

GO METRIC

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New Crusade**

**Anti-Christ's
Live Journal**

**Supersize Me -
Vegan Style**

**Paul Wolfowitz:
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And now a word from our publisher, Terry Sheldrake, who, like Nixon, compulsively records all of his office conversations. We thought the following was of considerable literary value and approached Sheldrake about publishing it. After all, Go Metric is his baby and nothing happens without his say so. Through a drunken haze Sheldrake replied, "Ok." Or it may have been, "Go'way." Regardless, we took it as a green light.

Mike Faloon: Hey, Terry, are you done with the proofs yet? There's some great fiction in this issue, don't you think?

Terry Sheldrake: (*Sounds of shuffling paperwork*) Sure I read everything. Remind me again of what the theme was?

MF: It's the fiction issue; we have a number of articles that are fictional or fictionalized accounts of actual events, those sorts of things.

TS: Oh. (*Pause*) More fucking lies, eh?

MF: Yeah...I've got to get these negatives to the production department. I'll check back with you this afternoon.

TS: (*The door closes and an office chair creaks as it leans back. Then there's the sound of a desk drawer opening and a bottle, presumably gin, being opened, and a carbonated beverage, presumably tonic, being poured.*) Fiction issue, my ass. They're full of lies, all of them. "This is the article that puts *Go Metric* across as the new *New Yorker*. These guys are the new White, Thurber and Fitzgerald. Terry, we're going to make you the next Harold Ross." So what did I get in the last issue? A fucking travel section! Glorified road trips that were written from home, complete with fake travel expense vouchers. Before that it was the new Gonzo journalism. Steve Reynolds is the new Hunter S. Thompson. Sure, if Gonzo means drunk on Rolling Rock down at Vegas, falling in love with some bird because she pumps two bucks worth of Wilco into the jukebox. No one really listens to that last Wilco record anyway. Wankers. Fiction is deceit. *Grapes of Wrath*? Here's some Farm Aid for you, Joad, move out of the bloody desert. Whoever heard of anyone complaining about life in California? *Mice and Men*, there's a good a one. George, you're friend's not slow, he's retarded—but you're the fool for dragging him along. Besides, everyone roots for Curly when they read that piece of crap. (*Another drink is poured*) To Curly! Fucking hell, next they're going to push a poetry issue on me. "I wandered lonely as a cloud"—what kind of bloody ponce writes crap like that? Clouds aren't lonely, they're water vapor! And they're never alone, there are always in packs, herds; tons of their friends to keep them company. Back in Hetfordshire there were two kinds of weather, raining and about to rain. Big fluffy clouds everywhere—always in clumps, always with their friends...not like my friends. "Don't worry, Terry, I've got the next round"—then they're out the door. "Don't worry, Terry, I'll stay in touch"—never hear from them again. Oh, but the writers, they're all my friends. "Just three grand to go in search of punk rock in Yugoslavia, Terry." "A college marching band on the cover, Terry, that'll sell copies!" (*Gulping sound, ice clinks on the bottom of a glass*) Who gives a crap about a marching band? "It's a fictional notion that this idea will sell any copies," *that's* what they should have said. Why can't someone be honest with me? When they say fiction, they mean lies. Like when the wife promises you Sheppard's pie and then it's take out from the local Paki again. Oh, excuse me, that's not political correct. Don't want the kids to hear me saying that. They'll be quoting the old man at school and then it's phone calls from the teachers, and the good Sheldrake name is further soiled. I know it's called Tendoori Palace II, but they're not even proper Indian there. They're Pakistani, you can tell from their bloody cricket scars. And the kids spilling curry all over their video games. What's wrong with plane spotting as hobby? No, really? That's what we did when we were kids. I learned a lot. It's not looney like trainspotting, where you stand all day outside of a train station, holding binoculars, wearing a Ham United scarf around your neck, scribbling down those meaningless locomotive numbers. Plane spotting is a proper 21st century hobby. Good, clean fun. (*Five second pause*) Who am I kidding? It's a total fucking bore. I didn't learn a thing watching planes. My life is a lie.

(*Door opens*)

Brian Cogan: Terry, did you have a chance to sign that travel voucher I turned in? I don't mean to bug you but money's a little tight at home.

(*A glass shatters against the wall*)

TS: Bloody fiction!

BC: You know, maybe Waddy from the Exploited was right, in that song "Horror Epics," "Sometimes real life is much more horrible than fiction."

(*A cricket bat bounces off the door frame*)

BC: Okay, next week, fine, no problem. Thanks.

(*Door closes*)

TS: I'm going to be just like that bloody Ras Al'Ghul Coca Cola or whatever from *Crime and Punishment*, but when I bleeding kill all the writers there won't be any tell tale hearts pumping under the floor boards. (*Pause*) I grow old, I grow old, I shall wear the corners of my trousers rolled...rock'n'roll-ah Ayatollah...(Sings) I shot a writer down in Reno... just to stop his lying...(Slumps forward, snores)

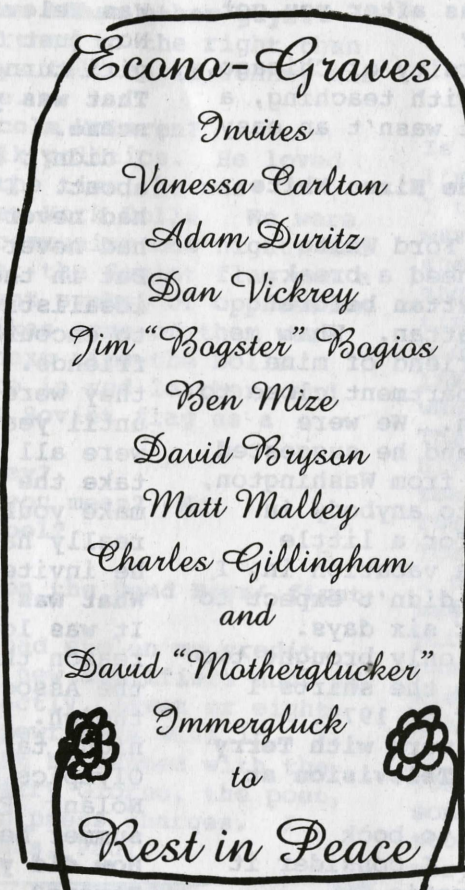
Whoever wrote the re-make of the Joni Mitchell song, "Pave Paradise and Put Up A Parking Lot", MUST DIE!!!! And by the words MUST DIE, I don't mean in the *well they have lived a long plentiful life and we're sad to see them go due to natural causes* kind of way. No! I want to witness this person's execution by guillotine. Then have each of their limbs ripped off the sockets. Stab their torso with one of those real live Freddy Kruger gloves and drink the blood while listening to a King Diamond record! Fuck these people!

Pave Paradise

By Duncan Wilder Johnson

Earlier today I was in one of those modern day drug stores, like a CVS, or a Right Aid, or a Brooks or some shit. There I was in the shitty drugstore, lit with fluorescent doom, minding my own business, checking out the hot actress' donning the covers of mainstream magazines, perusing the hair aisle for my cheapskate Suave shampoo (passion fruit, if you must know) when over the PA came the sound of SATAN! That's right, buck-o, the fucking re-make of "Pave Paradise and Put Up A Parking Lot"! The homicidal urge rising within me with every "uhm bop bop bop!" DIE! DIE! DIE! I skipped over to the school isle to get THIS NOTEBOOK, to write this piece in order to extol my rage, vent my vengeance, put pen to paper with the primary objective of catharsis.

There I was in the shitty drugstore... perusing the hair aisle for my cheapskate Suave shampoo (passion fruit, if you must know) when over the PA came the sound of SATAN!



(Note: We realize that at least two of the Crows depicted in the illustration above were not actually members of the band at the time that they, Counting Crows, recorded "Big Yellow Taxi," the song that is the subject of this missive. However, we'll damned if we're going to spend any more time on the Counting Crows website, in this or any other lifetime, trying to figure out which guys are in the band now and which guys used to be in the band. We're with Duncan on this one; let 'em all fry.)

Upon arrival at the cash register, I found a beautiful young blonde girl. Her nametag read, "Welcome to a shit-ass Drugstore. My name is Jessica." She rang me up, took one look at me, and said, "You hate this song too, huh?"

"DO I?" I exclaimed with anger and cynicism. "DO I?!?!? I want to have a barbeque where I burn the remains of the pathetic bastard who conjured this sound of terror!"

She took one look at me: Destruct-a-thon hooded sweatshirt, brimmed stocking hat, used diesel jeans from Beacon's Closet in Brooklyn, free Reebok's... yup, definitely a hipster. And with that she knew I was "down." She threw a few worried glances, left to right, right to left, and said, "Don't tell my manager, but I did do that and I have the leftovers."

With that one sentence, my homicidal urge lay dormant and a new found infatuation for this drug store chick moved in as a replacement.

"You do?" I asked.

"Yeah, here's my address and phone number," she said. "Dinner is at eight."

The tremendous weight off my shoulders could rival the girth of the entire continental United States. I WAS GOING TO EAT THE CHARRED REMAINS OF THE SCOURGE OF THE PLANET: THE SON OF A BITCH WHO REMADE "PAVE PARADISE AND PUT UP A PARKING LOT."

I exited the drug store, a newfound dip in my hip, and a swing in my swagger. I hopped into my Buick La Sabre, turned on the new Shadows Fall record and screamed along, "MY BETRAYAL!!!!"

And now, dear reader, allow me to confess, it was a good meal. A dinner date of revenge is the sweetest taste one could ingest.

THE GO METRIC INTERVIEW: PART II

Here is the second part of GO METRIC's exclusive interview with World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz. Part I focused on Wolfowitz's role in defining the neocon agenda and the planning for the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In Part II, Wolfowitz recounts his days in the punk scene that sprang up in New York in 1975-80 and at one point seemed destined to take over the world. **Johnny Reno** met with Dr. Wolfowitz at the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood.

PAUL WOLFOWITZ

GO METRIC: So this was after you got your PHD from Chicago?

WOLFOWITZ: The University of Chicago, right. I was fed up with teaching, a little burned out. It wasn't an easy time for a lot of us.

You were briefly at the Nixon White House.

(laughs) And then the Ford White House. I really did need a break.

Had you lived in Manhattan before?

I never lived in Manhattan. What happened was that a friend of mine from Cornell had an apartment close to Park Slope in Brooklyn. We were talking on the phone and he suggested I take some time away from Washington, just go and not talk to anybody in politics or academia for a little while. I hadn't had a vacation in, I think, four years. I didn't expect to stay more than five or six days.

(laughs) I remember I only brought two shirts, and those were the shirts I wore the entire summer of 1975.

The rumor is that you were with Terry Ork the day he booked Television at CBGB's.

I convinced Terry Ork to book Television at CBGB's. I consider it one of my great diplomatic achievements. (laughs) He was a friend of a friend of Cal's. Cal and I were having drinks in the Village and he was there. He was very down. Cal barely knew him. I remember thinking that he looked like one of the protestors outside the Nixon White House. I thought it would be a good idea to take the time to really talk to him and his friends. They just weren't people with whom I had ever really conversed.

Do you remember what he was wearing?

No. I remember he had very large hair. One of the girls who was there was wearing a trash bag, I remember that. It was the craziest thing I had ever seen.

Was Television there?

No, just Terry, John Holstrom, and the girl turned out to be Penny Arcade.

That was your introduction to the scene.

I didn't know what he was even talking about. I wasn't a big fan of music, I had never heard of this band, and I had never heard of this nightclub.

But in those days, I was very idealistic and I felt it was my duty to encourage Terry and all of his friends. I couldn't figure out why they were all so dour. It wasn't until years later that I realized they were all on heroin. I said, Why not take the chance? Call this man up and make your arguments. What do you really have to lose? So he did, and he invited Cal and I to the show.

What was it like?

It was loud. And strange. I for some reason thought they would sound like the Association. I did like them, though. I wound up staying up all night talking about the upcoming Olympics with Patti Smith and Jerry Nolan. From there the rest of the summer becomes a bit of a blur.

How did you end up living with Dee Dee Ramone?

(laughs) That's a good question. How did that happen? I had been introduced to him by Danny Fields. Cal had gone out of town and Dee Dee said he just needed someplace to stay for the night. No one, of course, told me that he was a hustler and a drug addict. I should have known it was a mistake when he brought everything he owned with him. Even then, it wasn't much. I dropped hints that it was time for him to move on, but I could not get him out. He would watch soap operas and game shows all day. I mean, for hours and hours at a time. I had never met a person who liked TV so much. Then he moved some girl in and that was the last straw for me. I



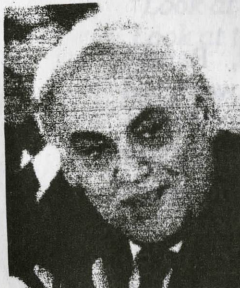
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finally kicked him out. I mean, I waited until the girl went out and I literally wrestled Dee Dee to the door and threw him out of the apartment. It was the only way. That night, I came home and heard someone in the bathroom. I thought I was being robbed, but Dee Dee had broken back in and he was having sex with the girl on the toilet. I wasn't scared of Dee Dee, but the girl had a knife and she told me she would cut my eyelids off if I touched him, so they stayed that night, too.

Did you ever talk to Johnny Ramone?
You might have been closer to him politically than these other guys.
 He was much further to the right than I was. I always felt as if Johnny was about to hit me.

What about Malcolm McLaren?

He loved to talk politics. He loved to argue. At the time, he was managing the New York Dolls. We were talking about communism one night, and I mentioned that the Soviet flag was a far more relevant symbol of oppression than the swastikas some of them were wearing. The next time the Dolls played they were in red leather, and they had a huge Soviet flag as a backdrop.

Did you ever play?

An instrument, you mean? No.
 Not even in school?
 Never.

You're thanked on the Dead Boys' first album.

Cheetah Chrome had stolen my credit card and bought new amplifiers and, if I remember correctly, seven or eight high-end IBM typewriters with it. I have no idea what he wanted with the typewriters. Terry Giorno, the poet, begged me not to press charges. I didn't, so, Thanks, Paul.

photo by Paul Wolfowitz



Is it true you dated Bebe Nuell?

I'm not sure you would call it dating. I took her to dinner once or twice. I was a little older than she was, and she wasn't used to nice restaurants and polite conversation. The last time we went out she disappeared midmeal. I went looking for her, and instead of being in the bathroom, she was blowing two busboys in the alley. The next time I saw her she was with Elvis (Costello).

You took a famous photo of Iggy Pop.

The one with him and Debbie Harry. That was, I believe, the only picture I took the entire time. I was told it was Andy Warhol's camera. I took that picture, and later I went to give the camera back to Andy, and he just stared at me. He claimed he never saw the camera before in his life. I think I just left it on a table. Someone must have developed the film, sometime. I have heard all kinds of stories about Iggy, but I found him very reasonable. He tended to bring out extreme behavior in other people. In fact, later that night, someone bit him very hard on his left nipple. He re-attached it with a Band-Aid.

When did it all end for you?

I knew I had to come back to reality in early 1976. Jim Carroll and I were sucking off these two Guggenheim dosins for fix money and I thought, What am I doing? We have big problems in the Middle East and the Salt II treaties are a disaster.

Do you ever throw on a record, for old time's sake?

I don't have the time for it anymore. I don't know. My granddaughter gave me an i-Pod for Christmas. Maybe I'll load it up with the Dictators and have my driver play it in the car ♦



Paul Wolfowitz (L, w/o tie) at Abu Ghraib



**RANDY
NEWMAN:
DANGEROUS &
DELUSIONAL**

I've lived in LA for three and a half years. Once you've lived here that long, you start to get LA jokes and you start to make some of your own. You laugh a little deeper in *Big Lebowski*, when the Dude gets arrested and his only ID is his Ralph's Club Card. You watch *Pulp Fiction* and you grasp the absurdity of there being someone with mob ties living in the placid suburbia of Toluca Lake. So with that in the mind, I impulsively bought a certain Randy Newman song off iTunes. "Hey," I reasoned, "I bet there's tons of in-jokes I didn't get that I will now. I will enjoy this song on a whole new level. Right?" What I found however, were the ravings of a misanthrope and lunatic.

So let's dive into Mr. Newman's 1980 hit, "I Love LA."

The quiet, electronic piano intro:

"Hate New York City, it's cold and it's damp"

Well, Randy, that's my native city you're talking about. It is cold and it is damp, year round, but one can seek refuge in one of the city's fine museums, Chinese restaurants, or crackhouses. And why do we have to start on a note of hate, Randy? I've never started a song with "I hate that fucking song from *Toy Story*." Though, I do.

