment at ten o'clock every Friday evening to turn off any lights that were on.

We also were not allowed to turn the gas stove on or off. Mama left a very low flame of gas on one of the burners until the Sabbath ended. A large tea kettle was kept on this jet so that anyone could have a glass of tea during the Sabbath. If there was any soup left over from Friday night, Mama would put the pot on this small gas flame at about 7 o'clock Saturday morning. In this way, Papa could have a little hot soup when he came home from the synagogue at about 11 a.m. Otherwise, all food was eaten cold until Saturday evening. Not one Saturday went by without us getting heartburn from eating for breakfast the grated white radish and onions with chicken fat and gribenitz.

CHAPTER 8

A "Mickey Roasting" was one of the most enjoyable evenings spent by the children of the neighborhood. No matter what the season was, practically every kid in the community participated.

On the corner of our street was a vacant lot on which even weeds couldn't grow. The children used this lot for everything. We played baseball, kickball, ring-a-levio, johnny-on-the-pony, and kick the can on this lot. We also held our mickey roasts there. The word would somehow spread during the afternoon that a roast would be held that night. This meant that each child had to bring a wooden box for the fire. A mad rush would be made on the two fruit stores in the neighborhood for orange and apple crates, and for all round wooden bushel baskets in which other fruits were packaged. Some children invaded the alleys behind the grocery stores for empty wooden egg crates. Some found small wooden cheese boxes. In order to be admitted to the roast, a child needed only to bring any wooden box that could be used for the bonfire and a raw potato. Usually, a child picked out his mother's largest potato to use as his "mickey." There were so many children and so many potatoes involved that there had to be at least four fires going at the same time on the lot. The wood would be broken up, stacked in four piles, and set afire. The children then threw their potatoes into the fires. Once his potato was thrown into a fire, a child never left that spot for fear that someone else would take his mickey. If there were an abundance of wooden crates, some would be used as benches to sit around the fires. We would sharpen the ends of long sticks and wait patiently until the fires began to die down. We would stab our mickey with the stick and remove it from the fire. When it was slightly cooled, we brushed off the dirt from the lot and took big bites out of the blackened potato.

We arrived home at night with clothes that were reeking of the smell of fire, and faces and hands that were black from the burnt potatoes. Mama made us take off our clothes, and while she hung them outside to air, we all had to take baths or showers. As much as we hated to take showers, the "Mickey Roasts" were worth it.

At one roast, a boy asked me to get up from the box on which I was sitting so that he could break it up and add it to the fire. I stood opposite him while he tried to break the crate. He took a large rock, held it over his head, and threw it down on the box with all of his might. The box did not break. Instead, the wood acted like a springboard and the rock bounced off of the box and hit me in the face right above my eye. I carried a scar above my right eyebrow for years until I was old enough to pencil it in with makeup. That was the last "Mickey Roast" that Mama ever let me attend.

CHAPTER 9

A very mischievous pastime that my brothers and I enjoyed was called "Scaring the Hell Out of the Trolley Car Conductors." This game proceeded as follows. First, my brothers would pool some of their pennies together and go to the local drugstore. They would tell the druggist that they needed some potassium and sulfur for an experiment for school. When these two chemicals were mixed and pressure was applied, a loud explosion would occur. My brothers allowed me to participate by letting me go to the local candy stores to collect all of the bottle caps that I could find from the receptacles attached to the cold soda boxes. I sometimes walked as much as ten blocks to gather soda bottle caps just to show my brothers how useful I really was. I then helped my brothers carefully remove the round cork disk inside each cap. The boys put a small amount of the mixed chemicals into each cap and then reinserted the cork disk. We were now ready to carry out our scheme. When we saw that a trolley car was about four blocks away, we would place a few bottle caps about three feet apart on the tracks. Then, we'd hide in either our hallway or apartment and peek out of the windows. The pressure of the trolley car wheels would cause the caps to explode with such a loud noise that the conductor would jump out of his seat! He would stop the car, run out, and curse anybody in sight. It really was funny to watch but we made sure that we hid behind the bedroom curtains so that we wouldn't be seen. Because of the small amount of chemicals used, the explosions were not dangerous and did no damage to the trolley cars. The only damage done was to the nerves of the conductor and

the passengers.

Sometimes, we walked down a block or two and laid the caps on the trolley tracks there. We then entered the candy store, which was opposite the track. We pondered which candy we were going to buy, just to waste time until the trolley came. We alternated the tracks that we booby-trapped to throw the suspicion away from our apartment.

One day, Papa didn't feel well and stayed home from work. We didn't know that he was sleeping and we planted the explosives on the track right in front of our window. We ran upstairs to look out of the window. We had just reached the doorway to Papa's bedroom when the trolley rolled over the caps. The noise was so loud that Papa jumped up and fell out of his bed. That struck us funny, but we didn't laugh too long. Papa came running after us, and we all ran screaming to Mama to protect us. We were afraid to run outside of the house because the conductor was out of the trolley car looking for the saboteurs. Mama couldn't protect all four of us at once, so Joey and Sammy were once again the recipients of Papa's iron hand.

From then on, we made sure that Papa wasn't home before we made attempts at Scare the Hell Out of the Trolley Car Conductors.

CHAPTER 10

Living in a front apartment with the windows facing the avenue had its advantages. I didn't have to keep running up and down the stairs if I wanted to speak to Mama. I just yelled up to her and she came to the front window. Most of the time when I called Mama, I asked her for three cents for ice cream. A big double decker scoop cone of two flavors of ice cream sold for five cents. We could very seldom afford this luxury so I was satisfied just to get the one scoop ice cream cone for three cents.

When Mama appeared at the window, I asked in my sweetest voice, "Mama, please give me money for ice cream." I asked so sweetly because I was afraid that Mama would refuse me by saying that she had no money. Most of the time however, Mama would answer, "Wait a minute, I'll throw you down a deposit bottle." The way that Mama "threw" me down a bottle was by gradually lowering it with a string tied securely around the neck of the bottle. Slowly she lowered the bottle, inch by inch, so that it shouldn't bang against the brick of the house and smash before I could reach it. Anxiously, I stood on my toes, stretching my arms up to grab the bottle.

My girlfriend, Lois Cohen, lived next door to me on the top floor of a six story apartment house. Whenever I got money for ice cream, Lois would scream up the six stories until her mother heard her and came to the window. Lois then yelled up, "Mom, will you throw me down three cents for ice cream?"

One day, Lois's mother threw down the money one penny at a time, but somehow this did not turn out to be such a good idea. The first penny came down and rolled off the sidewalk right into the sewer. The second penny rolled into the street and stopped on the trolley track just as a trolley car was passing. When we retrieved the penny from the track after the trolley wheels flattened it, it was the size of a silver dollar. Lois was determined to carefully watch the third penny descend and catch it. However, she miscalculated the speed of the falling penny and it landed right in her eye. Lois brandished a black eye for a week.

After learning by experience, Lois's mother devised a new method of safely throwing the three pennies to the street below. It entailed much more ingenuity and imagination than just lowering a milk bottle one story. When we heard the words, "Bombs away!" we both stood far back from the sidewalk and waited for the "bomb" to drop. We called it a bomb because what Mrs. Cohen threw out the six-storied window looked and landed like a bomb. It was the three pennies wrapped up in a ton of newspaper! It took us at least fifteen minutes just to unwrap the paper in order to find the three little pennies tucked inside. Lois' mother never discarded a newspaper. She saved and stored them just for this purpose. She was determined never to lose any more pennies.

CHAPTER 11

Going to Coney Island on a Sunday was comparable to taking the family on a safari. On the Saturday night prior to our adventure, Mama prepared the mountain of chicken and challah sandwiches that

were needed to feed the eight of us (including Lena) for a full day. She prepared them the night before; otherwise she would have had to arise at the crack of dawn to accomplish this gigantic task. These sandwiches were packed in a large suitcase, along with two dozen hard boiled eggs, four dozen cookies which Mama had baked on Friday, fruits, and anything else edible that was left in the icebox. The suitcase was so heavy that Papa tied a rope onto each side of it. Joe and Ben, each holding up an end, would carry the suitcase between them. We had two one-gallon thermos jugs, which Mama filled with chopped ice and tea. Papa carried the jugs and Sam carried the towels. Lena carried the two blankets necessary for us to sit on. I carried the shopping bag filled with extra clothes and underwear into which we would change after we took off our wet bathing suits in the public restrooms on the beach. Mama carried Goldy. Along the way, if the packages got too heavy for someone, we would stop, argue about who carried what, switch packages, and continue on our way.

After breakfast, we began our journey to the beach by taking the trolley car on the corner. Getting the eight of us on the trolley car was quite an experience for both the family and the trolley car conductor. The fares were as follows: children under 5 rode free. Children between 5 and 12 years old had to pay 3 cents. Anyone over 12 paid 5 cents. Goldy automatically rode free. I was over 5 and was supposed to pay 3 cents. However, we had a method planned whereby everyone would surround me and keep the conductor busy while I sneaked under the turnstile. If the conductor caught me, he would ask my age, and, very innocently, I would reply, "I'm going to be 5." I was small and I got away with this charade for quite awhile. In fact, I don't think that I paid trolley carfare until I was about 8 years old.

Mama then handed the conductor 24 cents. He counted the money and asked Mama to explain this amount. She answered, "5 cents for me, 5 cents for my husband, 5 cents for the other lady, and 3 cents for each of my three boys. The conductor looked at Joey and said, "He looks older than 12. You have to pay 5 cents for him." Mama answered, "I won't pay 5 cents for him because he is not 12 years old yet." Actually, he was about 14. All this time, the trolley was still standing motionless on the corner, and the other passengers began yelling to get the trolley started. The conductor wanted more money, but Mama wouldn't budge. Finally he gave up and said, "Okay, go on into the trolley car."

Now that Mama knew that she had won the battle, she really infuriated the conductor by saying, "Now I want free transfers for my whole family, for the trolley on Rogers Avenue." The conductor counted off six transfers (Goldy and I did not get any because we did not pay any fare), and mumbled some unpleasant things under his breath. My family members went through the turnstile and moved directly to the back so that we would not hear the conductor as he kept grumbling. We didn't look at any of the other passengers as we moved to the back of the trolley, because they too were grumbling about the delay.

We rode for about a half hour until we arrived at Rogers Avenue. Picking up all of our packages, we pulled the cord of the trolley, and when the trolley came to a halt, we tried to disembark. We held up the trolley for another five minutes while trying to manipulate the packages through the narrow exit door.

When we got on the Rogers Avenue trolley, the family surrounded me again while I went under the turnstile, but the conductor usually caught me, and we would go through the same routine once more. Then everyone started to hand him their transfers all at the same time. He got so involved with collecting the right amount of transfers that he forgot about me, and we saved another 3 cents.

When we finally got off the Rogers Avenue car at Sheepshead Bay, a half hour later, only half the trip was made. Now began the hard part of the journey. We had to walk about a mile to the beach carrying all of the packages. I often got tired along the way. Ben and Joe would cross their hands to make a seat. I would sit on their hands, and in this manner they would carry me part of the way. Because of this, the packages had to be redistributed. Papa and Sam carried the suitcase. Lena carried the two jugs of iced tea and didn't stop complaining about how hard she was working. I held the blankets while I was being carried, and Mama carried Goldy and the shopping bag.

Actually, there was a much simpler way of getting to the beach. We could have taken the Church Avenue trolley to the subway (about

two miles away), and then take the BMT subway train to the stop, which was two blocks from the beach. However, this meant an extra 5 cents fare per person over 5 years old, and that totaled up to 30 cents each way, an additional 60 cents fare round trip. This, plus the 48 cents round trip fare for the Church Avenue trolley, totaled \$1.08 in traveling expenses. This was too much for Mama's budget.

And that was the reason for our safari.

CHAPTER 12

As the boys grew older, they rode the trolley car in a different manner. They did not ride *IN* the trolley, they rode *ON* the trolley. When Mama and Papa were too busy to take us to Coney Island, the boys would take me with them. They took me not because they enjoyed my company, but because I would be useful to them in saving money. The plan worked as follows: the boys walked down to the next trolley stop from our house. I got on at our corner, paid my 3-cent carfare, and immediately walked to the rear of the trolley. I had to make sure that all the back windows were open wide. I then sat down in the wide back seat and opened the newspaper that I carried on the trolley with me. I held the paper up high, and opened it as wide as I could.

By this time, the trolley came to the next stop and the passengers who were waiting on the corner, got on the car. While the conductor was busy giving change to the passengers for the turnstile, the boys climbed onto the back of the trolley, put their arms around the posts of the open windows, and their feet on the ledge outside the car. They then held on for dear life. In this very dangerous manner, they were each able to save themselves a nickel so that they could have an ice cream or a hot dog on the beach.

Sometimes as many as six boys would hang onto the back of the trolley, and my small arms couldn't stretch the newspaper out wide enough to block out all the boys from the conductor's view. The sight of the hitchhikers enraged the conductor. He would stop the car in the middle of the block and run out of the car screaming as he ran after the boys, who by this time had dismounted from the trolley and scattered in all different directions. When this occurred, I quickly folded up the newspaper, tucked it under my arm, and quickly ran to change my seat before the conductor got back in the car. I then sat like an innocent little lady until we reached the avenue where I had to transfer to another trolley. If such an eventuality occurred where I would get separated from the boys, my instructions were to wait at the corner of the transfer trolley stop for them to catch up with me.

When we met on Rogers Avenue, where I changed trolley cars, I showed my free transfer to the conductor, walked to the back of the car, opened the back windows and my newspaper. The boys climbed on, and off we went again on our trip to Coney Island.

CHAPTER 13

A Bar Mitzvah is a special confirmation ceremony for Jewish boys. As is traditional Jewish custom, a boy assumes all adult religious duties at the age of thirteen. The Bar Mitzvah ceremony takes place in the synagogue generally on the Sabbath nearest the boy's thirteenth birthday.

Joey's thirteenth birthday was nearing, and so was his Bar Mitzvah. In those days, hiring a caterer and a hall for a Bar Mitzvah was unheard of. America was still in the midst of the Depression and money was just too scarce for such luxuries. Mama was the caterer, and our living room and master bedroom served as the catering hall.

Mama had been pinching pennies for a month. She even began charging Lena two dollars per week now so that she could accumulate money to pay for the food to be served after the Bar Mitzvah services. Lena wasn't too pleased about the charge for room and board, considering that she had been living with us rent-free for almost a year by this time. Lena didn't put up too much of a protest. She knew that Mama needed the money because of the Bar Mitzvah, and thought that once it was over that Mama would no longer charge her.

In the kitchen, on the cupboard, Mama had an old cereal set that consisted of five china jars. One jar was marked "Flour" but was filled with buttons. Mama never threw any article of clothing away until it was stripped of all its buttons. The buttons were then deposited into the flour jar. The second jar, marked "Sugar" contained screws, bolts,

nuts, metal washers, and safety pins. The third jar, marked "Coffee" held all of our gas, electric, and other bills that still had to be paid. The fourth jar said "Tea" on it, but contained all of our gas, electric, and other bills that had already been paid. The "Coffee" jar was always filled more than the "Tea" jar.

In the fifth jar, which was marked "Salt", Mama put all the treasured dollars and coins, which she painstakingly hoarded. All of the telephone tips, errand tips, and any other coins that the children earned were proudly donated to the "Salt" jar. Little by little, the jar began to fill.

About a week before the Bar Mitzvah, Mama made a special trip to Belmont Avenue. This time, the whole family went along. Upon reaching Belmont Avenue, we headed first for the boys' suit store to buy Joey his first suit with long pants. What a thrill! Of course, the suit was bought a size too big. The sleeves and pants cuffs were turned under about two inches so that there was material left for next year's growth. If he was lucky and didn't grow too fast, he might get two more years' wear out of the suit. Once the bargaining between Mama and the suit man was over, we continued on to the next store.

Mama and Papa had already discussed that Papa would not need a new suit. He would give his one good suit to the cleaners and nobody would know whether it was new or not. Mama would wear her plain black dress, but she would pin an artificial flower on it, so that it would look like a different dress. Ben would wear Joey's outgrown knickers and Sammy would wear Ben's outgrown knickers. My aunt gave me a dress that her daughter had outgrown. Goldy had a baby dress to wear which one of the neighbors had given her when she was born.

In order to appear all dressed up at a Bar Mitzvah, it was a must to have shiny, new shoes. Our next stop was the shoe store. When the shoe storeowner saw seven of us enter the store to buy shoes, he licked his lips and rubbed his hands together. But alas, that poor salesman didn't know what he was in for! Until we chose the shoes that we finally bought, the man had taken practically every shoebox down from the shelves and had them all piled up on the floor surrounding us.

After two and a half hours, when we were ready to leave the store with our seven pairs of shoes, the man was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Then, Mama started in on him with her experienced bargaining. As we departed from the store, we dared not look back at the salesman whom we left in a state of shock.

We then continued on to the grocery, and to the chicken, meat, and fish markets. We also purchased loads of fruits and vegetables from the pushcarts. It was getting dark as we headed for home, and each of us was laden down with packages. We had spent all of the money from the "Salt" jar, except for the exact change that we needed for the trolley fare home.

On the Thursday night before the Bar Mitzvah, we all gathered around the kitchen table to fill up the "Bar Mitzvah Bags." These were small paper bags in which we put raisins, shelled peanuts, chocolate candy kisses, and a few hard candies. We twisted the top of the paper bag many times to make sure that nothing would fall out. The bags were given out to all of the guests as they entered the synagogue on Saturday morning.

After the Bar Mitzvah boy read his Haftorah, a special section of the Holy Scriptures, and he was officially proclaimed a "Man" in the Jewish faith, everyone would throw a bag of candy at him. This was a tradition representing that the Bar Mitzvah boy should have a sweet life ahead of him. The Bar Mitzvah boy generally managed to duck the bags and never got hit too hard.

All of the children in the temple would then run forward and try to pick up as many of the bags as they could hold. No child could eat lunch after a Bar Mitzvah service because he was too stuffed from the raisins, peanuts, chocolate candy kisses, and hard candies.

After the Bar Mitzvah service at the synagogue, all friends, relatives, neighbors, and worshipers were invited to come back to our house for "something to eat."

My family had awakened at 6 a.m. the morning of the Bar Mitzvah. We took apart and folded up all of the beds in the apartment. All of the furniture from Mama and Papa's bedroom and most of the furniture in the living room was piled into the boys' bedroom. Everything managed to fit into such a small room because we had piled the furni-

ture on top of each other. We then locked this bedroom door so that none of our guests could see the room's chaotic condition.

Papa and the boys had brought up benches and tables that we borrowed from the Hebrew school that was located in the store beneath our apartment. These were set up in the living room and in Mama and Papa's bedroom. We put tablecloths over the tables, and our apartment was now ready for the expected crowd.

Because it was the Sabbath, Mama had all four gas burners lit on low flames since the night before. Most of the food had been placed on the burners to warm while we were at temple.

Because of our popularity in the neighborhood, due mostly to Mama's delicious cooking, after the temple services people filled our apartment to the rafters. If there was not enough room for them to sit at the tables, they managed to find other places to eat their food. Some people sat on the 18 steps in our hallway leading up to the apartment. Some went into the bathroom, turned down the lid and sat on the toilet seat and the rim of the bathtub. The constant flow of people continued way into the evening hours. People didn't leave until they were stuffed. They wanted to make sure that they had gotten their money's worth of food in exchange for the gift that they gave to the Bar Mitzvah boy.

And what gifts they gave! If a couple gave the boy \$3 in a sealed envelope, he was expected to be indebted to them forever for their generosity. A \$2 gift was most common. Another popular gift was a white shirt. The boy was extremely grateful if the shirt came with a tie. A Bar Mitzvah boy usually ended up with at least three or four fountain pens. For all of the weeks of work on Mama's part in preparing and serving for the Bar Mitzvah, and all of the expense incurred, Joey's haul came to \$30 cash, ten white shirts (3 with ties), four fountain pens, and two dozen white handkerchiefs.

This whole procedure was repeated almost three years later for Ben's Bar Mitzvah, and once again, a year and a half later for Sam's. The only consolation for Mama was that she didn't have five boys.

CHAPTER 14

Uncle Gershon was Papa's younger brother. He was Papa's junior by two years and was the youngest in a family of fourteen children. Papa was next to the youngest and always had a very close relationship with Uncle Gershon. After Mama and Papa were in America for a few years, and after they had scrimped and saved enough money to bring a loved one to the United States from Russia, they sent for Uncle Gershon. He was so overjoyed by this kind deed that he was grateful to them for the rest of his life. Uncle Gershon was a bachelor and a very handsome man. He was broadly built, had a deep baritone singing voice, and resembled the typical Cossack as portrayed by Nelson Eddy in the movies. In fact, whenever I saw Nelson Eddy dressed up in a uniform astride a horse singing "Stout Hearted Men," he always seemed to have Uncle Gershon's face. The only thing that bothered me was when Nelson Eddy made love to Jeanette MacDonald and I pictured him with Uncle's face. Somehow I just couldn't picture Uncle Gershon in love!

Shortly after arriving in America, Uncle got a job in the fur industry as a dyer of furs. The job didn't pay too much. As time went on, he was allowed to join the union and he gradually made more money. He never spent much money on himself, but he was always generous to my family. He adored Papa's family because we were his only kin in America. After he got his job in New York City, he rented a furnished room in the Bronx and lived there for thirty years. He came to visit us twice a month, on Friday nights, and on the Jewish Holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashanah. Lena was a first cousin to Papa and Uncle. Her father and their father were brothers. Although they were related, Lena had an overwhelming infatuation for Uncle. From the moment he entered our apartment until he left, she was never more than two feet away from him. However, the feeling was not mutual. Lena was a very homely woman with a Buster Brown haircut. As I previously mentioned, we called her "Lena the Hyena."

Whenever Uncle came to visit, he always brought something for the five children. The toys were not expensive ones. They would invariably be something he picked up at the Woolworth's store next to the subway station. We were thrilled nevertheless. As we grew older, he gave us money instead of toys. The amount of money we received depended upon our ages. Goldy and I were given a quarter each.

Ben and Sam received fifty cents each, and Joe received a whole dollar bill!

At the beginning, that quarter looked mighty good to me! There was so much that I could do with it. Usually I spent it the next day. I spent 10 cents to see the local movie, and another nickel for either a box of Jujubes or Good and Plenty candy. This candy would last me through the two feature films (usually Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello films), the serial (generally Flash Gordon or Fu Manchu), two cartoons, the News of the Week, and the coming attractions for the following week. We spent so many hours at the movies on Saturday that Mama gave us chicken sandwiches on challah bread to take with us. She would slice the challah so thick that we couldn't even open our mouths wide enough to bite into them. We would also take along sour pickles that could be smelled from the children's section on the main floor all the way up to the balcony. All of the children brought their lunches with them and the sound of crackling paper bags could be heard throughout the movie house.

Sometimes the manager of the movie theater felt that he had to give the children more to see for their dimes. The theater would run a horse race, a car race, or a foot race. Upon purchasing a ticket, each child would receive a number from one to ten. The race would be shown on the movie screen. The children who held tickets corresponding to the number of the winner of the race would go to the back of the movie house and receive a prize. They gave away puzzles, games, and comic books. I'll never forget when I won my first race and I brought home a prize worth 25 cents. Four and a half hours of movies and a prize! All of this was mine to enjoy for the price of a 10-cent admission ticket.

With the dime remaining after I purchased the movie ticket and candy, I went out for dinner. I patronized the local delicatessen and purchased a frankfurter for 5 cents and a bottle of Coca Cola for 5 cents. Sometimes when I was a little hungrier, I bought two frankfurters and asked for a glass of water.

The Saturdays after Uncle came were my favorite days. On the weeks that Uncle didn't come, I only received 10 cents from Mama for the movies and I had to do without the luxury of the candy at the movies and supper at the delicatessen afterwards.

CHAPTER 15

A lack of money was always our foremost problem. Whatever little money came into the house was spent on absolute necessities. Toys certainly were not necessities. We therefore were forced to use our ingenuity to improvise and make our own toys.

During the long summers, we had to find things to do which would occupy our time, keep us out of mischief, and, most importantly, didn't cost any money. One of our favorite projects was making a ring from a peach pit. What made this project so popular was that first we got to eat a delicious peach. After we consumed the peach, we pulled out each threadlike filament still attached to the pit. When the pit was completely clean, we were ready to make our ring.

To shape the pit into a ring, we rubbed it along the sidewalk. We continued rubbing until the top and bottom of the pit were flat and the sides of the pit were round. We rubbed and rubbed until our fingers became numb. We then used a small pocketknife or a sharp metal nail file to dig a hole through the center of the flat pit. Slowly and cautiously we twisted the knife in order to make the hole in the center larger. We did this very carefully so as not to break the pit apart.

Soon, the hole in the center was round and large enough so that the ring could be slipped over our pinkie finger. Even after we had rubbed so much of the peach pit away, some of the ridges on the sides remained so as to form a pretty design for the front of the ring. If we wanted the ring to be especially fancy, we would spend an additional day painstakingly carving our initials into the front of the ring.

Making a pinkie ring from a peach pit generally took from two days to a week depending upon how often our fingers became numb and with how many children we had to share usage of the scarce pocketknife. The end result was well worth the time and effort because wearing a peach pit ring became an important symbol in our neighborhood. If you had a peach pit ring, it meant that you were old enough to use a pocketknife, and that impressed all of the kids in the neighborhood.

Honeydew also had a dual purpose. When a honeydew was

opened and the fruit eaten, the pits were never allowed to be thrown away. The pits were rinsed in a strainer, and then laid out on paper napkins to dry. With a small brush and paint set, we painted the pits a rainbow of colors. Then with a sharp needle and long thread, we strung the pits and made necklaces and bracelets. Of course, if the pits were not thoroughly dry before being strung, they began to smell. Smelling like rotten fruit soon became a common aroma for those of us in our neighborhoods who were in a hurry to make our jewelry from honeydew pits.

Another toy that we made was a zip gun. We took one-inch wide and five-inch long pieces of wood and nailed them together perpendicularly. A rubber band was stretched across the top of the wood. The ammunition for our guns was one-half inch square pieces of cardboard. Zip guns were a dangerous toy and Papa didn't like when my brothers made them. He was always afraid that one of the pieces of cardboard would end up being shot into our eyes. But there were very few fights amongst the boys and their friends, and the guns were used as toys rather than as weapons against each other.

Every child owned a pair of roller skates. There were four wheels on each skate, two wheels side-by-side in the front of the skate, and two wheels side-by-side in the rear of the skate. Roller blades had not been invented yet. Rusty skates were never thrown away. The boys would go to the fruit stores and beg the storekeepers for large empty wooden crates in which oranges had been shipped. Then they would go to the lumberyard and purchase a 2x4 piece of wood for ten cents. One skate was nailed to each end of the wood. The wooden crate was then nailed to the front end of the 2x4. A six-inch strip of wood was nailed to each side of the top of the crate. Voile! A magic scooter was created! The boys would push the scooter with one foot on the 2x4 and one foot on the ground. Many races were held between my brothers and their friends and all that it cost them for this wonderful toy was ten cents!

CHAPTER 16

These days, the number of cars a family owns is usually determined by the number of people of driving age. It is difficult to imagine growing up without owning a family automobile. Cars were not necessities then, they were luxuries that few families could afford. A car parked in front of a house was a status symbol. As the automobile became the "impossible dream" towards which every adult would strive, the bicycle became the ultimate dream of every young boy.

Owning a bicycle meant that you were old enough to get a job delivering orders and packages for the neighborhood grocer, butcher, pharmacy, or fruit store. A bicycle was the magic carpet to transport you to places that were too far to reach by walking. It would save the valuable double fare of the trolley ride to such pleasurable and educational places as the Brooklyn Museum, Library and Botanical Gardens on Eastern Parkway, Prospect Park and the Zoo were also accessible by just pedaling away. The bicycle lane on Ocean Parkway was a path leading straight to Coney Island. With "those far away places" within easy reach, was it any wonder that every thirteen-year-old boy yearned for a bicycle for his Bar Mitzvah!

CHAPTER 17

Having your tonsils taken out as a child was a must, whether it was truly necessary or not. At the first sign of a sore throat, we were bundled up and taken to the clinic at the Kings County Hospital.

When I was seven years old, Mama decided that it was time for me to have my tonsils out. She took me to the clinic on a Friday. The surgery was scheduled for Saturday morning, and I was to go home on Sunday.

After I was registered at the Admissions Office, a nurse came to take me upstairs. The nurse told Mama that she could not come with me. With tears in her eyes, Mama hugged and kissed me and told me to be a good girl. I didn't cry. In fact, I was excited and looking forward to the experience. My brothers had told me how lucky I was because after I had my tonsils out, I could have as much ice cream as I wanted. This was really something to look forward to, as I had never had more than one ball of ice cream at a time before that.

I was put in a ward with about seven or eight other children who were also scheduled to have their tonsils out the next morning. The

children were all about the same age as I. We all formed a circle on the floor and started telling stories. Somehow, the conversation turned to religion and each child announced what his religion was. Most were Catholic or Presbyterian. When my turn came, I very proudly announced that I was Jewish. All the children looked at me and started yelling, "You killed Christ. You are a murderer!" They kept taunting me until I was sobbing and yelling, "I didn't kill anybody!" A nurse came running into the room, broke up the circle of children and made each go into her own bed. In order to keep us all quiet, she put me in a bed at the other side of the ward, far away from all of the other children. I cried myself to sleep that night. That was my very first encounter with Anti-Semitism.

CHAPTER 18

When I was about eight years old and Goldy was three, my family was invited to a cousin's Bar Mitzvah. This meant that we all needed decent clothes to wear. By letting all of the hems down on the pants of the boys' suits, Mama managed to get the boys outfitted. However, there was no money for new dresses for Goldy and me. Mama decided that we would have to be left at home and that she would have to ask a neighbor across the yard to watch us. As Mama approached the kitchen window to call out to the neighbor, her eyes lit up as an idea occurred to her.

Goldy and I were able to attend the Bar Mitzvah with the rest of the family. We were decked out in crisp white Swiss-dotted organdy dresses with matching hair ribbons. We had the prettiest dresses at the Bar Mitzvah and everyone admired them. Of course, we were all sworn to secrecy not to tell anyone that our kitchen windows were bare and that Goldy and I were wearing the kitchen curtains.

CHAPTER 19

I was almost ten years old when Sammy became a Bar Mitzvah. That evening, after the festivities had ended and all of the guests had gone home, we untangled all of the furniture in the small bedroom and returned the pieces back to their original places throughout the apartment. After collapsing into bed, Papa turned to Mama and uttered the words that I was soon to regret: "On Monday, I want Yiddis to start Hebrew School."

Mama tried to get Papa to change his mind. She argued that I was a girl, and that only boys were attending the Hebrew classes in the small synagogue. She also said that she could put the dollar a week that it would cost for the lessons to better use, such as for food and clothing. However, Papa had made up his mind and wouldn't be dissuaded. And so, on the Monday following Sammy's Bar Mitzvah, I began my first and last day of Hebrew school.

When I entered the classroom, I found that I was the only girl there. The second thing that I noticed was how short in height the Hebrew schoolteacher was. Practically all of the children in attendance, each of whom was under thirteen years of age, seemed to tower over the teacher. The next thing that I was aware of was the long wooden pointer, which the teacher never seemed to put down. I was soon to learn that because of the teacher's inferiority complex due to his size, the pointer was his symbol of height and strength.

The teacher gave us books and very rapidly taught us the first few pages of Hebrew. As the lesson progressed, he walked up and down the rows calling on children to read the Hebrew from these pages. If the boys fidgeted with their pencils or books, the teacher rapped them on the fingers with the wooden stick. If they turned around or spoke to each other, he rapped them on the heads. If they made a mistake in the lessons, he hit them on the shoulders.

As the language was new to me, and because of the rapidity in which the teacher taught the lesson, I was very confused. I saw the teacher coming closer and closer to me, and the wooden stick in his hand seemed to get larger and larger. I was petrified that he was going to call on me. I was afraid that if I didn't know the answer that he might bang me over the head with the stick that in my eyes was beginning to resemble a baseball bat.

The teacher was almost along side of me and I started to shake. Tears were building up in the corners of my eyes. He was right next to me now and he bent down to speak to me. I let out a scream, jumped out of my seat, and ran from the room. I ran home as fast as

my legs would carry me. The four blocks home seemed like four miles. When I reached the apartment, I was blue in the face from not being able to catch my breath. Mama kept asking me over and over again, "What happened?" Every time that she asked, I cried harder and harder.

About twenty minutes had passed and I was just beginning to calm down and stop crying. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. As Mama opened the door, I froze in fright. My Hebrew schoolteacher was standing there!

I darted under the kitchen table and began to cry again. Mama began to surmise that my troubles had something to do with this man, so she whispered to him, "What happened?" He replied that he did not know. He said, "All that I did was bend down to ask Yiddis how her Mama and Papa felt after the busy Bar Mitzvah weekend. She jumped up as though she saw a ghost!"

Mama and the teacher then came over and sat down on the floor to talk to me. Just then, Papa arrived home, opened the door, and was greeted by the sight of Mama, the Hebrew schoolteacher, and me sitting on the floor under the kitchen table!

Under the circumstances, there was a lot of explaining to do. Embarrassed, the teacher and Mama immediately stood up. With a little persuasion, I finally emerged from under the table. I refused to tell my story until the man left. Then I sat down on Papa's lap and told him the events that had led up to this moment. Hugging me tightly, Papa turned to Mama and asked, "How come you let me send her to a school with all boys?" Mama answered, "I tried to talk you out of it."

Papa then responded, "Well, why didn't you try harder?"

CHAPTER 20

There are approximately eleven major Jewish holidays throughout the year. Each holiday has a story behind it. Each is celebrated because of some event or series of events that took place in Jewish history. There are many beautiful customs and ceremonies for each of these holidays. Some of the holidays are solemn and serious. Others are happy occasions. The holiday of Simchat Torah is one of the joyous festivals.