"And all the people dress like monkeys"

That's just patently untrue.

"Let's leave Chicago to the Eskimos"

Patently untrue *and* racist. The 2000 census reveals that American Indian or Alaskan Native-only persons (Non-Hispanic), the most specific demographic available, comprise 0.1 percent of Chicago's housing (roughly 21 households). This is not a race poised to take over. A comment like *"Let's leave Chicago to the*

Eskimos" smacks of the worst kind of Polish paranoia.

"That's town's a little bit too rugged for you and me"

Merriam Webster's first definition of rugged is "having a rough uneven surface." Which is virtually impossible in the flatlands from Ohio to Montana.

Now the full band kicks in and we are...

"Rolling down Imperial Highway"

Now, see, as a resident of Los Angeles I get this! Imperial Highway will take you...well, will take you from just outside Compton to Manhattan Beach. If you're coming from, say Hancock Park, you could use this to get to Long Beach Airport, but it's easy to miss the turn, and you're better off just taking the 10 to the 405. To be fair, it will also take you to Yorba Linda, and is named for Yorba Linda's most famous native. Yes, a big chunk of the IH is named Richard Nixon Highway.

"Big, nasty redhead at my side"

She's probably not a real redhead, Randy. Chances are she was a blonde who went red because the lead in her WB drama was already a blonde, and to have two blondes in the show would have thrown off the time-space continuum.

*"Santa Ana winds blowin' hot from the north
And we was born to ride"*

This is, thus far, the most accurate statement in the song. The Santa Ana Winds do blow from the north, rather hot, and in the wintertime. As to whether Randy and his fiery companion were born to ride, this can be neither proven nor disproven. I would like to point out that Springsteen is born to run, but Jersey is much more of a pedestrian culture.

*"Roll down the window put down the top
Crank up the Beach Boys baby
Don't let the music stop"*

I can never hear the radio when the windows are down, let alone the top.

"We're gonna ride it till we just can't ride it no more"

So, what, you ran out of gas? So if you started with a full tank, and then ran out, you're approximately 200 miles from your starting point and, as such, no longer in LA county.

*"From the South Bay to the Valley
From the West Side to the East Side"*

LA is special in that it has a south bay *and* a valley. It is not special for having a west side and an east side. Most towns do. At this point the song could easily be about Duluth or Utica.

"Everybody's very happy"

Look up "depression" and "Los Angeles" on Google. Please. 1,680,000 hits. Compare to 80,000 hits for "Depression" and "Duluth."

"Looks like another perfect day - I Love LA"

Well, weather wise, it is often nicer in San Diego.

*"Look at that mountain
Look at those trees"*

You got me. We have both.

"Look at that bum over there, man, He's down on his knees"

HOLLYWOOD!!! COME FOR THE MOVIES, STAY FOR THE PROFOUNDLY RELIGIOUS HOMELESS!!!

"Look at these women, there ain't nothing like them nowhere"

Because they were virtually created here, Randy. Nationwide, we saw a 44% increase in plastic surgery in 2004, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, and the smart money suggests we handled a lot of that here, somewhere between the South Bay and the Valley.

Now we reach the songs famous coda, which I remember being longer. It's the part where Randy yells out the names of streets and people cry "We love it." Streets like...

"Century Boulevard—WE LOVE IT!"

Huh? Century Boulevard, in Century City, is a huge corporate canyon where everybody's entertainment lawyer works. There's a Coffee Bean and there used to be a movie theater, but it closed. It's like saying, "That stretch of Sixth Avenue from 43rd to 48th, excluding Radio City! WE LOVE IT!!!"

"Victory Boulevard—WE LOVE IT!"

Runs through the valley. When I moved here, I asked someone "What about the Valley?" and they said, "What about Jersey?" Victory is enormous, it goes from North Hollywood to Van Nuys, and whenever I'm on it, I curse because it always means I'm lost. Victory has the Tonga Hut, a Tiki bar that hops a little on a Friday night, and the Reseda Kosher Market, which ... well, I've never been, but let's you and I assume it's rather quiet on a Friday night.

"Santa Monica Boulevard—WE LOVE IT!"

Depends on where you are. The stretch in Santa Monica is nice, and West Hollywood has some good restaurants, but the stretch in Central Hollywood has the highest rate of prostitution arrests in the county. And furthermore, if you pick up a big nasty redhead on that stretch, her not being a real redhead is the least of your worries.

"Sixth Street—WE LOVE IT!"

Oh, are you fucking kidding me? You take Sixth Street when traffic sucks on Wilshire.

*"I LOVE LA
I LOVE LA
WE LOVE IT!"*

Fade out.

• Randy Newman: a deeply delusional, possibly dangerous man who, well, he loves this city, for all its flaws, and for all its drabness. As someone who left New York because the crime rate went down and felt it had lost its "Flavor" I must salute him. Randy Newman. (I don't love him, but I see his point.)

JOHN ROSS BOWIE lives in Los Angeles and learned how to drive when he was 30.

Behind the Music with Lost City of Moulan's Cody Honer

(as told to Seth Morris)

OK, I'm writing to dispel some of the lame rumors and more lamer lies that are circulating about me and my band, Lost City of Moulan. We are NOT a novelty act. We are NOT a "joke." People *should* know about us for our genre defying music (see our seven inch *Refuse to Be Labeled*) and crowd-pleasing *stage* shows. However, because of some cock-wads with a recording device on their Ipod we're known as the band that always fights on stage. **"BULLSHIT"!**

A few weeks ago we had a show at Uncle George's. I left feeling pretty good about the set even though the sound system there sucks and we used up eleven minutes of our thirty minute set arguing. But "Can't Take It No Higher" and "Remember to Forget About Her" went especially killer so I thought it was a pretty awesome night. I started noticing something was weird a day or two later. I was at my job at the nursery, The Plant-Plant, when I walked into the office and the receptionist Jessica jumped off her computer all paranoid as soon as I walked in. I thought that was weird because she knows I don't care if she's really working or not. I made some joke about her being on a porn site and she just kind of nervously giggled and said something about needing to order more Gerber Daisies. I thought she was acting nervous cause the porn thing made her horny. Me and her flirt all the time and I used to think it would be fun to throw down in the abandoned green house but now that I know what she was really doing I don't even want to lay her.

The day after that I was selling some old cd's over at Ear Candy and this goth kid working there kept asking if I knew where he could get a RODE NTK Tube Mic. I said I had one and he says "Yeah, I hear they're worth more than my fuckin' face" and I laughed and thought was odd because that's something I had yelled at the audience after some stage diver bumped into my mic stand at Uncle George's. Then shit really got lame. This chick I'm seeing (what up, Boo?!) works at Trails End Burrito's in Old Town and she saves all the sangria that people don't finish, puts it all in a

pitcher just for me and stokes me when I come in. So I'm there feelin' all 'we are *famalia*' when I get distracted by some art-fag-posers. Trails Ends has wireless and these wanna be's were online trading headphones and laughing and pointing. (Note to all art-fag-posers everywhere: Just 'cause you have Joy Division on vinyl and you do sketches in your dream journal doesn't mean you're an artist.) The kid whose computer it was, Dominic Merlow, should watch who he's laughing at. I went to Day Camp with him when he was seven and I was 13 and still remember how he shit the kayak during water week. All through junior high we called takin' a dump "Makin' Merlow" or "Merlowin' Out." Doing something embarrassing was called "Shittin' the Kayak." Anyway, Dominic's all laughing and pointing and after a while I was just like, "F-this" and I go up to him and I'm all, "What's so funny?" And he goes "Nothin' dude," and I say "Then why are you little clove-smokers tittering at me all fuckin' night," and he's like, "We're not dude." He's all, "We're just listening to a funny link someone sent me." I finally got it out of him and made him let me listen. What I heard was fuckin' Gnar Gnar Binks, dude. It was a recording of this argument that me and Jason, our drummer, had had, edited together and merged into the chorus of that song "Why Can't We Be Friends."

As far as that argument goes it wasn't shit. All that happened is that after "Los Angeles Raros" (our Spanish language cover of The Cures' "Strange Angels") I thought we should play "Take Back the Night" and Jason didn't know that I was right. He wanted to be all anal and stick exactly to the set list. He said changing it up on the spot would "affect the integrity of the structure of the show." Whatever, dude. I wanna rock. If you want to talk about "protection" and "integrity of structure," go build a fuckin' sturdy rape-crisis center. We went back and forth for awhile and then it got personal. He called me an alcoholic loser who never talks to his kid. (FYI, I just bought Coltrane one of those GIANT birthday cards, so go fuck yourself, Jason). I told Jason that he should just quit being a fag and come out of the closet. I have no problem with people being gay. I'm not the fuckin' government. What I hate is when people are not honest. If you're gay, BE GAY! I hate liars and I hate hypocrisy!!!! If I didn't why would I have a tattoo over my heart that says "hypocrisy" with a slash through it? So yeah, I guess if you didn't know us or our music the argument we had on stage could be construed as "funny" but you know what? Fuck that.

Lost City is nobody's joke but our own, so GO TO HELL!!! Technically we HAVE gotten in a fight every show but some of the best artists have had contentious relationships. Ever hear of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards? Ever heard of the Oasis Brothers? Ever heard of Billy Idol and that Jewish Guy who played guitar for him? Being an artist means putting your soul on the line, if that's a crime then put me in Guilty Jail.

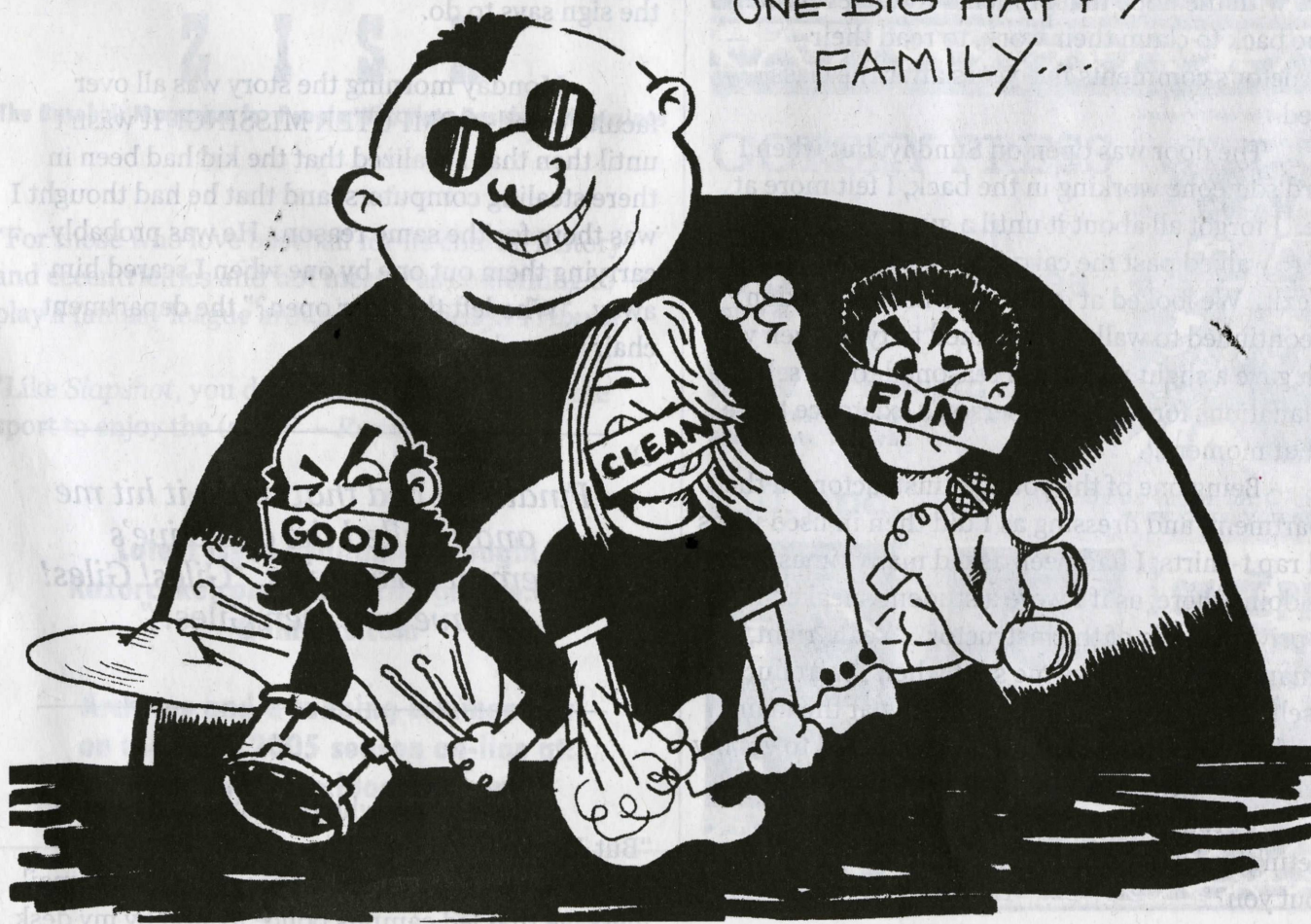
The point is we're fine, arguing is part of our creative process. Don't forget what I think Shakespeare said, "Great art is born from great pain." Just as the individual artist has a responsibility to delve into the pain and sadness in life, we as a band have a responsibility to find petty faults in one another and bicker about them endlessly. Many of our greatest songs were first hatched through the argumentative process. If we didn't fight, the world would be denied—pardon me for blowing my own horn—AMAZING songs like "Not My Fault," "Not Gonna Back Down," "No You Didn't/Yes I Did," "Say It To My Face," "C'mon You Guys (It Isn't Worth It)," "That's Not

What That Word Means," "Walkin' Out the Door," "Everybody Chill!," "So Not Cool," "Get the Fuck Out! (Of My Step Mom's Van)," "Some Day, Some Mornin', Some ROCK!," "NoitsnotYesitis," "Walkin' Out the Door," "Bullshit Police," "Walkin' Out the Door Part II," "Who Cracked My Sitar?," "Gimme Back my Bass Amp," "Would It Kill You To Call?," and "The Fault of Our Fathers."

The point is my band is fine, fuck you very much. We're a family and families argue, some families argue on stage. I could go into any of the homes of the readers of this zine and record them talking to their family and it would be hilarious. But I'm not going to do that. Instead we, me and the rest of Lost City of Moulan, are going to do what we do best: make great music about fucked up things. All you haters and dickheads have only succeeded in making us stronger as a unit. Watch your backs and hold onto your ears. Lost City!!!!

(Lost City of Moulan will be playing at the Novato Art and Wine Festival at the South end entrance from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 noon on Sunday January 31st.)

ONE BIG HAPPY
FAMILY...



Faculty Only

by Mickey Hess

They asked me to teach a writing class and I infiltrated a campus crime ring. I watched a computer carried right out of our office, and I nodded hello to the thief. This was not intentional.

I had come in on Sunday afternoon to use the staff computers, and I found the office door wide open. I shared the office with forty other part-time instructors, and a laminated sign warned the last person leaving to turn off the lights and lock the doors "For all of our safety." The office was located at the end of a musty corridor in the basement, darkened with decades of writing portfolios stored there with the hope that students would eventually come back to claim their work, to read their instructor's comments five years after the class ended.

The door was open on Sunday, but when I heard someone working in the back, I felt more at ease. I forgot all about it until a guy I'd never seen before walked past me carrying a computer toward the exit. We looked at each other in slow motion. He continued to walk, I continued to type, then we both gave a slight nod as we reasoned to ourselves explanations for the other person's existence there in that moment.

Being one of the younger instructors in the department, and dressing as I did then in used jeans and rap t-shirts, I had been asked many times what I was doing there, as if I were a student sneaked into the private realm of the instructor. "Yeah, right," a woman the same age as me spat when I introduced myself. She had watched me working at the main desk for a long moment, and then coughed to get my attention. "What are you doing here?"

I pretended to take her question for a greeting and responded, "Um, not too much. What about you?"

She put her hands on her hips and cocked her head. "These computers are for the faculty only."

But now here I was watching some guy carry one out of the office. Who was I to say anything? Just because he was a young-looking black kid in a Mobb Deep shirt didn't mean he didn't belong here, that he couldn't be employed here teaching college writing and taking the computer out for repairs. I was standing up against age-ism, against racial profiling. I was refusing to perpetuate the suspicion my colleagues had cast on me.

He left and I went back to digging through the recycling bin for a sheet of paper with one side clean enough to print on. He stepped back into the room and watched me digging around under the table. "Hey man, have you seen Giles?"

"Huh?"

"Giles. Are you working with him too today?"