Simchat Torah is the happiest holiday in the Jewish calendar. The word "simcha" in Hebrew means "joy." The "Torah" is the scroll in the synagogue on which is written the first five Books of the Bible. It is celebrated to display joy and happiness from having received the Torah from God through Moses. The Torah is read in its entirety each year. On Simchat Torah, the reading is completed and begun anew. The sacred scrolls are carried around the synagogue in a procession. The children participate in this celebration. The carrier of the Torah leads the procession and the children follow carrying flags and singing holiday songs.

Our flags were made of paper pasted about three quarters of the way up a thin wooden stick. Through the upper portion of the stick, an apple was inserted. The apple represented the harvest of the season. On top of the apple, a wax candle was tied with a rubber band to the piece of stick that protruded out of the top.

When the procession was about to start, all of the children's candles were lit. The children would proceed to march single file through the aisles of the synagogue, following the leader who was carrying the Torah.

On the Simchat Torah holiday when I was ten years old and Goldy was five, Goldy stood in back of me with her flag and candle held high. We began marching up and down the aisles. Goldy became distracted and managed to set my hair on fire. I was unaware of this until everyone started shouting. I saw the entire congregation running towards me and soon they were all hitting me in the head. I began to cry because I couldn't understand why everyone was hitting me. Luckily, the fire was put out quickly, but my hair, which was originally below my shoulders, was now at even length with my ear lobes.

The room soon began to smell like burnt chicken feathers. I was so embarrassed to know that the terrible smell was coming from me! Papa personally went around putting out all of the other children's candles. After that, lit candles were not allowed on the flags in synagogue, and Simchat Torah just never seemed to be as much fun.

CHAPTER 21

After living with us for over four years, Lena finally decided to move out. She was offered free room and meals in exchange for caring for a sick woman. Lena would now have a room all to herself instead of sharing one with my three brothers. She was made an offer that she couldn't refuse and my family was thrilled!

Now, Goldy and I had the privilege of sleeping together on the couch in the living room. The couch was situated right outside the French doors leading into Mama and Papa's bedroom. All sounds from the living room would easily travel into their bedroom through the glass panels located on their doors.

Goldy and I were young and loved to talk and giggle before we went to sleep at night. The talking and giggling would annoy Papa and keep him awake. First, he would yell out, "Shut up and go to sleep!" If he still heard the laughing, he would warn us that if he heard another *peep* out of us, he would come into the living room and smack us both. After everything got quiet and Papa figured that we finally had fallen asleep, either Goldy or I would yell out "PEEP!" Papa would come storming out of the bedroom, straight towards us. Goldy and I quickly made believe that we were sleeping, and we began to snore. Papa, seeing us lying there so peacefully, mumbled something under his breath, and returned to his bed. Goldy and I would then cover our heads with the blanket, and giggle softly so that Papa couldn't hear us.

Sometimes, the game didn't work. If Papa was really mad enough, I would get smacked lightly on my behind, and Goldy and I would stop giggling. I was the one who always got smacked, never Goldy, because I was the oldest.

CHAPTER 22

In 1939, my brother Joe graduated from Erasmus Hall High School on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. Times were hard and we were still recovering from the terrible Depression. Since money was so scarce, there was none to pay for Joe to go to college. Having no trade, he decided to join the United States Air Force. Aviation was still a very young industry; only 35 years had passed since the Wright Brothers flew their notable flight. The Air Force was teaching young men not only how to fly, but also how to build and repair planes.

Since Joe was very mechanically inclined, he felt that this would be the right profession for him to pursue. Therefore, towards the end of 1939, Joe signed up with the Air Force and was sent to Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. He learned how to take airplane engines apart and put them back together again. My parents were so happy that Joe was learning a trade, he was stationed near home, and he was making some money. Two years into his enlistment, the terrible news that Pearl Harbor was attacked truly shocked my parents. I was 13 years old at the time and I had gone to the movies that Sunday. When I arrived home from the movie theater, I found both of my parents sitting in the living room listening to the radio with tears streaming down their cheeks.

The US was at war and Joey was now a soldier in the Army Air Corps. The war was raging in Europe and the Pacific. Joe was sent to the Pacific and was stationed in Guam, Bougainvillea, and Guadalcanal. He was a staff sergeant at the time. Not only did he work as an airplane mechanic, repairing planes that were hit by enemy fire, but he also was a tail gunner. It was his responsibility to sit in the rear of the plane and utilize the tail gun to shoot down enemy planes.

Joe served as a tail gunner on 35 missions all over the South Pacific. During each mission, Joe's lower back would be very badly jolted by the repercussions of the gun. As a result, he developed a cyst on the bottom of his spine. The cyst became so painful for him that he was admitted into the hospital on the army base to have the cyst removed. The evening after the operation had taken place, Joe had a dream. He dreamt that Grandma Goldy, who took care of him when he was a young child while Mama was working, came to him in the hospital. He dreamt that she said to him in Yiddish, "Don't worry Yusseleh (her nickname for him), everything will be all right for you and you will be safe."

When Joe awoke in the morning, he was informed that his crew went on a mission during the night. His plane had been shot down and all of the crewmembers on board had been killed. Throughout his

life, Joe felt that Grandma Goldy was the angel who watched over him.

Joe returned to New York after the war and suffered ill effects from malaria, which he had contracted in the Pacific.

My brother Ben was 18 years old in 1941, which meant that he would be drafted into the service. Ben graduated from Samuel J. Tilden High School in June 1941 and enlisted in the Air Force also. He did not want to be drafted into the Army Infantry Corps; when Ben enlisted, he specified that he wanted to be a pilot. Ben was short and when the officials measured his height, he was informed that he was an inch too short to become a pilot, that his feet wouldn't reach the foot pedals. Ben was allowed a few months to stay home, do stretching exercises, and try to grow an inch. When he returned for his final physical, he had only grown one half inch and was denied pilot status. He was sent to Officer's Candidate School to become a Navigator-Bombardier. A Navigator-Bombardier guided the pilot to the locations on which the bombs would be dropped from the plane.

Ben was stationed in England during the war and went on almost 40 missions over Germany. After completing his required number of missions, he returned to the United States on June 1, 1944, just 5 days before D-Day! At that time, Ben had achieved the rank of Second Lieutenant. After the end of the war, Ben went to college and became an optometrist under the GI Bill of Rights. When he graduated and was ready to set up business, the Korean War broke out.

Since Ben was an officer when WWII ended, he was automatically placed into the Air Force Reserves. When the war in Korea began, all reservists were called to duty. When Ben was informed that the Air Force wanted him back as a Bombardier-Navigator, Ben told them that he had already flown 40 missions. He refused to fly any more missions. The Air Force gave Ben a choice: if he came back as a Bombardier-Navigator and flew missions over Korea, they would promote him to captain. However, if he insisted on coming back in the service as an optometrist, they would demote him.

Ben chose the latter and was demoted. Ben was very bright and invented many things pertaining to the eyes. One of his creations was the glass in the helmets that the astronauts later wore on their moon missions. When the astronauts went from darkness to light, the glass automatically adjusted to the changes. Because Ben was employed by the government, all of his inventions were owned by the United States Air Force. He was never paid for them. However, he kept getting promoted. By the time that Ben had left the Air Force, he had spent nearly 40 years in service and was a full-fledged Colonel. It made our whole family proud to watch 6-foot tall servicemen saluting the 5'4" Colonel Benjamin Kislin.

Sam graduated from Tilden High School at 17 1/2 years old in 1943. Not wanting to be drafted into the Army, Sam enlisted in the US Coast Guard and was stationed at Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn. Sam entered the service towards the end of the war and was fortunate not to have been sent overseas during the war. However, after the war ended, Sam was sent to China on his ship. Having had no training in the medical field, Sam ironically was assigned to be a pharmacist's mate. His responsibility was to assist the doctor on base if any medical problems arose. One evening when Sam was on duty at the sick bay, the doctor went home early. Sam was informed that he was in charge of the sick bay. The doctor specified that unless it was a dire emergency, he was not to be disturbed. Sam was all alone in the sick bay when a young sailor came in complaining of terrible pains in his right side. By the sounds of the sailor's cries of pain and the fact that the sailor was gripping his right side, Sam was sure that the young man was suffering from appendicitis. He had a decision to make...should he call the doctor and be reprimanded for disturbing him? Or should he not call the doctor and risk the chance that the appendix might burst? Sam decided to call the doctor and tell him that he was needed immediately to operate on the sailor. The doctor came to the sick bay right away and told the sailor to undress. While the sailor was undressing, the doctor was scrubbing up in preparation to operate. When the doctor returned, he was astonished. He asked the man, "Tell me, when did you have your appendix out?" Sam almost fainted from embarrassment. Sam had never looked at the sailor's bare skin and therefore never saw the scar from his appendix operation. The sailor just had a stomach virus!

While the war was raging all over the world, and my brothers were stationed in the war zones, the most important part of our lives was receiving mail from them. In the 1940s, mail was delivered twice a day, everyday but Sunday. Knowing how important it was for my parents to get mail from the boys, the mailman would come to our house straight from the post office. He would climb the 18 steps to our first floor apartment and personally hand my mother the mail. Mama would always invite the mailman in and offer him a cup of coffee. Of course, Mama would never just serve a cup of coffee without anything else, so she would also make him breakfast. The mailman never refused Mama. We often wondered whether the mailman delivered our mail first because he knew how concerned we were to hear from the boys, or because he enjoyed Mama's cooking.

CHAPTER 23

Every person in America, young and old, felt committed to do his part to help the Allies win the war. All schoolchildren were encouraged to buy War Bond Stamps. Each stamp cost ten cents and were pasted in a small booklet. When enough stamps were collected to equal \$18.75, the booklet was traded in for a War Bond. The bond would be worth \$25 in 10 years when the bond reached maturity.

The children collected rubber bands and made rubber band balls. When the balls were large enough, we brought them to recycling bins that were set up in many locations. This rubber eventually was melted down and used to make tires for airplanes, jeeps, and trucks that carried supplies to the troops. Tin foil and aluminum were also collected. These were melted down and used to make ammunition. Cigarette packs were lined with tin foil. After all of the cigarettes in a pack were used up, the tin foil was taken out and saved.

Lard and fat were saved in jars and cans. They were used to make explosives. When our jars and cans were full of fat, we turned them in at the butcher shop. The butcher would contribute the fat to the war effort. Bob Hope, the comedian, would announce on his radio program, "Ladies, get your fat cans down to the butcher." Of course, this was humorous since it could be taken two ways.

In order to help the war effort, we had meatless Tuesdays. The butcher shops closed on Tuesdays. It was almost a sin to eat meat on this day. The meat that was saved was sent to our soldiers.

Each person in America was issued a ration book for certain items. Some of the items rationed were gasoline, meat, sugar, and butter. These items were in short supply and were needed for the men in the services.

Sacrifices were made by all. Yet no one at home considered them to be sacrifices. We felt that with each item that we gave up, we were helping to end the war and get our husbands, sons, and brothers back home.

One beneficial thing that happened to my family as a result of the war was that Papa finally got a steady job. During the Depression, it was rare that someone would be able to afford to have Papa paint his house. During the war, Papa was hired by the Navy to work at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. His job was to paint the ships coming in from all parts of the world. This was Papa's first steady job since arriving in America twenty years before the war. At last, Mama and Papa not only were able to pay their bills, but they were able to SAVE money! Papa finally held his head up high. Not only did he feel as though he was doing his part to help the war effort, but in addition, he was being paid for it!

CHAPTER 24

Civilians in large cities did not miss having automobiles. Gasoline was very scarce and autos were very expensive. Public transportation was generally the accepted way to travel. Trolley cars and the subways got us anywhere we wanted to go. Going into Manhattan, especially to go to the Paramount Theater, was the greatest joy in the world to us. All of the big bands, including Glenn Miller, Harry James, Benny Goodman, and Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey played at the Paramount. The biggest thrill of all was to see Frank Sinatra! He was our absolute idol. One day, without my parents' knowledge, I skipped school and went with my girlfriend to see Frank.

I put on my brown and white saddle shoes, bobby sox, and my best skirt and blouse, and away we went. We yelled and screamed

with all of the other teenage girls who also skipped school that day. Because I arrived home so late, Mama knew that I had not gone to school that day. Playing hooky from school was a definite no-no! I got a scolding from Mama and could not go anywhere except to school for a month. But to hear Frank Sinatra sing made it all worthwhile!

CHAPTER 25

I graduated from PS (public school) 135 on Schenectady Avenue and Linden Boulevard in Brooklyn in January 1942, two weeks before my fourteenth birthday. While I was in the eighth grade, the girls had to take a course called Home Economics. It was mandatory in this class that the girls sew their graduation dresses. The dresses had to be white long dresses, and sewn by hand since the school did not have any sewing machines. We sewed feverishly to get them completed on time.

Finally, graduation came. The girls wore their long white dresses and looked so pretty in them. The boys wore blue suits. The moment came to be called up to the stage to receive our diplomas. When my name was called, I lifted my long dress to my ankles, and climbed the stairs. When Theodora Leibowitz's name was called, she climbed the stairs, but forgot to lift her dress. She stepped on the front of it. Because the hand-sewn stitches were not very strong, her dress came apart at the waist. Half of her dress fell to the floor and there she stood on stage with her panties exposed! The girls gasped, the boys laughed, and the faculty rushed Theodora off of the stage. Poor Theodora never received her diploma on stage with everyone else.

Because graduation was only one month after the war broke out, we did not have a graduation party at school. Some of the children had parties in their homes. I was invited to one of them. At the party, a boy named Irving spent the evening at my side and asked me to go out with him the following weekend. My first date!

The following weekend, Irving and I took the trolley car to Flatbush Avenue and went to the Loew's Kings Theater. We saw the movie "Skylark" with Claudette Colbert and Ray Milland. After the movie, Irving took me home and gave me my first kiss! After all of these years, I can still remember everything about that night... except Irving's last name!

CHAPTER 26

By the end of 1942, most of the men between 18 and 45 years of age were missing from the neighborhoods. They had either enlisted or were drafted into the armed forces. Bette Davis described the situation in a song in the movie "Stage Door Canteen." She sang:

They're either too young or too old,
They're either too gray or too grassy green,
What's good is in the Army,
What's left can never harm me...

How true! Many 17-year-old males did not even wait to graduate from high school before they enlisted in the services. Men had to leave their jobs and women started entering the work force. They built the airplanes, tanks, and trucks that were needed for defense. These women were being nicknamed "Rosie the Riveter." Many young women also enlisted in the Army as WACS; others enlisted in the Navy as WAVES and as nurses.

We proudly hung flags in our windows with stars on them. A blue star meant that there was a member of that household serving the country. The number of blue stars on the flag indicated the number of men from that household who were in the service. Proudly, we had three stars hanging on our front window. A flag with a gold star on it indicated that someone was killed in action. Every time that I passed a window that had a gold star on its flag, I cried for that family.

My dearest friend was Helen Schneiweiss. Every morning, Mama gave me ten cents for the trolley car fare to ride to my high school, which was seventeen city blocks from home. If the weather was nice, Helen and I walked the distance and would save the two nickels. Her brother Murray was my brother Ben's best friend. Murray had very poor eyesight and was rated 4F at the beginning of the war. 4F meant that he was deferred from the service. As the war progressed and more manpower was needed, Murray and some of the other 4F's were drafted.

Murray was told that he would be put into the Tank Corps under

General Patton. Fighting from inside a tank did not require keen eyesight. Ironically however, Murray was not stationed inside a tank. Instead, he was put into the infantry that walked behind the tanks during the battles. He was given a gun and expected to shoot the enemy soldiers. Murray wrote to Ben that he hated being in the Tank Corps and that "War was hell!"

One morning, I called for Helen to walk to school. She was not outside her house waiting for me as she usually was. I rang her bell many times but there was no answer. I was disappointed that she had left for school without me.

When I arrived at school, I noticed that Helen was not in school that day. Her brother Murray had been killed in action. Every day after that, Helen's house displayed a flag with a gold star on it. And every day that I saw it, I cried.

CHAPTER 27

My cousin Morty and I were quite close while we were growing up. He was one year older than I was. His mother and Mama were first cousins and visited each other almost every weekend. Morty always accompanied his mother so that he and I could spend time together.

In November of 1942, my cousin Morty called me and told me that he wanted me to meet his very good friend, Milt who went to Dental Mechanics High School with him. He told me that he was a nice, Jewish, handsome guy. It sounded good to me so I agreed to meet him. Morty set up a Friday night blind date for us to meet at Morty's sister's house in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Morty was babysitting for his sister's child. I got there before Milt, and waited and waited and waited! Milt never showed up. I was so insulted that I told Morty that I never wanted to meet this very rude person. I said that he should have called and told us that he was not coming. When Morty went to school on Monday morning, Milt apologized and said that he had gotten lost and that he couldn't call us because he did not know Morty's sister's number.

Morty then called me and informed me about what Milt had told him. He said that Milt was sorry. Morty said that I should come to Williamsburg again the following Friday. He would give Milt precise directions to his sister's house and Milt would definitely show up this time. I was not easily persuaded but I finally agreed to meet Milt the following weekend.

Morty told me that he was having a party the following weekend. He said that Milt was bringing a friend and that I should bring a friend to the party too. At the end of the evening, I ended up spending my time with Milt's friend Jackie Cohen, and Milt ended up with my friend Madeline. For the next three weekends, everyone came to my neighborhood. Morty and Henrietta, Jackie and I, and Milt and Madeline were considered to be couples.

On the fourth Friday, Morty and Milt were going to walk their dates home. Then they were going to return to my house to pick up Jackie so that the three boys could go home on the trolley together. Jackie and Morty waited about thirty minutes for Milt to return from walking his date home. When Milt hadn't shown up, Jackie and Morty assumed that he had taken the trolley home from Madeline's house. As a result, they went home without him. A few minutes after Jackie and Morty left, there was a knock at my door. There stood Milt. He said that he didn't realize that he had taken so long to walk Madeline home. Now he would have to travel home alone on the trolley.

My mother had just baked doughnuts that day so I asked Milt if he would like to have a doughnut and a cup of hot tea before he left for home. He said that he would like that. And so began our lifelong relationship. (Milt later told me that the only reason that he kept dating me was because he loved my mother's doughnuts and wanted to come back for more!)

We sat and discussed our lives and realized that we had so much in common. Milt asked me if I would go out with him the following weekend. I told him that I couldn't unless I asked Madeline's permission. I told him that I didn't want Madeline to think that I was dating Milt behind her back.

On Monday morning, I approached Madeline at school. I told her what had happened on Friday night and that Milt had asked me for a date. I told her that I wouldn't go out with him unless she said that it was all right with her. She answered that it was okay with her be-

cause she and Milt were not going steady.

About thirty-five years later, I was standing on line in a bank in Jericho, Long Island. I noticed a woman who had just entered the bank. I left the line, approached her, and asked, "Aren't you Madeline Polowitz?" She replied, "I haven't been Madeline Polowitz for over thirty years." I told her that I was Edy Kislin. She looked at me and did not recognize me. I told her that I was the one who had asked her if I could date Milt Haft. She said, "I wonder what ever happened to him." I smiled and answered, "I married him!" She had been my friend and didn't remember me. But Milt she remembered!

Morty and Milt went to school in Manhattan. They were studying to be dental mechanics and learning how to make false teeth. They worked for the Gimbel Brothers department store after school. Since they worked at Gimbel's, they received employee discounts.

On our first date, Milt and I were to go to Henrietta's house with Morty and spend the evening as a foursome. It was Christmas weekend and although we were all Jewish, Morty and Milt must have gotten caught up in the gift-giving frenzy of the season. Using their Gimbel's discounts, Morty and Milt purchased mother-of-pearl powder compacts for Henrietta and me. I had made up my mind in advance that I would not kiss Milt on our first date. When Henrietta opened her gift, she was so thrilled that she gave Morty a big hug and kiss. The compact that Milt gave me was so pretty. How could I not thank him with a kiss also? As we embraced and kissed, we could not believe what was happening. We heard bells ringing!! We looked at each other in disbelief, but then realized that someone was ringing the doorbell.

My father liked Milt right away. Although I was only fourteen years old, Papa did not discourage me from dating only Milt. Milt was Jewish, tall, handsome, and very respectful. My father was so lonely for his three sons who were in the service that he looked forward to having Milt around. When Milt would come to my house to take me out on a date, my father would ask us not to leave. Instead, he begged us to play cards with him. Wanting to please my father, Milt and I let Papa teach us how to play Pinochle. How many weekends we spent playing Pinochle with Papa! Just the three of us.

CHAPTER 28

In this present generation, every child wears sneakers. Whether the child is at school, on a date, or even at a formal occasion, it seems as though sneakers are always the preferred attire.

In the 1940s, one would wear sneakers only for gym or for playing after school. On the days that I had gym, Milt had a short day at school and would surprise me by meeting me outside my high school. Normally, when I had a date with him, I would wear my high platform shoes that were very much in style at the time. Milt had grown to be six foot tall by that time, but I had stopped growing at twelve years old and was still only five foot one. When I walked out of the school with my girlfriends and saw Milt waiting on the corner for me, I was so pleased to see him. He was so tall and handsome, and I was so very proud that he was MY boyfriend. All of the girls were so jealous of me! The only bad part about him meeting me at school was that I felt so short in my sneakers. So, in an attempt to look a little bit taller, I walked home the seventeen blocks from school with Milt and my friends on my tippy-toes!

All of my friends liked Milt. After school on Fridays, five of my friends and I would have an early dinner and then get together to play cards. We played a game called "Continental Rummy." When I told Milt that I couldn't see him on Friday nights, he suggested that maybe he could come along and join my friends and me. I told him that I would ask them, and when I did, they said, "Of course, bring him." And that is how Milt got his nickname. Because he was the only male with six girls, we wanted to make him feel comfortable. So, on Friday nights, Milton became "Mildred."

CHAPTER 29

In late 1943, when Milt was 16 years old, he worked after school for the Gimbel Brothers department store on 34th Street in New York

City. He worked in the toy department. One day, his supervisor asked Milt (because he was the tallest employee) to reach up and take a carton filled with merchandise down from the top shelf. Milt could not reach the carton, so he stood on the bottom shelf and grabbed the carton. The bottom shelf broke, Milt fell on the floor, and the heavy carton fell on top of him. A week or two later, Milt started feeling terrible pain down his right leg. Forgetting about the fall, he went to the doctor who told him that because the pain was on his right side, he was having appendicitis attacks. The pain was so excruciating that Milt had his appendix removed a few days later.

After convalescing from the operation, the pain was still there. After months of visiting doctors, it was determined that the pain was coming from his back. The doctors prescribed putting a plaster cast on his body from his neck down to his hips. Milt wore this heavy, bulky cast through the spring and early summer of 1944. He graduated from high school in June and walked down the aisle in his graduation procession with the cast on. The weather was extremely hot, and combined with his terrible pain, sweat was pouring out of his entire body.

In October of 1944, the doctors finally decided to operate on Milt's spine. The procedure of operating on the spine in those years was not as specialized and advanced as it is today. The doctors removed the broken bone from his spine. Then they took a bone from his ribs and fused it into his spine. It worked!! The pain was finally gone! Milt had to remain in bed for weeks to allow the bone to properly fuse in his back.

On February 8th, 1945, Milt's 18th birthday, the war was still raging all over the world. Milt was called up to the draft board for his physical. Although he had obtained notes from his doctors explaining about his back operation, the service doctors gave Milt an extremely long examination. So many men were giving themselves self-inflicted wounds trying to beat the draft, that the service doctors were suspicious of all excuses. Finally, they proclaimed Milt to be a bona fide 4F classification and let him go home.

While Milt was in the hospital, I visited him every day after school. I took my schoolbooks with me, and did my homework in the hospital. One of my subjects was stenography. Milt would read off the homework assignment to me, which usually consisted of short stories, and I took down everything that he said in shorthand. He was so proud that I could read all of that scribbling back to him. He looked forward to my visits, and time went a little faster for him.

Milt felt so guilty about his 4F status, that after he recuperated from his surgery, he joined the local Civil Defense Unit. His job was to patrol the streets during a blackout and to make sure that no one was out on the street at that time. A blackout meant that no streetlights, car lights, house lights, or any other types of light could be on at all. The streets would be completely black. Air raid drills were held all over the country. Sirens would sound as though we were having an actual enemy air raid, and every light had to be turned off so that enemy planes could not hone in on a target.

As a Civil Defense Air Raid Warden, Milt would get advanced notice that an air raid drill would be held on a specific night. On the night that he knew that there would be an air raid, Milt would don his white metal helmet and his armband with the civil defense emblem. He took his trusted flashlight also, and rode the trolley car straight to my house. When the siren blew, and the streets were darkened, Milt walked up and down my street for a few minutes making sure that no one was on the street. Then he would come upstairs to my apartment. My family's two bedrooms faced the street and we would all look out of the windows onto the darkened thoroughfare. Mama and Papa would look out the windows from their bedroom. Milt and I would look out from my bedroom windows. Papa told my sister, Goldy, who was now eleven years old, to go into the bedroom with Milt and me. When she came into the room we were in, Milt sent her back to Mama and Papa's room. Milt wanted to kiss me, but if Papa didn't see Milt's or my head looking out the window, he would yell into the street, "Milty, get your head out the window so that I can see it!" Milt would quickly kiss me before Papa could send Goldy back into the bedroom that we were in. Then Milt would go downstairs to patrol the street until the "all clear" signal would go on.

Milt and I would then anxiously await the next air raid drill that would take place during the war!

High school back in the 1940s was divided into eight terms as opposed to the four years it is divided into now. When I had just finished my sixth term and was about to enter the seventh, I was called down to the guidance counselor's office. I was told that because my grades were so good, I was eligible to skip from the sixth term to the eighth, and eliminate the seventh term. I was a little leery about doing this because it would mean that I would have to take extra subjects during the eighth term in order to fulfill the entire four years' worth of requirements. My schedule would consist of English 7 & 8, History 7 & 8, Law 1 & 2, Home Economics 1 & 2, and several other electives. It meant reading Hamlet and Macbeth at the same time. I am still confused to this day as to who killed whom in each story. Because I was an A student up to this point, I was petrified that the program would be too much for me and I might fail something.

Milt and I had been going steady for two and a half years by this time. When I told him what the guidance counselor had said, Milt told me to go ahead with the suggestion. He said that if I graduated earlier, we would get married earlier. And that is how Milt proposed marriage to me! I was so thrilled that Milt had proposed that I decided to skip the seventh term. I graduated in June 1945. I was seventeen years old and Milt was eighteen.

In August 1945, Milt and I went to the movies at the Loew's Piton on Pitkin Avenue, in Brooklyn. While walking to the trolley car to go home, we passed a jewelry store. We stopped to look in the window and I spotted a diamond engagement ring that I liked. Milt and I went inside to inquire as to how much it cost. The ring was approximately one carat, and cost \$325. Of course, now fifty-five years later, it would probably cost about ten times that amount. The next day, Milt went to the bank and withdrew every penny that he had carefully saved and purchased my engagement ring. I loved the ring, but Milt felt that the diamond was smaller than he would have liked. He said, "Edy, someday I will buy you a diamond ring that will knock your eyes out." And he did. For our seventeenth anniversary, Milt surprised me with a flawless four carat, marquee-shaped diamond ring. Maybe my eyes didn't actually pop out, but I was truly flabbergasted!!

On my 35th birthday, Milt presented me with a beautiful gift. He had taken the diamond from my original engagement ring and had the jeweler set the diamond in the middle of a pendant necklace. This diamond, for which Milt had worked so hard to save, has always been the most sentimental piece of jewelry that I own.

CHAPTER 31

As 1945 began, the war was now more than three years old. On January 20th, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated for his fourth term as President of the United States. On February 23rd, United States forces raised the American flag on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, a strategic Japanese stronghold. The struggle for this island lasted for 26 days. It was the fiercest battle in American history, resulting in the deaths, wounds, or missing in action of approximately 23,000 Americans. Nearly all 21,000 Japanese died on Iwo Jima.

The war in Europe was winding down as Allied troops were gaining more and more towns and cities. Then a catastrophe hit! On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt complained of a bad headache. This was followed by a cerebral hemorrhage, and he died suddenly. How sad it was for every American. He was our leader and savior. Every citizen worshipped him, and now he was gone.

As Roosevelt's vice president, Harry S. Truman took over immediately as our 33rd president. No one really knew too much about Truman except that he was once a haberdasher, an owner of a men's clothing store, who successfully entered politics. Truman turned out to be an intelligent and strong-willed leader.

On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker, and on May 7th, all German forces surrendered unconditionally, ending the war in Europe. May 8th, 1945 was declared V-E Day, Victory in Europe! Words cannot describe the happiness and joy that this news brought to all of us here in America and to all of our allies, including France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

But the war in the Pacific was far from over. Japan would not surrender. Wanting to end the entire war, President Truman gave the

order to drop atomic bombs on Japan. The first atomic bomb was dropped on August 6th, on the city of Hiroshima. The second atomic bomb was dropped on August 9th on the city of Nagasaki. On August 15th, after much devastation and 70,000 civilian and military lives lost, 120,000 wounded, and 250,000 left homeless from the bomb, Japan finally capitulated. On September 2nd, 1945, V-J (Victory in Japan) Day was declared.

After three years and nine months of American involvement, the most horrific war in history, World War II, was finally over.

CHAPTER 32

When Milt and I became engaged in August, we planned our wedding date for December 29th, 1945. Little did we realize that the war would be over in a month, and that all of the servicemen would be coming home, to whom available apartments were being offered first. It was impossible to get an apartment unless you had a lot of money with which to bribe the landlord. Of course, we didn't have *any* money with which to bribe.

After almost four years apart, practically every young couple was now getting married. Joe and Sam had married eight months before me, and they both moved in with their in-laws. Joe had been discharged from the Air Force in April, but Sam was still in the Coast Guard.

I said to Mama, "What are we going to do? Milt and I can't get an apartment." Mama answered, "Don't worry, Ben is going off to college. Goldy will sleep on the couch in the living room, and you and Milt can have the bedroom. You'll keep the room for six months and by then you will find an apartment." Nothing was ever a problem for Mama.

Milt and I got married in December, but six months later we still could not find an apartment. In fact, we lived with Mama and Papa for almost five years until we got the first place of our own. It was a basement apartment, if you could call it an apartment. It had one very large room, which was divided by a small wall in order to create a kitchen, a living room, and a bedroom. The bathroom was outside of the apartment in the basement. It wasn't beautiful or grand, but it was our own home.

CHAPTER 33

On December 29th, 1945, Milt and I were married. We will never forget that day, not because it was the day that we were married, but because of everything else that happened to us on that particular day! A few days before, I came down with the flu. I was still not feeling well when I awoke on my wedding day, looked outside, and saw that there was a blizzard. I went to the beauty parlor, and my hair came out looking so bad that I ran home and cried. I locked myself in the bathroom, washed my hair, and set it in curlers. When I combed it out, it looked much better.

The snow then began to turn to rain. Since it was so very, very cold outside, the rain turned to ice. The streets were like glass. I got all dressed up in my wedding gown and waited for Milt and his parents to pick me up with their car and take us to the photographer's studio for our formal wedding picture. I waited and waited for them and it was getting late. Mama and Papa were worried that our guests would arrive at the wedding hall and that there would be no one to greet them. So, in a rented car, Mama, Papa, Ben, and Goldy went off to the hall.

I was left all alone in the apartment, sitting in my wedding gown and crying. I felt as though I was being stood up at the altar. Finally, Milt showed up with his parents who apologized that the roads were so slippery that they drove very slowly to my house. It seemed like an eternity until we got to the photographer's studio who took two poses of us for our wedding picture. After all that was happening, it was amazing that he got us to smile! The photographer told us that he would meet us across the street in the hall to take the rest of the pictures of the wedding for my album. Milt and I got to the hall and waited for the photographer who never showed up. When he had crossed the street with his camera to get to the hall, he slipped on the ice and broke his leg. He somehow arranged, from the hospital, to have a teenager come and take the pictures of our wedding. The photographs that this

young boy took turned out to be the worst set of wedding pictures that I have ever seen. I cherish the two poses that had been taken at the photographer's studio earlier that day.

But at seventeen years old, I was now Mrs. Milton Haft!

THE HAPPY ENDING

Milt and I have had a wonderful life together. We moved from the bedroom in Mama and Papa's apartment to a basement apartment in Brooklyn. After our children were born, we moved to a garden apartment in Glen Oaks, Queens. Every week, despite the weather, I walked with the baby carriage to the bank to deposit whatever money I had left over from my weekly budget (even if it was only one dollar!) In 1957, we had saved enough money to put a down payment on a four-bedroom home in Jericho, Long Island.

Milt worked as a plant manager of a factory that manufactured electronic instruments for the government. He supervised 450 employees. In 1963, he left that position to begin his own air conditioning and appliance business in Massapequa, Long Island. He retired in 1982, and we moved to Florida where we currently reside.

We have three children, Linda, Steve, and Wendy who are married and live on Long Island. When our children married, we were blessed with in-laws who we couldn't love any more had I given birth to them myself. We were thrilled to have Linda's husband Michael, Steve's wife Cindy, and Wendy's husband Mike join our family.

We never experienced such happiness as when our six grandchildren were born. Every day, Sherri, Michael, Adam, Daniel, Jodi, and Brian fill our hearts with love and pride. There isn't anything that we wouldn't do for our children and grandchildren. We adore them.

Milt and I have been married for fifty-five years. It wasn't until after we were married for many years that Milt admitted that he did not get lost on the way to Morty's sister's house on the night that we were supposed to meet. He had gone out with another woman! Had I known that, I don't think that I would ever have been persuaded to meet him the following weekend.

In 1993, I was diagnosed with colon cancer. I have been through many courses of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Milt has never left my side. He makes me his homemade chicken soup to boost my strength and makes me laugh when I want to cry. He has been my best friend since that night that he missed the trolley and ate Mama's doughnuts with me.

And yes, it does seem like only yesterday.

Remembering Our Edy by Milton Haft

We remember her at the opening of the buds
and in the rebirth of the spring.

We remember her at the blueness of the skies
and in the warmth of the summer.

We remember her at the rustling of the leaves
and in the beauty of autumn.

We remember her in the winter
with the snowflakes settling to the ground.

We remember her at the beginning of the year
and the end of the year.