"Uh... no. I'm just here to grade papers."

His eyes widened and he left the room backwards. I locked the door because that's what the sign says to do.

Monday morning the story was all over faculty email—COMPUTER MISSING! It wasn't until then that I realized that the kid had been in there stealing computers, and that he had thought I was there for the same reason. He was probably carrying them out one by one when I scared him away. "Who left the door open?" the department chair wanted to know.

*Finally in bed that night it hit me
and I called the detective's
voicemail screaming, "Giles! Giles!
Have you seen Giles?"*

"I don't know who left it open," I replied.
"But I locked it."

It was the ill-thought bragging of my email message that led campus police to stop by my desk

in the basement. They left a note for me: "Please call campus police." Other instructors who'd questioned who I was in the first place now looked at me with new interest, like I'd stolen that computer, like I was a suspect rather than an informant.

I cooperated fully, enjoying the excitement on an otherwise dull afternoon. I narrated the incident while the campus detective asked questions like, "What were you doing here Sunday in the first place?" It was a good question. Looking around the room at all the other instructors pretending not to be listening in, all of them getting older by the minute and hunched over their desks with ramen noodles and coffee and stacks of their students' essays on pointless assigned topics like family values or becoming an informed citizen. Jesus, what *was* I doing there?

It took me awhile but I relived the situation. Mobb Deep t-shirt. "Hey man, have you seen _____?" The most useful information I could offer the cops, and I couldn't remember the name. Finally in bed that night it hit me and I called the

detective's voicemail screaming, "Giles! Giles! Have you seen *Giles*?" And immediately I felt like I'd sold out. I'd been caught up in the excitement of the investigation, but hadn't stopped to consider the effect I could have. Someone could be going to jail.

Detective Anderson called me back the next morning. He had arrested someone named Giles stealing computers from the business school Sunday night. But he didn't mention an accomplice. I thought of the kid in the Mobb Deep t-shirt, the one I made eye contact with, the one who took one look at me and decided I was like him, that I was stealing computers and working for Giles. I hope he went free, gained family values and became an informed citizen. I thought again of the writing instructors, none of them born writing instructors, making fun of their students for liking rap music or wearing noserings, for choosing an identity same as they did. Most of them I'd never spoken to, and they'd never spoken to me, except to question the youngish-looking guy in the Wu Tang t-shirt writing furiously in the corner, to ask who I was and what I thought I was doing there, in their world.

Z I S K

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THE SNAKE PIT
BOOK

The Antichrist's Live Journal Postings

By Ken Wohlrob

The Rodney Dangerfield of the Afterlife

Sept. 26, 2005 | 05:05 pm

mood: depressed

music: Leonard Cohen

posted by: anti_christ



I'm getting sick and tired of not getting any props from the humans.

Over the weekend I went to this really cool loft party in Williamsburg with **Demon_Jizm**. That place is so hot right now. So I go up and try to tempt this one chick that's standing by the DJ while he's spinning this really cool Guahibo-rain-forest-reggae-meets-hip-hop-ambient trance stuff. I do the name drop and she's like 'OOOOHHH, you're Satan? I'm such a fan!'

I'm like "Nooo, I'm the Antichrist. You know the prince of the powers of darkness."

She's like, "Well isn't that the same thing as Satan?"

I reply, "Well no, technically Satan is the King of Hell and I'm just a prince, but hey I'm my own man."

She fires back, "So then you're the same thing as Beelzebub?"

"Nooo, he's the prince of devils...I'm the Antichrist."

"Oh I see, I see, you're Lucifer!"

"No, no, no! That's just another name for Satan! I am the Goddamn Antichrist!"

Next thing you know she gives me a haughty look for correcting her and she walks back over and starts hitting on the DJ.

I swear, sometimes I feel like John Entwistle. Nobody knows my name in spite of all my great work.

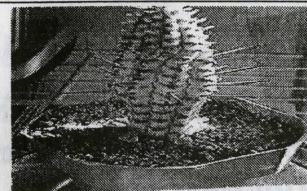
The Narrow Escape

September 28, 2005 | 03:47 pm

mood: cranky

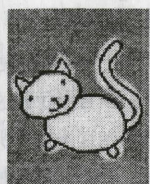
music: The White Stripes

posted by: anti_christ



Got accosted today on the Subway by a bunch of Mormon's on their pilgrimage in the City of Sin. Two burly members of the BYU football team stepped on the #6 train and started handing out pamphlets to everyone. I mean c'mon, I'm on my way to work here, I don't want to be bothered in the morning by no God Squad. Shit, I haven't even had my coffee yet.

So one of the linebackers for God jams a pamphlet in my face and starts telling me I better I take it if I want to be saved. I says to him, "You better step off and recognize



asshole!" I mean c'mon. What does a cat have to do to get people to respect his powers of black magic? Next thing I know, he whips out a hunting knife and starts screaming about sinners "need to have their blood spilt in order to pay for the sins." Luckily the train hit Union Square right at that moment and I literally leapt out the door. I'm a tempter not a fighter. Damn, those Mormon's are scary.

So I hi-tailed it over to the Starbucks at Astor Place, just one block away from the one we put by Cooper Union, to meet up with **Horny_Broad**. Ah Starbucks...one of my best ideas: the entire human race selling its soul to Hell one mocha-frappacino-half-latte with skim milk and Splenda at a time.

Dawn of Another New York City Day

October 2, 2005 | 07:07 am

mood: sleepy 

music: U2


posted by: anti_christ

Couldn't sleep all last night. I knew it was coming. Sunday. I hate Sundays.

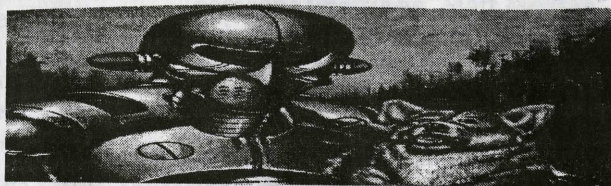
The Mail Never Stops

October 8, 2005 | 01:32 pm

mood: jacked

music: Sleater-Kinney 


posted by: anti_christ



You know it is hard enough being the prince of the powers of darkness – which on some days translates to Personal Asswiper for Satan – without having the daily mail drop adding insult to injury. I mean c'mon people. All I ever get are demo tapes from death metal bands in Norway. I'm sick of these fucking pasty son-of-bitches in lipstick and black eye makeup talking about how black and miserable life is. Get a job and work for a living you sons of bitches and then see what Hell is really like. Or at least move to a place that is immersed in darkness eight months out of the year. No wonder you're so fucking miserable. I was hoping to get the new issue of *Go Metric* from **Ziskophant**, but instead I get a CD-R from some lunatic dressed as a troll and growling Nordic folk tunes over a drum machine set at 150 bpm.

ZZZZZZZZL....

October 10, 2005 | 11:24 pm

mood: bored 

music: Coldplay

posted by: anti_christ



Went to over to **Ego_Taint** and **Pure_Drivel**'s house to watch DVDs and eat vegetarian. Why are there are no good biopics about musicians? *Sid and Nancy* – Shit. *The Doors* – Shittier! *Great Balls of Fire* or that horrendous *Buddy Holly Story* with Gary Busey – Kings of Shit! So if I understand this right, Jamie Foxx got the Oscar for basically doing a Ray Charles impression that Rich Little or Eddie Murphy could've done much better? Shit, now I know why the boss stays out of Hollywood. They're destroying themselves with this LCD, over-sentimental pap. I don't even want to see that new one with Joaquin Phoenix as Johnny Cash.



Trapped!

October 12, 2005 | 08:49 pm

mood: agitated

music: U2

posted by: anti_christ



Have been trapped in the house for three hours now! I'm supposed to be meeting this woman I met on Nerve.com for a date at a Polish-Mayan fusion joint in the West Village that makes killer jalapeno perogies, but I can't get out.

A bunch of fucking Jehovah's Witnesses rang the bell right as I was trying to leave. I tried to pretend like I wasn't home and then accidentally knocked over a vase in the hallway. They've been out there for four hours ringing the bell and singing hymns. I'd give them a case of malt liquor or Drake's Coffee Cake Jr.'s if I thought that would get them off the porch. Shit!

And I think this woman was the one...she works as a lit agent.

My Career

October 14, 2005 | 01:32 pm

mood: frustrated

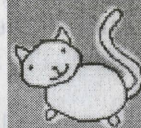
music: Wilco

posted by: anti_christ



When I first took the job of assistant to the assistant of the Chief Rebel Angel, I thought there would be room to move, an opportunity to grow in my position. Here it is over 2,000 years later and I'm still doing the shit work. Willy Loman had it better. Another fucking extensive tour of the South to go after the Evangelicals? Fuck me! Every time membership is down, Satan sends my ass to Atlanta or Houston or some other Hell-forsaken southern shithole. When am I going to get to plan nuclear wars or famine or plagues or Republican Party platforms? I should've taken the internship at Def Jam.

I mean what did Satan ever do that was so great anyway? Big deal — the whole temptation in the Garden of Eden. Any jackass can shape-shift into a snake. Let's see his un-Holiness change into a duck-billed platypus or Katie Couric. That shit takes talent. And what has he done since the whole "eat the apples" shtick? Nada. Zilch. I mean he's been coasting on that one ever since. He's worse than Chuck Berry, I swear. Fucking one-hit wonder son of a bitch. Then again Satan never had the audacity to videotape women going to the bathroom in a diner. Chuck was a sick son of a bitch. Now that would be a hell of a biopic.



Home Therapy For Professional Wrestling Fans

by Wred Fright

It's hard being a fan of professional wrestling. Non-wrestling fans just don't understand why you watch the stuff and usually question your intelligence (despite the fact that wrestling more often than not seems to be the favorite sport of gifted kids—probably because it has the action of other sports but mixes drama with it, plus it subverts the whole territorial pissing competition thing by having the "competitors" actually working together). The sports pages in the newspaper ignore you and the sport (or "sports entertainment" as World Wrestling Entertainment likes to call it). And half the time wrestling storylines seem to be written by drunk chimpanzees set loose on Microsoft Word. So what do you do when you turn on a WWE television show and see HHH wrestling the same opponent he's wrestled for the last six months, or you head down to see your local league live (in my case Cleveland All-Pro Wrestling) and you're confronted with the umpteenth version of the story of a working class hero wrestler taking on the evil, rich management of the wrestling company?

Personally, I scream (at the live event no one notices because they're all screaming too, usually they yell something like "Faggot!" which makes me further embarrassed to be a wrestling fan and thus associated with the kind of people who delight in screaming "Faggot!" at someone—despite or because of the covert homoeroticism of pro wrestling, most wrestling fans are quite homophobic, apparently that's still one of the lowest common denominators a promoter can count on uniting average Americans—and at home people in the apartment building might notice but they don't say anything—I live in the ghetto so they're used to hearing screaming).

After the involuntary response of screaming, I then go play with my wrestling action figures to soothe my soul. While doing so, I come up with a storyline that's fun. The storyline doesn't have to be completely new or even particularly radical (although I have run the working class hero storyline myself but this time I let him organize the wrestlers into a union and not just pour beer on the boss without somehow getting fired), but it should at least be interesting and preferably unpredictable. For the most part, I just let the wrestlers develop interesting and continually evolving characters (you know, like real people) and let them interact with one another (like life) and the storylines should almost write themselves. Some might say that a

35-year-old man playing with Dudley Boyz dolls is far more embarrassing than watching wrestling on tv, no matter how bland the storyline, but I still feel much better afterwards so I recommend it as a home therapy to other wrestling fans who crave the excitement of the sport but just can't watch another Hulk Hogan title run.

Now I know it's tough booking matches. People get hurt and people leave the company making it hard to plan anything long term. Every week there's a never-ending chasm of time to fill on tv and at house shows. And there are only so many variations of the basic high noon showdown good guy/bad guy story at the core of wrestling.

Still, the writers are far more conservative than they need to be. I realize money is the key factor but just because a match or storyline made money in 1985 or 1995, doesn't mean it will make money in 2005. Really, the absence of anything new might have the opposite effect, as the WWE really should have learned by now. Now part of the problem is that wrestlers, probably for quite sensible financial reasons, don't use gimmicks as much as they used to. I mean why would someone wrestle as "Matt Morgan" if he could be "Abdullah the Butcher" instead? Well, probably because Vince McMahon would own the trademark on the Abdullah the Butcher character nowadays but if you use your real name the big corporation probably can't trademark that. Now, I don't know the inside details on how contracts at the WWE work, but I'm guessing they've taken their toll on creativity. After all, who wants to bust their ass creating a great new character that the company will own? Perhaps the WWE should share the trademarks more with the performers and pay more royalties, and creativity will flow accordingly.

As an aside, I've noticed a similar phenomenon in the world of comic books. The most popular super-heroes were all created from the 1930s-1960s. There were a few created in the 1970s such as Wolverine, The Punisher, and Swamp Thing, but from the 1980s on most creators working for the two big companies, DC and Marvel, contented themselves with revamping older characters rather than create something new, a trend that continues today (why else bring back even minor characters such as The Black Panther or The Human Target for revamps instead of just creating a new character?). I don't think it's any coincidence that once the notion of creator rights became a force in comics in the late 1970s (most prominent in the lawsuit against DC which shamed the company into sharing royalties from the *Superman* movie with his creators, Siegel and Shuster), most creators saved their best ideas for creator-owned projects rather than let a big corporation own them. The results have been mixed in the industry. Though we've seen a plethora of great comics characters from the creative-owned wing of the industry (Bone, Cerebus, Hellboy, and the Sin City

crew just to name a few), without the oomph of the DC or Marvel Universe to play in with other characters and creative minds it's doubtful we'll see such an archetypal character as a Batman develop again.

Whatever the reason for wrestling's more-often-than-not storyline doldrums, what's a fan to do in the meantime? Well, one, turn off the channel, stop going to the shows, and let them know somehow that you think their storylines stink and why. Too often wrestling fans continue to tune in and attend merely out of habit and hope (kind of like Chicago Cubs fans), but as long as the money is coming in, there's no incentive at the company to try anything different, so we're bound to get more of the same. They'll notice when the money drops, though. Remember the creativity that fueled wrestling in the 1990s because of the competition between ECW, WCW, and WWE (then WWF)?

However, if we do more or less boycott the boring storylines, then we'll still need a wrestling fix. So unless you're going to form a backyard wrestling league with some buddies, get out your action figures or just use your imagination.

Here's one I came up with tonight. It's a tag team storyline and runs a whole year, from one Wrestlemania to another. I've written it so the WWE or another wrestling company can use it as a script but since I know the ending already, even if they aired it, I'd probably still go have my Chris Benoit The Rabid Wolverine action figure wrestle my Wolverine from The X-Men action figure in a loser shits his pants match instead of watching it.

April

Starting after Wrestlemania (the WWE's traditional wrap-up of old storylines from the previous year), I'd take the biggest wrestler on the show—say, for Raw, The Big Show—and pair him up with a smaller wrestler—say Tajiri—for a classic odd couple tag team. But first I'd let their characters evolve a bit on their own so we'll have a good foundation for the tag team storyline. For The Big Show I would make him bored with his job. He's all business. He wants to wrestle his match, preferably win it, and go home. His boredom would be evident. He'd yawn a lot and go through the motions on everything. Next, I'd let Tajiri be fun-loving. He'd start clowning around with the fans and wooing the ladies. I wouldn't worry too much about making either one a definitive face (good guy) or heel (bad guy), but most fans would probably boo the Big Show and cheer Tajiri.

May

The team of Big Show and Tajiri would come together in a random drawing for a tag team title tournament.

The tag team title tournament could be drawn out for a few weeks with all the wrestlers on the show involved and with the final at a pay-per-view. The Big Show and Tajiri would of course prove to be an unlikely but effective combination with Big Show using his size and strength to throw Tajiri at opponents and Tajiri would use his speed and smallness around the girth of the Big Show to surprise opponents.

June

Then I'd have the team face the obligatory series of challengers (and different challengers, not the boring WWE standard of facing the same opponent for an entire month) for a few weeks until the pairing got a bit stale.

July

Once the staleness started to set in, I'd have the partners become more and more frustrated with one another. What used to be amusing (at least for the fans) is now annoying (for the partners) such as when Big Show wants to end the match with the team's double-team finishing move—say The Sushi Squash with Big Show dropping Tajiri onto a prone opponent—but Tajiri would be off in the stands doing a beer bong. Over the next few weeks, the team would keep losing matches (without losing the belts, the old countout and disqualification victories for opponents upon which the title doesn't change hands) as they spend more time arguing amongst themselves than wrestling their opponents. Then at a pay-per-view I'd have them lose the belts.

August

Then I'd have the tag team belts go musical chairs changing just about every week as The Big Show and Tajiri try to pull it together enough to earn another title shot.

September

They, of course, would win at the pay-per-view but immediately fall back to squabbling, and Tajiri, disgusted at being lectured to pay attention to the match by The Big Show yet again ("How many times have I told you, quit taking your pants off and streaking around the ring!"), would quit in the middle of a title match leaving The Big Show alone to get ganged up on by his opponents. The Big Show, being a 7-foot, 500-pound giant who goes "Rahhhhhh!", would prevail to retain the tag team belts. The next few weeks would see The Big Show auditioning new partners by wrestling them solo in matches. This would be mostly played for laughs as The Big Show proves far too picky to get a new partner. ("Rob Van Dam, you don't play golf? I can't team with someone who doesn't play golf, in addition to a tag team partner I need somebody to

caddy for me at the course!"). Finally, the management would get impatient and demand that The Big Show pick a new partner and defend the title. The Big Show promises to have a new partner to defend the title at the next pay-per-view. At the pay-per-view the Big Show arrives with his new partner, say The Cheese Bandit, who no one but The Big Show can see.

October

That's right, for the next few weeks, The Big Show teams with his imaginary friend The Cheese Bandit, and continues to hold the tag team belts by himself.

November

Finally, management exasperated by The Big Show's solo run on the tag team titles (and sick of all the other tag teams complaining that he isn't a legitimate champ since he doesn't have a real partner) plots to take the title away from him by having three-team matches and whatnot in which the Big Show gets ganged up on by all his opponents. Worn out, Big Show finally chooses a partner the rest of us can see. That's right, he makes up with Tajiri, who nursing a grudge against his old partner, promptly screwjobs him and they lose the belts at the pay-per-view.

December

Solo feud between The Big Show and Tajiri. Likely The Big Show would squash Tajiri but Tajiri might be able to green mist the big man and blind him to win.

January

The Big Show announces he's taking another run at the tag team title with the partner he can depend on, The Cheese Bandit. He spends the month beating up other tag teams until he's granted a title shot at the pay-per-view. This time people can see The Cheese Bandit (I'm thinking a guy in orange trunks with a cheesehead hat like Packers fans wear but you can imagine him however you want, perhaps a naked man all slathered with slices of American cheese) because he's not imaginary anymore (probably a new wrestler brought up from Ohio Valley Wrestling or another one of the minor leagues). This team is more functional and actually works as a team unlike Big Show's previous pairings with Tajiri and the imaginary Cheese Bandit.

February

The new champs defend their belts against a variety of opponents.

March

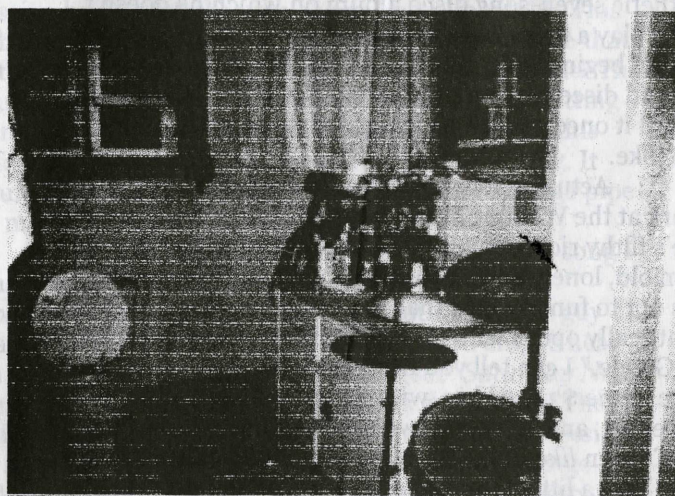
The champs lose at Wrestlemania and disband, spinning Big Show and The Cheese Bandit off into solo

competition. If successful, they can be periodically reunited if the WWE needs a tag team.

Oh my, wasn't that more fun than watching the latest reality Diva competition on Raw? Well, maybe not if there was a wardrobe malfunction, but otherwise yes. So wrestling fans, don't just sit there and suffer! Heal thyself! Play with yourself! Er...with your action figures! Hey, if you come up with a good one, send it in to the WWE. They're not open source but judging from last night's Raw where Kane wrestled Edge in a feud that should have ended weeks ago when it was already braindead, they could probably use the help.

Wred Fright is currently working on a new novel called Love At First Zine, where one of the characters publishes a wrestling zine giving Fright lots of opportunities to make up his own silly wrestlers such as The Panty Sniffer and Ed "The Bedwetter" Driphoski and involve them in storylines the WWE would probably never touch, for which we perhaps might all be thankful. His first novel, The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus, about a hapless garage rock band, comes out sometime this year from Underground Literary Alliance/Out Your Backdoor Press. His website is www.wredfright.com

In 2006, Underground Literary Alliance Press will collect a legendary zine in one book . . .



The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus by Wred Fright

Find out why this humorous rock and roll novel about a year in the life of a garage band in a college town was embraced by readers and rockers across zinedom

www.wredfright.com

www.literaryrevolution.com

www.outyourbackdoor.com

"Reads musically like a good Nuggets tune" Roctober
"A good read" Razorcake "Hilarious" Literary Fan Mag

The Longest Eight Minutes of My Life

(or *How Elton John's Cover of "Johnny B. Goode" Sent Me on an Obsessive Path That Led to Law-Breaking, Domestic Turmoil, a Superfluous Screening of Back to the Future and the Eventual Realization That We Are All Victims of Love*)

by Jesse Mank

Reggie's this guy at Partners. He's one of the many lonely, old, fat, gay guys who sit at the bar and talk about the sexual conquests of their younger days. He drunkenly rambles about how he used to be a rock star in the seventies, spraying beer and spit through the large gap between his two front teeth. I guess they called him Elton John back then. The guys at the Wonder Bread factory call him Dutch Boy now, after the cheap wig he wears when he's not busting his back loading those plastic, green crates of Wonder Bread onto the delivery trucks. *I used to be the Rocket Man, man. Bennie and the fucking Jets.* Everyone laughs, but Reggie was actually a decent pianist, entertainer and song stylist until he destroyed himself with excess. He developed a life-threatening cocaine addiction that ended his career in 1979. His last album was called *Victim of Love*. It's a pathetic seven-song disco album on which he doesn't even play a note. Didn't write a note, either. In fact the album begins with, get this, an eight-minute and five second disco version of "Johnny B. Goode." Good lord, I heard it once and it was longest eight minutes of my life. No joke.

Actually, most of that was untrue. Reggie doesn't work at the Wonder Bread factory. He's still Elton John. He's filthy rich, actually. And while it's fun to imagine him old, lonely and washed up in America somewhere, it's not to fun to know that *Victim of Love* is a real album that really opens with an eight-minute cover of "Johnny B. Goode." I can tell you first hand, because I saw this disc in the \$3 used bin, with its immediately unfamiliar cover art, and it sucked two weeks of my life out of me. I don't even like Elton John, but I'm a pop culture junkie and I got a little too curious about this album. I really needed to hear it. Why had I never seen this record while flipping through endless \$2 boxes at the record shows? Was it a lost classic? I know it's cool to dismiss him, but Elton can't be *all* that bad. He did once crash an Iggy Pop show with a gorilla suit on. I picked up *Victim of Love* and turned it over, surprised to only see seven songs on it. Just seven? Hmmm...and look at that, the first track is Johnny B. Goode. Weird. But wait, eight minutes? What could you do with Johnny B. Goode for that long? It's three chords, three verses. Chuck Berry's version is only 2:40. Not to mention, it's a founding father rock song, a certifiable classic, a *look but don't touch* song that no one has any business covering. Not just because it's such an

obvious roots-of-rock classic, but because it's not really a great song. Oh, don't get me wrong, it's important. But at the end of the day it's a corny, storyteller saved only by its totally awesome, life-changing, earth-shattering, history-writing opening riff. That was it, decision made: I needed to hear it. I needed to hear Elton John tear this baby down. Play that funky music, Dutch boy. It was going to be a laugh. One long, eight-minute laugh.

Hey wait a minute here, what am I thinking? I don't need some shitty Elton John record lying around my house. I have enough skeletons in my record collection. Put it down and walk away, Jesse. It's not worth it. Not even \$2.99+tax. So I did, and managed to escape *Victim of Love's* initial curious allure. But as soon as I got home I did a little research. One hundred percent of all the "professional" reviews I read rated it as the worst album of Elton's career. 100%. This, of course, only served to fuel my curiosity. It turns out the album was recorded in Germany with session players (including Steve Lukather of Toto) and as I gave away earlier, the man who once considered himself as "only the piano player" (don't shoot!) doesn't play a note on it. The songs (all except Johnny B.) were written by Pete Belotte who enjoyed success as a songwriter for disco-diva Donna Summer. The album is generally described as Eurodisco with an unhappy sounding Elton dubbed on top. One review even goes so far to say that the "absurd, endless Johnny" is actually the best track on the album. Meanwhile, I'm out of control. This sounds like a train wreck, I need, need, need to hear this!

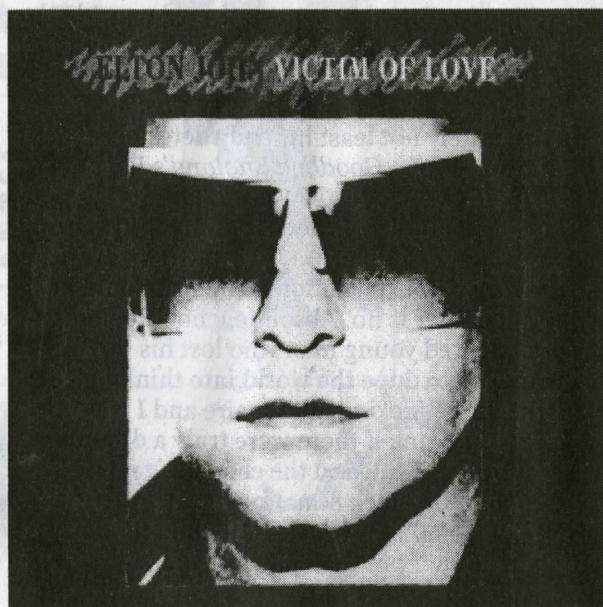
But my research didn't stop there, I went to Amazon.com where one can always count on John Q. Public to tell it like it is. I absolutely love Amazon's customer reviews. They're often better than the albums themselves. They're great because people don't know how to spell or use punctuation. They write in fragments. They don't know how to back their opinions with compelling description or reason. Reviewers exchange blows with each other, often hitting below the belt if someone doesn't agree with their opinion of *The Slim Shady LP* or *Tapestry* or *Brain Drain* or whatever. But even at Amazon, the lay-man can pretty much agree that *Victim of Love* sucks, but for a few die-hards who are admittedly soft on Elton and some screwballs who don't know any better.

"People who don't like disco wouldn't even listen (to) a song sample's cos for them disco is 'sucks'. And for me this is brilliant disco rock record so I will prefer this than well-known John's hits which me they also please themselves."

OK, clearly this one's been automatically translated by Alta Vista's Babelfish or maybe even written by a toddler. But then again maybe it's just the western world that had a hard time understanding *Victim*. Young Seok Park from Seoul, Korea writes:

"Elton and disco... This album gives you a special experience with its non-stop disco mood. In particular, the tune and the arrangement of instruments as well as the sound quality are

excellent. Best tracks are "Jonny B. Goode" and "Victim of Love" often I feel good with this CD trying to dance...if you notice the cool price, you could easily try this."



So there you go, another person agrees that "Johnny B." is the best track on the album. Thanks Young, but your feel-good enthusiasm is not shared by very many. Just to skim the surface of the overwhelming amount of sour reviews, one person writes "If Chuck Berry was dead he'd be turning over in his grave on this version." Another said about "Johnny" "Elton unleashes not a barbaric yawp at the beginning, but a howl of pain. His soul is dying here and he knows it." This same person makes my favorite observation about the album cover: "The album cover says it all...Elton closing his eyes to what he's created, hoping if he looks away it will cease to exist." There were several people who marveled that the album was still in print. One of them said: "This album does not even work as kitsch or camp. It is simply an embarrassment and unquestionably the absolute low point in the career of Elton John. I find it unfathomable that in the 21st century there is still anybody who has any interest in it. Absolutely unspeakable." Wow. Now I'm *really* interested. Still, some of Elton's fans proved themselves co-dependents by trying to make excuses for Captain Fantastic's fantastic piece of crap. "Perhaps there's a story behind this. Maybe Elton was trying to get out of his contract or something." Another reviewer prefers to imagine Elton as the victim of his own *Victim of Love* album. "I feel that someone must've strong-armed Elton into doing this album...this was probably something that someone made some money off of, or a possible tax write off." It would never occur to these Elton-ites that perhaps Elton was trying to get out of his *mind* on coke and pain pills and that maybe it was Elton's dealer that made some money off this record. But my favorite remark in the "excuses" category was: "Maybe this is Elton's *Metal Machine Music*."

My research led me to a site called Super 70s .com (subtitled: *Where the seventies never ended*). They hadn't even bothered to officially review the album, but

there was an anonymously posted review that read: "When I bought this album in 1979 I was so drugged out and lost. One nite I almost OD'ed but this album got me through. We are all Victims of Love." Ok, it's kind of funny and sad at the same time. *We are all victims of love*. The poor guy's probably living in his parents' basement. Anyway, it's clear that I should have walked away at this point, but those Amazon reviews kept pulling me in. When someone writes "the only reason to own this terrible disc is if you wish to experience, first-hand, what it must feel like to be trapped in hell," you've just *got to know* what it's like to be trapped in hell! I was so anxious to hear *Victim*, "Johnny B. Goode" especially, that the lo-fidelity, 30 second, streaming sample that Amazon provides just wasn't going to be enough for me. I really needed to experience the full eight minutes of "Johnny." I wanted to sit and feel my hair grow, really feel myself grow older as I waited for Elton to reign that tired old pony home. *Rocket man, I think it's gonna be a long, long time*. This is where I take the law into my own hands and illegally download Elton's *Victim of Love* from a Russian Mp3 website. Hell, it's no more illegal than buying the \$3 used copy. And as a matter of principle, Elton doesn't deserve a cent of my cash for this album. I'm sure even the FBI would understand. In a matter of minutes there it was on my desktop.

Thankfully the song still opens with "the riff" but god, if it isn't painfully slow. Super slow. It feels like half the speed of the original, played lifelessly by a clean guitar with some chorus on it. The slow speed makes more sense when the disco beat rolls in, though. You just can't disco dance very fast. Elton lets out his famed howl of pain and even gives us a "play it, boys" while the session hacks plod through a verse instrumentally. This is hilarious to me. Are we really supposed to believe that Elton is present while these guys are jamming it out? The music sounds like it was made automatically, by hitting a demo button on a keyboard or something. Oddly, this effect is only heightened when Elton begins to sing. It sounds like they recorded him singing in a drainage pipe or maybe an old aluminum tool shed.

Two minutes and twenty seconds into the song I was not all surprised to hear a yakety-sax-style saxophone solo, which really goes south when the guy starts doing that alto-sax scream-thing you always hear on late night television theme songs (see: *Saturday Night Live*). At 2:47 the background singers go bonkers. They spit out a mind blowing 22 "go"s in rapid fire succession in about seven seconds. Go-go-go-go-go-go-go-go-go-go! I don't know that it's exactly 22 because it was pretty hard to count. But it did lead me to wonder just how many times the word *go* was uttered throughout this version. To get a somewhat accurate count I had to listen three full times. Sometimes Elton and the background singers sing one unified *go*, but then other times their *gos* were just far enough apart that they deserved two separate counts. Either way, I tried to be fair and my official count is 218. I know what you're thinking, "Wow, that's a lot of *go*, Jesse." But just to put it into perspective, how many times does Chuck Berry sing *go*?" Well, put away your abacuses, I already did the footwork and counted 45 *gos* in Chuck Berry's original. That's a

484% mark up if you trust my math skills. But let me just warn you if you're planning on challenging it, you just might have bigger issues than I do.

The song could officially end at 3:50, which would still be too long if you ask me. But the song continues with a lot of instrumental baloney and even a bass solo at 4:30. Then the third verse is repeated after the guitar solo, if only to remind you that you're still listening to "Johnny B. Goode." Finally, Elton and the background singers just keep singing "Go, go. Go Johnny go, go, go" for a full minute and change to ride the song into the sunset. But the scary thing is, it's not really a sunset at all since every song on *Victim of Love* seamlessly segues into one another. It's one long disco party with the same disco beat at the exact same disco tempo. This reminded me of one the Amazon customer reviews I read that ended with: "NOTE TO AEROBIC INSTRUCTORS: This album is perfect for your classes... lots of energy and a steady, consistent beat."