As long as we live, she too will live
and we will always remember her.

We will remember her when we are weary and in need of strength.

We will remember her when we have joy in our lives.

We will remember her when we crave to share good things with her.

We will remember her for as long as we live, and she too will live.

Edy, you will always be in our hearts forever because
We will always remember you.



MANIFESTO JUKEBOX

conducted by Adam Liebling

Does living in the Arctic Circle influence the cold-hearted darkness of your music?

You think our music is cold-hearted and dark?! Wait until you hear any Finnish metal, we are emo sweethearts, really! But seriously, most Finnish music has always been in minor key and considering how dark and cold the weather often is, it's only natural I guess. That's just what kind of people we are. Not that we're depressed all the time but obviously life here is a bit different than under the California sun.

How's life in Finland, exactly? Most of my readers are a bunch of morons who don't even know what a Finland is. What could you tell them? (And what the hell is Estonia??)

Umm... all right, Finland is a small country in northern Europe, we speak the weirdest language but we are humans just like you: we sleep, eat, fuck and play punk rock! Generally life here is pretty easy... if the weather during the most of the year doesn't count. The social security and health care are good, things like that. I have been officially unemployed for years but the state pays my rent and gives some money to buy food. I do work hard but I don't really get any money for that - I run a small record label called Combat Rock Industry, play music, book gigs and tours, stuff like that. I think I do far more productive and useful things now, than if I was officially employed at an office or a factory. But still, of course that's what most people do. The paper industry is very big here - we have a lot of forests here. And a lot of high technology, computer and cell phone companies. Oh, and Estonia is our neighbor in the south. Estonia used to be part of Soviet Union so it's really totally different from Finland

in many ways, one of the most noticeable being a much lower standard of living. So Finnish people travel there to buy cheap booze all the time - just like people from California go to Tijuana, it's about the same situation I guess. And like you can guess, it's not so easy for Estonian people to come to Finland...

I heard there's 60 days of pure darkness during the winter and 60 days of total brightness during the summer. What do people do during this time? Does everyone just sleep a lot? Do people go insane and shoot each other, like in that movie *Insomnia*?

People drink a lot! Kill other people, kill themselves, the usual... But we are not like that of course, we play punk rock, write good songs and practice! Actually we live in southern Finland where there isn't pure darkness during the winter, but there sure isn't that much light either, say from November to April. How that affects me is that I very much feel like waking up every spring...

Do all the Scandinavian countries hate each other? I read somewhere that Europe didn't even consider Finland a country until 1500. And now they want you to use their currency and forgo your beloved markka. What's up with that?

Finland became independent in 1917. But as you have noticed, we are now a part of the United States Of Europe. The same money, a big central government (there are still local governments but what they can decide is limited), soon there'll also be a united military system etc etc. It's weird. Not good in my opinion. Not that I'm in favor of the National State either but the European Union is even worse.

Are you pissed at Sweden for selling you guys out to Russia? What was life like as a Russian colony?

Well I don't think history this distant really affects the attitudes of the people that much anymore. I don't think life would have been much different if we had been a Swedish colony compared to Russian, because although Finland was officially a colony, it was pretty autonomous - the ones who had the power did not care about the bunch of people living here, speaking some crazy language and not doing anything particularly productive! This was an agricultural society until almost mid 1900s, then after the second World War the industrialization started to happen very

fast and loads of people moved to cities.

New York City has double the population of Finland. Isn't that weird?

Yes it is! It's crazy really. I don't think I'd want to live there. I live in a city called Tampere, there are 200,000 people and I like it here. A bunch of good friends living within a very reasonable distance, a few good record stores, a few OK bars and nice places to eat... what more do you need?! I do love visiting big cities but if I stay longer I just become nervous.

What do you think about America? George W. Bush?

BYO = good. Bush = bad. Lots of things = somewhere in between. We'll come over in August, hopefully we'll encounter more good than bad things then. So come to the shows and show us what you've got!

What do you hope to accomplish with your music?

The music is an accomplishment in itself, and that's pretty much the only thing I'm concerned about. Sure it's nice to notice that many people all over the world are able to relate to our music and sure many great things have happened to me because of this band but the reason this band exists is to play music - and I hope we'll be able to continue for a long time, I'm enjoying this more now than ever before! But well... if what we do would somehow encourage people to fight for their own dreams, that would be great!

Were you able to understand this interview at all, since you speak Finnish?

No, Dave / BYO usually answers all Manifesto Jukebox interviews - and actually Shawn wrote the songs since we can really only sing drinking anthems in Finnish - ha ha! OK, really pretty much everybody in Finland speaks English, and I also speak some Swedish and German, and a little Russian too. How many Americans usually speak languages other than English...?!

MJ's great new album *Remedy* is on BYO Records (byorecords.com). Visit the band at manifestojukebox.com.

Lisa Ortiz

Lisa Ortiz has a cute, perky voice that's led her to roles in **Record of Lodoss War**, **Revolutionary Girl Utena**, **Slayers**, and **Pokemon**. When we met her, however, she was haggard and exhausted from being kept up all night by a mystery caller...

—Adam Liebling & Damon Shavers

Tell us about your stalker.

(laughs) No, he's not a stalker. But someone was calling me at like 4 in the morning, every 20 minutes. Really, it was bad. If you're calling me, you should stop doing it. It really pisses me off. But that's why I'm late—I couldn't sleep. But I'm sure you have more interesting questions to ask me.

Yes. Who are you?

Who am I? I have no idea.

How long have you been doing porn?

(laughs) That would be someone else...

When you first began school at Hofstra, did you plan on getting into animation?

Actually, I went and got a standard theater background. I have a BFA in performing arts. I have taken Shakespeare and restoration acting... I was trying to do stage stuff. I liked animation, and my older brother was a huge, huge fan, and he would bring home tapes, and that was my introduction to anime. But about 5 years ago, I bumped into a friend who was working at that time for Central Park Media. And they were looking for people to come in and audition for **Record of Lodoss War**. And I finally heard back like 6 months later, and wound up with **Deedlit** and I've been working since then. But to answer your question, I was planning on going straight to theater. I was trained for the stage.

How has doing Pokemon affected your life?

It's helped me get other work, and I've traveled to promote the movie, but besides that, it hasn't really affected me.

Is there a type of character you'd like to do that you haven't done yet?

It's funny because I was just thinking about

this. I liked doing **Utena**... it was fun because she's a little wicked. So I'd really like play evil characters. I always wind up doing spunky, because most of what I do, I end up being stuck in the higher range of voices. My natural speaking

voice is lower and deeper than the voices I use.

(drops voice) So I'd like to be eeeevil. But I wouldn't want to call anybody in the middle of the night, because that's really evil.

What's your favorite badly translated line?

Oh gosh! (laughs) There was one line that we ended up

completely changing because it just didn't make any sense. There was this one section where the character just kept saying the same thing over and over again, but she would change the order of the words. I can't remember it, but it was so hysterical.

Do you ever get a line that you just couldn't say? Do they let you ad-lib?

It depends who you work with. Some of the studios are really good about letting you do stuff, like when we did **Slayers**, we did things like that. Because they'll ask if you know what your character's talking about, and if it's not understandable... Because sometimes when it's directly translated, it doesn't make any sense, it's like they're not speaking properly. And also when they directly translate the lines, sometimes it doesn't match the mouth flaps, so you have to add or take out things.

Are there any advantages to voice acting over traditional acting?

Well, you don't have to get really dressed up if you don't want to, but I haven't yet come to work in slippers. But there is the disadvantage that it limits what you want to do. You have, essentially, somebody else's body and expressions and movements. You might read a script and think you want to take a line in a different direction, but you can't, because you can only work within the confines of what's actually happening, which is sometimes challenging.

Do you have any advice for wannabe voice actors?

I think you should pursue straight theat-

rical acting. And it's an off and on again business, so you should prepare for that. And take care of your voice. And study, study, study! Because even though it's voice acting, it's still acting.

If Lisa Ortiz had a Pokemon power, what would it be?

If I were a Pokemon, what would my power be? Um. Wow. Right now, I'd probably be like **Snorelax** or something like that and fall asleep. (laughs) I would like to turn invisible; that would be nice. And then I would just leave and not battle anyone.

You want to leave us?? Is the interview that bad??

No! No! I wouldn't leave here!! But it would be great to be invisible. Because you could creep around and listen in on things and leave when you want.

You want to leave??

No! Not here!! I would never use that power for evil!! (laughs) But I'd probably have a lame power if I was a Pokemon.

Squirtle would kick your ass.

Squirtle would! I would literally be the hide-behind-the-table Pokemon. Well, I'm glad I'm not a Pokemon. I would be so lame.

Who is your favorite character that you've done?

I would have to say **Lina**, but right now I'm working on **Tama** and I play a little boy cat and, for me, it's just a lot of fun.

Do you have cats?

Yes, I have a black cat. And I play a black cat on the show... because I'm a big wimpy wuss... as you can tell from my **Pokemon** magical abilities.

What's your favorite cartoon or anime?

I have to admit and please don't make fun of me, I recently sat down and started watching **Jackie Chan Adventures**...

That show is great!

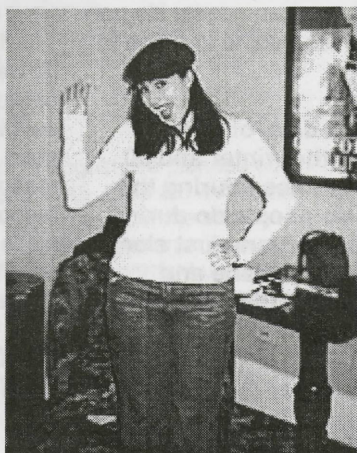
I LOVE IT!! I LOVE IT!!!

Yeah! Yeah!

I'M ADDICTED!! I love **Jackie Chan Adventures**! You do too?

No. And frankly I'm scared of you now.

(Attacks me **Pokemon**-style)





36 Crazyfists

Bitterness The Star

Screamo from Alaska that leaves me as cold as a tundra. Because there's a tundra in Alaska. See, I made a funny.

Roadrunner, 902 Broadway, NY, NY 10018

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

98 Mute

After The Fall

Political punk that's good in that 7 Seconds way, rather than that bleh Anti-Flag/new Pennywise way. In other words, their sound is energetic and hopeful and fun instead of whining and preachy. 98 Mute's got that driven, energetic, whoa-oaa, singalong sound that makes you pound your fist in the air and swing your dick around. They rock.

Best tracks: Just about all of 'em.

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Abandon Jolopy

Mercy

Wow. This is Brad Smith's (Blind Melon) solo album, and—I'm shocked to say this—it's good! It has a very sweet, smooth heartland rock sound without being sappy or predictable. While not every song is a winner, the album is mostly mellow, slightly psychedelic, and sweetly biographical.

Stank Face Laboratories, 3821 Aloha St., Los Angeles, CA 90027

Agoraphobic Nosebleed

Frozen Corpse Stuffed With Dope

38 songs at Anal Cunt speed, with titles like "Unwashed Cock," "Hang The Pope," and "Grandmother with AIDS." Funny on the surface, but this band seems pretty serious, especially since they use an excessive amount of racist, sexist, and anti-gay slurs during their 30-second rants.

Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Alfie

A Word In Your Ear

Last time we listened to Alfie, we thought they were bland, overcompensating with too many zany instruments. Well, this new one is much better. The melodies are stronger, and the music is happily lo-fi and charming. I'm not a fan of Lee Gordon's half Brit-poppy, half twangy vocals, and the flugelhorn have to go, but overall, not a bad release from Alfie.

Twisted Nerve, 580 Broadway Ste. 1004, New York, NY 10012

Ampline

The Choir

While most instrumental bands have a jazzy, freeform structure, or have some sort of artis-

tic or rational reason for being instrumental, Ampline just sounds like they couldn't find a singer. The songs are SONGS. They're good songs, but they're in dire need of, well, a singer. You can really feel that void, and while Ampline's music is very good, it makes me feel on edge, waiting for the missing vocals to kick in.

Tiberius, 4280 Catalpa Drive, Independence, KY 41051

Anti-Flag

Mobilize

Not as catchy as their previous, and the lyrics are the usual preachy stuff, but they went into the studios on September 10th, and that's got to suck. Album also comes with an excellent 21-track sampler CD, featuring The Code, Pipedown, Virus Nine, Thought Riot, The Methadones, Modey Lemon, The Unseen, Anti-Flag, and a bunch more. Good stuff.

A-F, POB 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Arson

Lacerate The Sky

From the first minute, before the vocals kicked in, I knew I was in trouble. The stereotypical chunka-chunka jerky guitar riffs were in full force, a sign of things to come. Then the vocals burped in and everything got all chunka-chunka and I got scared so I quickly shut it off.

Resurrection AD, PO Box 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701

The Arsons

Whole Life Crisis

This new band from the former members of the excellent hardcore supergroup Greyarea, plays straight-up punk with a lot of old school hardcore melody. While I prefer Greyarea, The Arsons are a fairly good punk substitute.

Chunksaah, POB 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

As Friends Rust

A Young Trophy Band In The Parlane Of Our Times EP

Poppy indie punk with old school hardcore breakdowns. They even mix in some goth-sounding vocals. The production is simple, but buzzing with energy, but in the end it's not very interesting.

Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534

Atom And His Package

Hamburgers EP

This 5-track CDEP shows that although Atom is still a silly dork, his songwriting has matured. The tunes—in all of their early TMBG zaniness—are some of the best-constructed and poppiest songs he's packaged yet. "I'm Downright Amazed At What I Can Destroy With Just A Hammer" is my new personal anthem and "Sebastian In Nigeria" sounds almost PIL-ish. Great stuff.

File 13, POB 2302, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Atreyu

Suicide Notes And Butterfly Kisses

A return to Victory's dark side, this new band plays ferociously intense new-school metal-core. I normally hate that stuff, but Atreyu are so melodic and technically complex that they stand far apart from all the crappy emocore and metalcore that is thrust upon me these days. The guitars do some really groovy stuff, the vocals have surprisingly good range, and the lyrics are emotional without being self-pitying, clichéd, or depressing. Great addition to Victory's roster.

Victory, 346 N. Justine St, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607

Audio Karate

Space Camp

Crisp, youthful, SoCal pop-punk produced by Trever Keith of Face To Face. They have a slight emo tinge, but it's actually a good thing, as it separates them from the Blink 181/Sum 41 mall punkers. Though I guess emo IS the new mall punk...

Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038

Audio Learning Center

Friendships Often Fade Away

Pretty good melodic indie from former members of popular Portland bands Pond and Sprinkler. I think the music has good hooks and all that, but there's something about some of these songs that ring familiar. "The Shell" has a chorus part that sounds just like this Beatles song whose title I can't quite remember (but Paul sings it). "Favorite" has a guitar and vocal melody similar to this mall-punk song I remember hearing a couple years ago. Again, can't remember the title. Some of the other songs sound like other indie songs. Sorry I can't be more specific, indie music muddles my thoughts. But anyway, this is mostly good. But guys, seriously, cut down your songs. Who has 6 minutes to listen to anything, let alone some schmaltzy indie song? Also, get rid of the dissonance. Nobody likes it; it disturbs us and makes us feel threatened. Clean yourselves up and you'll be the next Turtles!

Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Editor's Picks at a glance

98 Mute After The Fall (Epitaph)
The Decals Drive-By Kiss Off (Fork In Hand)
Dillinger Four Situationist Comedy (Fat Wreck)
Elf Power Creatures (SpinART)
Helen Love Radio Hits 3 (Damaged Goods)
The Peacocks Angel (TV-Freak)
Primal Fear Black Sun (Nuclear Blast)
Queers Pleasant Screams (Lookout!)
Rocking Horse Winner Horizon (Equal Vision)
Rush Vapor Trails (Atlantic)
Selby Tigers Curse Of The... (Hopeless)
Simple Minds Cry (Eagle)
Squad Five-O Squad Five-O (Tooth & Nail)
Steroid Maximus Ectopia (Ipecac)
Theatre Of Tragedy Assembly Nuclear Blast
Paul Westerberg Stereo/Mono (Vagrant)
Gina Young Intractable (28 Days)

Avoid One Thing

Avoid One Thing

Featuring Joe Gittleman from the Boss-tones, Amy Griffin from the Raging Teens, and Dave Karcich (R.I.P.) from the Pilers/Spring Heeled Jack, this all-star band doesn't add up to the sum of its parts. It's not bad, but it struggles to be more than mediocre in a genre known for its mediocrity (Face To Face-ish indie-pop-punk). This album kind of reminds me of a cross between Husker Du and the lackluster later albums from the Bosstones, minus the ska. Strangely enough, I preferred the slower tunes to the punky ones, as they're better constructed and more interesting. But on a positive note, Joe Gittleman's vocals are a very nice surprise.

Stand out tracks: Lean On Sheena, Pulse and Picture, Take A Good Look
Side One Dummy, 6201 Sunset Blvd, Suite 211, Hollywood, CA 90028

The Bad Luck 13 Riot Extravaganza With Friends Like These... Who Needs Enemies? EP

Shock rock that fails to shock. This thirteen-member group's shtick is that they run around on stage, beating each other into bloody pulps with barbed wire baseball bats and staple guns and other assorted things you might find in Japanese extreme wrestling. The music is generic chunka-chunka metalcore with a narrow lyrical content (they talk a lot about beating people up).
Resurrection AD, PO Box 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701

Chris Barth

Loving Off The Land: A Story In Two Parts

This is Chris Barth of The Impossible Shapes' first solo album, and it's an interesting take on hippie music. There are no chords, but a progression of single notes, giving it a minstrel feel. The arrangements are a bit weird and creepy, which makes this album slightly interesting. Overall though, I'm not into hippie naturalist/white boy Buddhist school of songwriting.
LUNA Music, 1521 W 86th St, Indianapolis, IN 46260

Bleeding Through

Portrait Of The Goddess

Cool thrash metal band with killer guitars and neat gothy keys. They sound a bit like the better Scandinavian metal bands with a bit of hardcore thrown in.
Indecision, POB 5781, Huntington Beach, CA 92615

The Blood Brothers

March On Electric Children

Noise-core. Lots of whirling guitars, screaming, guttural noises, hectic breakdowns, avant-garde compositions, frightening lyrics... This is about as fun as a drill-wielding dentist with Parkinson's. If you like your music... ah... challenging, you'll love Blood Brothers.
Three One G, POB 178262, San Diego, CA 92177

Bloodlet

Three Humid Nights In The Cypress Trees

Produced by Steve Albini, the long-awaited return of Bloodlet won't let fans down. Dissonant, sinister metalcore with wailing vocals and throbbing drumming will creep under your skin and rub you raw. Not my thing, cuz I'm a pussy.
Victory, 346 N. Justine St, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607

Blue

Something Borrowed Something

I think Blue's last album was this big epic gothic melodrama. And this is an upbeat, guitar-driven blues album. Huh, weird.
Sanity Check, POB 179, Boyce, VA 22620

The Boggs

We Are The Boggs We Are

Fun whiskey-soaked bluegrass rock. Sure, there are banjos and mandolins, but the band sounds so drunk, it's awesome.
Arena Rock Recording Co., 68 Greenpoint Ave 4th Fl, Brooklyn, NY 11222

Bracket

Live In A Dive

I was first skeptical of the necessity of a Bracket live album, but I was quickly won over. The 17-song track list will appease all Bracket fans, the performance is tight, and the sound is clean but not as horribly polished as the NUFAN live album. The CD is also enhanced and has 15 minutes of interviews and videos, in case you ever bother checking that stuff out. On top of that, Fat also throws in a Bracket comic book. It's an incredibly stupid comic book, but these are incredibly stupid times. But the music itself is great, and that's what it's all about.
Fat Wreck Chords, POB 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

Brando

Single Crown Postcard

I thought I was listening to this for an hour, when I checked and saw only ten minutes had passed. That's the sort of droning, lo-fi indie that slows my brain, makes me dizzy, and eventually knocks me unconscious. I actually like lo-fi indie, but Brando's vocals are grating and the music is boring as shit.
Luna Music, 1521 W 86th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46260

Bratmobile

Girls Get Busy

To be honest, I never gave Bratmobile much of a chance, figuring it was a no-guys club. But being the professional music journalist that I am, I sat down and prepared for the male-bashing onslaught. Well, the only thing that was bashed was my preconception. And my testicles, but that was from dancing around my small apartment and tripping on a pair of boxers. Anyway, Bratmobile are totally NOT psycho Ani DeFranco-on-crack freaks! They're just great poppy punk with a bit of 'tude. Besides the monotone vocals, this is perfect punk—poppy, rockin', slightly New Wavey. I am totally a riot grl now. Hot lesbians,

please call me. (Ugly lesbians need not apply.) (PS—My misconception might've been caused by confusing Bratmobile with Bikini Kill.)
Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703

Solomon Burke

Don't Give Up On Me

Solomon Burke, called the King of Rock n' Soul, never made it big like his contemporaries, but he was an early soul pioneer whose works deeply influenced many of the musicians that contributed songs to this album: Elvis Costello, Van Morrison, Bob Dylan, and Tom Waits to name a few. Solomon Burke sounds great on this record; he delivers the melancholy-yet-uplifting lyrics with a voice that is smooth, passionate, and as inspiring now as it was 50 years ago.
Fat Possum, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Cadillac Blindside

These Liquid Lungs

CB are similar to Jimmy Eat World in that they write music that's too poppy to be indie, too moody to be mall punk, and too good to be emo. I normally hate this type of music, but CB pulls it off: somber lyrics without being self-absorbed; dark instrumentation without being monotonous sludge. CB have an energetic, intense, and original sound that drives their music way beyond their peers.

Fave songs: Straightjacket Weather, True and Cold, Save Your Breath, Empty Bottle Evening, Killing A Con-Artist

Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

Caesura

More Specific, Less Pacific

Great hard indie rock, driven by math-rocky and buzzing guitars, Frank Black-esque shouting, bouncing basslines, and fast jazz drumming. They're not freeform or too jazzy, just enough to create an energetic live feel without seeming self-indulgent or pretentious. They're kind of like a cross between Fugazi and Spoon: powerful indie rock ends justifying the math rock means.
540 40' or Fight!, POB 1601, Acme, MI 49610

Capitol K

Island Row

Capital K mixes up some totally creative and psyched out trip-hop, but somehow constructs and converges the tons of great sounds and melodies into great, pure pop songs. I only don't like the occasional vocals. Other than that, I think this is Kick-ass with a capitol K.
XL Recordings/Beggars Group, 580 Broadway, Suite 1004, New York, NY 10012

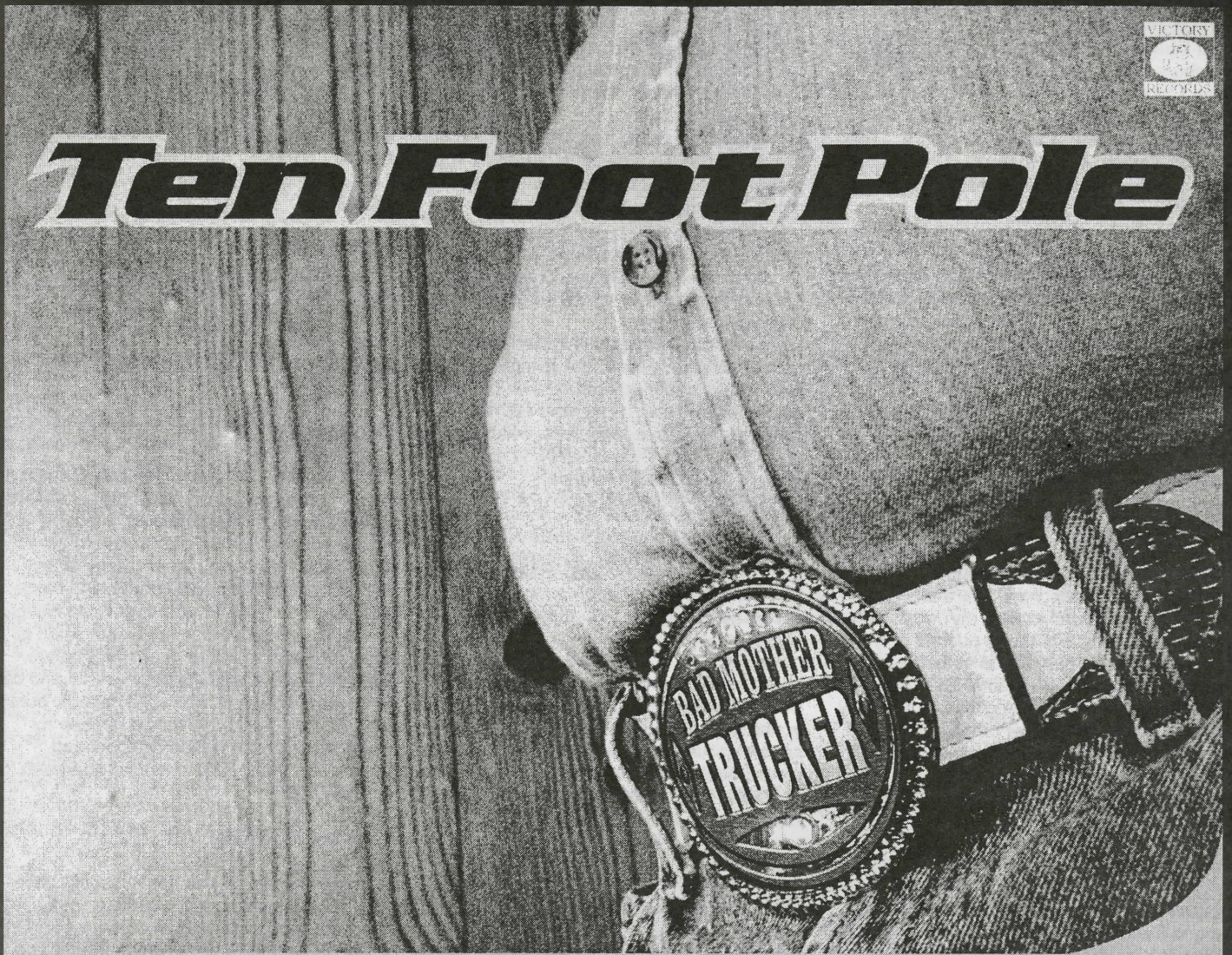
The Capricorns

In The Zone

Wacky! The Capricorns are two cute girls, both of whom sing and frenetically play/program old Casios. It's surprising how well their vocals are in tune with not only each other, but with the cheesy synths. The music is dorky and slightly irritating after awhile, but way more adorable than Atom & His Package (if also more serious). (Great harmonizing on "Remote Control," incidentally.)
Paroxysm, POB 58133, Wash, DC 20037



Ten Foot Pole



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Casket Lottery

Survival Is For Cowards

Multi-layered, laid-back indie rock from former members of Coalesce. They have what I've coined "boring brilliance" – exquisite melodies and textures, many brilliant moments, but altogether too boring to listen to again.

Second Nature Recordings,

www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Champion

Count Our Numbers EP

With a name like Champion, I was expecting horrid jock-core, but they're actually catchy melodic hardcore with a foot solidly planted in the old school. And while they're straight-edge, their lyrics are more personal than preachy. I'll drink to that!

Bridge Nine, POB 990052, Boston, MA 02199

Beth Nielsen Chapman

Deeper Still

Some promos I just don't know why I get. When this CD came in the mail, the cover adorned with a very spiritual-looking woman, standing on a forest path, staring into the white sun as the first of winter's frost creeps toward her, I debated ending my "we-review-everything" policy. But then I pushed play and her golden vocals carried me into a world of beauty and hope. Just kidding. This is your typical pretentiously introspective, annoyingly uplifting, singer/songwriter crappy crap. This is music for middle-aged housewives who believe in angels.

Aretmis Records, 130 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011

Christiansen

Forensics Brothers And Sisters! EP

Featuring ex-members of The National Acrobat and Enkindels, Christiansen play intense indie punk in a progressive style with very strong musicianship. They're slightly experimental musically and lyrically, but it's done without pretension, and it serves to add to their awesomeness. Very, very strong release from Revelation. Can't wait for the full-length!!

Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

Chumbawamba

Readymades

This fiery political punk band turned one-hit wonder have now gone in another drastic direction, probably prodded by their yearning to put "Tubthumper" and its appeal to stupid frat boys and sports fans far behind them.

"Readymades" is completely mellow folk music set to low-fi breakbeats. The politics are still there and stronger than ever, but it's hard for the lyrics to stick in such a lulling musical bubble bath. While I commend any band with the balls to change their popular style and alienate their "fans" outside the core, the Chumbas just don't do this well. Then again, I'm not sure exactly how one would do a folk/ambience hybrid well, but this isn't it.

Universal Records

Citizen Bird

Citizen Bird

Man, I thought we were passed the age of

masturbatory, self-important psychedelia. Spiritualized can get away with it because they never forget they're penning pop tunes. But Citizen Bird sound like they're too into themselves. At best, they sound like Joy Division clones, at worst they bring up early Pink Floyd (shudder). But I do semi-like the third track Money (speaking of Floyd), which starts out rocking but then melts into an organ & theremin psychedelic mess, like the rest of their songs.

Stinky, www.stinkyrecords.com

The Code

Alert Aware Involved

It sounds like there's two bands here. Most of their songs are excellent straight-up punk with a bit of street punk thrown in, but on some of their songs they have Rancid-esque ska guitar breakdowns, which I think takes away from their great punk sound. But overall, this is a solid release.

A-F, POB 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Coheed & Cambria

The Second Stage Turbine Blade

Musically, they're an interesting mix of emo and early Rush, and this release is—true to Rush form—a sci-fi concept album. I suppose that's cool. The vocals, though, also take after Rush. I suspect the singer is male but his range is somewhere between a young Michael Jackson and Alanis Morissette. It's kind of hard to take, especially since I don't like emo to begin with. But it's definitely...ah... interesting.

Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534

Cornelius

Point

Cornelius, Japan's answer to Goldy, is back with his sophomore album, which is definitely more cohesive than his previous work, but at the expense of his usual innovation. All the songs sound similarly constructed: they all have light vocals, simple melodies, slick beats, and tons of nature samples (birds singing, crickets chirping, water sloshing, ocean tides breaking, etc.). While the songs sound "nice," very few really stick out. If anything, this album is a cross between The Orb and those cheesy nature CDs they sell at Hallmark.

Best tracks: Drop, Bird Watching At Inner Forest
Matador, 625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012

Count Me Out

Permanent

Count Me Out, meaning count me out of your wild marijuana-soaked orgies. Permanent, meaning the straight edge is permanent. Aw yeah. You know, I was thinking. All these straight edge bands, they're so angry and uptight. They need to smoke up or get wasted.

Indecision, POB 5781, Huntington Beach, CA 92615

Cricket Rumor Mill

Renderings

Vibrantly melodic and beautifully executed instrumental rock. They manage to be both percussion and melody-oriented, and they do it extremely well. The music is multi-layered without seeming polished or overwhelmed, but they also maintain a live, jazz quality.

Loose Thread, POB 220180, Chicago, IL 60622

Curlupanddie

Unfortunately We're Not Robots

Unfortunately they're not a band either. Just a bunch of screamin'. Jeez, what are they so angry about?

Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

Dag Nasty

Minority Of One

To be honest, and don't think less of me, I never heard much Dag Nasty stuff. I always assumed they were metalcore, probably because I subconsciously associate them with Cro-Mags, or maybe because they're on Revelation, so I expected something harder. So I was surprised to hear great Bad Religion-ish punk blast out of my speakers. And I'm also surprised that after a ten-year hiatus, they still have an old school intensity and can write such energetic and solid melodic punk. This has been a long-awaited release for many, and no one will be disappointed.

Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

Dark Day Dawning

Nothing That I Wouldn't Give

Thrashy metalcore that doesn't suck! Intense, tight musicianship and screaming vocals that drive the music rather than drown it out. This music makes me want to drive around and knock over vending machines, but I don't have a car and vandalism is a real drain on society, so I'll just stay home and watch some pro-wrestling.

Resurrection AD, POB 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701

Guest Reviewer: Stephen Shafer

Elvis Costello "When I was Cruel" (Island)

So maybe this isn't exactly his return to the *This Year's Model* or *Armed Forces* era of blisteringly sharp tunes from the only Angry Young Man that mattered. However, *Before I was Cruel* is enough of a fantastic Older Angry Man (that continues to matter) album to blind you to any resentment you might harbor toward Elvis for wasting the last decade messing around in all that classical music and Bacharach pop pap (the show off).

Masterful, clever word play and searing rock songs abound ("45," "Tear Off Your Own Head," "Daddy Can I Turn This"), as do tunes that brilliantly incorporate the taut expansiveness of reggae and dub ("Spooky Girlfriend," "Soul for Hire," "Tart," "Alibi"). Warning: this is smart, edgy rock for grownups who never grew up and anyone else who's fed up with 98% of the trash excreted daily by the majors.

Dead Poetic

Four Wall Blackmail

First the bastards gave us emo. Then some genius came up with screamo, blending emo with the horrid death metal vocals of new school hardcore. Now Dead Poetic offers another layer of crappiness by adding Christianity to the mix. I just can't deal.

Solid State, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

Death Threat

For God And Government

Some line-up changes, some time off, and Death Threat is back with a more streamlined, improved, old school sound. If you like hardcore that's generic thrash metal, you'll be disappointed with this album. But if you remember hardcore being aggressively fun and melodic, you will want to check out Death Threat. *Triple Crown, 331 West 57th Street, PMB 472, New York, NY 10019*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

The Decals

Drive-By Kiss Off

The girl punk bands that are getting a lot of hype these days can be categorized as either slutty (Donnas), cutesy (Eyeliners), or frightening (The Distillers). Boston's The Decals prove that girls can just rock out without any pretense or gimmick. They play straight-up, riff-heavy, power-pop punk songs about being spurned in relationships, and the dual vocals aren't nasal, screechy, cutesy, or scary, but perfectly befitting the music and lyrics — energetic, slightly angry, and totally rocking. They're like MTX fronted by Joan Jett *Fork In Hand, POB 230023, Boston, MA 02123*

Delta Dart

Fight Or Flight

DD have a Kill Rock Stars sound; they're an all-female trio that play very complex punk rock that mix up electric-acoustic tracks, straight-up punk tunes, and weird experimental indie. They all sing together, and their vocals get in the way of each other. This band is all over the place. I like the idea, but it's not cohesive enough for my fragile ears. *Paroxysm, POB 58133, Wash, DC 20037*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Dillinger Four

Situationist Comedy

D4 are definitely unique, and they once again put out an astounding and confounding release that redefines punk. Awesome!! *Fat Wreck Chords, POB 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-8690*

Division Of Laura Lee

Black City

From the land of Volvo and Ikea comes another Hives-sounding band, mixing up punk with mod retro. DOLL's got it down: the typical tinny guitar and muffled distortion, the drums that sound like they were recorded a mile away, and shaggy-haired and garagey vocals. But DOLL takes this beaten-like-a-dead-horse genre and transcends it with brilliant songwriting, and a dark, brooding Joy Division tint. Highlights include the ultra super rockin'

Q&A—Dillinger 4

What do you have against grilled cheese sandwiches?