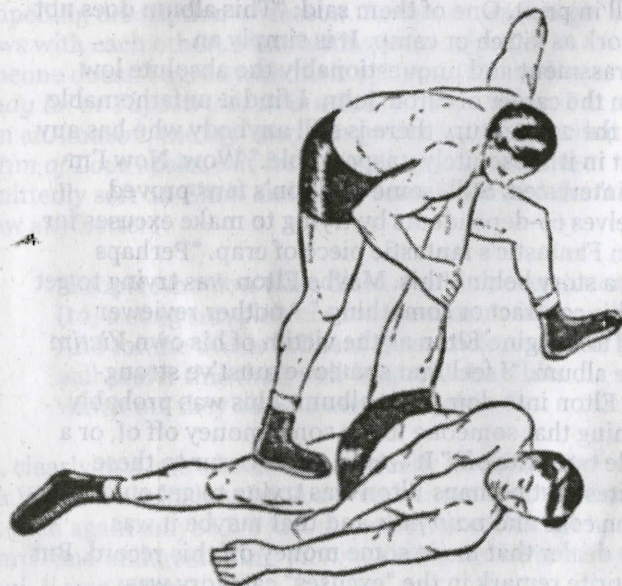
Elton managed to wrangle a lot more than eight minutes out of me, and it was really starting to show. My girlfriend had given me a strict verbal warning that if I needed to count anything "Johnny B. Goode"-related again, I was to wear headphones. As the week progressed, I told friends about *Victim's* version of "Johnny" while they looked on with confusion and concern. Only my friend Brian brought up the use of "Johnny B. Goode" in the 1984 hit movie *Back to the Future* starring Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd. His concern was valid. He said during Marty McFly's performance of "Johnny B. Goode": his future parents have their first dance, which gets interrupted, jeopardizing Marty's existence; they reunite; the band's guitar player calls his cousin Chuck Berry to introduce his own sound to him; the crowd of 1950s teens gets introduced to a heavy metal-style guitar solo 20 years before their time; and Doc struggles to rig the time machine to the lightening-catalyst clock. That's a lot to go on in just one song, just how long is *Back to the Future's* "Johnny B. Goode"? And while that's a good question, it's a question that cost me two hours to answer while I sat through *Back to the Future* for what I have to admit was an embarrassing fourth time. It turns out none of the above actually occur during "Johnny," except for the phone call to Chuck Berry and the surprisingly boring guitar solo. Thanks, Brian. But just for the record, the song only lasts 2:16 in the movie.

And just when I thought Elton was done with me, a week later I was food shopping and his 1973 song "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" came on the overhead. I stopped in my tracks with a box of Post Honey Comb breakfast cereal in my hand. I have to say it's a goddamn beautiful song. It sort of sent a chill up my spine. And I had a moment there in the cereal aisle. I almost felt sorry for him. Almost. I thought about the young Elton. He had so much promise. He was an extravagant showman, and if you ever took the time to listen to his live album 11-17-71 without prejudice (a radio broadcast from 1971), you'd know that he started out as anything but soft rock. He

was a rip-roaring show-stopper. There was sincerity in those old songs, and now he's a hack. A rich wash-up. Maybe there's nothing worse. You can't even feel sorry for him. If life were fair Reggie really would be working down at the Wonder Bread factory, and we'd never had to hear all the shit he put out after 1979 (see: the 1980s "I Guess That's Why They Call it the Blues," "I'm Still Standing," the 1990s Disney-inspired *The Circle of Life* and last but definitely not least his truly detestable tribute to Princess Diana *Goodbye England's Rose*). I had to stand there in the cereal aisle and ponder this. Could I forgive Elton? Was he not just a talented young performer who simply lost his way? Clouded by drugs and the high costs and expectations of fame? Could he be pardoned? The answer is no. Absolutely not. Reginald Dwight was a talented young man who lost his way and somehow managed to dupe the world into thinking he'd found it again. He's a fucking millionaire and I was just standing here wondering if there were truly a difference between Post Honey Comb and the cheaper, generic Yellow Honey Rounds. Fuck him. Con artist. I put the box of cereal down and left the grocery store disgusted. And when I got home I put that goddamn version of "Johnny B. Goode" on one last time, just to validate my disgust. Eight minutes later the only thing that came to mind were the wise words of yet another Amazon reviewer that simply said, "It's still better than anything Cher's put out."

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Faggot ass pop music



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Return of the Master of the Flying Guillotine!

I must get to Blockbuster to return Master Of The Flying Guillotine. The late fees are great and many.

By B. Wallace & Ian Kazimer



Mom? Why are you taking my picture?

Can't you read? I must get to the video store!

My bike has a flat tire. Will you drive me?

No.

Awww, Mom.



You! Loan me your bike!

No.

What are you doing with that thing?

Knock it off.



We talked about this before.

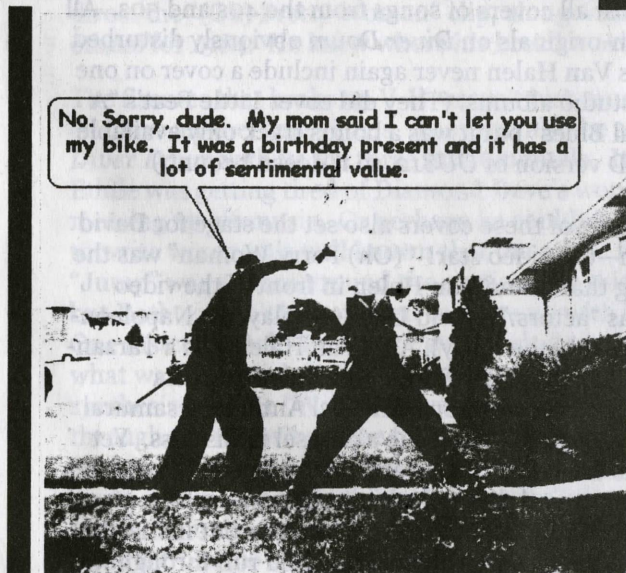
I know but I forgot.

Now, don't take offense, it's not really your fault, it's just that you look sort of blurry, but... um... Are you a dude or a chick?

Don't you have to go return a movie or something?



Can I use your bike?



No. Sorry, dude. My mom said I can't let you use my bike. It was a birthday present and it has a lot of sentimental value.

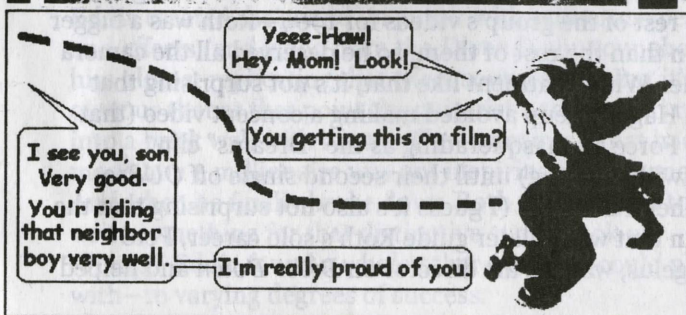
You leave me no choice but to RIDE YOU TO THE VIDEO STORE!



C'mon! Let's Roll! We're burning Daylight! Get a move-on!

Hey! Knock it off!

Aw, man! I lost a contact lense!



Yeee-Haw! Hey, Mom! Look!

You getting this on film?

I see you, son. Very good. You'r riding that neighbor boy very well.

I'm really proud of you.



Hey. Arent you doing the class president thing?

Naw. That was last year.

Now I'm doing the ninja thing.

Oh. I see.

Happy Trails: Van Halen and the Impact of *Diver Down*

by Steve Reynolds

If you asked any casual Van Halen fan what the most important album was in the band's storied career, 95% of them would answer their 1978 self-titled debut (followed most likely with them yelling at you, "dumbass!"), while the other 5% would probably pick 1984 because it was such a big hit. Alas, these people would be wrong. 1982's *Diver Down* is the album that ties the whole group's fractured history together. It summed up where the Pasadena quartet had been—and where it would go in a few years.

Most people would consider the paragraph above either heresy, totally insane, or worth a punishment of listening to the Gary Cherone-fronted *Van Halen 3* over and over again while strapped to a rather uncomfortable chair. And while these people would all have valid points (well, except for the torture by Cherone, no human deserves that), they'd miss the chance to learn more about an album that, on the surface, seems like the throwaway of David Lee Roth-era. But with a closer look, you can find a surprising amount of diversity and innovation from a group that was looked down upon by critics as cartoonish hard rockers with a technically flashy guitarist.

Let's take a look at where David Lee Roth, Michael Anthony and Eddie and Alex Van Halen were when they hit the studio in the early fall of 1981. The band had already released four platinum albums in four years and toured incessantly. But Eddie Van Halen was not content, at least musically. (I mean, he had married Valerie Bertinelli, so life wasn't all that bad.) The guitarist had tried pushing the envelope on the band's sound with *Fair Warning*, which is loaded with some of the darkest and hardest music they'd ever recorded. That darkness didn't translate into sales, as the disc was the group's worst selling up to that point. (Somehow I don't think one-million copies should ever be considered a flop, though.) Considering the fact that the band's commercial star had dimmed slightly, it's not too far-fetched to think Warner Brothers—like any record label—probably wanted something out quickly to recapture that momentum. And with V-H still an arena tour champ, the pressure to get back out there and make money for their expanding machine must have been in play as well.

What is a band to do with a career-challenging deadline staring them in the face? Go back to their roots—and to other people's songs. With the amount of touring this band did, it's no surprise that Eddie's bag of musical tricks might have run a bit empty. They filled that void by dipping into their bar band past and loaded up *Diver Down* with five covers. The group had their first hit in 1978 with their frantic version of the Kinks' "You Really

Got Me," so they went to the Ray Davies well again by leading off *Diver Down* with "Where Have All the Good Times Gone." *Van Halen II* featured a cover of the Dee Dee Warwick/Linda Ronstadt hit "You're No Good"; *Diver Down* taps into that same classic Top 40 vein with Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street" and Roy Orbison's "(Oh) Pretty Woman." The latter song gave the band its very first track to crack the Top 15, peaking at #12. And with "Dancing in the Street" peaking at #38, *Diver Down* was Van Halen's first album to launch two Top 40 hits, exposing the band to more of a pop audience. That paved the way for those pop-minded folks (like myself) to welcome a smash like "Jump" with open arms (and open wallets—10 million copies of 1984 sold so far) two years later.

The last two covers on *Diver Down* foreshadowed the type of music that David Lee Roth would use to kickstart his solo career. "Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)" was a song from a 1930s musical, and was also covered by Peggy Lee and Ry Cooder. (The V-H version featured a clarinet solo (!!!) from Eddie and Alex's father, Jan Van Halen.) And "Happy Trails," originally done by the singing cowboy Roy Rogers on his radio and TV show in the 40s and 50s, closes the always entertaining album in style with the goofy three part harmony from Roth, Michael Anthony and Eddie Van Halen. These two songs were natural successors to the acoustic intro of "Ice Cream Man," yet both were absolutely nothing like anything else in the Van Halen catalog. And it came clear why these two covers made the cut once Roth went solo with his *Crazy From the Heat* EP in 1985...which was almost all covers of songs from the 40s and 50s. All these non-originals on *Diver Down* obviously disturbed Eddie, as Van Halen never again include a cover on one of their studio albums. (They did cover Little Feat's "A Apolitical Blues" but it was a bonus track only available on the CD version of *OU812*, so it doesn't count.)

Another one of these covers also set the stage for David Lee Roth—the video star! "(Oh) Perry Woman" was the first song that found Van Halen in front of the video camera as "actors." David Lee Roth played a Napoleon-like figure (ah, the irony), Alex Van Halen was a Tarzan-like man of the jungle, Eddie Van Halen played a rambunctious cowboy and Michael Anthony a samurai warrior, all coming to rescue a damsel in distress. Yet Roth gets the last laugh by arriving to rescue the girl in a long white stretch limo, flashing a grin and a look of disdain for his bandmates when he steps out in his little general glory. It's a pattern that would run throughout the rest of the group's videos for 1984—Roth was a bigger man than the rest of them, so he deserved all the camera time. With treatment like that, it's not surprising that the Hagar lineup avoided making a concept video (that Air Force ad masquerading as the "Dreams" clip notwithstanding) until their second single off *OU812*, "When Its Love." (I guess it's also not surprising that the man that would later guide Roth's solo career, Pete Angelus, was the art director on *Diver Down* and helped



direct the "(Oh) Pretty Woman" clip, along with the others for 1984. He knew where his bread was buttered.)

The fissures that broke up V-H weren't just caused by the all-Dave all-the-time videos. They can also be seen on *Diver Down* with its three instrumentals. It's as if Eddie was getting tired of Diamond Dave's words messing up his music. Or perhaps he couldn't get Dave to write words—it's well known that the music for "Jump" was written around the sessions for this album, but Roth couldn't be bothered to come up with lyrics. One instrumental, "Intruder," even included a hint of what was in Eddie's head as the future for the band—synthesizers. The "Wah, wah wah wah" sound that runs through the majority of the track sounds like a synth part, even though it was created by Eddie on his guitar. And while most people think the gurgling intro to "Dancing in the Street" is done on a synthesizer, most reports from the studio that I have found claim that Eddie created the sound on guitar with numerous pedals and effects (and video from the *Diver Down* tour shows him almost replicating that exact sound live). But it's obvious that at that point the guitarist had felt he'd run into a brick wall with his ax. The instrument that had made him a millionaire was not inspiring him anymore. And when he finally broke down Roth and got him to write something for that distinctive synth hook of "Jump," Eddie found a whole other world he could play with—to varying degrees of success.

The four originals on *Diver Down* would also point to the band's past and future. "Hang Em High" easily could have fit in with *Fair Warning* and "The Full Bug" echoes the frenetic pace of most of *Van Halen I* and *II*. Meanwhile, the slinky and relatively mellow "Secrets" is the obvious predecessor to slower and more melodic tracks like "I'll Wait" and "Love Walks In." And it's hard not to hear the Hagar era "Finish What You Started" and not think of the chunky guitar rhythm in "Little Guitars."

All in all, *Diver Down* set a number of events in motion that propelled Van Halen through the rest of their up-and-down career. Without this album, we might not have seen: synth heavy songs like "Jump," "I'll Wait" and "Why Can't This Be Love;" David Lee Roth leave for a solo career to make one goofy video after another and ruin a perfect fine Beach Boys song; Sammy Hagar join the lineup and churn out one mid-tempo song about love or partying one after another, or become a purveyor of fine tequila. V-H might be done as a functioning band after 2004's successful—but tension filled—reunion tour with Sammy Hagar, but the importance of this 31-minute "throwaway" will always resonate throughout their career, blazing some happy trails indeed.

Steve Reynolds has published The Reynolds Top 20 List for 16 years [ReynoldsTop20.Blogspot.com], and never saw Van Halen in concert until that 2004 reunion tour. Damn, was he really disappointed.

Rock 'N Roll Day

By Jennifer Whiteford

I told Mike I was going to write an article about dating a record collector.

I told him that because, at the time, it seemed like an awesome idea. I've got lots of stories about various vinyl-addict paramours that lend themselves to a great, light, funny kind of expose on just how insane it is to involve yourself with someone who always has one hand in the record bin.

Of course, with the best laid plans come the most unexpected distractions. I haven't been working on my article this month because I have spent every bit of my physical and mental energy shutting down a business that I've been running for four years.

And not a normal business. Not a cute little shop or a trendy restaurant or a cat sitting service. I ran an after-school program. Every weekday for the last four years I spent my afternoons in a room with 25 kids between the ages of six and twelve. They got off the buses every day after school and ran into our center with exuberance that bordered on insanity. There, they played hockey, Monopoly, Uno, Harry Potter computer games, and basketball. They lay on futons reading Archie Comics or sat on the window sill watching rain and drawing pictures. We drank mint tea together in the winter time. In the summer months they came from 8 AM until 6 PM and we went on field trips to parks and farms and museums. I taught them how to knit, play guitar, flip pancakes, make punk rock angels for the top of the non-denominational holiday tree...



Our program had to shut down because the school board decided that there was no room on the school bus for our kids anymore. They said that our kids weren't a priority and that they should be able to walk (crossing two major, accident-prone downtown streets) from their schools to our center. We fought about it. The parents fought about it. We scheduled meetings with the principal, the school board, and the government. We got nowhere. Eventually we had no choice but to shut down. The hearts of twenty five kids and their parents were broken. So did mine.