Um, usually a big bowl of Berts Chili and an order of hash browns covered, smothered and topped. Doubled, of course. I don't fuck around.

I heard you guys own a bar. Doesn't that send a wrong message to "the kids"?

Erik and his wife Gretchen own a bar called The Triple Rock Social Club and Billy bartends there. "Wrong message" to the kids? Um,...yeah, I guess. Hopefully.

The music teacher in Rock N' Roll High School called the Ramones the "Beethoven of rock n' roll." I think you guys are the James Joyce of punk rock, in terms of all the puns and stream of consciousness in your lyrics. What say you to that?

Well, Erik tends to use a lot of simple/traditional metaphors to animate real life experience so I'd say he's more like Hemingway. My lyrics tend to not mean very much pecked apart; opting to shine only as one collected thought. Therefore I feel I might be the Faulkner, maybe. The live show hopefully harkens back to various heights of delightful chaos best associated with Vonnegut. PS- people who speak like I just did are usually assholes.

"Number One," the slightly psychedelic "Trapped In," and the ethereal "I Guess I'm Healed." *Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

Dogface

Dogface EP

This new, young band plays a progressive funk-rock that reminds me of early Mr. Bungle. Amateurish production but not bad for a debut EP. *Mama's Boy, POB 597, Fishkill, NY 12524*

Down By Law

Punkrockdays: The Best of DBL

This CD contains 18 or so of their most beloved pop-punk anthems, chosen by fans online. Eh, DBL are okay. I always thought the vocals were too lackluster and wussy for the snappy music, but this greatest hits package succeeds in showing them at their best, putting them in a better light than I had remembered from listening to their other albums. Also features strangely sincere covers of "500 Miles" and "In A Big Country."

Faves: Ivory Girl, Superman, Last Brigade *Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

Dropsonic Belle

After listening to five billion indie bands trying to sound the same in their sexless, rest-



For shits n' giggles, here are some words and phrases. Let's do a stream of consciousness association thingy to them:

a. Canadian Power Rock Trio Rush: Hallway "mood music" for a metalhead retirement home.

b. Fear: Beef beef beef- beef bologna.

c. Supreme Court: Old men in dresses.

d. Molesting Altar Boys: Thank God!!

e. Dillinger 4: "Shit Sandwich"

How do you feel about the pledge of allegiance being ruled unconstitutional? If there was a Pledge of Allegiance to Dillinger 4, how would it go?

I think the legal situation surrounding any sort of "forced" participation in saying the pledge of allegiance is one of America's funniest ironies, 'nuff said. Our pledge of allegiance might be millions of people mas-turbating the person to their immediate left while everyone yelled "Who farted?" continuously in their best Don Rickles impersonation.

Dillinger 4 is the only band that matters. Agree/disagree/discuss.

Yes, however only when we are not playing, recording, writing or talking about music.

Check out D4's new CD *Situationist Comedy* on Fat Wreck Chords (fatwreck.com). It's a great, great, great album.

less, la-de-da ho-hum way, it's great to listen to a band that remembers how to rock out. Dropsonic is the indie world's Led Zeppelin: driving, stomping drums and classic rock riffing (a la *Physical Graffiti*) without that annoying ironic nostalgia and oh-so-hip retro indie act. The indie approach is still prevalent with low-key vocals and indie arrangements, but they don't let that get in the way of rocking. If anything it gives it a neat new spin.

Good tunes: Stolen, Good Intentions, Congregate, No Reply *540 40' or Fight!, POB 1601, Acme, Michigan 49610*

Ed Hale and the Transcendence Rise And Shine

Tailored-for-VH1 pop that attempts to be worldly but comes off more as self-important. At their best, they sound like the poor man's U2, and at their worst they sound like over-the-hill rockers mixing up watered-down alternative music with very Americanized "international influences." Blech. *TMG, 405 E 51st Street #2D, NY, NY 10022*

Electric Automatic Be My Battery

A good post-Superchunk indie rock band that's worth a few listens. They're a two-piece but they rock out like they wuz four. *Crustacean, POB 370156, Milwaukee, WI 53237*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Elf Power

Creatures

How could something that seems so bad be so good? First off, their name is Elf Power. Next, the album cover is every Catholic priest's fantasy—a drawing of a 5-year old boy, wearing nothing but boxing gloves. And then the song titles: "Let The Serpent Sleep," "Palace Of The Flames," "Visions Of The Sea"... someone's been reading too much Conan the Barbarian. So I reluctantly press play, and that's when everything I've ever known no longer made any sense. Elf Power are AWESOME! It's psychedelic, fuzzy indie-pop, but super melodic and fluid. They've got those half-asleep Galaxie 500 vocals, driving percussion, and a Spiritualized-esque wall of sound. Elf Power... who woulda thunk??
SpinART, POB 1798, New York, NY 10156

Embrace Today

FxYxlxE

Tough guy sXe hardcore band with lyrics that are all basically "you fucked up and you'll get what you deserve, you fuckin fuck up." They're like the hardcore equivalent of an abusive father. Luckily, no song is over 90 seconds long.
Life Recording Company, 43 Essex Street, Marlboro, MA 01752

Entwine

Time Of Despair

It's not surprising that Scandinavian countries, which experience long stretches of constant darkness due to their lateral location, breed bands obsessed with pain and death. Entwine are another band people are dubbing "suicide rock" or "depro-rock", which is to say, the new gothic revival sound that mixes 80s goth with pop and alternative, instead of death metal and industrial. Well, I hope they don't kill themselves because they are excellent, and kind of similar to Tiamat and Theatre of Tragedy, two of my fave modern goth bands.
Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

The Exit

New Beat

Jeez, what a letdown. From the ultra-punky cover (the band, standing around in leather jackets, looking like the Clash) to their bio about growing up as punks in NYC, I was under the impression they were a kick-ass punk band. Turns out, they're this weak sugary pop emo garbage. I mean, melody is nice and all, but this completely lacks anything nearing an edge. Some of these songs even sound like Sting. What's up with that?
Some, 51 MacDougal St #458, NY, NY 10012

Face To Face / Dropkick Murphys

Split EP

Three songs each. I'm not much of a F2F fan, but I did dig two of their contributions (both covers). On the flipside, I really like Dropkick, but only dug their original song. They also cover two songs, but, well, let's just say John Fogerty is rolling in his grave.
Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Face To Face

How To Ruin Everything

Well, they ruined my opinion of them. I was never a fan, and their recent releases have been less than stellar, but this album blew me away. Everyone will hate me for saying that — "you hate F2F but you love the NEW album??" What can I say, I'm erratic. But hey, the new F2F: it's energetic. It straight up rocks. It's as catchy as genital warts. It forces you to sing along. It rocks, yo.
Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Fairgrove

Good Luck

Melancholy indie that's too sludgy and restless for me. The only song I really like is called "Let's Not Listen." Irony is so ironic.
Montesano, POB 20692, Seattle, WA 98102

Fall Silent

Drunken Violence

Man, I wish this band would fall silent. It starts off as decent political, pissed-off hardcore, but my interest waned after the first ten minutes as all the songs sound the same: furious shouting, hammering guitars, and pounding (as in pounding headache) drumming. I like hardcore, but I don't like being assaulted by it. (They also do a hideous cover of Heart's "Barracuda".)
Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

The Fiendz

Redemption

So I'm expecting some hard-ass metalcore, and the first minute of the album, I got the really hard guitar punk sound. But then the vocals kicked in and... I don't want to say the vocals are wussy, but they don't really meld with the music. Don't get me wrong, the music is good and there's nothing wrong with the vocals per se, but the music sounds weird with such harmonious, light, semi-cheesy vocal lines. This isn't a bad album by any means, just not what I expected.
Black Pumpkin, POB 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377

First Grade Crush

Our Time Down Here

FGC have a great, all-encompassing sound that seamlessly melds emocore, punk, horns, and a theremin. It all comes together well in an infectious ball of energy. I'm not really into punk-with-horns, but there's nothing bad I can say about these guys.
Jump Up!, POB 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

The Flipsides

Clever One

There are about 50 other bands called Flipside or Flipsides, but this one's by far the best. They're an impressive female-fronted band from the Bay Area with a very Bay Area sound—power pop punk with sharp lyrics delivered sweetly. They sorta sound like the female version of Green Day.
Pink & Black, POB 1901516, San Francisco, CA 94119

From Safety To Where

Irreversible Trend

FSTW have an interesting sound that's hard to pin down. Their music toes the line between dissonance and melody, frequently buzzing monotonously with fuzzy distortion, but done pleasantly. The vocals have a guttural quality, but not quite as bad as screamo. The mix is definitely unique, but it becomes more cohesive after a couple listens. This is definitely not something I'd expect from the oil boys and street punkers over at Radical, but kudos to them for releasing it.
Radical, 77 Bleecker St #C2-21, NY, NY 10012

The GC5

Never Bet The Devil Your Head

I was standing at the edge of the cliff, weeping to myself over how punk today is either crappy-ass corporate emo or death metal in hardcore skin. I was about to throw myself over, when I faintly heard some lines of serious ass-kicking street punk. I followed the music to a wondrous place called GC5. In this forbidden land, I dined on honeydew and drank the milk of paradise. Grapes there grew to humongous... okay, this is stupid. Point is, GC5 is keeping punk alive, and they have cool Tarot card imagery in their liner notes, just like the new Rush album.
Thick, 409 N Wolcott Ave, Chicago, IL 60622

The Get Up Kids

On A Wire

GUK have become better songwriters, forging young emo wussy music for more adult emo wussy music. I still can't stomach them.
Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

The Ghost

This Is A Hospital

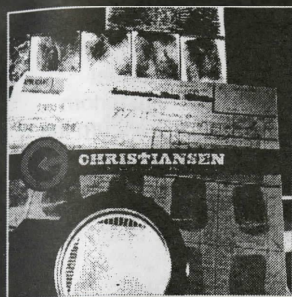
The Ghost takes a valiant stab at making screamo interesting with some neat and tricky musicianship. But no matter what you do to screamo, it still sucks hairy ape nuts. Between the purposeful dissonance and wrenching simpers and screams, this genre is the musical equivalent of really bad overacting.
Some, 51 MacDougal St. #458, NY, NY 10012

The Gloria Record

Start Here

Indie veterans Chris Simpson and Jeremy Gomez (from the legendary emo band Mineral) are reunited and it feels so good. *Start Here* has the extraordinary talent of sounding both sparse and dense at the same time. There's so much stuff concentrated into their music, and yet the songs are light and fluffy. Sort of like a matzoh ball. They're similar to *Farewell to Kings*-era Rush in that powerful aural blasts pop unexpectedly out of lulling melody. It's quite good, and I never use "quite" to modify an adverb. I only have three points of contention: song durations could be trimmed by 30 seconds to two minutes, the last three songs are musical Nyquil, and I find it unsettling that a man's vocals could be just like Aimee Mann's.
Arena Rock Recording Co., 68 Greenpoint Ave., 4th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11222

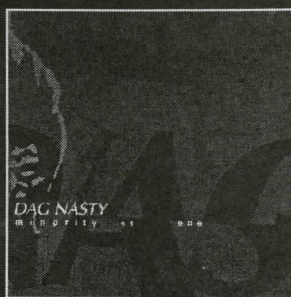
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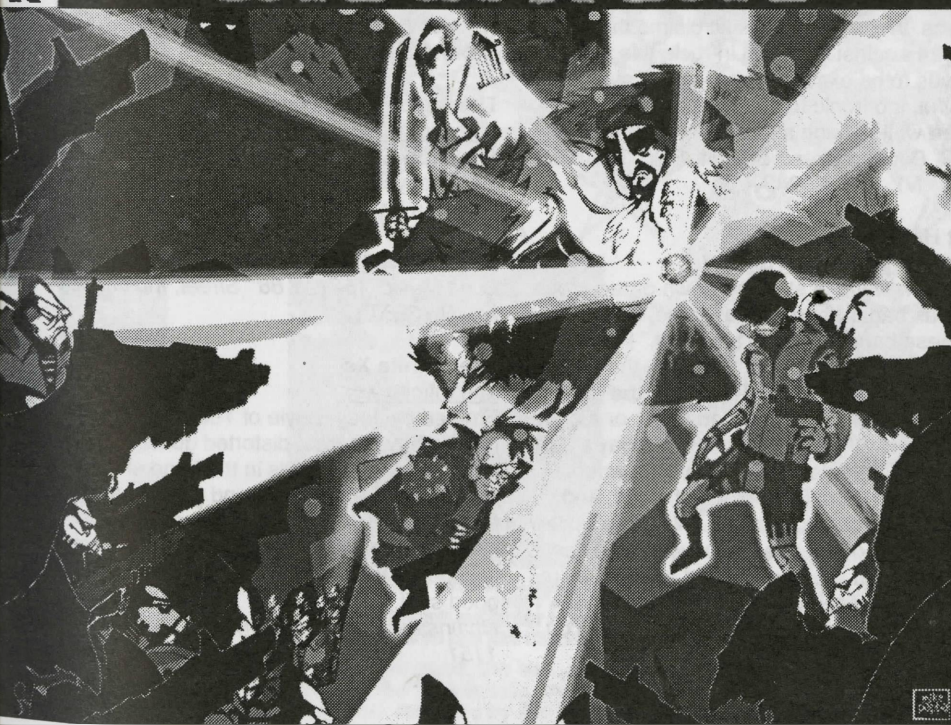
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Go Jimmy Go

Slow Time

If this came out five years ago, I'd simply call it bad Allstonians, but there's something to be said of a trad ska band that's stuck through the bad times. *Slow Time* is just that—overlong trad ska songs that are decent at best, but overall a bore. But at the same time, there's very little else like it around anymore, and it's a link back to that wonderful world of 1996 when trad ska flowed like honey.

Jump Up!, POB 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

The Grandprix

Drive Me Crazy!

They're sort of like a Grand Prix—really goddamn fast. This is some of the most caffeinated pop-punk I've heard: 3-minute songs are crammed into 90 seconds with road-tearing guitars and quicksilver drumming. Yet the songs are still really poppy and catchy. They sound like Screeching Weasel on speed, fronted by a less nasal version of the guy from Less Than Jake.

Fork In Hand, POB 230023, Boston, MA 02123

The Green Pajamas

Is She Only Knew EP

Standard folk rock with a slight 60s psychedelic bent, especially on the 10-minute opus "Autumn Leaves." Some haunting vocals, some tambourines, some lazy drumming, whole lotta pretentiousness.

Luna Music, 1521 W 86th St, Indpls, IN 46260

Gregor Samsa

Gregor Samsa EP

A wash of keyboard buzzing and lazy mononotes with some soft, whispered singing. So boring. This 3-track, 18-minute EP felt like a short eternity.

Iodine, 1085 Commonwealth Ave., PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215

Troy Gregory

Sybil

13 different Detroit-based bands back Troy Gregory of The Witches (and formerly of Prong and Flotsam & Jetsam). The 13 bands bring their different styles, hoping to create musical schizophrenia, hence "Sybil." Only problem is that it all sounds the same, which is to say, not very good. It's straight-up rock that's slightly brooding, but not exceptionally interesting. I do like Prong, though.

Fall Of Rome, www.fallofrome.com

Guttermouth

Gusto

I don't know if it's me or the band, but Guttermouth doesn't seem so un-PC and snotty anymore. This album is good in a straight-up SoCal pop-punk way, but it doesn't have that NOFX-ish zany mayhem and smart-ass humor of their previous.

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Hank Dogs

Half Smile

Moody folk music with bubbling arpeggios and a slight sinister undertone. Nice but boring.

SpinART, POB 1798, New York, NY 10156

Hey Mercedes

The Weekend EP

It's bands like Hey Mercedes that allows me to see the appeal of emo bands. This four-song EP packs more good music than your given full length from Taking Back Jimmy's Saved Kids on Thursday. This is poppy indie rock whose only tie to emo is its passionate delivery. No whining and self-absorbed bullcrap, no listless guitars and oh-so-important lyrics; this is just good rock n' roll for the kids. Just listen to "Everybody's Working For The Week" and you'll see what I mean.

Vagrant, 2118 Wilshire Blvd #361, Santa Monica, CA 90403

High On Fire

Surrounded By Thieves

They are sort of like a cross between Motorhead and a hive of bees. Vocalist is the second coming of Lemmy, but instead of Motorhead speed and catchiness, the music has this consistent drone and underlying buzzing. They're going for the expansive, atmospheric, modernized early Black Sabbath sound, but it ends up too slow and dull. Still, they're better than most new metal bands, and the Lemmy vox are cool.

Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Hockey Night

Rad Zapping

Think hot pink guitars. Neon graffiti. Hanging out at the arcade, playing Lazer Tag. Hockey Night rehashes the 80's, or at least their extreme view of it. Dripping with irony, this album contains all the early 80's clichés, grotesquely exaggerated: tons of Casio sounds, electric hand claps, and cartoony sci-fi imagery, mixed with purposeful weirdness and noise. It's not so much nostalgic as it is dopey, and the music isn't even that good. Besides the tunes "Battlestar Scholastica" and "REBEL System," the music is slow and boring, and even the punkier tunes have two or three additional minutes of boring intros or outros. While their press kit claims that they're against cynicism in rock, this album proves to be exactly that: too cynical to be playful, too ironic to be sincere, and not executed well enough to be interesting.

IMG, Bowling Green Station, POB 343, New York, NY 10274-0343

Hot Hot Heat

Knock Knock Knock EP

The new wave of stripped-down garage rock isn't as bad a trend as, say, emo, but some of these bands just don't have "it." I can't say if "it" is the poetry of the Voidoids, the glam/drug culture of Johnny Thunders, the balls-out rock of MC5 or the Dead Boys, or a combination of all three, but many of today's shaggy-haired, lanky-thin Iggy Pop wannabes have the soul of a plank of wood, and the musical chops to match. Well, this review has started off meaner than I wanted since Hot Hot Heat aren't really bad at all. They're very blues-based with a slight oom-pah up-beat. But (with the exception of "Touch You Touch You") they just don't have "it."

Sub Pop, POB 20645, Seattle, WA 98102

((AWESOME ALBUM COVER))

Hot Rod Circuit

Sorry About Tomorrow

It bugs me when bands like Get Up Kids and Thursday get all this exposure and HRC don't get nuttin'. The world is unjust. I can not live in it anymore. I shall now take my life — garrrrrrkk!! Spluurrngllee!! Blrrrrgghh!! Just kidding, I only wounded myself. Anyway, this is a great album, I recommend it to you wussy boys out there. And I'm in love with the chick on the cover. I haven't been this attracted to an album cover chick since Blind Faith's Blind Faith. Call me, sweet thang. I will turn that pensive, deep, forlorn expression upside-down. Hey! If you turn the album cover upside-down, you can see more cleavage! Hey Vagrant, hook me up with her number and you get a free ad.

Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Hot Snakes

Suicide Invoice

Another great one from this punk supergroup. Percussive and bass-heavy, with swirling guitars and howling vocals from the vocalist of Drive Like Jehu. Unlike DLJ, Hot Snakes are more coherent, but maintain that chaotic sonic attack.

Swami, swamirecords.com

Immortal

Sons Of Northern Darkness

Norway can be a pretty cold place. That's why just about everyone there starts death metal bands—you need to play guitar furiously and go nuts on the double bass to keep warm. Well, Immortal's been doing it for a dozen years now, becoming the country's premiere black metal band and #2 export behind plastic Viking helmets. The new album is more of the same: fast scary metal and songs about how bitchin' cold it is. The vocals are better than most Scandinavian black metal bands, and the band wears cool Alice Cooper makeup.

Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

The Impossible Shapes

Laughter Fills Our Hollow Dome

Similar to Elf Power, Impossible Shapes take a cute psychedelic-pop approach to indie, though a bit sillier, incorporating what sounds like toy organs and French horns. It's good, but too sugar-coated for me.

Luna Music, 1521 W 86th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46260

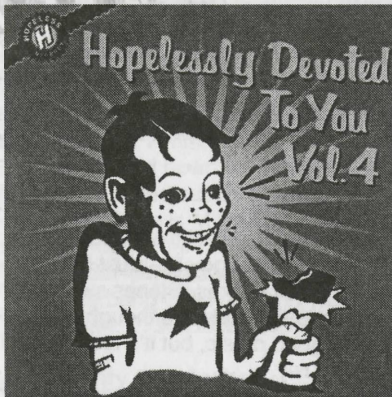
The Infinite Xs

The Infinite Xs

Fronted by Jody Bleyle of Team Dresch, Infinite Xs have a great distorted guitar grunge-pop sound. All the girls in the band share vocal duties, and they sound great in a wistful, yet happy way. Very poppy stuff, especially "Welcome To The Show," "What I Believe," and the Le Tigre-ish "Joanna." Pretty good stuff.

Chainsaw, POB 1151, Olympia, WA 98501-1151

Summer CD/DVD Compilations



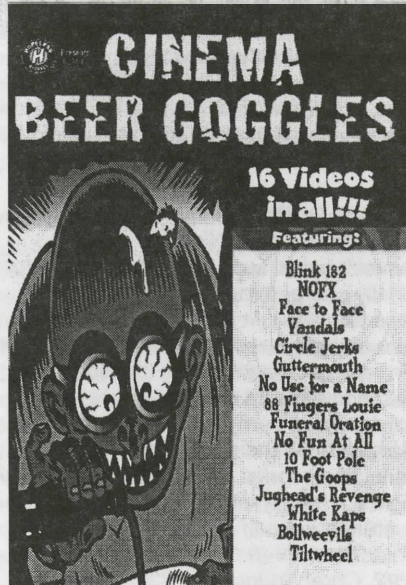
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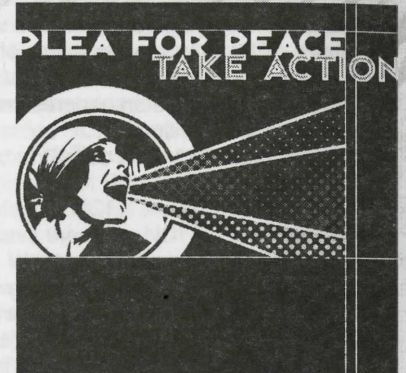
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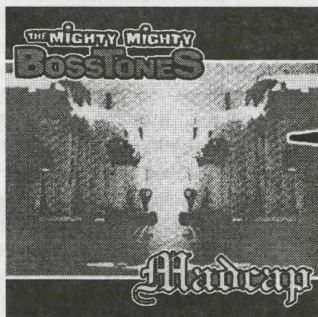
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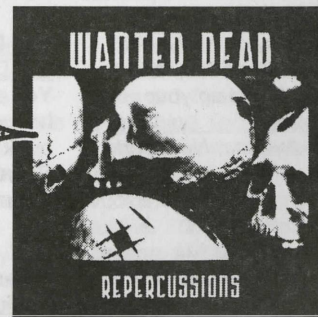


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bouncing souls - "the good, the bad, and the argyle", "maniacal laughter", "the bad, the worse, and the out of print"
worthless united "which side are you on" - the arsons "whole life crisis" - bouncing souls/zero zero split 7"
and many other releases by the bouncing souls, sticks & stones, johnny x & the conspiracy, felix, and more



Ink

Reagent Specs

Ink considers themselves minimalist artists who offer "recordings that were written and recorded simultaneously!" To the layman, that means they recorded some jam sessions. While they're much tighter than one would expect, and actually sound a little like early PiL (sans the annoying Johnny Lydon vox), I'm turned off by the pretentiousness of it. Musically, it's not bad, but to sell this as some brilliant artistic project is an underestimation of the audience's intelligence.
Monitor Records, 843 West 36th Street, Baltimore, MD 21211

Inner

Lovetheonlyway

Inner is Jennifer Turner, a singer/songwriter who's best known for playing guitar for that demon of the night, Natalie Merchant. Like her moniker, this is all "inner" music – introspective, personal, and folky. Done well, this could be interesting and haunting. Unfortunately, this CD comes off as self-absorbed and the music is too boring to register.
Caboose Music, www.caboosemusic.com

Kaia

Oregon

Sensitive, sweet tunes from this popular lesbian punk rocker/folk singer, whom you might know better as frontwoman for riot grrl band The Butchies. It's too mellow and country-influenced for my tastes, but if you find yourself sipping chamomile tea in coffeehouses, this might be for you.
Mr. Lady, POB 3189, Durham, NC 27715

Keepsake

Black Dress In A B Movie

They're so similar to Thursday and Taking Back Sunday that they should've given themselves a weekday name. Maybe Monday's Keepsake or Keep Saturday. Mid-tempo emo vocals (and no screeching in the background) over decent melodic indie music. What's interesting is that their lyrics are angry and somewhat aggro, but they're delivered in a very soft, harmonious way. Not too shabby and the liner notes feature hot naked chicks.
Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St #545, Westminster, CA 92683

Killswitch Engage

Alive Or Just Breathing

These kids sort of sound like "Far Beyond Driven"-era Pantera, but they do some neat rhythmic things, additional shredding, and a tinge of emo wussiness. Metal up your heiny!
Roadrunner, 825 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

King Of Woolworths

Ming Star

Save for one or two groovy electro-dance hits, this is mostly ambient stuff that seems designed to bore. It's soft n' purty with violins n' shit. It's like a gentle breeze across the Martian landscape. Barf!
Mantra/Beggars Group, 580 Broadway, Ste. 1004, New York, NY 10012

Knuckle Sandwich

Nice

Knuckle Sandwich play some catchy, melody-driven punk, similar to their NJ brethren the Bouncing Souls. Unfortunately, their lyrics, although well-written, reflect the suburban, conservative viewpoint, much of which I don't agree with. They're a great band, but I'm not into Reform Party rhetoric.
Resurrection AD, POB 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701

Legends Of Rodeo

A Thousand Friday Nights

I haven't heard such earnest, simple, emotionally charged rock from the heartland since Bon Jovi. At first, I thought these guys were an indie band with a straight-up American rock approach, but as the album progressed I realized the opposite is true. They're more Tom Petty than Jimmy Eat World, but the indie/emo sentiment is still there. Their songs are sad but hopeful, nostalgic but refreshing, and it gives emo a much-needed pair of balls.

Bieler Bros, 1440 Coral Ridge Dr., Suite #292, Coral Springs, FL 33071

The Lesser Birds Of Paradise

It Isn't The Fall EP

It's not a bad thing to be an indie rock band with a rootsy, bluegrass sound. It's also not a bad thing to incorporate ukuleles, accordions, dulcimers, organs, and other untraditional instruments. But it's a really bad thing when you try all that and nothing saves you from being the most boring, pointless band on the planet. In fact, all those ukuleles and whatnot only drive home how unnecessary it all is. What's the point of having weird instruments if you play them in an extremely droning and boring manner? What a bunch of crappy crap.

Loose Thread, POB 220180, Chg, IL 60622

Little Cat

Little Cat

Little Cat is Devon Rumrill and an old sequencer. This lo-fi electronic music was inspired by video games, so it's mostly bleeps and bleeps atop a bed of serene ambience and under a current of frenetic breakbeats. It's kind of a neat twist on Nintendo nostalgia, but nothing I can listen to for more than 45 seconds without passing out.

Pandacide, POB 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952

Los Dryheavers

Los Dryheavers

You can't suck with a name like Los Dryheavers. In fact, these guys rock it street punk stylee. Get drunk and sing along in Spanish. This shit is great.

Pandacide, POB 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Helen Love

Radio Hits 3

A throwback to 80s new wave with a little Atom & His Package and Ramones spun in, Helen Love is an indie cult goddess in Wales, and I hope she breaks through here. Casio-backed and monotone-voiced, Helen

Love is shockingly good at penning bubblegummy, super bouncy punk hits that sound sugary sweet, but have a nasty undertone as she bashes just about everything. Her happy, synth-heavy music somehow works well with her biting indie snobbery, and the result is a deliriously fun anti-pop pop album. If you plan on buying anything Welsh, make this your first purchase.

Faves: Does Your Heart Go Boom, Long Live the UK Music Scene, Great In Formula One, Leader Of The Pack
Damaged Goods, POB 671, London E17 9GH

The Makers

Strangest Parade

The five billionth from the Makers has them continuing where Ziggy Stardust left off: grandiose mini rock operas, Stones swagger, and funky glam attire. I always thought the Makers made good music, but it's too hard to take them seriously.

Sub Pop, POB 20645, Seattle, WA 98102

Manifesto Jukebox

Remedy

Yowling vocals and wall of sound distortion has people calling them a hardcore Husker Du. Only problem is that they sound nothing like Husker Du because they're a Finnish hardcore punk band. This is why I don't read reviews. Everyone always gets it wrong. You shouldn't read my reviews either. What are you doing here?? GET OUT!!!

BYO, POB 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

Mastodon

Remission

Cool thrashy metal, with simple lyrics, creative guitar parts, and low lumbering basslines. They've got a driven sound (more melodic than brutal) that could appeal to both metal and hardcore crowds. I especially dig the instrumentals that remind me of old Metallica.

Faves: Ol'e Nessie, Trainwreck, Trilobite
Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Mayday

Old Blood

Great, ornate instrumentalization with electric banjo, strings, vibraphone, organs, pianos, etc. that reminds me of the really slow songs from TFUL282 (it's probably the electric banjo). The lo-fi music is accompanied with even lower-fi guest vocals, creating a hauntingly pleasant narcotic effect.

Saddle Creek, POB 8554, Omaha, NE 68108

MegaSuperUltra

...Back To Take Another Bow

Wow, haven't heard anything from these mod revivalists in awhile. I can't remember much about their first album, *Power Pop Art*, but I think I liked it. This new one tho isn't very good. The vocals are the weakest part of the band, and they're unfortunately the loudest part in the mix. On some of the slower songs the vocalist sounds a bit like Elvis Costello, but that's the nicest thing I could say about him. If I were producer, I'd recommend speeding the songs up a few notches and mixing the vocals away from the forefront.
Jump Up!, POB 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

Middletown

Welcome To The Family

Not to be confused with Midtown, Middletown is a pretty good indie-country-folk hybrid cleverly known as y'allternative. They have a pleasant sunny sound with strong songwriting. Kinda like if Tom Petty wrote for Blind Melon. *Flat Earth, POB 30497, Indnpls, IN 46230*

Millencolin

Home From Home

Millencolin must be exhausted from constantly being awesome. Hmm, maybe that's why their sound has slowed down a bit over the years... but it hasn't worked cuz they're still awesome! *Home From Home* is Millencolin at their most melodic, though older fans might miss their original harder-edged sound. Stupid older fans. Let the band GROW damn you! GROW! *Burning Heart, 2798 Sunset Blvd, CA 90026*

Mighty Mighty Bosstones

A Jackknife To A Swan

I've long since given up on the Bosstones. I found *Question The Answers* mediocre at best, and everything afterward had gone downhill. But now after struggling with a major for years, the Bosstones are back with an indie, and I don't know if it's this new freedom or feelings of relief or lack of pressure to write college radio-friendly tunes or what, but their new album is very fresh-sounding. Most of the songs continue the sound they've had since *Let's Face It* - heavy, energetic rock with a sprinkling of horns, sort of like parsley to steak, as opposed to the generous heaping of horn riffs and ska rhythms that drove their sound on their earlier albums. The difference here is that these new songs are the catchiest tunes they've written in years, even the dopey song about Sammy The Bull. Plus there are some heavier ska/reggae-tinged tunes like *Everybody's Better*, *You Can't Win*, and *You're Chasing The Sun Away*, and a funny song called *I Want My City Back*, a nod to *They Came To Boston*, all of which shows them moving back to their early roots.

Best tracks: *Sugar Free*, *You Can't Win*, *The Old School Off The Bright*, *Go Big*, *Shit Outta Luck*, *7 Ways To Sunday*
Side One Dummy, POB 2350, LA, CA 90078

Modey Lemon

Modey Lemon

A simple two-piece that plays some heavy garage rock with a Violent Femmes/Pixies weird-noise spin. They've got a great gritty, down-n-dirty 70's punk sound, but the pounding drums and screechy vocals can get to you after awhile. I like 'em tho.

A-F, POB 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Moneen

The Theory Of Harmonial Value

Moneen mainly manipulate moody music manically. They take emo and tack on some dark churning rhythms, explosive guitars, and prog arrangements. The Toronto Sun called them "thinking man's emo" and I think that about says it. Check it out if you're into Frodus and/or King Crimson.

Smallman, POB 352, 905 Corydon Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3M 3V3

MU330

Ultra Panic

This is by far their best and most consistent album. Remarkably, it comes out in a very arid time for ska, and yet this album is so unabashedly third wave it's awesome. If you miss the Midwest quickly, bouncy ska of the mid-90s, get off your checkered ass and order this album from Asian Man. *Asian Man, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030*

Mull Historical Society

Loss

Songwriter Colin MacIntyre is the voice and pen behind this Glasgow band, and he writes some nice melancholy pop songs. But though MHS have been compared to Coldplay and Ben Fold's Five, they're cheesier and lack lyrical depth. The music doesn't hold your interest for too long, and the presence of things like glockenspiels, bells, and an entire boys choir could make even the cheesiest cheeseball cringe.