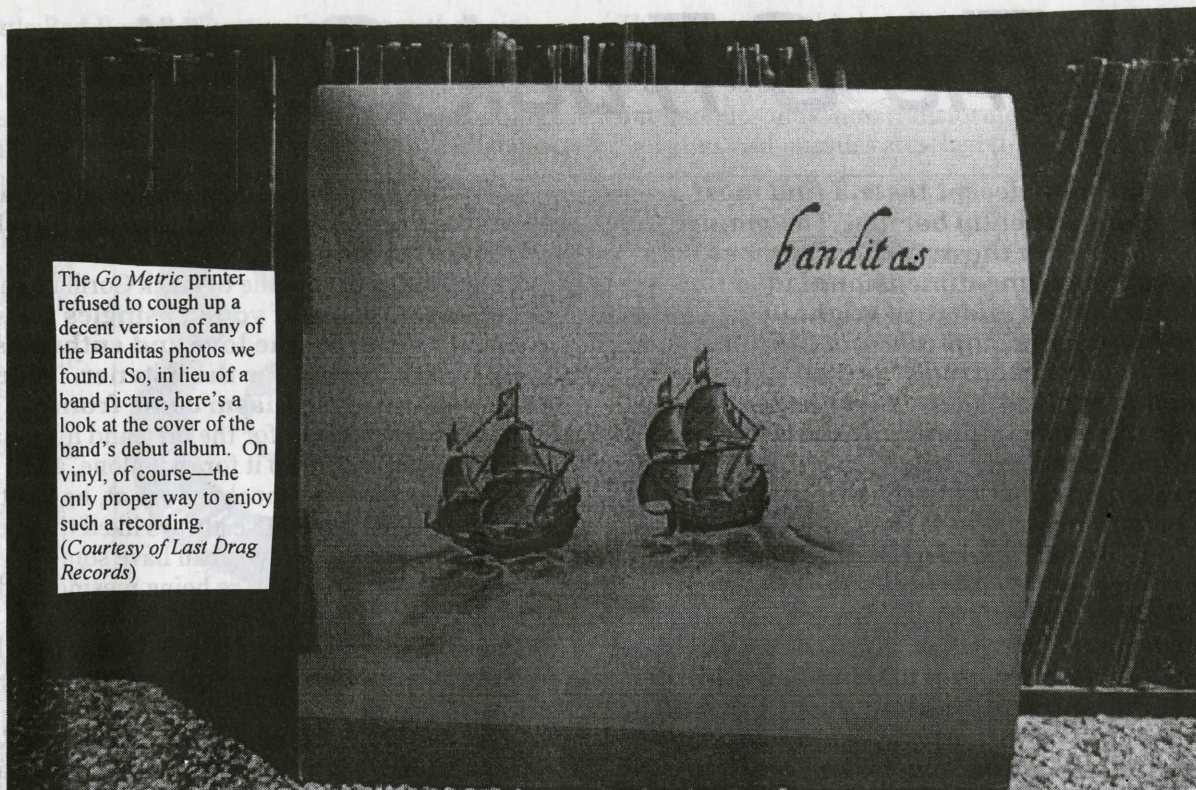
So you can perhaps understand why dating record collectors isn't really on my mind this week. Instead, I've decided to write about something we did at the center that combines what I'm thinking about (kids) with what you, dear reader, are probably thinking about (rock 'n roll).

We called it "Rock 'N Roll Day." Well, that's what the kids called it. The idea was to have a benefit for the program, which was always short on funds, but not a benefit that would end up raising money from the same people who gave us money in the first place: the kids' parents. I wanted the community to open their wallets. I wanted people who'd never even thought about childcare to cough it up. The solution was obvious. We needed to have a benefit show, but not necessarily a kid-friendly one. We secured a night at a large, accommodating, neighbourhood bar and booked four big-draw local bands to play. But we didn't want the kids to be left out of the whole thing just because it was going to happen long past their bedtimes and in a bar they were about ten years too young to get into.

Two of the bands that were playing the evening show agreed to come to the program in the afternoon to play for the kids. We had no idea what to expect. I warned them not to be ear-bleedingly loud. I warned them not to swear. I suggested that songs about kissing would likely not go over well. They said no problem. They'd bring their own PA system and arrive sometime after snack.

When the bands arrived and started setting up their gear, the kids got instantly shy in that curious, kid-like way. They hovered around and whispered questions to me. As soon as the band members turned around and asked who wanted to try the drums, the shyness evaporated magically. The kids mobbed the instruments and microphones. They tried the guitars and the bass. They sang and they whacked away at the snare and the kick drum. The band members showed them where to put their fingers and counted out rhythms.

The *Go Metric* printer refused to cough up a decent version of any of the Banditas photos we found. So, in lieu of a band picture, here's a look at the cover of the band's debut album. On vinyl, of course—the only proper way to enjoy such a recording. (Courtesy of Last Drag Records)



With an appreciation of how hard it actually was to press those strings down and to keep a steady beat, the kids all settled down on pillows on the floor to watch the show. Our "opening act," the Banditas blew the kids away, and not just because Liz, the lead singer and guitarist, and Colin, the drummer, were both supply teachers at our program. The kids clapped appreciatively, but stayed seated. In between acts, I reminded them that it wasn't a school assembly and that they could stand, dance, jump around, and whoop as much as they wanted to. We all told them that this was how people behave at rock shows.

Andrew Vincent and the Pirates headlined the show and the kids were on their feet before the end of the first song. It helped that these were pop songs being sung and everyone found them instantly catchy. The little girls danced with each other and with the teachers, holding hands and spinning around. Six year old Nega ran to me and exclaimed, out of breath, "Jenny! This is the best day of my WHOLE ENTIRE LIFE!" The boys grabbed our mops and brooms and stood on the snack tables playing air guitar and laughing their heads off. I took pictures and watched the spectacle, so happy with the outcome of the experiment that I found myself giggling involuntarily.

By 5:00 the bands had finished playing and all the gear was packed away in their vans and station wagons. The kids were tired and most of them sat

on the carpet in the quiet space, reading comic books or chatting. When the parents arrived to pick them up, it seemed like we'd had a day like any other.

It's days like Rock 'N Roll Day that make me deeply regretful that our center had to shut down. Canada may occasionally be painted as some kind of socialist utopia, but in reality we are far from it when it comes to prioritizing care for children. I wish I could end this article on a more positive note, but there isn't one to be found. By the time you read this, what once was a center full of happy children will be cleaned out and empty. This isn't *School of Rock*. I have no happy Hollywood ending.



The 8-Track Gorilla

Like anyone with decent taste, I find most performance art really boring. The majority of its practioners are the art school shmoees who mistake a weird, one-dimensional idea for something that an audience might want to see in action. They're the guys who get light-headed thinking about Yoko Ono's "put an apple on display under glass" idea. Like the guy I once saw who ate a box of doughnuts while listening to a Johnny Cash cassette. It might have been funny when he came up with the idea six beers into a Friday night, but it was pure tedium in execution. At the height of their powers most performance artists are lucky to cook up an oddball concept that's more fun to hear about than experience firsthand. Like the Columbia University students who, working as a team, spend eight hours descending four flights of stairs, moving in stunningly calculated, super slow motion the entire time. Then there are the likes of Andy Kaufman, the exceptions, the ones who entertain, always keep you guessing as to where the persona ends and the person begins.

Prior to doing this interview I wasn't sure where on the continuum of god-awful to great the 8-Track Gorilla fell. The concept is simple: a guy in a gorilla suit incorporates 8-tracks into his karaoke nightclub act. I first read about the 8-Track Gorilla in Russ Forster's zine 8-Track Mind about five or six years ago. I wanted to know if there was anything beneath the surface of this wonderfully ridiculous concept, but I had no luck tracking down the infamous Gorilla. Then three years ago I met Robert Newsome at a publishing conference. Like the 8-Track Gorilla, Newsome hailed from Athens, Georgia, and though he didn't know the Gorilla, Newsome thought he might be able to put me in touch. When I didn't hear back from Newsome after six months, I abandoned the idea, figuring that such things tend to happen right away or not at all.

Cut to the spring of '05 when I received an email saying that he, Newsome, had spoken with Kenny Aguilar who, speaking on behalf of the 8-Track Gorilla, had green lighted an interview. The guy with whom I spoke on the phone identified himself as the 8-Track Gorilla but always referred to the Gorilla in the third person. He, Kenny or 8-Track, kept me guessing throughout the conversation and elevated his deceptively simple character beyond the typical trappings of performance art. Or so I think. Read on and judge for yourself. (Interview by Mike Faloon)

Go Metric: For the sake of our readers, am I speaking with the 8-Track Gorilla himself or someone representing him?

8 Track Gorilla: This is the 8-Track Gorilla himself. Excellent. On one of your 7" singles the stated goal is to capture "the love and enthusiasm" of the 8-Track Gorilla for the listener. Where does that love and enthusiasm come from?

I think it's just the love for the man and his music. Just the love of the rock, I do it for that alone, and I love girls. The Gorilla is not that much to look at, he pretty much frightens people away. I've always liked that beauty and the beast dichotomy, so you can have some lovely eye candy to look at while you're being mesmerized by a singing simian.

What are the origins of the 8-Track Gorilla? What prompted you to express your love and enthusiasm this way?

I was inspired by this film, a documentary by Russ Forster called *So Wrong They're Right*, it was about obsessive 8-track collectors.

I've seen that movie and like it a lot.

Well that showed on the cable access channel here in Athens for a long time. That's what inspired me to start collecting 8-tracks. Then one day I decided that I would like to try to DJ with the 8-tracks and the first time I did it I wore a Zoro mask and I was 8-Track Bandit. And I did a party at some of the Elephant 6 kids' house, and it just didn't go over too well. At the time I was playing a lot of disco and funk and soul and I didn't have any of the weird stuff like Captain Beefheart or Brian Eno yet, and it didn't go over too well. Then there was this band, the Melted Men, and the Gorilla used to sing like one song during the Melted Men's set as one of the characters that they had. Later, this artist named Deonna Mann, who was a local performance artist, she had an art opening and asked me to DJ as the gorilla. That was my first show and that was in 1998. It was a huge success. It was at this place called The Hole in the Wall, which is now the Flicker Theatre and Bar. Also present were two girls, friends of Deonna's, wearing 2-piece bikini outfits, painted head-to-toe in gold paint. They were housed in large dog cages and eventually unleashed onto an unsuspecting public. To this day, if you look up at the ceiling at the Flicker bar you will see gold fingerprints there. It was a great show. Everybody was raving and everyone was asking about the Gorilla and eventually bands started asking me to open for them. Also, the Gorilla was a child of the 70s, raised on the weird and wonderful world of Sid & Marty Krofft (i.e. The Banana Splits, H.R. Pufnstuf, Lidsville, etc.).

And the feedback from audiences was pretty positive from the start?

Yeah, I guess it was so stupid and so bizarre that it just took off. Then I started doing some recordings like the single you mentioned and I did another split with a band

called Little Red Rocket. Eventually it got to the point where I was sick of using the tapes—8-track tapes are precarious at times and they tend to break or they sound really crappy—and it got to the point where I was doing shows with a live band. I had a backing band called the Phantom Felines, which was an all-girl group, but that only lasted for a couple shows and then it self-destructed. Then the Gorilla went on hiatus for a long time. He came back last year for AthFest with a group called Night Seeker, which is a heavy metal karaoke band who backed the Gorilla on a set of songs. He's been on TV, too. He's been

on a show called *City Confidential*. It's about unsolved murders and this particular episode was about T.K. Hardy who was a bar owner who was murdered mysteriously. They happened to be in town when I was doing a show with Elf Power and so I made it on the A&E network briefly. Then I was on a show called *Liars and Legends*, which is on Turner South, and they did a little thing about the Athens music scene.

It's a simple idea—8-tracks, gorilla suit—but you've gotten a lot of mileage out of it.

I like the fact that I can reinterpret and reinvent myself every time; it doesn't always have to be the same. The songs are always going to change, the people—the cast—are going to change. I like to think that the Gorilla is evolving, even though he's really probably de-evolving. I'll do shows with different themes. Once I did a psychedelic, freak out tribute to Syd Barrett, and played all Pink Floyd songs and I wore a suit that was like the orange jump suits in *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*. And last year I had a state prisoner's uniform. I like to think that 8-Track wears different clothes that go with the themes, kind of like a G.I. Joe doll.

That's similar to how people like David Bowie or Madonna describe themselves—these pop chameleons.

I like to think of myself like Bowie or Lou Reed or Iggy Pop; I am one of the last living rock'n'roll animals. Literally.

You'd mentioned the orange jumpsuit and I read somewhere that the Gorilla busted out of an Athens County jail and that's why he, you, was wearing the orange jumpsuit.



This is true and this is a direct result of being abducted by the Spy Cars. The Spy Cars used to be a fleet of about a dozen or so of these art cars, these bright, multi-colored automobiles that were transformed by an artist, and they had guns and missiles attached to them. And these cars

were in pursuit of the 8-Track Gorilla for no other reason that I know of except that they didn't like me. It was actually the Elf Power show that I mentioned before where mid-show, mid-song members of the Spy Car regime bumrushed the stage, gave me an injection, put me into a spy car, and drove me out of the club. There was literally a spy car

in the club. That was the beginning of the end, you could say. It was a publicity stunt taken too far, and that was one of the reasons he (the 8-Track Gorilla) disappeared for awhile.

What do you make of the fact that there's an army pursuing just one guy. It's like the Incredible Hulk.

There's all sorts of interpretations on that, I guess. Maybe they're jealous, or maybe they fear someone who's different. People tend to rebel against things that they don't understand, much in the way they did to Frankenstein or the Wolf Man. If someone appears to be intimidating on the surface, then other people want to annihilate that person, take them out. You could also interpret Gorilla as "guerilla," as in the terrorist guerilla. I think that was another factor involved. It was inevitable and essential to go underground for awhile.

Kind of like Abby Hoffman?

Yeah, except I wasn't hanging out with Amy Carter. I wish I was, I would like to hang out with Amy Carter.

So what did the 8-Track Gorilla do while underground?

There are a lot of different things that he did. He was basically licking his wounds and re-evaluating things. He checked himself into a clinic for awhile, he was having tests run. I think he may have been abused with psychiatric evaluations and things like that. Shock therapy. Substance abuse. Counseling. 12-step programs, and things of that nature. You can only keep him caged for so long and then he comes back out.

Have those detox programs taken hold with him?

No, those things never work for any long periods of time. I think it was a temporary fix to a permanent problem.

Really, just to change the subject, the 8-Track Gorilla is a hairy humanoid. He comes from a group of monsters that includes the famous Bigfoot, or Sasquatch. He's part of a collection of bipedal hirsute creatures found across the continent. I think he falls into that category.

As someone who's come down from the mountains, so to speak?

Yeah, and then through the process of adaptation and observation, he's evolved to the point where he can speak and sing and play music.

And win over the ladies.

And win over the ladies.

He seems pretty suave. In some ways he's surpassed his male human counterparts.

Hairy humanoids exist in every area of the continent, but most of the time they're only found in remotes wilderness areas. It's rare that

you ever see one in the city. You usually see them only at night. That's why the nightclub is a good place for them because they have night vision, they have super-human smell and an innate sense of direction and location.

Mojo magazine called you the "karaoke troubadour." What's your take on that? When I hear the word "troubadour" I think there's a message to be conveyed to people.

As a massive fan of someone like Bob Dylan, who's someone I consider to be a troubadour, then, yes, the 8-Track Gorilla is someone who has to get his message out and I think the songs that he picks usually have some sort of dual meaning or hidden meaning that can be interpreted any number of ways.

What's the 8-Track Gorilla listen to while he's at home without an audience to consider? Is there a different side to the Gorilla?

I like to consider the 8-Track as kind of an old blues guy, like Jimmy Reed or R.L. Burnside or Son House or Robert Johnson, a spinner of tales.

Like an old soul in a younger body?

Yeah, I like that idea, I like that a lot.

When you mentioned the downtime, the time when the 8-Track Gorilla was out of the public spotlight, it reminded me of the time after Bob Dylan's motorcycle accident. He dropped out of sight for awhile and then came out of that as a different kind of performer.

Exactly, he came out of that with *John Wesley Harding*, which was a stripped down, country/folk record, and that was in the midst of the psychedelic area so people weren't expecting that at all. I guess they were expecting him to do "Eight Miles High" by the Byrds or something like that. He just broke it down even further.

He found a new direction. With that in mind, does the 8-Track Gorilla have a blueprint for where things are going?