XL Recordings/Beggars Group, 580 Broadway, Suite 1004, New York, NY 10012

The Nationale Blue

A Different Kind Of Listening

Awesome!! While some other indie bands play a bunch of boring sludge and call it math-rock, this new band plays true progressive indie: energetic, complex but melodic, and way cool-sounding. This trio is mostly instrumental, and kind of reminds me of early 80's Rush. Some parts get repetitious and boring, and the drums need to be mixed louder, but overall, this is an impressive debut.

Best tracks: the cool sounding "Silver Alien Pyjamas In II Movements" and the Brubeck-ish drum-heavy 6/6 piece "Focus In Six"
Iodine, 1085 Commonwealth Ave., PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215

Nerf Herder

American Cheese

Ah, Nerf Herder. The fun Vandals-ish pop-punk band that we all know and love, even when they do goofy things like get famous. Their new one's great, the highlights being a couple of 80s nostalgia songs and odes to Jenna Bush and New Jersey girls.
Honest Don's, POB 192027, San Francisco, CA 94119-2027

NOFX

45 or 46 Songs That Weren't Good Enough

To Go On Our Other Records

Everyone knows I'm not into NOFX, so I won't waste your time with a critical analysis of their music. Instead, let me say that this is a great double CD if you're a fan. Almost 50 outtakes and unreleased songs, and they're not like crappy, poor-produced demos; they're all pretty coherent, fully structured songs. So you're getting a lot of music for your dime, plus the discs come with really nice and comprehensive liner notes.

Fat Wreck Chords, POB 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119

NOFX/Rancid

BYO Split Series Vol. III

It's a cute idea to have the bands cover each other, but too bad it's with NOFX. See, I can't stand NOFX's brand of shock punk rock, and the collective IQ of their fans still couldn't pass the boiling point of water. So hearing them do Rancid songs is still hearing NOFX, and hearing Rancid doing NOFX songs is still NOFX songs. But I have to admit that this wasn't THAT bad! NOFX are pretty loyal to the originals, and any variations don't incorporate typical retarded NOFX crap (except for a reggae version of *Radio* with the worst Jamaican accent this side of Rocker T.). Rancid does their best with the NOFX songs, but even they can't save them. So NOFX's side is much better. What a strange world we live in, where NOFX sounds better than Rancid... Anyway, if you're a fan of both bands, you'll love this, but you're also a complete moron.
BYO, POB 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

Noise Ratchet

Till We Have Faces

I was hoping for something noisy and ratchety like a Spazz meets Molly Hatchet sort of thing, but instead these guys are emo. I suppose emo is a type of noise. But anyway, for an emo band they're not horrendous. The musicianship is pretty good, although the vocals/lyrics are still too whiny for me.

The Militia Group, 16662 Goldenwest St #1, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

No Use For A Name

Hard Rock Bottom

I was never a fan of NUFAN, but you have to give them credit for helping create this bouncy poppy lite-punk sound that's now all the rage on MTV2 and MuchMusic. The new album isn't my thing but it's not bad. In fact, if I could get my head out of my ass, I'd admit I even liked it. A lot. In any case, fans will be happy.
Fat Wreck Chords, POB 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

On The Might Of Princes

Where You Are & Where You Want To Be

Lawn Guyland in da house! I had heard good things and I expected good stuff, but.. well.. you know what they say about assuming. It's typical indie-emo, though maybe a little more lyrically literary and highbrow. The sound quality is grainy, giving it a neat garagey sound, but overall they don't stand out.
Traffic Violation, Box 772, E. Setauket, NY 11733

Orange Island

Everything You Thought You Knew

Indie with a heavy guitar sound that drowns just about everything else out. Pretty good vocals and lyrics for an indie/emo-ish band.
Iodine, 1085 Commonwealth Ave., PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215

Origin

Informis Infinitas Inhumanitas

Fast death metal with good lyrics that are unfortunately belched out.

Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Out To Win

Persist And Destroy EP

Like a bad case of diarrhea, this metal band's music comes out fast and furious with jack-hammering drums, buzzing guitars, and vocals that seem ripped from hell. These guys rock my ass... maybe a little too hard. Just like diarrhea.

Triple Crown, 331 W. 57th St, PMB 472, New York, NY 10019

Oxes

Oxxxes

Man, these boys sure have stirred up some controversy. First they get dropped from Southern Records cuz they complained about them in a zine interview, and then there was the huge uproar over their cover art, which depicted a young indie girl slipping the band some roofies and then performing sexual and explicit acts with each member (and the members' members). Albums had to be recalled and the artwork was hilariously replaced with photos from the protests held against the original artwork. (Incidentally, if you're over 21 and have a strong heart, you can check out the original art at www.monitorrecords.com/oxespress.html). So after all this controversy, I was stoked to hear this now legendary band. And man, how lame. It's just loud instrumental indie stuff. I mean, it's good stuff and all, I mean they can certainly play math geek rock like it's their job, but I was expecting some crazy Satanic metal or dirty-ass punk rock. *Monitor, POB 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203*

Ozma

The Double Donkey Disc

I really liked Ozma's "Rock And Roll Part 3", but this one... well... sucks. The 10 tracks are from two EPs Kung Fu released one or two years ago. The first EP has a handful of fairly boring indie songs, the only track standing out being a silly metal cover of the Tetris song. The second EP is a "side band" called The Bootytraps, but the music isn't as fun or interesting as their name and Booty-inspired song titles. Usually old EPs that aren't very good are re-released long into a band's career, but I guess it makes sense financially, since Ozma gained a lot of press and popularity during their recent tour with Weezer, resulting in opening distribution channels. Or maybe I'm just being really cynical. In any case, Ozma is good but these EPs blow.

Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollywd, CA 90038

Panic

Panic EP

Featuring ex- and current members of American Nightmare, The Explosion, and The Trouble, this Boston hardcore punk band doesn't add up to the sum of their parts. (Yeah, I used that stock metaphor for Avoid One Thing too.) While I prefer the aforementioned bands, Panic is still good in a dark and brooding way, and they're energetic enough to rock your ass. Incidentally, the lead singer is the founder of the lame-o online atrocity known as makeoutclub.com.

Bridge Nine, POB 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

The Peacocks

Angel

Ah, I love the Peacocks. This Swedish trio manage to be both high octane and super-cute. I want to take them home and feed them. Anyway, their new one, which is on a Japanese label for some reason, is 16 fun, rockin' tracks that will have you hopping your ass off. Jump Up is distributing this album in the States, so you have no excuse not to get it.

TV-Freak, 2F No. 2 Kumazaki Bldg, 2-1-9, Kitazawa Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo, Japan

Perpetual Sound Systems

Forward Selection

Somewhere between ambient and drum n' bass, this atmospheric, rhythmic album also mixes in some dub and occasional dance-hall toasting. However, it's a little too monotonous for repeat listens, inducing drowsiness by the third soundscape. Don't listen to this while operating heavy machinery.

Open Source Music, 7306 Idylwood Court, Falls Church, VA 22043

Pere Ubu

St. Arkansas

Another fascinating album from the first band to perfectly blend modern art and garage rock. While I find many of their albums boring, *St. Arkansas* is truly a thing of raw beauty. It is both bleak and energetic, dissonant and clear, dark and... uhh... more dark. If you're a fan, or wish the Velvet Underground was still around, pick this one up.

SpinART, POB 1798, New York, NY 10156

Pitch Black

Pitch Black

Fun, fast, furious punk that mixes in horror imagery that's more sinister than campy, similar to the Nerve Agents. Not only do Pitch Black kick ass, but they're a rarity: a punk band from the bay area that doesn't try to sound like Green Day or MTX.

Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

The Pixies

The Pixies

These are the tracks the Pixies recorded during the *Come On Pilgrim* sessions, but didn't make the cut. Seven of the nine tracks here were subsequently rerecorded for future releases, but here they are in their original form. I am a HUGE die-hard Pixies fan, but a 9-track CD of demos is kind of weak. I would've preferred something with a bit more meat to it, like that Pixies B-sides album that came out a couple years ago.

SpinART, www.spinart.com

Pretty Girls Make Graves

Good Health

PGMG are a tornado of punk, indie, and noise with male/female duo vocals, incessantly buzzing guitars, and progressive (almost arbitrary-sounding) drumming. Featuring members of the Murder City Devils, Death Wish Kids, Area 51 and Kill Sadie, and naming themselves after a Smiths

song, PGMG definitely don't sound like your standard Lookout! Band, but more like a cross between Fugazi, Bikini Kill, and a lawnmower.

Lookout!, 3264 Adeline Street, Berkeley, CA 94703

Prevent Falls

A Newer More Shattered You

Nonstop driving rhythms and unrelenting energy makes Prevent Falls not only the best of the new, young emo-core crowd, but – to be honest – one of the only good ones. They're not wussy, sappy, lame, nostalgic, sentimental, forced, or overdramatic like everyone else, but... dare I say it?... ROCKIN! Stop being a pussyfart and get into Prevent Falls.

Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Primal Fear

Black Sun

Whoa... metal lives. Only the Germans would think of resurrecting the corpse of Judas Priest, splicing in a little Iron Maiden, adding a pinch of Diamondhead, and adorned with a sprinkling of Ronnie James Motherfuckin' Dio. Those sick German bastards. But the result is pure fucking metal. You couldn't get more metal if you dipped your balls into a vat of liquid steel. Seriously, if you like or ever liked Judas Priest, you need to track down this album. You know you want to.

Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

The Promise Ring

Wood/Water

I used to hate Promise Ring and wished brain tumors on all the members. Then a couple years ago, singer Davey vonBoring actually got a brain tumor, and I felt super bad. Some time went by, Davey recovered, and this album came out and I decided the least I could do was give it a nonjudgmental, unbiased listen. Well, let me tell you, brain tumor or not, this album rules. Well, as much as an emo album can rule. The songs are excellently structured, the performance and production are top-notch, and – dare I say it? – much of it actually, genuinely rocks. I can't believe I now have a TPR CD in my collection, but I guess I'm just a big softie. All those other emo bands can still suck it, though.

Anti-/Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026

The Put-Ons

The Put-Ons

This band emulates the late 70's and early 80's mod/new wave punk sound a little too well. Like a cross between The Jam and The Undertones with a sunny Californian feel, The Put-Ons sound both raw and poppy. Unfortunately, they don't sound very original. Sometimes emulating an era too much makes you sound uninteresting, since, after all, this has already been done. They're a good band and all, but, hey, I'd rather listen to the Jam and Undertones.

Manic, POB 667, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Quarashi

Jinx

The Beastie Boys have been around for a quarter of a century (what a weird thought!), but only now have the clones come out. The latest is Iceland's Quarashi, who do a surprisingly good job of imitating Beastie-style overlapping and battling vocals, record-scratching, tempo changes, and genre-hopping, and mixing in a bit of Cypress Hill heaviness. Some songs like "Mr. Jinx," "Turfur," and "Xeneizes" are downright brilliant, and as a whole, this album is extremely good. But as far as originality, let's just say Quarashi has a song called "Copycat."

Time Bomb/Columbia, 550 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022-3211

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

The Queers

Pleasant Screams

The Queers are back on Lookout and back to their golden age sound (*Beat Off* through *Don't Back Down*). They haven't been this poppy since Joe King decided to become a curmudgeon, releasing a couple of lackluster, un-fun albums on Hopeless. The tunes here are catchy, positive, cute, and fun. Even negative songs like "Generation of Swine" and "See You Later Fuckface" are sung more in good humor than in the sourpuss whiney way of their albums in the recent past. The heavy Ramones influence is back (prevalent in "I Wanna Be Happy"), as is the Beach Boys-ish vocal harmonizing ("I Never Got The Girl"). Glad to see the Queers we know and love back, and I have to say, this album is very much worth the wait.

Fave tracks: Get A Life & Live It, It's Cold Outside, Danny Vapid, Tic Tic Toc, You Just Gotta Blow My Mind, Debbie Be True

Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703

Reaching Forward

Burning The Lies

I could be wrong, but I think Reaching Forward are a Dutch band. If that's true, they do a great impression of NY hardcore. Mid-tempo and angry, these sXers rock out a slew of impressive 60-second songs.

Bridge Nine, POB 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052

The Reputation

The Reputation

Sugary female-fronted indie pop, sort of like Hey Mercedes or Jimmy Eat World on estrogen. Great songwriting and honest lyrics rise this band above your usual muddily distorted indie rock.

Initial, POB 17131, Louisville, KY 40217

The Returnables

Unrequited Hits

The Returnables are a great pop-punk band from Chicago that has neat '77-sounding guitars and production, shades of 60's garage-pop, and bar-rock mid-tempo speed and attitude. I don't know much about this band, but they've got a great sound and they're worth looking into.

Best tracks: Bubblegum, Summertime, Run Run Run Run

Jettison Music, 6008 S. Harlem Avenue, Summit, IL 60501

Robbers

Orphan Endorphin Dolphin Dorsal Fin

Like the album's title, Robbers' music is a tongue twister of collected samples and live instrumentation. It's on the ambient, boring/atmospheric side, but most of it is pretty neat, and there are some standout tracks.

Keep Safe, 1016 Berlin Rd, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

The Rocking Horse Winner

Horizon

Scanning the sappy song titles, I feared for the worst. "Orange Blossom," "When Songbirds Sing," "Miss You".... I prepared for an emo nightmare. I pushed play and as soon as Jolie Lindholm's upbeat vocals overpowered me, I realized my grave, grave mistake. RHW have this bright, hopeful, happy indie sound that digs its hooks into you and fills your soul with goeey, chocolatey goodness. Jolie sounds like a less nasal Gwen Stefani, and the music sounds a bit like the more upbeat Sugarcubes tunes. They are so damn sunny and cheery, I feel like I'm going to burst into a rainbow of Skittles.

Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Rush

Vapor Trails

At long last, it has arrived. I have been living in a void, a hollow shadow of myself, waiting all these years. I shall wait no longer. The new Rush album comes out today. Well, last night at midnight to be exact. Being the biggest Rush fan on the planet, I was expected to camp outside of Virgin Megastore until midnight, whereupon I was going to bite and claw my way to the counter to be the first purchaser of Rush's *Vapor Trails*. Alas, my medusa of a girlfriend was "worried about me" and "wanted me to come home." Sure, it sounds innocent, but let's not forget that women are the anti-Rush. They not only don't understand the multi-textured splendor and appeal of Rush's music, but I believe they are physically incapable of it. While women seem to have been imbued with dexterous hands to better serve their male masters, the Powers-That-Be were not as gener-

Oops! Releases That Arrived After Deadline:

An Automotive

An Automotive

Six Gun Lover, 3203 Overcup Oak, Austin, TX 78704

Release date: September 10, 2002

Beatsteaks

Living Targets

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Release date: August 13, 2002

Biffy Clyro

Blackened Sky

Beggars Banquet, 580 Broadway, Suite 1004, New York, NY 10012

Release date: August 6, 2002

Frank Black & The Catholics

Black Letter Days & Devil's Workshop

spinART, www.spinart.com

Release date: August 20, 2002

Glasseater

Glasseater

Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683

Release date: ?

Lucid Nation

Tacoma Ballet

Self-released, www.lucidnation.com

Release date: Out now

Metal Machine

Kinked Slinky

Sanity Check Musec, POB 179, Boyce, VA 22620

Release date: Out now

The Pietasters

Turbo

Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

Release date: August 6, 2002

Poulain

With Fingers Crossed EP

Soft Serve, 137 Golden Beach Dr, Miami, FL 33160

Release date: Fall 2002

Rescue

Volume Plus Volume

Dead Droit, POB 68061, Grand Rapids, MI 49516

Release date: Out now

Rooney

3-song EP

Introscope/Geffen

Release date: ?

Serene

Serene

Arena Rock, 242 Wythe Avenue, Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211

Release date: Out now

The Starting Line

Say It Like You Mean It

Drive-Thru, POB 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

Release date: July 16, 2002

The Stryder

Jungle City Twitch

Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534

Release date: July 23, 2002

Time In Malta

A Second Engine

Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534

Release date: Out now

ous to their hearing orifices. As a result, my girlfriend wrinkles her nose at Rush and Blue Oyster Cult and other fine examples of the pinnacle culmination of music evolution, and yet enjoys listening to blasphemous musical abortions such as Weezer and Natalie Imbruglia. But my girlfriend does have a magical, invisible chain wrapped around me, and when she pulls hard, my judgment wanes, my mind clouds, and all I can think about is cuddlin' with my hunny. And so, the world's #1 Rush fan did not buy the album the moment it came out, the first transgression from a tradition that began almost ten years ago. The year was 1993. It was a world before terrorism, before the middle east crisis, before Y2K, and even before Britney Spears. These were innocent times. But I was not innocent; oh, ho ho! Indeed I was not, as I pretended to be sick to stay home from school. As soon as my mom's Buick turned the block, I was up and out of bed, throwing on clothes as I ran to the nearest Sam Goody to pick up Rush's *Counterparts* on cassette. I owned a CD player but I HAD to listen to the album; and so I got it on tape so I could play it on my Walkman during the 5-minute walk back to my house. Years passed. Before I knew it, it was 1996. My hair had been cut short. My black jeans and Cannibal Corpse T-shirts were supplanted by rudeboy regalia. And yet I blew off school once again to traverse over to Sam Goody to pick up the newest Rush album *Test For Echo*. When the first notes hit, I knew something was wrong. This wasn't Rush! It was crappy crap! I couldn't believe it. I felt misled, dirty, used, lied to, thwarted, spiritually flogged... *Test For Echo* was a dud. For the first time in my life, I had to deal with a bad Rush album, and even worse – the knowledge that Rush were capable of creating bad music. They were no longer superhuman immortals. I could no longer kneel before Neil, Ged was not God, and Lifeson was... uh... a bison (what the hell rhymes with Lifeson??). But it took years for me to admit it. I just never listened to TFE again, deluding myself that it was so good, human ears shouldn't attempt to decipher it. But then my once-worshiped heroes put out another travesty in 1997 – two greatest hits CDs that were completely pointless if you had the far-better *Chronicles* album. What was going on? I had to wait another year for the obligatory live album (four studio albums had just passed). That had to be good, since Rush are amazing live. But... they must've chosen the worst performances of their lives for this release. Bad sound quality, bad production, and... grrr... too many damn TFE songs. "Analog Kid" and the drum solo were the only redeeming qualities. Then I was "treated" to Alex Lifeson's laughable solo album, which has thankfully since gone out of print. That was followed up by Geddy Lee's solo album, the aptly titled *My Favorite Headache*, which did create many headaches during unsuccessful listening attempts. MFH sounded like outtakes from the TFE sessions. We are all doomed, I thought. More time has passed and the most anticipated event of the year is upon us – the glorious release of *Vapor Trails*. Will it be a turning point for the embattled band, or will it drive the last stake into

my heart? Oh shit, I forgot to buy it! Hold up a sec... Okay, just picked it up. Look, I had a stomach ache all day. I spent most of the day spewing diarrhea all over the executive bathroom. Come to think of it, it's all because of my girlfriend's cooking... could it have been fiendish sabotage to foil me from getting the new Rush album?? So anyway, cut me some slack; I'm still Rush's #1 fan and I will not stand for your impudent claims to the contrary! By the by, I'd like to point out that Virgin Megastore strangely did not have *Vapor Trails* on display. I saw the new Weezer, the new Moby, even the new Elvis Costello. All handsomely perched on attractive shelving units surrounded by big and colorful "sale!" and "new!" signs. I was expecting tons of people to be clutching the new Rush, eager to buy it and get it home for some giddy listens. But people were holding all sorts of other things, and the new Rush was just filed in the Rush section, as if it were any other old album. While I am happy the album wasn't displayed in a way that would cause it to be sold out before I got there, I am rather peeved that *Vapor Trails* was usurped by that dastardly Weezer. The CEO of Virgin Megastore shall hear of this. The cover has a neat new Rush logo (their typography constantly changes, as Rush has taught us that "constant change is permanent") featuring the band's name in all caps, in a fiery red color, with the back head of the R and the horizontal slash in the H extending into a "vapor trail." The logo is on the top left, sitting on top of a black bar (another black bar lies across the bottom, so it sort of looks zebra stripes or a letterbox film). On the white bar in the center is a fiery meteor, barreling left-to-right. Fans of Rush will undoubtedly call to mind the fiery balled images on the *Hold Your Fire* cover and within its liner notes. The liner notes are attractive, and the lyrics are easily readable. The motif for this album is Tarot, and each song is accompanied by a Tarot card, a tool to better illustrate the song's meaning. For instance, "Peaceable Kingdom" does not specify the World Trade Center attack, but its card is The Tower – one of the unluckiest cards in the deck, and woe be unto those who pick it. Not to mention it's a picture of a burning tower with people leaping out of it to their deaths. The packaging has passed my standards. Now for the ultimate test: the music. I will soon submerge myself in a (permanent) wave of new Rush music. I will lock myself in my study and absorb the music until it is a part of me. There is no "good" or "bad." There will only be me (and Rush). Don't ask me what I think of the album, for that would be like asking me what I think about myself. And I love myself. Mentally and physically. But mostly physically. *Anthem/Atlantic, 1290 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10104*

Justin Sane

Life, Love, And The Pursuit Of Justice

The front man from Anti-Flag is solo and unplugged! Justin Sane sings/preaches about his brilliant epiphanies: genocide is wrong! Capitalism is greedy! People need health care! War is dumb! What?!! The media and politicians are deceptive?! Oh my. Okay, I'm being needlessly snide. Well, I admit the album is decent

and there's some really good non-political stuff on here too, but this folksy album made me realize that Anti-Flag and other political punk bands really just play speeded-up hippy music.

A-F, POB 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Satanic Surfers

Unconsciously Confined

The new Satanic Surfers has them continuing in their mid-tempo SoCal pop-punk-emo vein started with the critically panned "Fragments & Fractions." I think this new one is their best yet, and if you've given up on them after F&F, give this a listen. They've never been poppier, and though some might consider that a negative thing, the songs are consistently good and the production is great.

Hopeless, 7702 Balboa Blvd #3, Van Nuys, CA 91406

Schatzi

Fifty Reasons To Explode

Distorted guitar-driven indie pop, akin to Superchunk or Jawbox. This is what emo should sound like – emotional but rockin. Wow, it's 3 am and I looked at the last sentence and I thought it said "emotional butt rockin." Wouldn't want to know what that is. **Best tunes:** Death Of The Alphabet, Guitars Vs. Humans

Mammoth, www.mammoth.com

Seether

Disclaimer

From the label that brought us Creed and subsequent clones comes this pretty good metalcore band from South Africa. They do sound like Creed (especially the Eddie Vedder-on-steroids vocals), but I can see the music being more appealing to indie fans than jocks. Good lyrics, too. *Wind-Up, 72 Madison Ave, 8th Fl, New York, NY 10016*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Selby Tigers

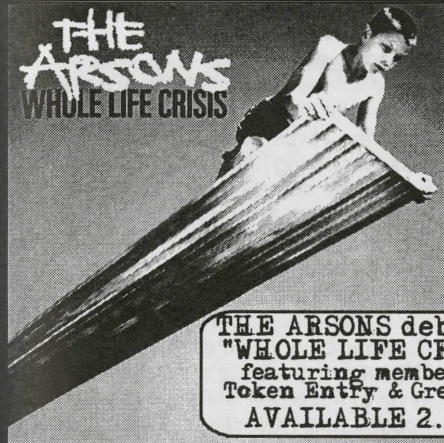
The Curse of the Selby Tigers

I had trouble writing this review because it's hard to compare the Selby Tigers to anyone else. So I went online to get ideas, and found this great line in Ink 19's review of ST's first album: "...the true sign of greatness is not being compared to anyone." But since you need to know what they sound like, here's my shot at it: Picture a straight-up, simple punk band that is also somehow a smooth blend of late 70's New York-style garage-y punk (Dead Boys, Voidoids), 80's new wave (Human League), tag-team male-female vocals (Vaselines, Pixies), and some elements of Bikini Kill, Dead Kennedys, Devo, and the Amboy Dukes. But you should really hear it for yourself. As another tiger once said, "It's GRRRRREAT!"

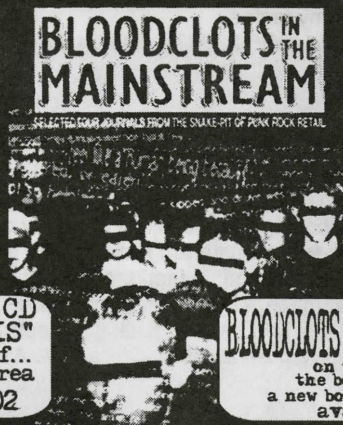
Fave tracks: Down In Uppertown, The Littlest One, Neighbor With A Defect, Superbreakout!, Punch In The Face (With Your Lips), The Prom I Never Had

Hopeless, POB 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7495

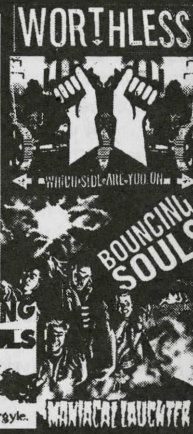
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Maia Sharp

Maia Sharp

Decent singer/songwriter stuff. It's got a slight country/70s disco diva tinge, and the production is very crisp. Your mom might like it.
Concord Records, ?

The Sillies

America's Most Wanton

Formed in 1977, this Detroit band always played second bill to the likes of MC5 and The Stooges. They spent most of their 25-year career unsigned, unheard, and completely unknown. All that has changed with this 12-song retrospective compiled by Smooch Pooch, featuring all their great songs you've never heard. It's surprisingly good; I'll admit I never heard the Sillies before, and I was blown away by how comparable they are to their contemporaries who've since become legendary. They're just as raw and sexually immature as any 70's punk rock band, with a Heartbreakers catchiness, a 50's rock swagger, and some honky-tonk piano occasionally thrown in. It's strange that after 25 years, they could only cull 13 songs, and of those a handful aren't very good or barely audible, but overall, this is a great introduction to a band I should've known about a long time ago.
Smooch Pooch, 2525 Hyperion, Suite One, Los Angeles, CA 90027

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Simple Minds

Cry

Considered a one-hit wonder here in the States, SM have been secretly putting out more excellent albums since then. Their new one is packed with absolutely fantastic power-pop songs that sound uncannily like U2, but with a little more synth vibe. "One Step Closer" is a brilliant song that everyone should listen to fifteen times a day, and "Cry," "Spaceface," "Disconnected," and "The Floating World" are winners too. The only misses are the two ballads "Face In The Sun" and "Cry Again." Otherwise, this lovechild of Joy Division and U2 have delivered another stunning pop record. Don't you forget about Simple Minds!! (I know, I'm hilarious.)

Eagle, Freepost, POB 21, London, W10 6BR

Sin In Space

Asteroid Band

Very similar to the Pixies. They've got the distortion down, the changing speeds, the nervous breakdown intensity, and the singer even sounds a bit like Frank Black! Pretty decent stuff...

Pandacide, POB 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952

Six By Seven

The Way I Feel Today

Muddy, monotonous dissonance that's supposed to convey openness and an outpouring of deep emotion, but comes out annoying and pretentiously sulky. Many of the songs would be pretty good in a Blur sort of way, if it wasn't for the background humming noise. I dunno, I'm disappointed. I'm going to weep.

Mantra Recordings, 17-19 Alma Rd., London, SW18 1AA

Sixer

Beautiful Trash

An excellent mix of punk n' roll and melodic street punk, like a modern version of early Clash meets Social D and Rancid. They're highly infectious – you can sing along to most of the album, and thankfully they're playing down the country rock that peppered their previous. I can't see anyone not liking this album. It's a good time.

BYO, POB 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

Smackin' Isaiah

We Know Sexy EP

6 tracks from this hardcore-influenced punk band. The vocals are too emo and the music is too dull for my tastes.

Fork In Hand, POB 230023, Boston, MA 02123

Snowdogs

Animal Farm

Wow, strange band for Victory's roster. I want to call it pop punk, but it's really just energetic corporate rock. I could definitely hear any of these songs on mainstream radio. Which is not to say they're bad; in fact, they've got a really great modern hard rock sound. And I mean that in a good way. Check them out!

Victory, 346 N. Justine, #504, Chicago, IL 60607

Soilwork

Natural Born Chaos

Soilwork are simply amazing. They're thrashy metalcore from Sweden that mix up different levels of heaviness, so there's something for all metal fans. They can be as melodic as early Metallica, as aggressive as any Victory band, and as deep voiced as Carcass, with tinges of death, goth, and industrial all in one. What's appealing about them though is how well they make a thrashy sound so melodic and harmonious. This band is a great bridge between hardcore and Scandinavian death metal.

Nuclear Blast, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250

Soundtrack Mind

Elementary School Talent Show

Sunny, poppy tripe. Bubbly guitars, rollicking piano, upbeat banjos, mid-tempo drumming... ugh, make it stop. They sort of sound like the Gin Blossoms, only slower and less rocking. Soundtrack Mind would be the soundtrack to my personal hell.

Shut Eye, 244 Iswald Street SE, Suite 1-A, Atlanta, GA 30316

Spitvalves

Movin On

Decent midtempo skacore from Orlando. I guess you could say it's hardcore punk with horns, since there's nothing very skanky about their sound. The horns can definitely be scaled down – they're mixed way too loudly and sound out of place. Some of the songs are way too long and not very catchy, but overall, this is a pretty solid release. Good songs include "Your Loss," "The End," and "Drinking Song #1."

Resurrection AD, POB 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701

[Spunge]

Room For Abuse EP

There's a reason why [Spunge] is one of England's most beloved ska-punk bands. They've got a polished, poppy punk sound, sort of like a good version of Reel Big Fish, only not annoying. There's nothing bad I can say about [Spunge] – they're extremely poppy and fun, they have great vocals (rare for ska-punk), and even their cover of "No Woman No Cry" was great (poppy but respectful of the original). My only beef with this EP is that there are only three tracks!

Jump Up!, POB 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Squad Five-O

Squad Five-O

Whoa... these guys rock. They have that gritty, punk n' roll sound similar to the Undertones, Hives, and Electric Frankenstein, and every song here has distinguishably catchy riffs and choruses. This is real, fist-pumping, high-octane rock. I didn't listen to the lyrics closely, so I can't tell you if they discuss the Big J too much, or even at all. Truthfully, it just sounds like a kick-ass punk rock album, and I only know they're a Christian band cuz they're on Tooth & Nail. This album made me a believer... a believer in the power of ROCK N ROLL!

Tooth & Nail, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

The Stereo

Rewind + Record

Jamie Woolford and friends are back, pushing poppy indie in different directions, like the Ben Folds Five-ish "Don't Say Uncle," and the Beatles-with-moogs "Too Little, Too Late." The music isn't bad, but the lyrics are a bit irritating. A couple of the songs really pander to "the kids" with cheesy "I know what it's like to be 15, so hey buck up" sort of lyrics. Even worse is "Vice-Versa Inquisition," a bitter song about getting bad reviews in punk rock zines, insinuating that a reviewer doesn't give a bad review because they think the music sucks, but because they're stroking their own egos and being punker-than-thou. It ends with a challenge to zine writers to pick up a guitar and try it out for themselves. Whatever, dude. Pick up a pen and start your own zine and give your band all the positive reviews you want.

Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Steroid Maximus

Ectopia

One of J.G. (Foetus) Thirlwell's many side projects, Steroid Maximus is like Esquivel on crack. Electronica is forced to do plushy lounge, jazz, Latin jazz, big band, tribal, you name it. It's a menagerie of sounds and instruments, brought together into structured and well-crafted songs. If Esquivel had today's technology and went insane while retaining his pop sensibility, it would sound something like this.

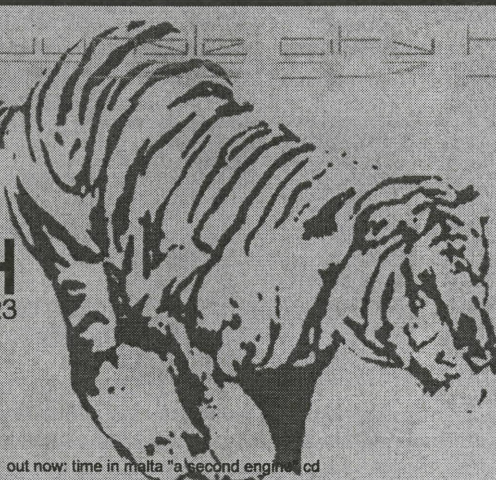
Ipecac, 136 Lawrence St., Ste. 3A, Brooklyn, NY 11201

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Still Breathing

September

Named after the tragic events of 9/11, "September" reminds us that faith in God will help us see through the difficult period of loss. And I guess it reminds us this through really, really bad death metal. I've said it once and I'll say it again: Jesus does NOT like death metal. He's more of a Phish fan.

Solid State, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

Striking Distance

The Fuse Is Lit EP

Raw, fast DC-style hardcore. The bonus live tracks aren't special, but overall this is another good hardcore release from Bridge Nine. What I like about B9 is that their bands tend to play hardcore the old school way, i.e. without death metal screaming or jock rock.

Bridge Nine, POB 990052, Boston, MA 02199

Strung Out

An American Paradox

Definitely the best Strung Out album so far. Sleek melodies and great lyrics combine for pure pop-punk power! Some might complain that they softened their sound a little, but I think this album is fantastic. So there you go.

Fat Wreck, POB 193690, San Fran, CA 94119

The Suicide File

The Suicide File EP

Featuring ex-members of Death By Stereo and The Hope Conspiracy comes this mega-heavy, straight-up punkcore band. Simple lyrics and song structure, but pretty cool.

Indecision, POB 5781, Huntingtn Bch, CA 92615

Sunday's Best

The Californian

Get it out of your mind right now that Sunday's Best is an emo band. They severed that tag with this bright new album packed with hook-laden college radio pop and super-melodic guitars. The lyrics are still "rise-from-defeat" emo fare, but they're delivered with such sweet vocal harmonies you hardly realize it. Maybe a little too polished and smooth, but otherwise a fantastic down-tempo pop album. **Best tunes:** The Try, The Californian, If We Had It Made

Polyvinyl, POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826

Superdrag

Last Call For Vitriol

Pretty good semi-fuzzy pop from this late-90s MTV buzz band. Sort of like the Replacements meet the Lemonheads with a tiny bit of Foo Fighters and a pinch of the Beatles. So that's a lot of pop right there, let me tell you.