I have been toying with the idea of, ironically, putting together an alt-country band. Last year, I did the heavy metal thing and this year I've been thinking of paying tribute to people like Gram Parsons and Dylan and

whoever. I had a few different names for it. I was going to call it 8-Track Gorilla's Big River or 8-Track Gorilla's Shame Train. I know the right people, but easier said than done. It's going to take some time before I can do it right. I don't want to do it again until I can do it right. So for the time being, I'm content to lay low and pontificate, until I come up with my next move. I've still got a few moves left in me.

The bag of tricks has not been depleted?

No, and I don't think it can be. I like to think of it as a way of life, much in the same way as Russ Forster's "Rules of the 8-Track Mind" were, like new and improved does not necessarily make it better. Who's to say that DVD is a better format? Or who's to say that compact

discs are a better format than 8-tracks? It's all relative. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

I came across something on the internet about a guy

named Sean Hill who listed a credit as having written lyrics for the 8-Track Gorilla, which implies original material.

This is true. That was for a song called "Indian X Song," which was made for a compilation. It might have been for *Festival of Failure*, but Sean Hill is a local poet and a writer, an African-American writer/poet, and he was friends with 8-Track and I approached him about writing some lyrics. That is an original composition that was done in addition to the regular cover songs that I've done.

Sounds like there are no boundaries for the 8-Track Gorilla.

Yeah, the only boundaries are time and space.

So is he mortal?

Umm, no. He's supernatural, he can't be stopped, just like any of these swamp monsters, like Swamp Thing or Man-Thing. He can go back into the bog and hibernate and go underground and manifest himself whenever the time is right. That's why there aren't many sightings, just like the Loch Ness Monster. He's been sighted and there's been photographs taken, but we're talking super-intelligent creatures. They know when to stay on the down low. They're not just going to expose themselves.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I would recommend, if you can find it *The Field Guide to North American Monsters* by W. Haden Blackman.

That's got everything you need to know about encountering terrifying creatures in the wild. It's a good reference book. Pretty much any state in the country there's going to be some sort of creature, whether it's the Minnesota Iceman or the Skunk-Ape or the Canteen Fish, the Jersey Devil, the Giant Gator—the list goes on and on and on. They haven't added the new chapter about the 8-Track Gorilla, but it should be in the updated version.

This has been my first direct encounter with a North American monster and I have to say you've been very accommodating.

Thank you, it was my pleasure. I don't get asked to do interviews all that often any more. I think my popularity has peaked and waned, but there's always room for a comeback.

"I like to think of myself like Bowie or Lou Reed or Iggy Pop; I am one of the last living rock'n'roll animals. Literally."

—The 8-Track Gorilla

ON THICKENING PASTE

By Chris Gethard

Today I came one mouse click away from ordering hair product over the internet. I am glad I regained my grip on sanity before plunging over that cliff.

As soon as I x'd out the browser window, I came back to my senses. Realizing that I was panting and in a cold sweat, I had one thought go through my brain: "I'm wearing a t-shirt with holes in it and twenty dollar jeans. I live in Astoria and I regularly bite my fingernails. There is absolutely no way that I'm a Metrosexual."

I have nothing against Metrosexuals per se, although becoming one is something I have never had a desire to do. This is not due to any masculinity or gender issues. Instead, I feel like caring about my appearance that much would shred to pieces the last vestiges of the punk rock attitude and working class ethics that I like to claim make me who I am.

There was a time when not only would I not even go to a web page about hair products, I wouldn't even consider drinking bottled water. Up until three years ago, I considered anyone with a cell phone to be a sell-out poser. At some point all of this changed. My cell phone is on my desk next to me. I check it for messages every three to five minutes, convincing myself there was a chance I didn't hear it ring and someone left a voice mail for me. On my right is a bottle of Evian. Not Deer Park or even Poland Spring. In such a short time I went from criticizing the institution of bottled water to regularly partaking in its worse offering.

If the pimply faced pubescent me could have seen into its own future and realized that some day he would be sweating it out over which website would afford him the opportunity to save thirty cents on a 3.5 ounce bottle of KMS Thickening Paste, he probably would have ended it all in a blaze of teenage punk rock glory right then.

There's a ton of pressure on guys in their 20s and 30s these days. We were easily the most affected by the grunge movement, as that pop culture tidal wave occurred when we were in our impressionable tweens and teens. We got used to the idea that cool was synonymous with "unkempt," that fashionable equaled "kind of dirty," and that sexy was the same thing as "by all means, go with that ratty eighth grade facial hair look."

Now, as a clear backlash to the attitudes we learned during our adolescence, females of our generation are demanding higher standards than any of our fathers faced. In the past few years I have become conditioned to know that I should never wear white sneakers, that nothing in my closet should be baggy anymore, and that pleated pants are a definite no-no in all circumstances (although to be fair, I probably should have realized that one much sooner on my own). My hair is consistently well groomed, my backpack has been replaced by a messenger bag, and my glasses went from wire rim to Buddy Holly style plastic.

Is this all part of growing up, or part of selling out just to please girls? At the very least, I didn't spend the summer walking around wearing a pale pink button down shirt. That was all the rage among Metrosexuals this past season. I'm no fashion critic, but I do have the somewhat misogynistic pride of a man raised in Northern New Jersey, and just the sight of these pieces of apparel gave me the exact same feeling as seeing a dog in an embroidered sweater—that feeling of "I don't know who dressed you up or how their well intentioned efforts to make you cute went so wrong, but man you look douchey right now." My feeling was borne not out of homophobia, but of hopelessness. I know that if the pink shirt trend continues, I will eventually buckle under its weight and get one. Why? Because clearly women want that, and like the rest of my brethren, I am a slave to their whims.

I pray for the day when guys can wear stained t-shirts, and not ironic hipster thrift store t's—old ratty baggy ones like our dads wore while building shit in the back yard—and it will be accepted as a commendable fashion choice. I'm not saying this is in any way better than a pink shirt, but I pray that some day it will be viewed as equal. The civil rights of unkempt male culture have lessened considerably in the past five years. We are not allowed to show our true selves, lest we be punished with social and sexual isolation. I'm going to take a stand and do something about it.

That's right, I'm not going to dress, smell, or think any differently because of what women want from me anymore. I pledge to you, my fellow non-Metro males, I will never even think about purchasing KMS thickening paste online again! From now on I will walk right into the overpriced French salon where I pay forty dollars per haircut and spend fifteen dollars at the counter like a classic American male should.

Smugness is one of the few flaws that I actually lack. I have many of the others, Vanity (for no good reason), gluttony, selfishness, greed, etc., but smugness was never one of them. I can actually remember several arguments, roughly one of every ten thousand or so that I have with my wife, where I actually was able to win by virtue of having a greater command of factual knowledge than she did and she even admitted that I was more or less correct, but I couldn't gloat. No matter how much I wanted to cross my arms and look at her with a wry grin, or jump up and down in an ecstatic victory whoop, I could not. I could master annoying, petulant, even malodorous, but smug was somehow beyond the capacity of my emotional responses.

Super-Straight Edge Size Me: My Week as a Straight Edge Vegan

By Brian Cogan

I blame this on the fact that even though I grew up as a punk rock kid with spiked hair (I sometimes used toothpaste, which left my hair vaguely spiky, but minty fresh and bacteria free) with chains and a homemade anarchy t-shirt that featured the Fonz, smiling and ginning with an "A" for anarchy drawn on his chest in magic marker, I was never into straight edge. For those of you who come from other scenes (which is what we punk rock kids called ourselves, a "scene" to distinguish ourselves from others who dressed in different fashions or liked Bon Jovi), I must pause for a minute to explain the unique phenomenon that is straight edge. It started out in Washington D.C. in the early eighties when numerous militant punks led by Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat, rejected the druggy and alcoholic ways of the slightly older punk crowd, and decided that the truly punk thing to do would be to avoid things such as drugs, alcohol, and even sex in some cases (or at least promiscuous sex, it is unclear that if one was married or had a girlfriend if one could have sex and not feel guilty afterwards. I can just imagine the scenes inside the marriage counselor's office when numerous wives told their therapists how their husbands no longer took care of their needs, but instead spent all their time in large circles of sweaty half-naked men jumping all over each other.). Straight edge was inspired by two Minor Threat songs. First in the song "Straight Edge," where Ian explained how he had better things to do than "*Hang out with the living dead*" (a wise move as zombies usually crave the succulent flesh of humans, particularly those free of toxins) and later in the song "Out of Step"

where he declared "*I don't drink/I don't smoke/I don't fuck/At least I can fucking think.*" In these songs, and in interviews, Minor Threat articulated the straight edge philosophy. This philosophy was to inspire numerous bands to stop taking illegal or illicit substances while kicking the shit out of smaller people in the pit, and to live a life of substance free, spiritual questing purity, while kicking the shit out of smaller people in the pit.

The movement spread fast and MacKaye later became alarmed by the monster he had created (some bands such as SSD from Boston would delight in advocating violence against those drinking at shows and Earth Crisis from Syracuse supposedly has a list of anyone who has ever sipped a drop of schnapps and is systematically eliminating people across the world one at a time), but the beast was out of its cage and straight edge, as evidenced by the notable "X" marking both hands (occasionally accompanied by "XXX" and "True till Death" tattoos, to indicate one's devotion to the movement. Eventually straight edge evolved further into a quasi-religious cult where many members became militant vegans, who would not use any animal products including dairy, and some more extreme members even preached against the use of caffeine (one punk knocked a can of ice tea out of Ian's hand, declaring it "A drug in my book") and the movement eventually became associated with vegan philosophy. Therefore it was natural when the punks of Youth of Today, such as Porcell and Ray Cappo, joined the Krishnas, who espoused the same tenets, but added even goofier haircuts, and all the chanting you can stand (be sure and come back for seconds of chanting!). Eventually straight edge and vegan became almost synonymous and naturally when I was young, I avoided the movement like the plague. My brother tried the veggie thing for a week and said "Bleah" and my friend John made several half-hearted attempts (he was a Smiths fan and we would imitate the cows at the end of the song "Meat Is Murder" when he would talk about not eating animal flesh), but I had never been in a straight edge crowd (except when we were too young to drink) and never wanted to be in one. Then two things stuck me, the fact that I was incapable of being smug, and seeing the film *Super-Size Me* by Morgan Spurlock. The film, which documents the director's 30 days on a McDonalds-only diet was truly inspiring and also kind of cool to watch as he began to look more and more like most of my friends. He even had the requisite vegan chef girlfriend, who cooked him some pre-Super-Size meals that looked as though they would have made the entire Crass commune take a field trip to their local steak house. As I watched the film (and believe me, I had not been to McDonalds in years, especially after reading the book *Fast Food Nation*, but this was something different, I learned that one could go on a spiritual quest of sorts and come through with a valuable lesson learned). Then I learned that one could have a really annoying vegan girlfriend, and NO ONE COULD COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT A JACKASS SHE WAS! This clearly suggested a plan of action, to be smug, and

also to try something of a detox: I decided to become a straight edge vegan.

Now, before you begin to congratulate me or tell me "bacon tastes good, pork chops taste good," I will admit to several delimitations before I started. First of all it would only be for a small period of time. One that was doable. I looked at several websites on veganism and I researched the nutritional values of different foods. Then I watched *Super-Size Me* again, I was inspired by Spurlock to give it a go. As he has lasted a month on junk food, I decided that the least I could do was last a week. I told my wife, she laughed. I told my friends, they laughed. I told my bartender. He shuddered and briefly contemplated putting his kids in a less expensive college. I decided that I would start at midnight on a Saturday and go for a full week, starting to drink and eat meat again the midnight of the following Saturday. This way I could potentially drink both Saturday nights. It was a plan. After a rousing Saturday, I decided after several hotdogs and some

Guinness to announce loudly to the patrons of the bar that I was in that they were all a bunch of lushes ruining their lives (I had recently reread *The Iceman Commeth* by Eugene O'Neill) with the demon rum. They laughed at me as I left, but on the way out, I took out my pen and drew the "X"s on my hands. The week had begun.

Sunday: no bacon and eggs, I remembered far too late. It occurred to me at this point that maybe I should have

shopped for some straight edge food before I decided the diet. There was plenty of booze and meat in the house but precious little in the way of health food. I decided cereal was the way to go and poured myself some Special K (I already was going without milk—I like my cereal dry with bananas anyway), but then looked closely on the side of the Special K box. Under the

myriad of ingredients I noticed, "May contain elements of dairy products." Not Special K! Betrayed by my favorite healthy cereal. I settled for the bananas and the unique sensation of queasiness that would bedevil my stomach for the rest of the week. Pasta and hummus got me through the rest of the day and there was little reason to drink on a Sunday anyway. (Actually there are numerous great reasons to drink on a Sunday, but I was being strong.) I played Minor Threat's "Straight Edge" as the song of the day and retired early.

Monday:
Bananas again.
Plus apples.
Plus rice cakes.
I had bought whole wheat bread but, of course, it also

carried the warning "may contain traces of dairy products," but how the hell do they get into bread?? Are there dairy products floating in the air, and if I breathe them in, have I sacrificed my straight edge principles? There was almost nothing to eat at my school, but there was freshly popped popcorn and almonds. Almonds would become my staple of the rest of the week and often became a meal onto themselves. Crunchy. I told my students who were eating meat that

KARMA comes back!



they were fascists. They ignored me and I had more almonds. I decided to put on Youth of Today. Wow. These guys could sure scream about unity and the scene! But yet, I was not comforted.

Tuesday: "*I don't drink, don't...*" Ah, you get the idea. Did I mention that I also gave up sex for the week? What else are you supposed to do for fun when you have given up everything you love to consume? Nah, having sex all the time would have too easy, especially as I am not very good at sex and it would only have killed a few minutes every day. My wife had a cheese omelet and I muttered something about cows being our friends as well. She looked at me funny.

Wednesday: Bocca burgers taste a lot like regular burgers when covered in a lot of mustard and when you have your eyes closed and when you are drunk. I was not drunk. The annoying meat eating kids at school today were pissing me off and I wanted a beer. But beer is a crutch and I don't need a crutch. I decided I would have Earth Crisis beat them up, but that would entail getting in touch with Earth Crisis and that would scare me too much. They probably would have instituted a new rule against gluten, and I'm not sure what that is, so they would probably beat me up was well. Listened to *Walk Together, Rock Together* by Seven Seconds. It made me want to put on black eye make up, but the feeling quickly passed after I ate another bag of almonds.

Thursday: Known as "Thor's Day" by our pagan ancestors who ate a lot of meat and drank beer because the water was so bad. But those guys were long gone and the Krishnas were here. I went to a vegetarian restaurant that a lot of Krishnas and vegans go to. The dishes all said that they were meat free, but had meat names. I found out that these names were ironic and not meant to indicate content. The vegetable dumplings weren't bad, they momentarily got rid of the queasiness, but not the liquidly diarrhea that I was getting accustomed to that week. In the interest of furthering my studies, I listened to the *Quest for Certainty* record by Shelter. The end has a thirty minute speech by a Krishna leader who makes fun of meat eaters and those that have sex. Yeah, tell them, brother. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Friday: Going crazy. Alcohol not the main problem, it's the lack of protein? I ate soy chips by the bundle and every almond outside of California, but was still weak and woozy. I tried going to the gym and lifting weights, but to no avail. Surely Henry Rollins is not a vegan? How could the guys in SSD be so tough and do this? (I later read that the Boston Crew was heavily into steak, go figure.)

Saturday: Final day. Yeah. Whoopee, somehow a week's worth of almonds and cranberries have made me a nervous wreck. Me and Lisa went to an "Irish Rock and Roll Review" led by Joe Hurley from Rogues

March. We have a very plain pasta dinner and after several over-priced glasses of Sprite, the evening ends. It is midnight, and my arduous task is over. I am done, I have a beer. Somewhere, someone is repressed, not likely because of me.

Overall: I have become smug, or at least have attempted to become as smug as possible. I have looked down upon others because they ate meat or drank. Is this what Straight Edge is all about? Well no, and well, yes. I dare say if you ask, and I have, many people who identify themselves as Straight Edge if they look down on those who are not "True Till Death." They will probably say they do not, but will also grudgingly admit that they do. We all look down on those who dare to have different beliefs. I look down on those who dislike Dr. Who, for example, but does that mean I am a bad person? Yes. Yes, it does. But maybe we are all bad people, in our own way. On my super-Straight Edge diet, I lost ten pounds in a week. Does this mean that straight edge is always healthy? No, and yes, to miss out on Guinness can be considered a crime, but to deprive oneself can also be the path to wisdom.

Now, I do drink, I don't smoke, I do fuck.