Arena Rock, 242 Wythe Ave, Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211

Susperia

Vindication

From the stinking depths of Norway comes this black metal band. They're standard speed metal with machine gun drumming, boring guitars, and spooky atmosphere. The vocals are better than the norm, but the music puts me to sleep.

Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

Sworn In

Sworn In EP

If someone said to me, "Adam, one day you will like a British straightedge emo hardcore band," I would reply, "Shoot me now." But somehow Sworn In don't suck. They're old school enough (especially the vocals) to be melodic, and although the lyrics are standard, they aren't screeched or whined at you. I have to say, they're good. Okay, shoot me now.

Bridge Nine, POB 990052, Boston, MA 02199

System And Station

Compiling The #7

This is my first time listening to S&S, and I wish I had known about them sooner. They're a progressive indie band, sort of a cross between Flaming Lips and Superchunk, but slowed down a bit with an emphasized math-rock approach. I normally can't listen to this stuff for too long, but S&S are really melodic, so my interest is kept up. Pretty good.

Crustacean, POB 370156, Milwaukee, WI 53237

Taking Back Sunday

Tell All Your Friends

They sound just like Thursday.

Victory, 346 N. Justine, #504, Chicago, IL 60607

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Theatre Of Tragedy

Assembly

If you had to describe "new gothic metal," you need only say "Theatre Of Tragedy." The sound they have created in the mid-90s completely embodies everything that is good about gothic metal. It is at once industrial, with their unique and upbeat take on 80's new wave synth rock, and yet warmly alive and inviting. The music has both danceable grooves and metal hooks, and Liv's vocals aren't ethereal and creepy like Switchblade Symphony, but energetic and sexy as they deliver romantic and intelligent lyrics. *Assembly* perfectly typifies good goth, but its shining excellence also breaks down the boundaries of metal, new wave, and Euro dance, building them back up into a style that is distinctly theirs.

Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

Thirty-Two Frames

Thirty-Two Frames EP

This Kentuckian band has a pretty good old school hardcore-punk sound. Most notable are the driving drums and great vocals.

Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

Thought Riot

Shattered Mirror Syndrome

Since I'm cynical as fuck, I'm not into political punk. I believe that most socio-economic political issues are too complex to condense into two-minute songs, and the issues that are easy to decide on (racism sucks, politicians and the media lies to the public, etc.) are obvious, played-out clichés. Plus, as I get older, I get annoyed at kids younger and richer than me bitching about the system. That being said, Thought Riot surprised me by having pretty good lyrics. They say the same old same old, but they do it in a fresher, more poetic way

(their lyrics are actually more akin to thoughtful emo than generic political punk). The music is also much better than I expected, and the vocals are some of the best in this genre. No hardcore screaming or shrill whining. Plus good vocal melodies, background singing, and pop-punk song construction. If you like young, impassioned, political emo-punk you can't get much better than Thought Riot.

A-F, POB 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Tiamat

Judas Christ

If you love Sisters of Mercy, you'll dig Tiamat. While many SOM contemporaries lean toward industrial (Rosetta Stone for one), Tiamat maintain that atmospheric, vocal-driven classic goth sound, while still sounding fresh and modern. All fans of goth and dark new wave should get into this Swedish band and get this album.

Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250

Tiger Saw

Blessed Are The Trials We Will Find

Tiger Saw have a nice, quaint sound that melds a light mood, repetitive melodies, and sweet dual vocals. However, they need to speed things up. I'm not saying they should be death metal, but Tiger Saw are slow enough to prematurely age the listener. Kick it up a notch and you've got some decent light, contemporary music.

Kimchee, www.kimcheerecords.com

The Toasters

Enemy Of The System

I was hoping to like it - I'm still a huge Toasters fan and was really enthusiastic for the album. But I have to say, it's a pretty long wait for an album whose highlight is a ska version of Sweet Home Alabama. The album had a low production budget and sounds very sparse, almost garagey. Also, the lack of keys really threw me off, and the horns don't seem to mesh well. The first few songs aren't that great-they're okay but forgettable as they lack the usual Toasters catchy hooks and riffs. The first track "Skafinger" is just a throw-away tune, as is "Barney" (which was written years ago to kill time when someone onstage popped a string or needed to re-tune.) The Buford cover is kind of pointless, and the cover of "Social Security" doesn't offer more than the original. However, I did like some of the songs towards the middle and end of the album. "Why Oh Why," "Sitting On Top of the World," and "Pendulum" are great, and "Pirate Radio" is sweetly nostalgic. "Dog Eat Dog" and "Enemy of the System" continue the Toasters' lyrical trend of defeatism and self-martyrdom, which is getting kind of old. All in all, I think the album is decent after a couple listens, but weak considering it took years to come out and is filled with covers, throw-away songs, and live staples they've been doing for years. It's not bad, but there's just too much filler.

Asian Man, POB 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

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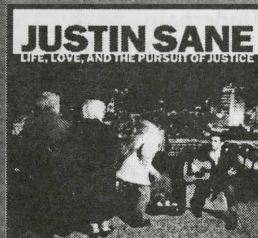
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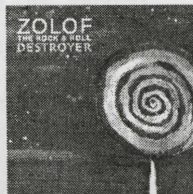


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Female/Male vocals. Moog like synth, and some catchy as
hell pop tunes make these 9 songs actually worth listening to
and really enjoyable. Reminiscent of the Rentals, if anyone
remembers who they are anymore. - Muddle

Wustinwonka@yahoo.com Wonka Vision P.O. Box 63642 Philly PA 19147

Twothirtyeight

Regulate The Chemicals

Lazy-paced indie rock with an introspective, songwriter style. It's very good, but a little too slow and bleak for me.

Good Songs: Coin-Laundry Loser, This Town Will Eat You

Tooth & Nail, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

Ultimate Fakebook

Open Up And Say Awesome

Dorky indie rock that's sort of a cross between the Replacements, Weezer, and cheesy metal ballad butt rock. The music is melodic and well-executed, but they really lay on the nerdy-boy-who-secretly-loves-the-cute-girl shtick a little too thick.

Songs I like: Inside Me, Inside You; When I'm With You, I'm OK; Popscotch Party Rock

Jeez, grow some balls: Wrestling Leap Year; Girl, Here's Another Lie; Combat Fatigue

Initial, POB 17131, Louisville, KY 40217

Underoath

The Changing Of Times

Speaking of changing, time has found Underoath carving out a unique niche in Christian hardcore, somewhere between metal, hardcore, emo, and a grey "general weirdness" area. I almost like these guys; their music is progressive and multi-layered and very melodic while keeping a hard edge. But dude, what the hell is up with the constant guttural screeching in the background? Do you realize how stupid it sounds? It's like someone who's constantly coughing up hairballs. It completely ruins your sound. I don't care if this screeching moron is your friend, get rid of him.

Solid State, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

Unleashed

Hell's Unleashed

Unleashed rule. Unleashed is sort of the Megadeth to Entombed's Metallica. I dunno, you figure it out. Anyway, these Swedish metal gods play slower-paced, groove-laden death metal with Phil Anselmo-meets-Lemmy vocals. It's fantastic, almost thrash-punk if it weren't for all the demon-this, demon-that lyrics. If you're interested in hearing a more satanic, midtempo Motorhead, get Unleashed! *Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250*

Uphill Battle

Uphill Battle

Pretty good lyrics, but otherwise standard metalcore. Nice n' fast, but nothing special. *Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082*

Various Artists

Atticus: Dragging The Lake

Brought to you by Blink 182's clothing line comes a good comp of punk bands that are more in the mainstream, or soon will be. Featuring Alkaline Trio, New Found Glory, The Movielife, Avoid One Thing, Midtown, Boss-tones, Glassjaw, Agent 51, Jimmy Eat World, Blink 182 and their side band, much more. Half the songs are previously unreleased. *Side One Dummy, 6201 Sunset Blvd, Suite 211, Los Angeles, CA 90028*

Various Artists

Because We Care

A diverse lineup including Reel Big Fish, Yellowcard, Rufio, Gameface, Ozma, Thrice, and a bunch others I never heard of, of whom I liked Limbeck, Astoria, Cheswick, Mind Driver, and Fairview. Proceeds go to support the Children's Hospital of Orange County.

Glue Factory, POB 404, Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Various Artists

Commercial

This Traffic Violation Records sampler showcases some of the interesting stuff going down in the suburban wastelands of Long Island. Featuring Latterman, The Insurgent, On The Might Of Princes, Splurge, Striped Bastards, more. 11 tracks. *Traffic Violation, Box 772, E. Setauket, NY 11733*

Various Artists

Estrus Double Dyn-O-Mite Sampler Vol. 3

Strong comp with Gas Huffer, Gasoline, The Monkeywrench, Man Or Astro-man?, and some cool garage punk and high-octane rock bands I previously wasn't familiar with, including The Cherry Valence, Fatal Flying Guilloteens, and more. *Estrus, POB 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227*

Various Artists

Hopelessly Devoted To You Vol. 4

The new Hopeless cheapo sampler boasts a great lineup: Thrice, Against All Authority, Common Rider, Atom and His Package, Mustard Plug, Samiam, Selby Tigers, Scared of Chaka, and more. Definitely worth \$4. *Hopeless, 7702 Balboa Blvd. #3, Van Nuys, CA 91406*

Various Artists

How We Rock

The key word is "rock." This comp has the rockinest bands this side of North America and Scandinavia: Turbonegro, Zeke, The Hives, New Bomb Turks, Dwarves, Donnas, INC, Electric Frank, RFTC, Gotohells, and a bunch more. Great lineup and tracks, and classy silver-on-black packaging. *Burning Heart/Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

Various Artists

Leisure Riddims For The Working Class

Holy crap, what a nice surprise! Not only does

Guest Reviewer: Stephen Shafer

The Toasters "Enemy of the System" (Asian Man)

Much like the reanimated Buffy, The Toasters have clawed their way out of the coffin that far too many were happy to nail shut, and are back in surprisingly strong form after the crash and burn of the US ska scene. How Bucket was able to survive all that went down—including his much celebrated label--and go on to record a better than decent follow-up to *Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down* is a testament to his damn-the-torpedoes tenacity and Job-like faith in Ska. With half the band made up of holdovers from the pre-meltdown days (Jack Ruby, Sledge, Larry Snell, plus ex-Scofflaw Buford O'Sullivan), it's no surprise that The Toasters are (if you'll forgive the tasteless, white trash analogy) as tight as The Rock's ass, and even though there are a few minor missteps, *Enemy of the System* is really a satisfyingly good album. Buck's singing is incredibly relaxed and self-assured (losing everything can set you free?), and while some of the band's later studio recordings sounded a bit workman like, The Toasters are clearly engaged and energized here.

Yet again, Bucket has crafted a fine set of instantly recognizable Toasters tunes, all incorporating a pop sensibility that suggests there's a Brill Building tunesmith lurking beneath his rough and ready persona (see Pirate Radio, Sitting on Top of the World, Pendulum or better yet, the kiss-off If You Loved Me and the fun calypso-y bonus track Road to Rio). In a perfect world, at least a couple of Bucket's cuts from each Toasters' album would have been in Casey Kasem's Top 40 countdown—his songwriting can be that good.

The tune Enemy of the System sounds great, but its lyrics—semi-autobiographical or about Jerry Dammers, you decide—are almost trite, when you consider that it's about defiance in the face of irrelevance. This re-recording of Dog Eat Dog is a great improvement on the EP version, but it takes too long to hit its stride and its topicality expiration date has come and gone (at this point, who really cares about all that). Much better are the songs that address universal themes like love, nostalgia (the aforementioned pop songs) and the corrupted American dream (Modern World America). The covers of the Barkays' Soulfinger and Ruby's reggae revamp of Lynyrd Skynyrd's Sweet Home Alabama are a blast, as are Ruby's excellent excursions into dancehall (Why Oh Why and Barney). Of all the frontmen for The Toasters over the years, Ruby has stretched himself the most—he's now easily the best singer and toaster of the bunch.

Nagging questions that popped into my head while listening to this CD: where do The Toasters now fit into the sonic landscape without the ska scene of old? If a ska band makes a record, does anyone care? All I know is that he was a lone man on a mission back in '82, who almost single-handedly created the US ska scene that peaked in '97. At least this time he's got a band, a slew of albums and a whole lot of history backing him up when he steps up on that soapbox.

traditional ska and skinhead reggae still exist in modern form, but the stuff coming out today is actually good! SpitShine, run by an Allstonian, compiled a dozen smooth ska sounds from veterans The Allstonians, Deal's Gone Bad, Israelites, Pietasters, and Pressure Cooker, and great tracks from unfamiliar acts like Westbound Train, Green Island, SoulSteppers, Color Blind, Take 5 and Rikki Rocksteady Special. *SpitShine, POB 377, Allston, MA 02134*

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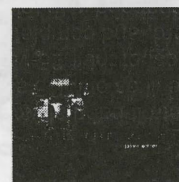


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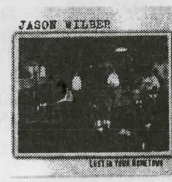
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"...who hid my teeth" - Floyd



Pink & Black Records
P.O. Box 190516 San Francisco, CA 94119
www.pinkandblack.com

Various Artists

Punch Records 2002 Comp CD

This comp features 23 bands, most of whom I'm unfamiliar with, so I expected some demo-quality high school crappola. Instead, I was treated with damn good punk, hardcore, metal, and even some ska, and very few misses. Standout bands include No Soap Radio, Ugly Stick, Split Fifty, SGR, and South Of Hell, and FO The Smack Magnet.

Punch, 3 Sherwood Court, Flemington, NJ 08822

Various Artists

Punk Rock Is Your Friend

Kung Fu follows the Quality Not Quantity philosophy. Their roster is modest in size, but includes excellent newcomers Audio Karate, Useless ID, Mi6, Antifreeze, and Ozma, big guns Tsunami Bomb and The Ataris, and label owners and personal fave The Vandals. This comp isn't just a good sampler, but also a treat for fans as it offers up one or two unreleased tracks from each of their lineup.

Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038

Various Artists

Ramones Forever: An International Tribute

This inevitable tribute album proves that no one can do the Ramones but the Ramones. Quite a number of bad covers here, with way too much Eurotrash from Belgium (12 out of the 23 tracks!). But there is some good stuff, including a cute French "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend," a Belgian "California Sun" (even the Belgians can't screw up this song), a Peruvian dance mix of "Beat On The Brat," and a lounge version of "Somebody Put Something In My Drink." A portion of proceeds goes toward the NY Presbyterian Hospital.

Radical, 77 Bleecker St, New York, NY 10012

Various Artists

Revelation 100: A 15 Year Retrospective Of Rare Recordings

There's a lot of good stuff here: demo tracks, unreleased tunes, b-sides, and exclusive tracks that span Revelation's 15-year history. If you like any of these bands, this CD is worth getting: Burn, Shai Hulud, Quicksand, Garrison, Gorilla Biscuits, Youth Of Today, Movielife, SOIA, Judas Factor, Farside, more. *Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232*

Various Artists

Roots of Dub Funk 2

Featuring dub that has more in common with ambient than reggae, but cool sounds and rhythms nonetheless.

Tanty, POB 557, Harrow, Middlesex HA28QE

Various Artists

Sample This, Too

This cheap-o sampler has upcoming tracks that won't be out for months, rather than the same ol' already released stuff. For 3 bucks, you're getting first-dibs on new songs from the Bouncing Souls, Anti-Flag, Youth Brigade, The Unseen, Manic Hispanic, Pistol Grip, One Man Army, The Beltones, and The Forgotten, plus more. If you're a fan of these bands like me, a comp like this is a great bargain.

BYO, POB 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

Various Artists

Stiff Generation

This is a label tribute to Stiff Records, which brought us the herky-jerky new wave sounds of Nick Lowe, Madness, Elvis Costello, Graham Parker, Devo, Ian Dury, and a few others. Highlights include Lisa Mychols' version of Baggy Trousers, Nixon Head's rockin' cover of Stupefaction, and The Trolleyvox's fantastic take on Is Vic There? Misses include an almost identical Welcome To The Working Week, a listless, slow-as-death Alison, and anything originally by Ian Gromm (never liked his stuff). Overall, this is a strong comp, and it rejuvenated my interest in early New Wave. *Groove Disques, POB 271, Haddonfield, NJ 08033*

Various Artists

Vans Warped Tour 2002 Tour Compilation

This huge 2-disc comp is a Who's Who of today's punk scene. Although I have gripes with corporately packaged rebellion and the fact that ska is always underrepresented at these things, the CD itself is damn good. I would be here forever listing the good bands on this disc, so let's just say the good outweighs the bad and if you like any style of punk, you'll be happy with the diversity of this comp.

Side One Dummy, POB 2350, LA, CA 90078

The Visible Men

In Socks Mode

Featuring two members of Cherry Poppin' Daddies, this is about as far from CPD as you can get. Gone is the scumbag swagger, in are the soft, lo-fi songs, most of which only feature vocals, bass, and piano. Jazzy and introspective, this album shows a slightly more mature side of these skuzzy swingers.

Leisure King, 541 Willamette #212, Eugene, OR 97401

Voodoo Glow Skulls

Steady As She Goes

I'm not a fan of VGS to begin with, but this one seems exceptionally bad. More bad punkcore with squeaky horns. Very noisy, but not in a good way. And there's all this pirate imagery and I think the pirate trend is really, really stupid and VGS is like 2 years late for it anyway. But you have to understand that I don't like noisy stuff. I live in NYC - I listen to music to get away from the noise. If you're a fan of VGS, you might like this. Personally, I'd rather cut out the middleman and just bash my head in with hammers. They should've called this album *Thar She Blows*.

Victory, 346 N Justine #504, Chgo, IL 60607

Tom Waits

Alice & Blood Money

The mad crooner is back with two good releases, *Alice* and *Blood Money*. *Alice* is the gentler of the two, harking back to his 70s loungey songs of broken hearts and from-the-pit-of-the-stomach misery. While most of the songs are slow and pretty in their sad Waits way (notably the title track and Flower's Grave), some of the tunes slip into Boresville, while others (like the abrasive Kommienezuspadt) don't belong at all. *Blood Money* is more percussive and ultimately more interesting,

with Waits' frightening bellowing, crazed polka shuffles, and lyrics that are more gallows humor than *Alice*'s just plain gallows. Both are classic Tom Waits, twisting gentle music into jagged fractals.

Anti-, 2798 Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026

Ben Weasel

Fidatevi

Our little Ben Weasel is all grown up! His first solo album, after a dozen on-again-off-again years with Screeching Weasel and the Riverdales, takes the usual first solo album approach: slower tempo, less formulaic arrangements, and more introspective lyrics. The only difference is that this is done WELL. SW fans might be disappointed because it's not SW, but it's still a solid pop-punk record, just not as silly, immature, or punky as his other work.

Panic Button, 3284 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Paul Westerberg

Stereo / Mono

Paul Westerberg came out of seclusion with a bang. This double album represents the two sides of the former Replacements frontman: Disc 1 (*Stereo*) continues and builds upon his quiet, acoustic solo works, while Disc 2 (*Mono* by his alias Grandpa Boy) represents his younger rockin' side. Both are brilliant. This is one of the best CDs of the year, and you should get it. *Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403*

Yesterday's Kids

Can't Hear Nothin'

Aw yeah. Me likey. This is pop with a punky edge that makes me want to tap my toe. This is so poppy I want to run naked through sprinklers. Get this you damn fool! *Panic Button, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Gina Young

Intractable

I looked at this CD and dismissed it as sappy lesbian folk rock, but gave it a chance anyway. And I was blown away. Not literally, cuz she's a lesbian and wouldn't be into that, but I was shocked at how good this is and how much I like it. First off, Gina Young's vocals have an excellent range - they can be deep and husky but also sweet and passionate. The music isn't just dorky acoustic arpeggios; you've got killer bass lines, some cool thumping drums, and stellar vocal harmonizing. It's, dare I say it, catchy. I wish I was a lesbian. *28 Days, www.28days.com*

Zao

Parade Of Chaos

Down-tempo deathcore with standard growling, phlegmy vocals, monotonous guitars and thumping drums. I dunno, this stuff was scary in the sixth grade, but where does it fit today? *Solid State, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111*

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SELF-RELEASED

Buzzsawyer

Buzzsawyer

Down n' dirty punk n' roll, similar to Electric Frank. I like the style, but the production isn't so great. The guitars are too loud, drowning out the vocals and drums which gives it a muddy, garagey quality that downplays their energy. Hopefully these Chapel Hill rockers will get signed soon and put out a better-sounding disc.

107-F W. Main Street, Carrboro, NC 27510

Cinema 8

Cinema 8

Formed by Michael Sauri of Fighting Gravity (barf), Cinema 8 plays cheesy power-pop that I think is trying to emulate U2. The guitars are extremely "blah", the songs are way too long, and the album is poorly mixed. However, the CD came with this promo pack that included some candy, a feather, and a condom. That's pretty cool.

www.cinema8.com

Donkey Punch

8 Track

On one hand, it's great to hear ska in this day and age. On the other hand, this is god awful. I hate to bash an unsigned band, and a ska band at that, but this brings to mind all the horrid high school ska bands that came out of the woodwork around 1997. Dumb songs, horns for the sake of having horns, and painful vocals. Hopefully they'll improve cuz we need more ska bands.

1108 E. University, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

The Drawing Board

Now We're Blood, Now We're Water EP

Poppy, melodic indie with some math rock arrangements thrown in to differentiate them. They're not bad, due in part to their extremely good sense of melody, but the problem is that they switch gears in mid-song, so you think you've listened to three songs when it was all just one. I guess I have traditional tastes when it comes to song structure...

www.drawingboard.net

The Driven

Gravity Clock

If you miss the live wire music of Extreme and Jackyl, drive your Camaro out to Long Island and pick up this very lengthy, 18-track release from this quintessential groove-oriented hair metal band.

thedriven.net

Elektrik Mistress

Elektrik Mistress

Just my luck. This Canadian metal band's debut was produced and mixed by Terry Brown. Yes, that Terry Brown. "Broom" to all you Rush fans. The greatest Rush producer EVER. And of course the CD is broken and refuses to be read. Grr. But the CD looks pretty interesting. They misspell "Elektrik" which means METAL.

www.elektrikmistress.00band.com

Entrain

Live Volume One: Rise Up

One-world music that mixes up everything from calypso to rock to Latin jazz. They can do the jamband thing, but they're talented enough to not let it slip into boring hippie music.

www.entrain.com

Exit Ocean

Exit Ocean

More lazy, mid-tempo, indie stuff. Exit Ocean do this well; they would fit in perfectly on Monitor or Polyvinyl's roster, but I really need music with more bite.

www.exitocean.com

Mad Crusade

Mad Crusade

This is cheesy progressive metal, complete with a 25-minute demons-n-sorcery Manowar-ish epic. The musicianship is pretty good; the vocalist sounds like a young Ozzy, and everyone can perform well. The drummer seems to be heavily influenced by Neil Peart, as he gratuitously uses more percussion instruments than he needs (including a generous feast of woodblocks and splash and china cymbals), and the glockenspiels at the beginning of "Asylum" sounds lifted from Rush's "Witch Hunt." (This song also contains guitar parts seemingly lifted from both Rush's "Losing It" and "La Villa Strangiato." Methinks they like Rush.)

410 Forest Lane, Baltimore, MD 21228

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Scott Mosher

Virtuality

The CD says to file under "ambient neo-progressive cyber-rock." So what is that exactly? It's fucking awesome, is what it is! Prog metal spliced with electronica, or vice versa, but with a real driving energy, unlike straight-up ambient. Hard-hitting drums, wailing guitar solos, heavy synths, and New Age lyrics and imagery combine for an aural experience of ROCK. This is music that begs for a laser light show. It kind of reminds me of *Signals*-era Rush, only way heavier. File under dope shit.

1510 Quail Ridge Rd., Suite 1, Raleigh, NC 27609

The Out_Circuit

Burn Your Scripts, Boys

Well-produced atmospheric indie. It bores the hell out of me because I'm not a very patient person and I want my music to kick ass right away and not slowly build up into some big, pretentious aural crescendo. But, still, it's pretty good for a demo. Actually, I kind of liked it. Why must I be so negative??

1176 Wimbledon Drive, McLean, VA 22101

The Vanities

The Vanities

Complex and strange arrangements, Beefheart-low to young-Patton-squeaky vocal range, and an upbeat-yet-spooky funkiness round out this band that I would call unique if they weren't completely biting off early Bungle and *Angel Dust*-era Faith No More. But hey, I love that stuff and they do it well. You can't pick many better bands to emulate. In fact, I'm

kind of surprised there aren't more bands that go for this sound. 10 solid tracks.

1751 Kimberly Drive, Wall, NJ 07719

West

Trailduster

West play a Johnny Cash-styled gothic country with a bit of surf distortion thrown in. It's dark, but they're tight enough to pull it off without sounding muddy or boring.

Best tunes: Where's Your Rope?, Halo (it's kind of Nirvana-ish)

Westbywestwest.com

VINYL

The Sights

The Sights

Two singles in one sleeve – brilliant! Red and yellow-colored vinyl, one song per side. Looks pretty cool. Sure wish my record player worked.

Fall Of Rome, POB 69431, Los Angeles, CA 90069

The Velvetteen

Immortality

Really gorgeous picture vinyl. I wonder if this is the same band as The Velvetteens – that ska band from the late-90s?

Pandacide, POB 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952

MISCELLANEOUS

Doris Martini #2 (audio zine)

This is a great idea, just poor execution. DM is an audio magazine – just pop in the CD and listen to the interviews, skits, and some music. Perfect for us lazy Americans who wish to read magazines but don't like, or can't, read. Only problem is that this really, really sucks. The skits are sooooo lame and unfunny, and the interviews are hard to hear because there's all this background noise and music and crap. Also, instead of playing snippets of songs and then reviewing them, DM plays entire songs with no commentary, which is really more of a promotional tool for the band/label than anything else. I really like this idea, but I would've done things much differently. I'd have more interviews with all sorts of interesting people, not just some indie bands I never heard of. I'd play snippets of songs with commentary, and maybe also do some book reviews and read passages. I'd have much funnier pieces (not skits – there haven't been good audio skits in like 50 years), and some other interesting content. Hopefully DM will improve. As it stands, it's just a bad radio comedy show spliced with an indie comp.

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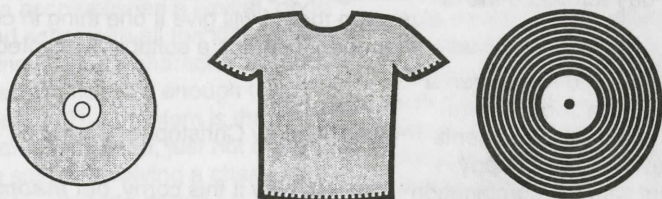
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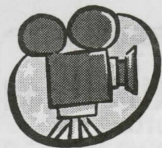
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The Sum of All Fears

Bad Company

Reviewed by Christopher Campbell

We could be entering a new era of fear not felt since the 1950's when the Cold War was new and so was atomic weaponry. Now the war against terrorism is at a high mark and nuclear bombs can fit in suitcases and it seems just about everybody has one.

Hollywood is doing a good job of accentuating the fear lately without deliberation, releasing films that were already in the can when this country got the shock of a lifetime last September. More than six months later, we are seeing congressional hearings for the possible incompetence of our protective agencies, peaking tension in the middle east, and threat of nuclear war in southwest Asia. Unless ignorance is your virtue, these films could have a more powerful effect on you than they were meant to.

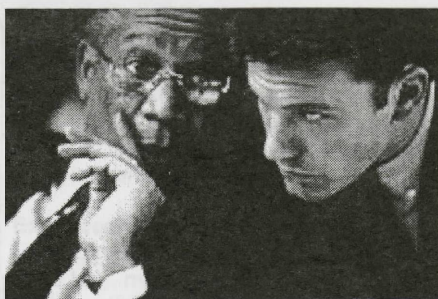
The Sum of All Fears is the perfect example. Based on the Jack Ryan series of Tom Clancy novels (of which we've already seen three adaptations), the picture focuses on the character's early days as a CIA analyst. Ryan (**Ben Affleck**) is taken to Russia by top dog Agent Cabot (**Morgan Freeman**) because of his expertise on a man (**Ciaran Hinds**) who has just become president there.

While in Russia, Ryan becomes suspicious of some missing scientists and goes into action with a special agent (**Liev Shreiber**) to unravel the plot. Affleck is no superhero, playing the inexperienced geek to Shreiber's James Bond. Meanwhile, a group of neo-Nazi terrorists have bought a lost nuclear device, detonate it on American soil, and frame the former Soviet republic, all a plan for extinction of the world's mightiest nations. The Aryan leader sums up the plan in a speech: "Hitler was stupid. He fought America and Russia, instead of letting them fight one another."

US President Fowler (**James Cromwell**) must make some heavy decisions, as must the Soviet leader. Fowler has many scenes with his advisors played with stark confusion and worry by actors like the amazing Philip Baker Hall that



"Ugh.. Why am I in this bloody stupid movie? I've been knighted, for bloody sake!"—Chris Rock



"So I have this idea for Project Greenlight..."

emulate the seriousness of *Thirteen Days*. While that film showed the intensity of a true near disaster of the past, this film frighteningly portrays the possibility of it happening again.

Ryan discovers the truth and single-handedly must avert world extinction on his own. Unfortunately, he will not be heard or believed. The final actions he makes to save the day reminded me of *War Games*.

The Sum of All Fears could have been a horrible Hollywood action show. There are, in fact, some unfavorable moments that reek of unbelievability and happy ending crappola, but with the combination of a precise and intelligent Clancy story with the perfectly executed direction of Robinson (*Sneakers*), I cannot imagine a more entertaining, grown-up Hollywood movie this year.

Bad Company, on the other hand, is very much a horrible Hollywood action show. **Joel Schumacher** seems capable of good filmmaking, evidenced in *Falling Down* and *Tigerland*, but he is used to making some of the most disappointing pieces of garbage ever seen (*Batman & Robin*, *Batman Forever*, *Dying Young*). *Bad Company* doesn't really fall into either category. It just doesn't register enough feeling in me to say that it's as miserable as ruining the Batman franchise or introducing us to Julia Roberts.

The movie centers on a Menaechmi sort of plot involving twins. But instead of crazy hi-jinx involving the twins being confused for one another, here one twin has been killed and the other is confused for him. **Chris Rock** plays the twins, primarily the pauper who is recruited by CIA agent Oakes (**Anthony Hopkins**) to replace the prince in a mission involving a suitcase-sized nuclear device.

After three days of fish-out-of-water and Pygmalion-based humor, the mission commences with Rock and Hopkins meeting with an arms dealer played by the usually charming **Peter Stormare** in a cliché role and performance. The ensuing plot and action is similar in story and lack of excitement to *The Peacemaker*.

Schumacher shows no skill in directing the film. I got so tired of trying to follow what was going on (cinematically that is, the story was received and never lost predictability from the first few minutes), that I lost desire to even pay attention. Even Rock's one-liners weren't fresh enough to bother listening to while my eyes were wandering.

Unlike *The Sum of All Fears*, *Bad Company* never achieves a tense feeling of thrill or peril. The picture was postponed from being released last fall because of 9/11, but I can't imagine it would have affected an audience even then. I will give it one thing in common, though, which is a suitably appointed title.

Insomnia

Reviewed by Christopher Campbell

I hate to play it this corny, but *Insomnia* really did make me sleepy. The slow-paced story and brightly lit photography put a strain on my eyes, causing them to grow heavy until I eventually shut them. Fortunately, in the few moments my eyes were closed, I am certain that I missed no memorable cinematic achievements.

Al Pacino and **Martin Donovan** play Los Angeles detectives sent to Alaska to help out the locals with a murder mystery. I don't particularly understand how or why this would ever happen, but it's useful for the story. Pacino is under investigation by internal affairs for tampering with evidence and Donovan states that he's decided to testify against him. The next day, while chasing the murder suspect in thick fog, Pacino accidentally shoots and kills his partner, then covering it up as being the suspects doing.

He cannot sleep partly because of the guilt, but more because of the 24-hour daylight found in northern Alaska at that particular time of year. He becomes weak and weary and when he eventually comes into contact with the murderer (**Williams**), a local detective novelist offering a deal in a wishful Hitchcockian twist, Pacino agrees to frame the murdered girls' boyfriend for the crime.

I am not the biggest fan of Hitchcock, but I know he could've made a much more interesting picture with that twist. Instead, the screenplay decides to put more emphasis on the sleeping disorder, giving Pacino his least powerful performance since *Scent of a Woman* (for which he was given a masked



Al Pacino grabs Robin Williams by his third chin in this suspenseful scene.

lifetime achievement Oscar). Williams and **Hilary Swank** are also more capable than what they showcase here, just passing by with quiet, monotony.

First-timer Sweitz wrote the screenplay based on a Swedish film, and if you've ever seen much Bergman, you know how drowsy the Scandinavians make their films. She accomplishes a typical "good" Hollywood script with all the little details like naming Pacino's character Dormer in Dickensian fashion. It's enough to make me nauseous. The problem is that the picture is technically good, just not enjoyable. Only one scene, involving a chase across floating logs, kept me drawn.

Mostly, I was disappointed with *Insomnia* because Christopher Nolan's previous two films were full of creativity and wonder. I am aware that he was hired for this job before *Memento*'s release and imminent success, so I'm not doubting his future nor labeling him a sellout. Now that he is the acclaimed auteur, we can push this under the same carpet as John Sayles' or Luis Bunuel's Hollywood half-jobs.

Human Nature

Reviewed by Christopher Campbell

Human Nature evokes the spirit of writer Charlie Kauffman's screenplay for *Being John Malkovich*. Unfortunately, it is a much weaker film, stemming from the direction of Michel Gondry and the feeling that Kauffman's script went through far fewer drafts than his debut.

Human Nature tells the story of three people narrated from their confessions. There is Lila Jute (**Patricia Arquette**), a woman who at puberty began growing hair all over her body, causing her to excommunicate herself from humanity and live in the woods. There is Nathan Bronfman (**Tim Robbins**), a virginal scientist whose thesis involves teaching table manners to table mice and is himself removed from normal society by his compulsiveness toward such manners. Finally there is Puff (**Rhys Ifans**), a man who was raised in the woods by a father who thought himself to be an ape. Nathan ends up rearing Puff

into society in a plot that is more *Walk Like A Man* than *My Fair Lady*, bringing about tired scenes of Puff's reversions and a slapstick-inducing shock collar.

The unusual concept shares a lot of surreal originality with *Malkovich* and even has some familiar moments on the theme of obsession. But while the previous film was bold in its foundation in reality, this film is more like a cartoon and lacks the ironic contradictions. The photography is bright and plastic, complementing the hammed tone and performances.

Human Nature is not a bad film but it is disappointing in comparison to *Being John Malkovich*. There are some very funny moments including two at the end: As Puff walks down the street, followed by a parade of media, stripping off his clothing in preparation to return to the wild, a family is seen in their apartment watching the spectacle on television instead of witnessing the event, viewable from their window. A few moments later when he is reunited with his mother, he glances at his wrist-watch, the only remaining item on his body, to prompt the statement that it is time to leave humanity.

Charlie Kauffman is still, in my opinion, the oddest and most fun of original new storytellers. If his previous script had not been already filmed, I might love the film more, witnessing the rise of a new Savage Steve Holland. The script is very similar to an early draft of *Malkovich* found on the web and has the same potential for genius if only it had been given more concentration.

More of Chris' movie reviews are at www.geocities.com/cameroncaul

Spider-Man

Reviewed by Syed Bokhari

Hollywood has always had a fascination with New York. After all, it's the place to be. You can do anything anytime and driving isn't a necessity. Granted, the weather isn't as nice, but at least there's no fear of being sucked into a crack in ground.

Manhattan has always had its place in the limelight; however, the other boroughs are virtually ignored in comparison. Sure, Brooklyn had the *Honeymooners* and the *Cosby Show*, but Queens has had little fanfare. Other than the fact that Queens is home to both NYC airports, it lacks the depth of history that Brooklyn and Manhattan enjoy.

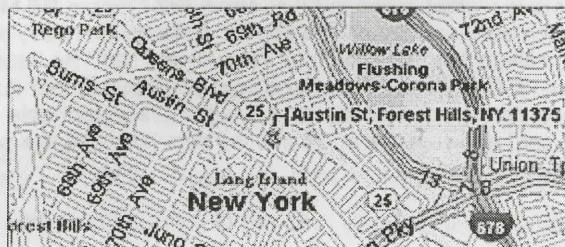
Although shows like *All In The Family* mentioned the borough on some occasions, such anecdotes were merely incidental to the action

on screen and did little to present a realistic depiction of life in Queens. It wasn't until the Eddie Murphy and Arsenio Hall film, *Coming to America*, did Hollywood and the world take notice. I was in the 4th grade when the McDonald's on Queens Blvd. was turned into McDowell's for a short time. Even at this early age, I felt a sense of validation for a borough that had virtually been ignored. The television series, *The King of Queens*, by far, broke more barriers for Queens than any other series yet. Not only is the show prominently set in Queens, but is even mentioned in the title - a first for any of the non-Manhattan boroughs.

In comic books, and now finally on the big screen, Spider-man has brought Queens to the forefront. Since 1963, Peter Parker's Aunt May has maintained a residence in Forest Hills, Queens in the home where Peter was raised. Until her death in Amazing Spider-man #400, Peter Parker frequently web-slung the trip out to Queens to visit his elderly aunt.

Spider-man's big screen debut prominently featured areas of Queens. Wannabe non-native New Yorkers and the rest of America are slowly beginning to understand this new resurgence of Queen Pride. Stories of audience applause and cheering have been reported by several Queens moviegoers, especially at the many Forest Hills theaters, such as the Midway on Queens Blvd. The mere mention of major roadways, such as Woodhaven Blvd and Queens Blvd, has caused reasons for celebration. I, myself a long-time comic book collector and Queens alumnus, found myself freaking out within the first five minutes of the flick, a strange sight for those in the Ft. Lauderdale theatre where I first watched *Spider-man*. Although aware that much of the comic book was set in Queens, I was wholly unprepared for the onslaught for Queens-related references and honest portrayal of the Queens lifestyle. It's like an inside joke - an entire aspect of the film that only other current and former Queens residents can understand. It is clear that *Spider-man* marks a forthcoming renaissance and resurgence of Queen Pride.

For those who follow the comic book, Peter Parker and Mary Jane marry and move to Chelsea, Manhattan. I myself now call Manhattan home, but like the Parkers, Queens will always be part of my fabric, my roots, my life. Queens Pride!



Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia **

By Christopher Campbell

I would love to write an article for you all about the top ten movies that scared me, but I honestly do not get scared often at the movies. I truly despise horror pictures and find them to be ridiculously boring. The fact is, there isn't much that scares me at all and each rare case is documented somewhere in this magazine.

The only two movies that left me feeling very freaked out were **Poltergeist** and **Poltergeist 3**. The former made me pay close attention to my toys and the trees outside my bedroom window, constantly making sure they were remaining still and lifeless. The latter gave me a temporary fear of mirrors (catoptrophobia) and I had to do some Groucho Marx routines to be sure they were obeying their function at all times. I've given up that fear now that I'm vain and love to look in mirrors every chance I get.

More recently, I received some chills watching **Series 7**, a movie about a fake reality series where contestants must kill each other. Most of the time, the movie was too realistic and therefore highly disturbing. Aside from these three cases, I've only been really frightened during movies with Reese Witherspoon in them, because she really gives me the creeps.

Instead, I'll address this column toward phobia movies. There are a few of them, but not nearly as many as you might think. Phobia movies are about, obviously, phobias, really strong disordering fears. While I may include movies where it is important for a character to be phobic, I draw the line at times where it is a convenient plot device for them to be. You know the kind I mean. It is quite typical for a character to have a fear, introduced somewhere early on as foreshadowing, which he must overcome in the end to thwart the villain. These are all cheap **Vertigo** knockoffs and none have the same focus on phobia quite like Hitchcock does.

Arachnophobia should have been a phobia movie with that title. Unfortunately, it isn't really about arachnophobia as a disorder, despite the convenient fear that Jeff Daniels' character suffers from. It's about little mutant hybrid spiders that kill people. I'm sure that everybody would have a fear of spiders if this was normal, but it isn't. The film should be called "Fear of Little Mutant Hybrid Spiders" because that is what the characters are really scared of.

An interesting psychological drama, **David and Lisa**, explores a young teen's fear of being touched (Aphenphosmphobia or Haphophobia) as he falls in love with a schizophrenic girl. While a modern film would see this as a situation for comedy, the 1962 film touchingly follows the pair as they learn to understand and cope with their diseases.

Comedic phobia can be done very well, though, as evidenced in **What About Bob?** Bill Murray plays a multiphobic individual who invades his doctor's vacation. Not a perfect film by any means, much of the time Murray plays the part as if he's a con artist faking the disorders rather than being an actual case study. Yet, he is still entertaining throughout and it is very fun watching Richard Dreyfuss, as the doctor, become overly annoyed and eventually insane, a perfect punishment for a psychiatrist who has no real care for his patients and views them all as nuts.

There is a great scene in **What About Bob?** where Bill Murray overcomes his fear of boats. He's tied to a mast with heavy rope wearing a life jacket and shouting, "I'm sailing! I sail!" He becomes so excited. **One Crazy Summer** also deals with this fear (for which I can't find a medical term, maybe it's just thalassophobia - fear of the sea) and supplies an interesting cure involving sex with Demi Moore.

Another decent comedy is **In and Out** which tackles the common

disorder homophobia in a stereotypical and ironic satire. It could have been a disaster without the talents of Kevin Kline as the teacher who discovers he's gay and Joan Cusack as his abandoned fiancé.

Automatonophobia is the subject of a few films. It is the fear of animatronics, wax figures or anything that falsely represents a sentient being. This includes robots and intelligent supercomputers. Examples include **2001: A Space Odyssey** and **Chopping Mall**, but a wonderful recent addition is Spielberg's **A.I.: Artificial Intelligence**. From the abandoning mother to the prejudicial populace to the murderous Flesh Fair, androids and other robots get the royal racism treatment. It is a sub-genre of the xenophobic film (another sub-genre could be superhero blockbusters like **X-Men** and **Spider-Man**, only done with less attention).

Xenophobia pictures are the most typical phobia films. From **The Birth of a Nation** to **American History X**, we have seen the Klan and nazis and skinheads displaying their fear and hatred of foreigners. No film shows the situation with better understanding than **Romper Stomper**. While **American History X** does contain the important arguments regarding affirmative action, it lacks the feeling of invasion that causes the fears that Russell Crowe and his gang experience in an Australia quickly being overrun with Asians. Not that the film is sympathetic toward racial hatred or the violence that comes of it, but it takes a look at the mind of a villain in a way that many movies wish they could. D.W. Griffith's epic **Birth of a Nation** is full of racial stereotypes more humorous (embarrassingly) than the recent **Undercover Brother**.

Here, on a different note, are some recent and classic films you may wish to avoid if you suffer from any of the following phobias:

Amnesiophobia (fear of amnesia): **Memento**, **The Bourne Identity**
Anglophobia (fear of England): **Gosford Park**
Arachnophobia (fear of spiders): **Eight Legged Freaks**, **Spider-Man**
Arithmophobia (fear of numbers): **Pi**
Bolshephobia (fear of Bolsheviks): **October (Oktyabr)**
Brontophobia (fear of thunder and lightning): **Clue**
Cacophobia (fear of ugliness): **Freaks**
Cryophobia (fear of extreme cold): **Ice Age**
Cynophobia (fear of dogs): **Scooby Doo**
Deipnophobia (fear of dining): **The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie**
Ephebiphobia (fear of teenagers): **The New Guy**
Equinophobia (fear of horses): **Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron**
Francophobia (fear of the French): **Amelie**
Gamophobia (fear of marriage): **Four Weddings and a Funeral**
Geliophobia (fear of laughter): **Wet Hot American Summer**
Gerontophobia (fear of old people): **Cocoon**
Gymnophobia (fear of nudity): **Full Frontal**
Gynophobia (fear of women): **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood**
Harpaxophobia (fear of being robbed): **The Scorpion King**
Hemophobia (fear of blood): **Blade II**
Isolophobia (fear of being alone): **Juwanna Mann**
Lutraphobia (fear of otters): **Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas**
Musophobia (fear of mice): **Stuart Little 2**
Nucleomitophobia (fear of nuclear weapons): **The Sum of All Fears**
Octophobia (fear of the figure 8): **Murder 8y Num8ers**
Oneirophobia (fear of dreams): **Waking Life**
Paraskavedekatriaphobia (fear of Friday the 13th): **Jason X**
Parthenophobia (fear of virgins): **Crossroads**
Parturiphobia (fear of childbirth): **Window Water Baby Moving**
Phengophobia (fear of daylight): **Insomnia**
Porphrophobia (fear of the color purple): **The Color Purple**
Potamophobia (fear of rivers): **A Night In The Life of Jimmy Reardon**
Proctophobia (fear of rectums): **Pink Flamingos**
Pupaphobia (fear of puppets): **The Muppet Movie**
Selachophobia (fear of sharks): **Jaws 4: The Revenge**
Soceraphobia (fear of parents-in-law): **The In-Laws**, **Meet the Parents**
Spacephobia (fear of outer space): **Star Wars 2: Attack of the Clones**
Technophobia (fear of technology): **Minority Report**
Triskaidekaphobia (fear of the number 13): **Thir13en Ghosts**
Zoophobia (fear of animals): **The Country Bears**
** *Fear of long words*

Snap Judgments of Movies We Haven't Seen

Adam Liebling & Bryan Kremkau

Austin Powers In Goldmember—Okay, this is getting old.

Blood Work—Clint Eastwood gets some blood work done, mostly for Alzheimer's and osteoporosis.

Blue Crush—Hot babes in wetsuits. That's all you need to know.

The Bourne Identity—Matt Damon has to figure out why he's being hunted down by assassins. Hmm, maybe All The Pretty Horses and Legend Of Bagger Vance has something to do with it.

Cinema Paradiso: Director's Cut—More movie magic in this beloved classic about the power of film. This director's cut features the never-before-seen Mos Eisley canteen dance video and further evidence that Deckard himself is a replicant.

City By The Sea—Robert De Niro plays a cop. Yes, again. But this time he's after a killer. Yes, again. But this case forces him to confront the darkness of his past. Yes, again.

The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course—On a collision course to the 99-cent bin at the video store. Crikey!

The Dangerous Lives Of Altar Boys—Answers the age-old question: What's the difference between Catholic priests and acne? (Acne at least waits until the boy is 12 before coming on his face.)

Daredevil—Ben Affleck is blind. Maybe that explains his recent script choices.

Divine Secrets of Ya-Ya Sisterhood—I hope the divine secret is that they're all into bukkake.

Eight Legged Freaks—I'm more scared of the two-legged freak named David Arquette.

Halloween: Resurrection—Okay, here's what you do. Take Michael Myers. Chop off his head. Hack up all his body parts. Douse the parts with gasoline and burn them til they're ash. Feed the ashes to a squirrel. Then kill and immolate the squirrel. Then take a rocket and blast the squirrel's ashes to the sun. Then move to Antarctica.

Harry Potter & The Chamber Of Secrets—I wouldn't want to see R. Kelly's sex chamber of secrets. Actually, yes I would.

Igby Goes Down—By natural law, anything with Jeff Goldblum has to be good. Even a movie with Claire Danes and one of the Culkin clones.

Jackass The Movie—If this guy really had balls, he'd kill himself on camera.

Juwanna Mann—A basketball player dresses up like a woman. Dennis Rodman supplied wardrobe.



Where we take the critic's chair... without ever seeing the movie!

K-19: The Widowmaker—I couldn't get through K-12, but I got me a GED.

Like Mike—I wanna be a washed-up athlete, trying to relive my glory days, too!

Lilo & Stitch—Disney doesn't have many more cultures to exploit. This one's about Hawaiians and aliens. All they have left now are Lithuanians and sea monkeys.

Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers—Frodo dies in the 9/11 tragedy.

The Master Of Disguise—Dana Carvey disguises the fact that his career is over.

Minority Report—Tom Cruise is accused of a crime he claims he didn't commit. Namely, sodomy.

Mr. Deeds—Adam Sandler pays homage to classic film by once again remaking "Billy Madison."

The Powerpuff Girls Movie—Dude, this is SO 2001.

Red Dragon—A movie about when Hannibal Lecter was a young man and martial arts master.

Reign Of Fire—I heard they had to cut out the scene where the dragons set the World Trade Center on fire.

Road To Perdition—I have no idea, but I'm sure it'll win an Oscar.

Scooby Doo—Through state-of-the-art computer technology, we are fooled into thinking Freddie Prinze, Jr. can act.

Shaolin Soccer—I shit you not. This movie is going to rule.

Skins—A documentary on the repressed homosexuality of skinheads.

Slap Her, She's French—Huh?

Spirited Away—Omigod... The new Miyazaki... I know, I'm a total anime fan-boy, but it's Miyazaki, damn it!!!!

Spy Kids 2: The Island Of Lost Dreams—Even with all that cool gadgetry, those two nerdy kids need a serious beatdown.

Stealing Harvard—Tom Green does some goofy stuff that we might have laughed at five years ago.

Stuart Little 2—Stuart Little discovers he's really a sewer rat and eats a baby.

Sweet Home Alabama—Play some Skyn... oh, you are.

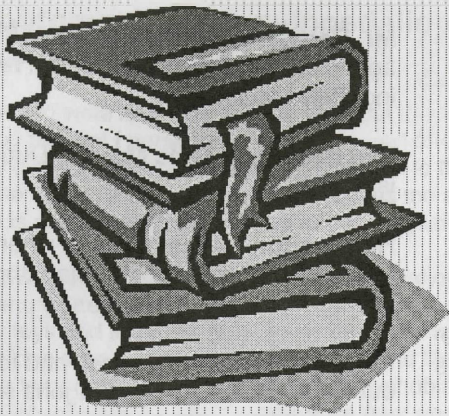
Swimfan—Reinforcement that women are psycho sluts and men are their poor victims.

Undercover Brother—Actually, this looks pretty good.

Who Is Cletus Tout?—Isn't he the slack-jawed yokel on the Simpsons?

Windtalkers—Or as it was originally titled, Not Another World War II Movie.

XXX—Finally, my home video makes it to the big (and I mean BIG) screen!



READING LIST

Blinded By The Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative

David Brock

Crown Pub, 288 pages

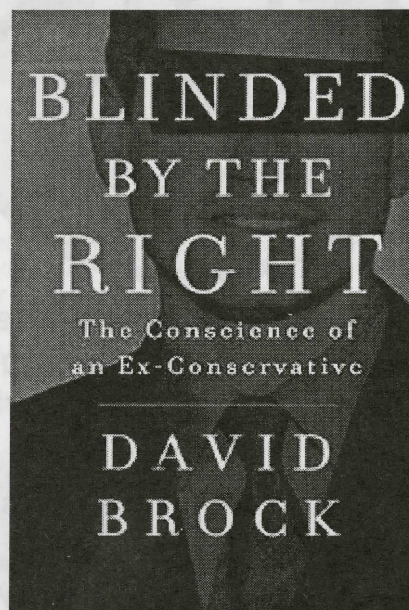
As a cold-hearted conservative, venomous reporter, slanderous author, and character assassin, David Brock gained notoriety for his *American Spectator* article on Clinton's years in Arkansas, as told by state troopers, which helped set the table for the Paula Jones lawsuit. He also penned the popular *The Real Anita Hill*, tarnishing the subject's reputation through shoddy journalism, which changed public opinion on Clarence Thomas, helping him get his seat on the Supreme Court. While writing his follow-up, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, Brock attempted objectivity and better journalistic practices, resulting in an even-handed book that deeply drove in a wedge between him and the Clinton-hating right who wanted another hatchet job.

Depressed, alienated, and facing an identity crisis, Brock began reevaluating his career and life (the two were inseparable), and decided to spill his guts to clear his conscience. The result is *Blinded By The Right*, a fascinating dish-y tell-all wrapped in a memoir. The book is a frightening look at the greasy (and filthy) wheels of politics: the lying, the spinning, the scandal-creating, the shadowy funding, and, of course, the hypocrisy.

The book details the behind-the-scenes of Troopergate and the Arkansas Project, giving good support to Hillary's infamous claim that she and Bill were being targeted by a "vast right wing conspiracy." There are also tons of anecdotes and conversations illustrating the hypocrisy, insanity, and unethical and illegal activities of many of Brock's former friends in their attempts to create and perpetuate scandals against the Clintons.

While the book is spellbinding, it doesn't have as many revelations as I had hoped. I was giddy from the personal attacks on Republicans, but I was disappointed by the lack of any information I hadn't already known. Any news junkie knows by now that conservative politicians and re-

porters staged a quiet, underground war against the Clintons (funded by Richard Mellon Scaife, says Brock), dredging the muck in Arkansas for any sleazy story they could find.



I also have to question Brock's motives. The book is obviously another hatchet job, but just in the opposite direction. Since he's not a profitable author for the right anymore, it could seem this book was written not as a purging memoir to clean his troubled soul, but a way to get back in the spotlight and on the bestseller lists, only this time to be embraced by the center and left.

His words do seem sincere, and it does seem like he's an emotional and mental mess over his past actions, but at times it seems like it's overdone. Some parts feel like he's sobbing over the page, leaving some reviewers to consider his book too self-pitying, while more jaded reviewers feel it's a façade to mask self-love. Clearly, Brock wants you to sympathize with him, but how can you trust

a confirmed liar?

Although I'm skeptical of the tone and motive, the content rings true, and the deafening silence from the usually defensive right helps Brock's case (only a handful of tiny details have been debated, the rest of Brock's accusations have remained unopposed. And even though Drudge's recent smear campaign uncovered Brock's stay at a mental hospital to make it seem like Brock is an insane liar, the important content in the book was never refuted by him).

Overall, this is a gripping and eye-opening book about the repugnant depths into which our two political parties sink to undermine each other, specifically the "moral majority" and the "unifiers, not dividers" who are anything but.

—Adam Liebling

Stupid White Men ...and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation!

Michael Moore

Regan Books, 280 pages

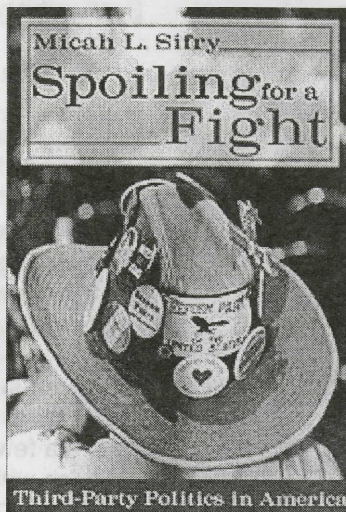
When Michael Moore is good, he is really good, using his sharp wit and well-developed sense of irony to drive home his point (see *TV Nation*). But when he's bad... yikes.

For one thing, *Stupid White Men* is a fairly breezy read. It's a small-sized hardcover with very large type and charts and sidebars that seem to be just filler. Weighing in at around 280 pages, it only took me two 25-minute subway rides to read it. It's formatted and designed like a David Barry book, and looks like it should be shelved in the Humor section, a common occurrence which I've heard Michael Moore gets angry about.

But why should Moore expect anything else? This really isn't good political commentary. While I agree with a lot of the content, most of it are no-brainers. Yes, Boy George stole the election. Yes, Clinton did little for the environment. Yes, there are many societal ills. Yes, politicians suck. Yes, Ralph Nader needs a new suit. There's really not much intelligent thought behind the humorous tirades, and the "facts" that Moore does offer tend to be embellishments or exaggerations.

Which is fine. Moore isn't exactly Howard Zinn. He uses absurdities and ridiculousness, not boring research, to make his point. The only problem is that Moore doesn't have much to say, and whatever substance there is becomes drowned in gags that don't work well this time around. Not to mention his smug superiority is unbelievably grating.

I did enjoy the book to an extent; some of the essays were pretty funny. And it's great that it topped the bestseller list, and that the masses are checking him out. (I'd rather people nod along with Moore's book than Ann Coulter's *Slander*.) But as many reviewers have said, this book just isn't funny enough for fans of satire or intelligent enough for fans of political commentary. As a crusader against injustice and corporate greed, Moore needs to justify the \$25 price tag on this breeze-through book. —Adam Liebling



Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America

Micah L. Sifry

Routledge, 288 pages

Sifry, editor for *The Nation*, has served up an extremely impressive chronicle of third parties in modern America. He begins by arguing the need for more options for voters. Polls show that most Americans want more than two choices: people are tired of being forced to choose the lesser of two evils, and more and more voters are feeling alienated and disenfranchised from the two large parties. This frustration has discouraged voter participation, resulting in the extraordinarily low voter turnout in the last few elections.

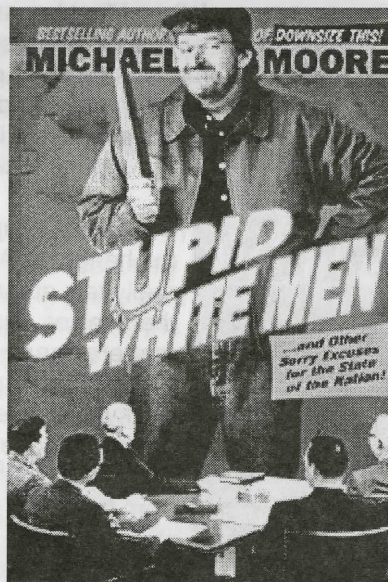
But while the time is ripe for the reemergence of strong third parties, the two-party system has effectively created legal ways to stunt their growth. Sifry explores the difficulties problems third parties face in getting on ballots, raising money, securing government matching funds, being allowed to debate, and simply having their voices heard. While there is nothing in the Constitution about parties, the Democrats and Republicans, along with federal and state judges and the media, have created a system that restricts the development of third parties, and allows the Dem-Rep to maintain their stranglehold on national politics.

However, some parties have managed to create waves, in one form or another, whether it be by winning offices, putting pressure on the big parties to change their agendas, or by spoiling races. Sifry discusses, in great detail, the creation, development, and success and failures of the Reform Party, the New Party, and the Green Party.

Most interesting are the Reform and Green chapters. With all of their organization and large seed money, the Reform Party was a dysfunctional family, but still managed great success; their early positions greatly influenced Gingrich's Contract With America and the victory of Jesse Ventura in Minnesota rocked the country. However, being controlled by the tight-fisted and kooky Ross Perot, and later becoming merged with the religious right and Buchanan, alienated most of their "angry white male" base and put the party in disarray.

The Greens, which had only been successful in very low-level elections in liberal areas in the southwest and California, burst upon the national spotlight during the 2000 elections. The Green Party succeeded in engaging cynical, white youth, turning nonvoters into a new political force. However, they failed in attracting minorities (who are fiercely loyal to the Democrats), or having any of their messages adopted by the Dems. In the end, we all know how things turned out for the Greens and the election.

This fascinating book is packed with information and sources. Sifry is someone who knows this topic forward and backwards, probably better than anybody. *Spoiling For A Fight* is a must-read for anyone interested in changing the political system, or who believes that it's difficult to spoil something that's already rotten. —Adam Liebling



Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Barbara Ehrenreich

Metropolitan Books, 221 pages

Ehrenreich, a contributing writer for Harper's magazine, decided to become the reverse Eliza Doolittle, when her editor challenged her to put her journalistic skills where her mouth was. During a business lunch, Ehrenreich wondered how anybody manages to survive on the low wages offered to unskilled laborers. She made the "mistake" of saying, "Someone ought to do the old-fashioned kind of journalism — you know, go out there and try it for themselves." It was her editor's smug response that sent her on a two year long quest to live the reality of the American unskilled working class.

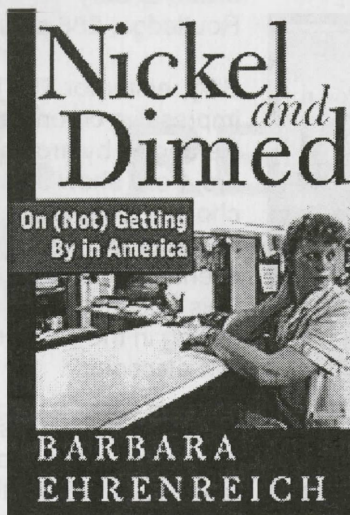
Ehrenreich immediately dispels any concerns that the reader may have that this research is being done by some spoiled, rich, college professor type. She informs us that while she is well-educated and relatively well off in the present, her dad was a coal miner and she is blue collar through and through. Fortunately, the tone of the book does support this claim.

During her sojourn, Ehrenreich, poses as a homemaker (without job skills) attempting to enter the work world. She takes on jobs as a waitress and hotel maid in Key West, a nursing home attendant and maid for a cleaning service agency in Maine, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk in Minnesota each for one month. Presumably, she worked in other places during her "two year" research project, but she never makes this clear. I'm forced to wonder why.

Regardless, Ehrenreich's experiences teach her that the work of the "unskilled" laborer is often exhausting and backbreaking and, in fact, requires a myriad of skills after all. Moreover, she feels that her privacy is invaded and feels completely demoralized by the personality tests and drug tests that she is forced to undergo during the interviewing process with prospective employers. Her prose is particularly entertaining when she is railing against these indignities.

However, these are not the most daunting obstacles that Ehrenreich encounters. Her frustration becomes palpable as she quickly discovers that finding and keeping affordable housing with the wages that she earns is a near impossibility. In fact, she encounters quite a few people who are forced to share small apartments with parents or adult children just to get by. She is also shocked to learn that some of her peers can afford nothing more than a bag of Doritos for lunch. As she narrates these stories, however, Ehrenreich is careful not to strip her "research subjects" (coworkers) of their dignity.

Repeatedly, Ehrenreich is forced to marvel at the resilience of



the people she works alongside. She is thoroughly astounded, as will be many middle and upper class readers, by the ability of her coworkers to cope with the harsh realities of trying to support oneself and children on only \$7 an hour.

Overall, this is quite a revealing book. Ehrenreich's writing is clear and straightforward and her language is accessible to readers of all types, from the stuffy academe to the casual social critic. She is also refreshingly candid about the temptation she felt at times to run away from her experiment and back to her far more comfortable world.

However, in contrast to some of the more serious topics that she takes on like hunger and homelessness, there are a few laughable moments, like when Ehrenreich whines about repetitive stress injuries and ergonomically challenging equipment.

These moments force the reader to ask, "Is she kidding?" That aside though, this book really is a must-read for anyone who has eyes and chooses to see the tragedy of the working poor in the richest country in the world. —*Josie Burgos*

Bloodclots In The Mainstream: Selected Tour Journals From The Snake-Pit Of Punk Rock Retail

Rob Santello

Chunksaah Records, 126 pages

This book is a collection of diary entries kept by the Bouncing Soul's merch guy during a couple of their recent tours. When I first began reading, I was worried. It seemed to be a poorly-written mess: all-lowercase, badly punctuated stream-of-conscious notes about mundane road life or doing drugs. At the best, it

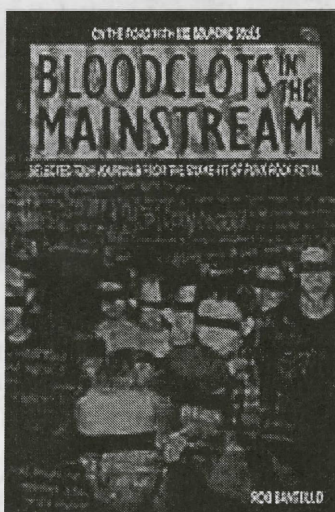
seemed like a bad attempt at sounding like a punk rock Kerouac.

But after a couple dozen pages, I got past my hangups. Although Santello doesn't really talk about the band or the shows themselves, but focuses more on internal matters, many of his journal entries are sad, witty, or interesting. His pieces on the quirky characters he meets on the road are amusing, as are his humorous observations of the punk kids who buy t-shirts from him.

I was a bit disappointed at first because the Souls are one of my fave bands and I was hoping to read more about them. But while reading the thoughts of a drugged-

out merch boy sounds boring, I enjoyed it. It's possible that I liked the book solely because I could relate (I merched/roadied briefly a few years ago), but I think anyone who likes perzines would dig this book. It's introspective without being bogged down in self-absorption, and there's enough funny pieces to keep up interest.

—*Adam Liebling*



Globalizing Japan: Ethnography of the Japanese Presence in Asia, Europe, and America

Harumi Befu and Sylvie Guichard-Anguis, Eds.
Routledge, 262 pages

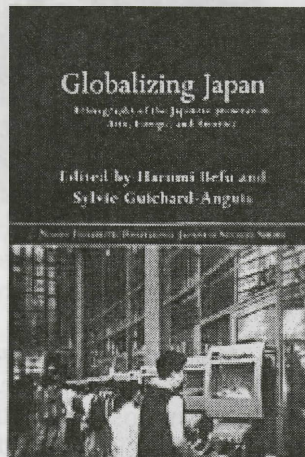
For anyone with a strong interest in Japanese culture and its extension into other countries, I would recommend this collection of academic essays.

Refuting old conventions of cultural and economic globalization as a unilinear process from Western countries to peripheral nations, the book makes the case for globalization as a multidirectional process whereby there are multiple centers, of which Japan is one.

The chapters in the book are bound both by this theme and their ethnographic approaches, which has its bases in anthropology and is divided into four sections based on their focus: human dispersal, organizational transplantation, cultural diffusion, and imagining of Japan.

Authors discuss a variety of topics, ranging from the ethnoscapes of Japanese female employees of a Japanese supermarket chain, Yaohan, who are sent to work abroad in the company's Hong Kong subsidiary, to the migration of judo to Austria and its establishment as an international sport, to how Japanese comics influenced the local comic culture of Hong Kong, to the influence of Japanese popular music in Hong Kong. The book is interesting in the context of Japan's present depressed economic climate, though I would liked to have seen the simultaneous decline of Japan's economy and increased cultural presence abroad discussed in greater detail.

Globalizing Japan represents yet another important contribution to the body of work which effectively argues for a more open reading of globalizing processes, one which doesn't employ an ethnocentric view as the West as its sole center, but multiple centers and peripheries with a globalization that unfolds in local contexts. —Jennifer Kao



We've Got Blog: How Weblogs are Changing the Future

Editors of Perseus Publishing
Perseus Publishing, 242 pages

Although everyone's got their own pet definition, a weblog, or blog, is simply a website of interesting links and news items that's updated frequently, and usually comes with editorial commentary, personal notes, and/or a forum for reader responses.

With technology making it possible for anyone to do a blog, blogging has becoming a phenomenon with up to 500,000 people updating their blogs daily. Mainstream media is calling it the future of journalism, while old school bloggers consider it an annoyance.

We've Got Blog looked like a fawning, enthusiastic collection of essays on the blog explosion, but I was extremely pleased to find it very balanced. It's got tons of thoughtful, engaging, and humorous pieces by the bloggers themselves, mostly on the downfalls of blogging.

The outside observers who contributed to this book believe that blogs are good because they're an extension of personal expression, they're addictive, and they make the mundane fascinating. Plus they serve as a news filter, offering up interesting news items that would have otherwise been left unread, buried in the archives of most mainstream news sites.

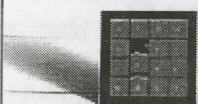
But the bloggers in this book see otherwise. It's not an extension of self, they say, but an extension of ego. There's no real journalistic revolution because there's no independent content. It's just people pointing to people pointing to people, especially since most bloggers just take copy links from other bloggers (Readmag.com steals from Catch.com who steal from Fark.com who steal from Ananova.com who steal from, etc.). As one commented, it's like one big online circle jerk. And instead of filtering the news, the blog scene is so saturated that it has suddenly become as confusing as the web itself.

I was surprised that political blogs weren't mentioned much, since they've been the most successful (Drudgereport, Buzzflash, and Mediawhoresonline, to name a few.), but overall, this is an exceptionally fun read and a great look at the blogging from those inside and outside the scene. —Adam Liebling



THE ATOMS OF LANGUAGE

THE MIND'S
HIDDEN RULES OF GRAMMAR



MARK C. BAKER

The Atoms Of Language: The Mind's Hidden Rules of Grammar

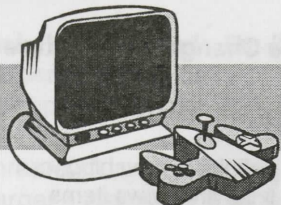
Mark C. Baker
Basic Books, 276 pages

Everything in the universe is made up of the same 110+ elements. Things that seem so complicatedly different are actually made up of the same stuff, just slightly altered in some microscopic way.

Mark Baker brings up this idea to help explain Noam Chomsky's parametric theory of language. While hundreds of languages are spoken on the planet with seemingly completely different grammatical structures, Baker explains that all languages adhere to a handful of rules, or parameters. For instance, in English, verbs usually come before the object, while in Japanese they appear at the end of the sentence. So a parameter could be "verbs either come before or after the object." Yep, it's that simple.

It's "epiphanies" like the above that makes this book a chore to read. The book is filled with examples (mostly Navajo and Mohawk for some reason) that pretty much repeat over and over again the same thing: grammatical structure can be comparable between all languages, and even the weirdest differences can be explained using only a few parameters. This gives weight to Chomsky's theories that all humans are innately programmed with language capabilities, and that babies quickly cognitively figure out which culture they're in, and which appropriate set of parameters to use.

Mark Baker doesn't offer anything new to readers already into linguistics, but his slow pace and clear, multiple examples might benefit the layman. Personally, I was disappointed as I had hoped for something more original.



Spider-Man: The Movie

Publisher: Activision

Developer: Treyarch

Genre: Action

Platform: Playstation 2

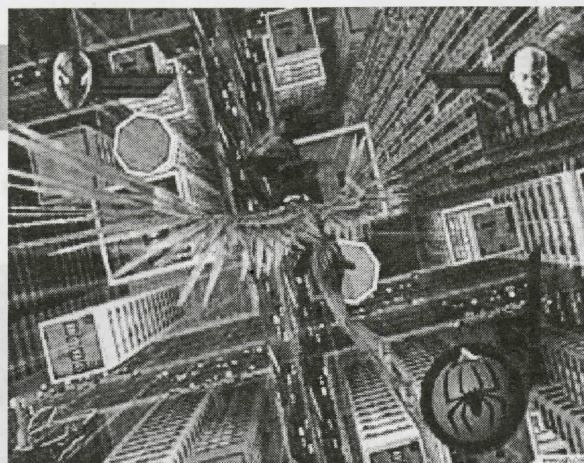
I never liked video game adaptations of movies; they always seemed dorky. More often than not, the game is either used as a promotional tool for the film, or just another method of merchandising. In the end, you have a cheesy, dorky game with little substance and gameplay shorter than the movie length.

This time, however, someone did it right. Spider-Man: The Movie is everything a video game should be. First off, once you master the controls (which won't take long, especially if you've played Spider-Man on the PS1) you can do just about anything with Spidey. You have tons of abilities at your disposal: web-slinging, tons of cool fighting techniques, wall-crawling, zipping across buildings, aerial acrobatics, spidey sense, yo-yo'ing off the ceiling, etc. The actions are flawlessly executed, and the graphics and cut-scenes are so smooth that you really feel like you're part of the game. Also of note are the good voice-overs delivered by Tobey Maguire and Willem Defoe, and the tutorial narrator is none other than smart-alecky cult icon Bruce Campbell!

The plot wisely doesn't stick to the movie, but expands upon it, drawing in classic Spidey villains like Vulture, Shocker, Scorpion, and those pesky Spider robot things. These missions are extremely fun, especially as they take place around NYC, and chasing Shocker through Grand Central Station and subway stations is really freakin' cool. There aren't too many levels, but they're almost all challenging – sometimes impossible. But however frustrating some levels get, the gameplay is addictive enough to keep you glued.

And luckily, this game has a bazillion cheats and cool things to unlock. Plug in some codes and you can skip levels, unlock tons of training games, wear different costumes, play as the Green Goblin, unlock Matrix-esque camera angles, and lots more. Even if you beat the game in a week, there are enough extras to keep you busy for months.

But no game besides Final Fantasy VII is perfect, and Spider-Man: The Movie does come with some flaws.



Left—
Spidey
beats the
piss out
of that
old fart
Vulture.

The biggest gripe from gamers is in respect to the camera angles. The camera rarely gives you a wide angle, so it's hard to figure out what's going on around you. When you're just swinging around NYC, this isn't so bad, but when you're in a small room with fifty different lasers and guns beaming at you from all sides, it becomes frustrating. In most cases, the only way to avoid things is by blind luck or unless you, the gamer, actually has spider sense yourself. The camera angles are especially bad when Spidey's climbing on dark walls and ceilings – you can barely see anything in front of you, let alone around you. In some places, the lighting is so dark that you're just running blindly, and since Spidey can climb walls just by running into them, you can keep running around a room in floor-to-wall-to-ceiling-to-wall-to-floor circles without realizing it.

Bad camera angles and lighting aside, this is a tremendously fun game. The game control is excellent, the game play is addictive, and there's a great, prevalent sense of freedom that makes this game the best in the Spider-Man franchise.

Cheats

Go to the Specials menu to enter the following codes. You will hear the Green Goblin laugh to confirm the code was entered correctly. Repeat code to return to normal.

ARACHNID, IMIARMAS, ROMITAS - Unlocks all regular levels, FMV sequences, and gallery pictures
HEADEXPLODY – Unlocks bonus training levels

ORGANICWEBBING – Infinite webbing

KOALA – All fighting controls

GIRLNEXTDOOR – Play as Mary Jane

HERMANSCHULTZ - Play as The Shocker

SERUM - Play as a scientist

REALHERO - Play as a police officer

CAPTAINSTACEY - Play as Captain Stacey (helicopter pilot)

KNUCKLES - Play as thug #1

STICKYRICE - Play as thug #2

THUGSRUS - Play as thug #3

DODGETHIS - Matrix-style attacks

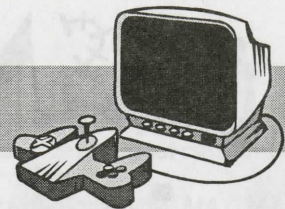
FREAKOUT - Goblin-style costume

SPIDERBYTE - Small Spider-Man

GOESTOYOURHEAD - Big head and feet



Spidey shoots his wad.



for Spider-Man

JOELSPEANUTS - Enemies have big heads

UNDERTHEMASK - First person view

CHILLOUT - Super coolant

Other Cheats

Pinhead Bowling mini-game - Accumulate 10,000 points during game to unlock this mini-game in the training menu.

Vulture FMV sequence - Accumulate 20,000 points during game to unlock the Vulture FMV sequence in the CG menu.

Shocker FMV sequence - Accumulate 30,000 points during game to unlock the Shocker FMV sequence in the CG menu.

Green Goblin FMV sequence - Successfully complete the game on the hero or greater difficulty setting.

Play as Alex Ross - Complete the game under the normal or higher difficulty setting to unlock the Alex Ross costume.

Alternate Green Goblin costume - If you are using the Alex Ross Spider-Man, play any level with the Green Goblin in it and he'll wear an alternate costume that resembles his classic look.

Play as Peter Parker - Complete the game under the easy or higher difficulty setting to unlock the Peter Parker costume in the specials menu.

Play as wrestler—Complete the game under the easy or higher difficulty setting to unlock the wrestler costume.

Play as the Green Goblin - Complete the game under the hero or superhero difficulty to unlock the Green Goblin costume option at the specials menu. Select that option to play as Harry Osborn in the Green Goblin costume with his weapons in an alternate storyline where he tries to correct the Osborn family's reputation.



Left—
nefarious pigs
attempt to stop
your looting
ways by beat-
ing you down.
Luckily, you
can quickly get
up and kill
them with their
own batons!

State Of Emergency

Publisher: Rockstar Games

Developer: VIS Entertainment

Genre: Beat-'em-up

Platform: Playstation 2

It should be stated clearly that this is NOT Grand Theft Auto 3. State Of Emergency has the same ultra-violent, amoral attitude that will drive parents nuts, but this is more akin to the beat-'em-up arcade games like Streets Of Rage and Double Dragon than to the in-depth, sweeping epic of GTA3.

The goal in SOE is simple: smash shit. There's some storyline about being a revolutionary drawn into an anarchist group dedicated to toppling the mega-corporate government, or something. But the bottom line is that you run around and smash shit. Besides having an endless amount of windows to smash, you can also have every weapon imaginable to beat and kill the cops and civilians who get in your way: batons, bats, handguns, Uzis, AK-47s, M16s, rocket launchers, grenades, mace, swords, and my favorite—the flame thrower. You can also pick up just about anything—garbage pails, boxes, chairs, tables, stereos, kegs, televisions, cash registers, even the heads of decapitated people—and use them against others or everyone's favorite target, more windows.

The game is a riot. I mean that literally—it's you and hundreds of others frantically running around in a panic, rioting and looting. As for being a ha-ha riot, it is funny at first. The first few days of playing this game, I had regressed into a 12-year old metalhead. I was living out my adolescent fantasies, and macing the cops with pepper spray was cooler and funnier than running over old people in GTA3. But then the repetition began to bore me. The Chaos mode is simply smashing things for points, but the Revolution mode isn't much deeper. The missions are for the most part the same: escort and defend this person, find and return this item, kill those people. After you get all your aggression out in the first couple days, there's really nothing motivating you to play any longer.

Cheats

Invulnerability—L1, L2, R1, R2, X.

Infinite Time—L1, L2, R1, R2, Triangle.

Infinite Ammo—L1, L2, R1, R2, Circle.

Big Player—R1, R2, L1, L2, Triangle.

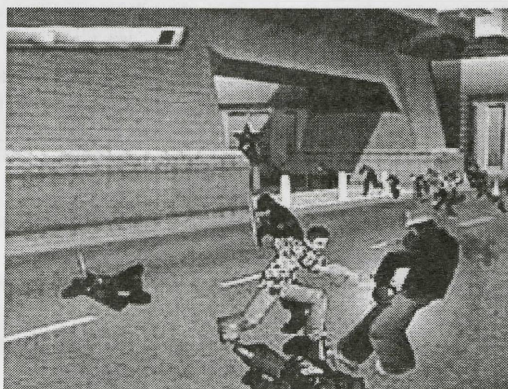
Little Player—R1, R2, L1, L2, X.

Restore Size—R1, R2, L1, L2, Circle.

Looters—R1, L1, R2, L2, Triangle.

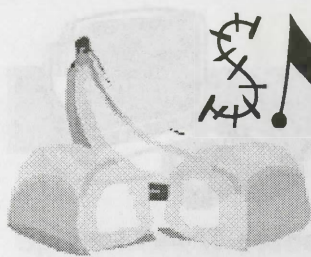
Decapitating Punches—L1, L2, R1, R2, Square.

Unlock Characters—Press Right four times and use any face button to unlock a hidden character.



DID YOU KNOW?

Video games are a great way to improve hand-eye coordination!



SNACK MONKEY

Alas, my mega snacking ways caught up with me and my doctor and girlfriend placed me on a snackless diet. The closest thing to a snack I've ingested all week was half of a low-fat Polly-O string cheese (low-fat cheese tastes suspiciously like semi-hardened wood glue).

But I am not one to disappoint. Outside the bedroom, that is. So instead of either bashing or praising the merits of some half-assed new candy product that will probably disappear from the shelves in six months anyway, I'd like to discuss the long, illustrious history of the greatest snack food ever made. Ladies and gentlemen, friends and foes, nubile maidens and belligerent cretins, I give you... **The Twinkie**.

The first Twinkie was nothing like the wondrous yellow dirigible we have today. The year was 1930. Hitler was just a failed painter. America was beginning to feel the crippling effects of the Depression. In this era of bleakness, only one thing cheered the men and made the women giggle—strawberries. And the **Continental Baking Company** introduced a golden sponge cake to the world. A sponge cake that was used in the creation of strawberry shortcakes.

But this was 1930. There were no PlayStations, televisions, or methods to grow strawberries in the off-season. The sponge cake would not sell well once the last strawberry of the year shriveled and died. Enter the genius of a young bakery manager **James A. Dewar**. He decided to fill up the sponge cake with a creamy banana filling, enabling its sales to continue even without strawberries.

But World War II placed its dark shadowy hand across the land. Millions were killed. Families were torn apart. And bananas were sent to the frontlines for our brave soldiers for nourishment. And thus... a banana shortage enveloped the land like a, uh, big shadowy hand.

Thus, **vanilla cream** was used in place of bananas. And the Twinkie as we know it was born.

Twinkie Timeline

Pre-1930: People were miserable, their lives empty.

1930: Twinkies are created with banana cream and sell two for a nickel. Back then, a nickel was worth five cents.

1940s: World War II creates a banana shortage. Consequently, the classic banana cream filling in Twinkies is replaced with vanilla cream. Women also start playing baseball for some reason.

1941: Lewis Browning, a mailman in Shelbyville, Indiana, begins treating himself to one Twinkie a day. By 1997 the Twinkie King had consumed 20,440 Twinkies! All hail Lewis Browning. You are a daily inspiration, sir!

1950s: The Twinkies mascot is Twinkie The Kid, a rambunctious lasso-twirling Twinkie dressed as a cowboy. Incidentally, Twinkie The Kid haunts my nightmares.

1980: Twinkies turn 50. Continental Baking celebrates with a 10-foot-long Twinkie that weighs more than a ton and is the equivalent of 32,300 regular Twinkies.

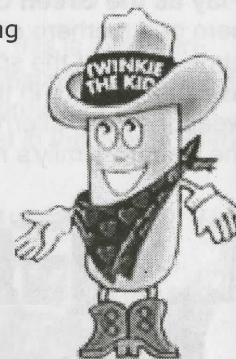
1999: The Twinkie is chosen to be included in the nation's millennium time capsule, representing "an object of enduring American symbolism." In other words, this shit is indestructible. Twinkies have a longer shelf life than God.

2000: On April 1, Hostess throws a birthday part at Chicago's Navy Pier, and the world's tallest birthday cake is constructed, standing 25' high and containing 20,000 Twinkies.

2002: Deep-fried Twinkies are introduced at a fish n' chips shop in Brooklyn. Just in time for nuclear annihilation.

How To Make Your Own Twinkie-Like Cake!

- 1 pack White cake mix
- 1 small Vanilla instant pudding
- 1/2 cup Oil
- 3 Eggs
- 1 cup Milk
- 1/2 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 cup Margarine, softened
- 2 teaspoon Vanilla
- 4 tablespoon Flour
- 1 cup Sugar
- 1/2 cup Crisco
- 1 cup Water
- Naked photos of hot lesbian action



1. Combine white cake mix, vanilla pudding, oil, eggs, and water and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat at medium speed for 2 minutes until nice and smooth, like my ass.
2. Pour into a greased and floured 9 x 13 pan. Make sure the pan is greased. Like my ass.
3. Bake at 350 for 40-45 minutes.
4. In a saucepan mix the flour with the milk. Cook until thick, stirring constantly. Let cool, like my ass.
5. For the cream, add sugar, salt, Crisco, margarine and 1 tsp vanilla. Beat until fluffy. Fluffy like my ass.
6. Spread nefarious sickly sweet concoction on the cooled cake. Send naked photos to Snack Monkey and enjoy!

ZINES & Mini-comics

Action Geek #6

Pocket, 24 pages

Kitchy robots, J-pop, toys, and cute comics thrown together in a brightly colorful hoi polloi, weird-ass montage. It's wacky. *Dsquared, Doug Chapel, 12 Grenada Street, Worcester, MA 01602*

Bob Called #1

Digest, 28 pages

From the editor of Ducky comes this fantastic new zine about roommates. A dozen contributors fill this zine with tales of unbelievable thoughtlessness, rudeness, obnoxiousness, and messiness. These horrible roommate experiences range from the shocking to the hilarious to the downright evil. A great, fun read.

POB 1582, Piscataway, NJ 08855-1582

Born Ready #5

Pocket, 38 pages

Perzines are so hard to do well, but Born Ready succeeds immeasurably. This small zine is crammed with blurby personal writings and quick stories that pack a punch. And it's incredible, but the editor is able to put into a few words a lot of really complicated emotions. Zines like this are a treasure.

Bornreadyzine@hotmail.com

The Census Taker #1

Digest, 24 pages

Funny cut-n-paste zine with amusing articles on celebrity boxing, whale farming and being Irish. The editors also have a funny obsession with potatoes.

censustakerzine@yahoo.com

Debutante Dinner #1

Full, 32 pages

More than any other place, NYC has been a magnet for sex-drenched punk n' glam bands. DD is probably the only mag that covers the sweaty, dirty-assed scumbag rock scene inspired by the New York Dolls and the Cramps. This nicely-designed first issue features interviews with such classy acts as Split Me Wide Open, Daddy, The Psychos!, and Double Dong Wyld Lixx. If you're in your mid-30s and still wear black eyeliner, this mag's for you.

POB 564605, College Point, NY 11356

Esme! #1

Pocket, 24 pages

Blurby items on Buddhism, coffeehouses, yoga, how the media sucks, ad nauseam. Your usual high school girl-cum-"socially enlightened being" eye-rolling fare. Couple of cute pieces, though, including a piece on becoming disillusioned with a community service organization and a neat article on making spontaneous jewelry.

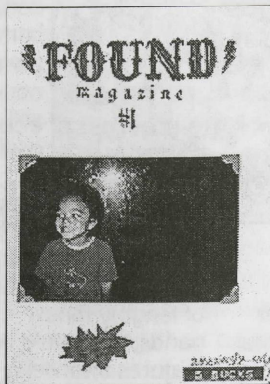
Ehoffman01@cityyear.org

Found Magazine #1

Full, 82 pages

This is an awesome mag that reprints letters and notes found on the street and present them as works of art. The odd to-do lists, angry and/or love letters, crazy scribbles, terrible short stories, flyers and photos run the gamut from hilarious to strange to mundane, but there is an overall sadness that is hard to pinpoint.

Maybe it's that these found items are private conversations that are being made public, creating an unflinchingly honest look at highs and lows (mostly lows) of humanity. *POB 14364, Chicago, IL 60614*



Impact Press #39

Full, 64 pages

True to its name, this political zine is always chock full o' many impacting articles. This ish covers Catholic priests, Barbie-induced self-image problems, the Commission on Presidential Debates' unethical barring of Nader in the 2000 debates, the oil pipeline-war in Afghanistan link, an expose on circuses, stuff on pedophilia and racism, and much more. It's ultra-liberal stuff, but almost all of it is thoughtful, well-researched, and well-written, as opposed to many other political zines that are just uneducated rants. I enjoyed this issue a lot, my only disagreement being with a very Earth First-ish article on zoos, suggesting that it's a completely exploitative system (I dunno, a lot of zoo workers do a lot of good, such as educating the public and helping endangered species breed to save them from extinction). Overall, an extremely strong, interesting, and informative issue. *PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd, Orlando, FL 32817*

LipWise²

Digest, 24 pages

Standard perzine with neither style nor substance, but lots of blurbs and filler. A short piece about a cyber friendship is cute, but the best part of the zine is the handmade and elaborate ornamental border adorning the sides of the pages.

35 Sheridan St, Haverhill, MA 01830



Mreowkorblast #17

European half, 40 pages

A meshing of the two zine/comic projects

Mreow and Microblast to form this imaginative, whimsical issue about cats and creating your own world.

POB 442118, Somerville, MA 02144

The New Scheme #5

Full, 56 pages

Good music zine featuring interviews with Engine Down, Dismemberment Plan, The Flashing Astonishers, and Pinq, plus loads of record and zine reviews. But the highlight is a really hilarious collection of short pieces by Scott from the Fairlanes that teaches us about Italian toilets and "chesticles."

POB 19873, Boulder, CO 80308

Pocket #1

Mini, 24 pages

This adorable illustrated travelogue follows the adventures of Missy as she rocks out all over the country. It's so cute and upbeat and positive and charming and child-like and simple and adorable that you want to slam a fork in your neck. Comes with a stick of gum.

24 Longvine Cr., Ambridge, PA 15003

Puink! #1

Digest, 94 pages

Extremely impressive first issue from some really hip girls in Singapore. This HUGE punk zine is packed with funny columns, good (!) poetry, artwork and graffiti, and loads of interviews and reviews. Apparently English comprehension is high in Singapore, as this zine is in flawless English. And it's kind of cool how these punk girls are like punk girls from anywhere else, and their punk scene is also like any other. I guess punk is a universal.

SPC PO Box 314 S(914011), Singapore

Razorcake #8

Full, 104 pages

Not going anywhere for awhile? Grab a Razorcake. This thick punk mag features mega long articles, stories, interviews, and reviews. This mag will keep you busy for a LONG time. Issue #8 features interviews with Squab, The Beltones, Jello Biafra, and a bunch more, plus tons of entertaining (and long) articles and stories.

POB 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042

Red-Hooded Sweatshirt #5

Pocket, 48 pages

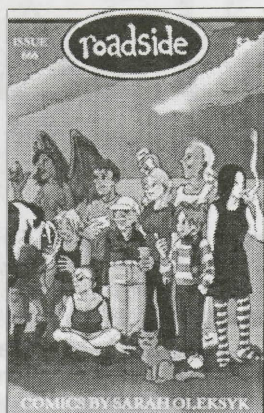
A cool perzine with cute comics and neat inner zines (tinier booklets stapled within the zine, including a great piece about throwing a formal dinner party in the middle of a busy street). Really charming articles and comics, and very well-designed to boot! Recommended!

POB 15214, Boston, MA 02215

Roadside #666*Digest, 28 pages*

This may be the last issue of this excellent personal mini-comic, but at least it's going out with a bang. This issue is one of the best, featuring a fantastic story of transition, detailing Sarah's Portland-to-Portland move. Wonderfully illustrated and written, Roadside has long been one of my faves. Good luck, Sarah, and I hope we see new projects soon!

PO Box 1004, Portland, OR 97207

**Rose-Colored Times #1***Digest, 36 pages*

You know what to expect from a zine that takes its title from a Lisa Loeb song: painful poetry, poorly reprinted photos, and female angst. But the editor is 14, and when I was 14 I could barely wipe my own ass.

www.violeteyes.net/dust

Schuell #N*Full, 48 pages*

Schuell is one of my fave zines, and not just because the editor and I contribute articles to each other. Schuell's always got fun and interesting articles, and this ish features a what-if article about Elvis, a personal piece about public school, a few political/personal essays about 9/11, and an informative piece on sexual harassment legislation. #N also comes with a cool comp CD, has funny mad lib interviews with four bands, and contains some of the funniest album reviews I've seen in awhile. NEXT!

PO Box 4663, Lafayette, IN 47903

Short Reader #2 & #3*Digest, 4 pages each*

Each issue is just a piece of paper folded in half, hence "short reader." The 4 pages are crammed with content, mostly poetry and personal pieces.

www.shortreader.50megs.com

Sinkhole #8*Euro digest, 36 pages*

Great interviews with the Distillers, Filthy Thieving Bastards, Avoid One Thing, Legends Of Rodeo, and Catch 22, plus some really honest CD reviews. No articles or non-music content, but still a good read.

www.sinkholezine.com

'Sup #9*Full, 136 pages*

'Sup is every publicist's wet dream: over 100 pages of interviews followed by tons of lengthy record reviews. If you like indie bands, this could be your bible: this issue features interviews with Arthur Prewitt, Built To Spill, Death Cab For Cutie, Guided By Voices, Mogwai, Spoon, Saves The Day, The Shins to name a few. Personally, I like zines with more variety, but indie fans will enjoy it.

POB 2644, New York, NY 10009

Switchblade Fanzine #1*Full, 32 pages*

Very nice for a first issue. The title brings to mind goth, but the zine actually focuses on the Long Island punk scene. In the style of Under the Volcano, it has some columns, followed by interviews and then record reviews. Interviews include Brand New, On The Might Of Princes, and Become One. Also comes with a good 14-track LI punk comp.

240 Willowood Dr, Wantagh, NY 11793

Transcending The Mundane #21*Full, 112 pages*

TTM is just huge now, and a must-own for fans of any metal genre (but this issue focuses on mostly death and black metal). Although it's mostly interviews and reviews, they are consistently excellent. Interviews include Abominant,

Aphotic, Bathory (remember those guys??), Dark Day Dawning, Hypocrisy, Sacred Oath, Seth, and about five billion more.

5 Hudson Avenue, Bohemia, NY 11716

Treatment Bound: A Ten Foot Rule "On The Road" Special*Digest, 16 pages*

Another great collection of funny and bitter-sweet comics from Shawn Granton. This one contains a funny story about the author embarrassing himself at a ska show, a cute illustrated dream, an interesting article on mass transit in LA (hint: it sucks), and a sweet comic about home town nostalgia.

3719 SE Hawthorne Blvd #243, Portland, OR 97214

Wonka Vision #18*Full, 84 pages*

Wonka Vision is like READ's long lost twin, or vice versa. Cool columns, hilarious interviews, funny blurry side stuff, and loads of reviews. This ish has great interviews with Death Cab For Cutie, Magnetic Fields, Atom & His Package, Brand New, Tiger Army, H2O, Flogging Molly, Ultimate Fakebook, and much more.

POB 63642, Philadelphia, PA 19147

Yum! #1*Pocket, 16 pages*

A cute mini-cookbook featuring many tofu recipes.

Yum_zine@yahoo.com

**Zombre #1***Digest, 12 pages*

Ansis, formerly an Epitome and one of the weirdest ska cartoonists of the 90's, is back, sans the ska but still damn weird. Zombre is a strange comic about a skeletal thingy that runs around the forest hugging deer and eating flies. A chance encounter with a hunter leaves a beloved deer dead and us wondering what the hell is going on. Ans40@lycos.com

Classifieds

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POINT

Adam Liebling

Men Are Monkeys, Women Are Robots

Ten years ago, a man named John Gray wrote a book called "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus," an exploration of the communication differences between men and women, and offering recommendations to help bridge these gaps in order to strengthen relationships. As well as being a total pussyfart, he overlooked an important fact that will forever drive a wedge between the sexes: men are monkeys and women are robots.

My theory finally brings together Darwinism and creationism.

Yes, men evolved from some simian ancestor. You can see traces of our primal, primate urges in everything men do: our playfulness, our inextinguishable boyishness, our explosive flatulence, our territorialism, our tribalism, our preference for having sex from behind, our hairiness, and our bright red asses.

But women don't share these characteristics. They're cold. They're heartless. They don't appreciate scatological humor. They're all into "responsibility." While men wouldn't mind staying boys, women have a "biological clock." So what happened?

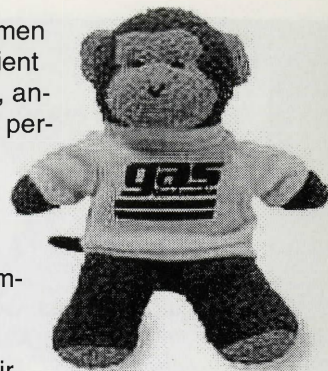
This is where creationism comes in. Men evolved and continued spawning prodigy through sporing or some other asexual method. But men were getting restless. There seemed to be no point to life. Human existence was on the brink of extinction due to boredom. So God or Mother Nature or Tony Danza put all men to sleep and took out a rib each. Using those ribs, they built an army of robots called women to serve their male masters, sexually and domestically.

"Darwinian Man, though well-behaved,
At best is only a monkey shaved"
—W.S. Gilbert

Men Are Idiots

I think the author has it all wrong. Which gender is known for being cold and heartless? Which gender is commonly accused of being work-driven and emotionally unavailable? Which gender probably invented robots in the first place? Men! One of the most well-known earliest humans ever discovered was in fact a female. Discovered in the primordial paradise of Africa, Lucy was quite visibly a descendent of the primate and roamed the earth at a time when men were hunters and women were gatherers. Now lets take a look at this evolutionary detail and apply it to the discussion at hand—men were hunters which meant they would track down prey and kill them while women spent their time foraging for fruits and vegetables. There are plenty of robots which serve similar roles to the prior but have you heard of a foraging robot that goes searching of nuts and berries? I didn't think so.

Things were great for awhile. Women proved to be an effective subservient species. They cleaned like robots, answered only when spoken to, and performed their womanly duties with great efficiency. Like Isaac Asimov's rules for robots, they were incapable of turning on their masters. Their programming was seemingly impeccable.



And then something happened. Circuits got shorted. Signals got crossed. A balance got distorted. One woman became a thinking robot. More followed. Soon, most women were forming their own conclusions, following their own decisions, arbitrarily rewriting their behaviors and creating an incoherent internal logic.

The robots became smarter than the programmers. Smarter, but they still lacked a soul. They looked upon the monkey men doing fun monkey things like starting rock bands and playing video games and playing baseball and starting wars, and they couldn't understand any of it. They became vindictive and jealous.

By the time men noticed, it was too late. The strict, unyielding robotic wenches had them where they wanted: miserable, stuck in relationships for fear of losing half their income, and forced to do things like repairing shingles and taking things off of top shelves. The masters found themselves as slaves.

And so this is where human nature stands. Women, once the playthings of man, are now their robotic harbingers of doom. Men are being forced to evolve out of their monkeying ways.

I foresee a coming war between the monkeys and the robots. Tony Danza have mercy on our souls.

COUNTERPOINT

Jennifer Kao

And speaking of robots, which gender's fascination with robots has fueled the popularity of such shows as Transformers, Voltron, and more recently Battlebots? Males. I think that in addition to their love for building things and working with wires and circuitry (not unlike the role served by many robots), men have an affinity for robots because they feel a special kinship to them that most females lack. In fact, only recently a researcher at a preeminent British University implanted a chip in himself to see if he could control the environment around him, fueling the imaginations and fantasies of male scientists and geek boys world wide. Watch out women—if you didn't think men were robots before, they're moving inexorably towards becoming one with their beloved robots now.



45 or 46 SONGS
that weren't GOOD ENOUGH
TO GO ON OUR OTHER RECORDS

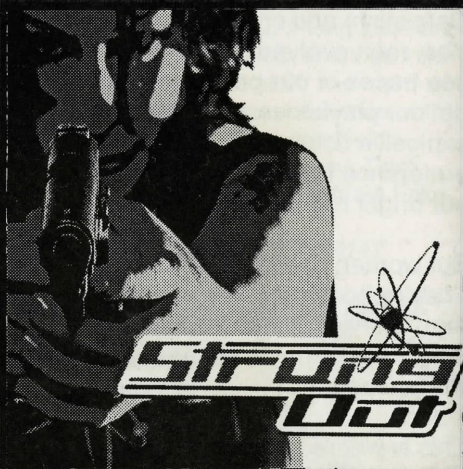
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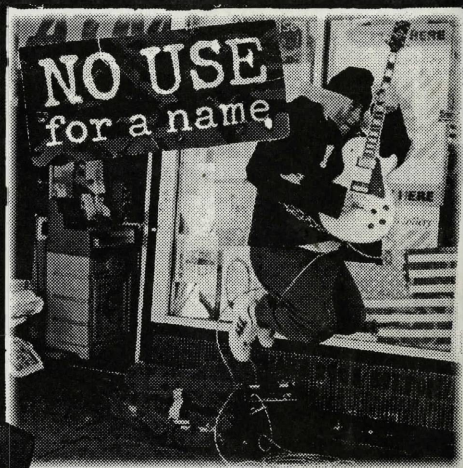
"Situationist Comedy" June 4th

Strung Out

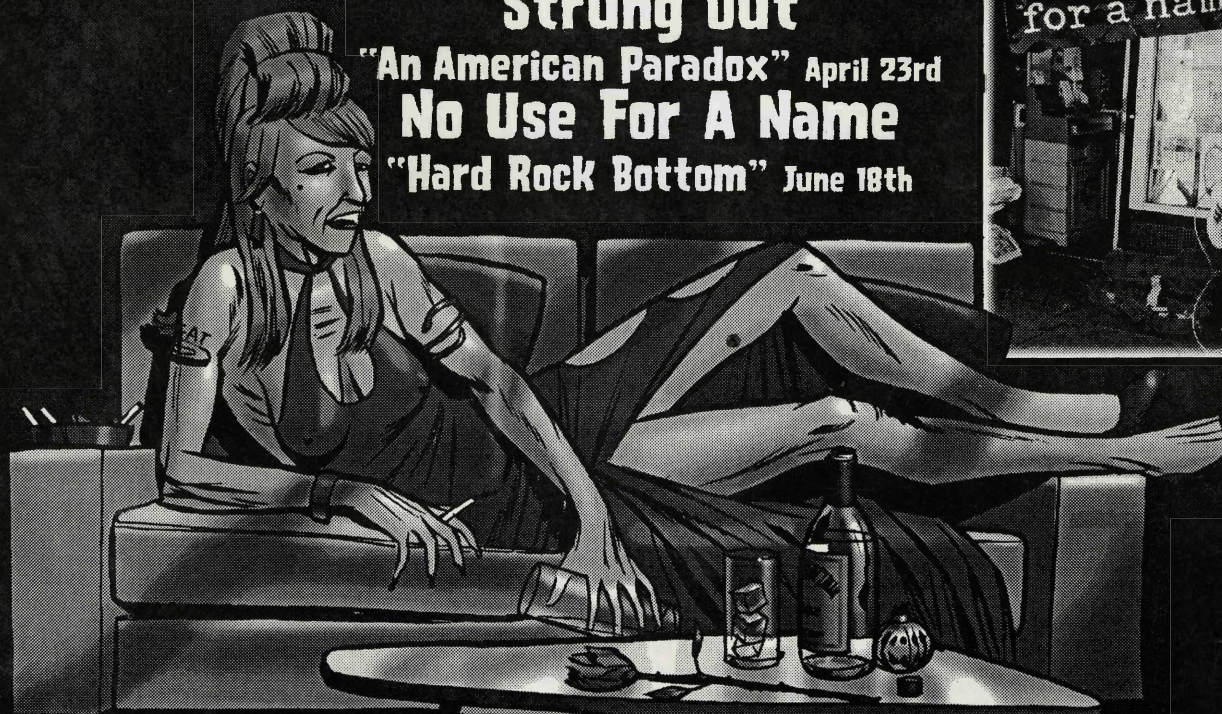
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