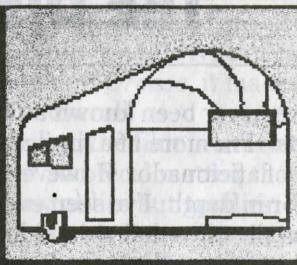
Can I think?

And now, in a slightly different mode, a description, written by some underpaid hack, or, more likely, an intern, at the Greenwood Publishing Group, about Dr. Cogan's upcoming book, The Punk Rock Encyclopedia, which is coming out in hardcover, no less, due out in the summer of '06.

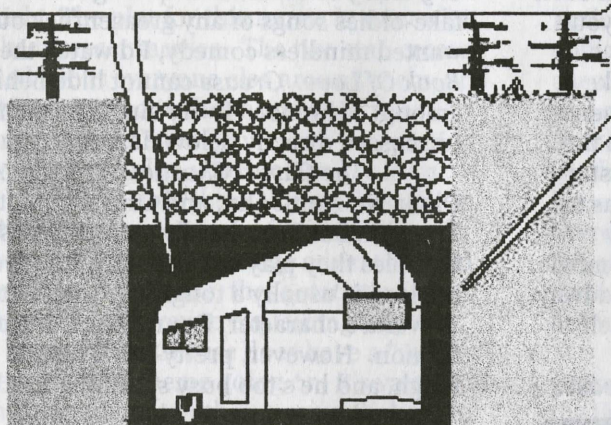
"Although its origins and definition are hotly debated among scholars and fans alike, punk rock music has an ever-evolving but always loyal fan base. The British punk movement is thought to have begun in the early 1970s with bands such as the Clash and the Sex Pistols, and the American punk movement in the mid-1970s with bands such as the Ramones, Patti Smith, and Television playing at CBGB's in New York City's Lower East Side. The punk subculture continues to evolve today, with new bands, fashions, politics and zines embodying the spirit of its founders while also influencing mainstream culture. This inclusive encyclopedia chronicles the history and development of punk, including sub-movements such as Hardcore, Post-punk, Queercore, and Emo, to provide readers with an extensive overview of the music, fashion, films, and philosophies behind it. Entries for musicians include a discography for those wanting to start, or develop, their music collections."



Last Will & Testament



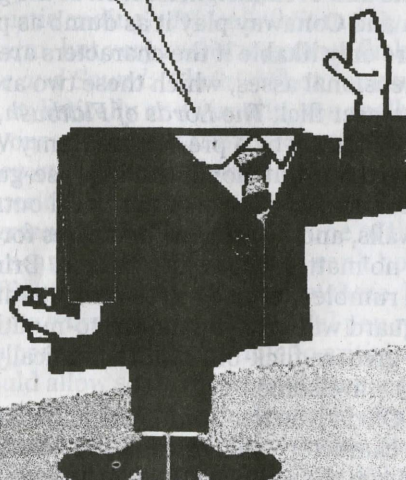
When I die I want to be entombed by my cult followers in my ceremonial afterlife AirStream trailer.



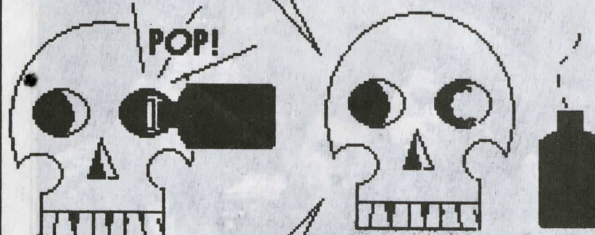
I want to be buried with all my favorite 8 tracks and mummified pets.



A year after I have departed they should come in and remove my head and clean the skull.



The skull then should be installed in the Cult rec room over the bar where my eye sockets can be used to open beers.



Because after I am gone I still want to help people like the ghost of Ghandi does.

The Disgrace of *Grease* - by Mark Hughson

I've never been known as a connoisseur of the cinema arts. I'm more of a limited edition 10" import vinyl kind of aficionado. However, what I lack in reach I make up for in depth; I've seen every greaser movie ever made, even the ones that should have been mercifully put to bed in pre-production. Sure, I could go on and on about the multitude of great greaser flicks one could find at the local video store (well, I do mention them), but really I want to focus at the topic at hand. *Grease* is a humiliating and horrendous movie, a disgrace to the greaser flick genre in general. I commend those who agree with me, please continue to show your contempt towards *Grease* and go on boycotting all Randal Kleiser-related projects. For those who do not agree, I will soon reveal that the poodle dress has been pulled over your eyes...and I mean that in a bad way.

Grease was released in 1978, and much like Paris Hilton and Simon Cowell, became a phenomenon for no apparent reason. Why was *Grease* made in the first place? Some theorize that *Grease* was just a star vehicle for talentless airheads; others believe it was to capitalize on the 50s nostalgia boom pioneered by George Lucas' *American Graffiti*. Either way the movie became a hit, painfully elongating its original Broadway run, spawning an atrocious sequel, and lodged itself somewhere amidst the greatest selling movie soundtracks of all time. (Note: In this regard, *Grease*

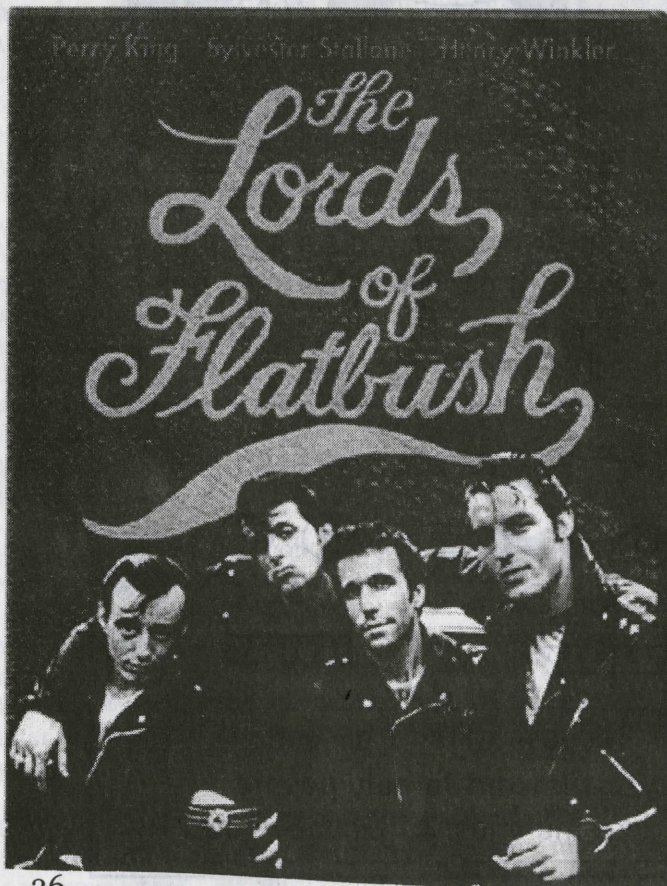
shares company with other bloated, star vehicles/wastes of film like *The Bodyguard* and *Titanic*.)

Before *Grease* gets its well-deserved dissection, I want to clear up a few matters. First of all, *Grease* is a greaser flick. It contains just about every single greaser flick element in regards to characters, plot, style, and sound. It deserves to be compared to (and then shamed by) its peers. Secondly, it must endure criticism regardless of the fact that it is a light musical/comedy. Who gives a shit if it's supposed to be tongue-in-cheek? Who cares if it doesn't take itself seriously? If I wanted a light homage/parody greaser musical, I'd watch *Cry-Baby*, John Waters' wonderful 1990 film. (Note: The *Cry-Baby* soundtrack is quite good. Probably the best fake-oldies songs of any greaser flick out there.) If I wanted mindless comedy, I'd watch the oft-overlooked *Book Of Love*. *Grease* cannot hide behind its paltry amount of humor. Every single facet of the movie (discussed directly below) leaves so much to be desired.

The Cast & Characters: Ugh. Australia loves Olivia Newton-John, and amateur pilot clubs love John Travolta, but I can hardly stomach these two actors and the roles they play in *Grease*. In the greaser flick world the lead is usually a tough guy with a soft heart. Travolta's character, Danny Zuko, fits this bill in typical fashion. However, pretty-boy Travolta is too hunky to be tough, and he's too busy sparkling for the camera to

show any real, human emotion. His smile is nice, but so is a letter from grandma. His emotional range has about as much depth as a Hallmark card. Danny is a T-Bird. So fucking what? He never beat the shit out anyone like Perry did in *The Wanderers*. He never stabs a guy to death like Johnny Cade did in *The Outsiders*. In short, Danny is a sissy and poor excuse for a greaser. Now some may argue that Danny and his cohort Kenickie (played by longtime B-list actor Jeff Conaway) weren't all about being rough and dangerous, they were about being goofballs and having fun. While that's an admirable and even insightful look at the greaser role Travolta and Conaway play it as dumb as possible. Antics are only likable if the characters are more than just one dimensional asses, which these two are not. In the classic greaser flick *The Lords of Flatbush*, Butchey (played brilliantly by a pre-Fonzie Henry Winkler) had razor-sharp wit, but along with his wise-guy attitude came a brain. He's aware of the world outside the high school walls, and he respects and cares for his greaser buddies no matter whom they fall for. Bringing a squirt gun to a rumble = stupid. Pretending to drown so the hot lifeguard will give you mouth-to-mouth (as seen in the non-greaser-flick-but-still-thematically-relevant *The Sandlot*) = awesome.

Olivia Newton-John, who plays Sandy, also is a familiar character—she's a good girl who falls for the greaser from the wrong side of the tracks. Sure, she might go toe-to-toe with Danny, but the guy's a wuss!



Joanie Cunningham's freckles could take on Danny Zuko. Sandy is a wide-eyed blonde... yeah I'm sure this role really pushed Olivia to new acting heights. The rest of the cast and cameos are either forgettable or possibly insulting to Italians, though I will say a bit about Stockard Channing, who played Rizzo. The greaser girl, though not essential, can be a strong part of the greaser flick. Playing a tough-girl adds to the development of the greaser picture. Being a greaser isn't about gender and it's not always about muscle. Greasers are products of their environment, and girls live on the wrong side of tracks, too, you know. Yet, Channing is just a shell of a rebel, only content when cutting down pure-as-snow Sandy or dreaming of goals so far out of reach it's laughable. Fucking and fighting with a feminine quality was done to much greater effect by Fairuza Balk, who was in a girl gang in *Deuces Wild*, and Linda Manz, who was Pee Wee, the Fordham Baldies ladies auxiliary in *The Wanderers*.

Plot: Meh. The plot for this movie is somewhat similar to all other greaser movies. The two star-crossed lovers are worried about everyone else around them, and try to fight their love for each other because of the restraints of society. There's really not much to say about the plot, which of course is far from a compliment. I will note three things, though. In greaser flicks, the young lead comes-of-age so to speak, and the plot involves about 80% teenage adventure and 20% teenage romance. In *Grease*, these statistics are reversed, which goes a long way to explaining why the movie is such a bore. While *Grease* does have a "we're from two different worlds" theme going on, it's value and intensity pale in comparison to other greaser flicks. For example in *The Wanderers*, the city boy Richie falls for a folkie activist, and in *A Bronx Tale* (the tremendous directorial debut by Robert DeNiro) Calogero falls for a black girl amidst racially tense neighborhoods. Now *those* are stories worth exploring. Finally, while some girl action is usually warranted and always welcome, there are plenty of greaser flicks where romance just isn't in the cards, the guy *doesn't* get the girl, and the ending isn't happy. The ending of *Grease* is like a trip to the grocery store, it's cheesy, it's corny, and sometimes just a free sample of it can make your stomach turn. But wait, you say you want an uplifting movie? You'd prefer a less pessimistic ending? It's called *Stand By Me*, people. A warm, but very realistic greaser flick.

Style and Sound: Blech! When looking at a greaser flick stylistically and visually, you really only need to ask yourself one question: Does the film accurately depict the look and sound and feel of 1950s/early 60s America? In my view, *Grease* does not. A majority of greaser flicks take place in one of the five boroughs or nearby New York areas. I can't hold it against any film that sets the scene elsewhere, but *Grease*, with its sunny skies and cheerful pep rallies in California, is particularly susceptible to criticism. I suppose I could allow some directorial license (this is a fictional story after all), but with streets so clean and backdrops so incredibly staged, this is more like a revisualization rather than true nostalgia. What the hell are these teens dissenting against? It's 72 degrees out,

their cars are gleaming, and the view is postcard perfect. Also, about the black leather jackets and the greased hair—the word I'd use to describe the greaser look in *Grease* is "overkill." While it's this type of caricature that makes people laugh off *Grease*, it makes me disgusted with the film overall.

The soundtrack to the film is a mixed bag. A bag mixed with both vomit and fecal matter, that is. Don't get me wrong; I love my oldies but goodies. The three volumes of Rhino's *Doo Wop Box* collection sitting on my shelf could tell you that. However, there are two types of songs that pervade this musical, and both of them bring a single tear to my eye. The first type of song is the real golden oldie. "Blue Moon," "Rock'N'Roll Is Here To Stay," et al are all fine pop songs (though unfortunately played through an embarrassing Sha Na Na filter). However, this is a greaser flick, and it's supposed to be a greaser flick with mischievous hoodlums. The onset of the rock'n'roll period was supposed to rile up the blood and get you going all wild and crazy. These songs are simply too cheerful, too pure (read as: white), and too *safe* to be a real soundtrack for rebellion. The other brand of songs found in *Grease* come from the original Broadway production...need I say more? Finally, while I have issues with musicals in which the actors' voices are overdubbed with real singers, I might actually prefer that to listening to Travolta and Newton-John duet like two lovebirds stuck in the no talent tree, on the wannabe branch, sitting in the off key nest.

And so, while I wholly support the greaser flick genre, *Grease* is an acetate of atrocity, the dismal runt of the litter, and I cannot endorse even one second of this movie. It's a disgrace to real greasers everywhere. At the end here, if I may, I'd like to offer a morsel of consolation. If you are indeed a fan of Travolta, and absolutely must see him in a 1950s setting, in which he sings and dances and attempts to buck authority, please rent the movie *Shout*, which was made post-*Look Who's Talking* and pre-*Pulp Fiction*.

Thank you.

Mark's Greaser Flick Picks
(in chronological order)

1. *Blackboard Jungle* (Glenn Ford, Sidney Poitier, 1955)
2. *Rebel Without A Cause* (James Dean, 1955)
3. *American Graffiti* (Ron Howard, Richard Dreyfuss, 1973)
4. *The Lords of Flatbush* (Sylvester Stallone, Henry Wrinkler, 1974)
5. *The Wanderers* (Ken Wahl, Karen Allen, 1979)
6. *The Outsiders* (C. Thomas Howell, Matt Dillon, Ralph Macchio, 1983)
7. *Stand By Me* (River Phoenix, Corey Feldman, Wil Wheaton, 1986)
8. *Cry-Baby* (Johnny Depp, 1990)
9. *A Bronx Tale* (Robert DeNiro, Chaz Palminteri, 1993)
10. *Deuces Wild* (Stephen Dorff, Brad Renfro, 2002)



In the early 80s I was one of the first kids I knew who had cable television. Growing up in Upper Canada we would get our American cable feed from upstate New York. At the time I didn't think it was such a special thing. We spent a lot of time watching the American channels, since Canadian television programs were barely tolerable back then. They paled compared to what was on the American channels: shows nearly every kid loved like *Knight Rider*, *Airwolf*, and *Blue Thunder*. I would really get a kick out of the advertisements that the Rochester, NY network affiliates would produce for local businesses. The J & E Grocery spots were classic. A dumpy yet cheerful, soft spoken fellow in a clean red (wtf?) butcher's apron, standing in front of an ancient glass meat counter would announce the week's specials, which usually sounded very odd and went something like "pigs feet \$1.39 a pound, pigs snout \$1.19 a pound, head cheese \$0.99 a pound, so come on down to J & E Grocery, 139 Reynolds Street!" There were also the nearly unbelievable Great House of Guitars commercials. Two longhaired nut jobs hollering about used guitars while standing outside their storefront, which happened to be a house, freaking people out with their tie dye acid flashback maelstrom of sight and sound. If you ever get the chance, visit this place, it's huge and just as insane as their commercials once were.

The fine cable feed from the USA would deliver these adverts for a show called *SCTV*. Seeing those ads I was mesmerized. I had never seen a TV show like this and I fell in love. I was nine years old and actually understood the humour. Well, I might have just thought I understood, but I did find it awfully funny. I wondered who the hell these people were and why I'd never seen this Canadian show. How come I had never seen this show on the CBC or CTV, Canada's two major networks at the time? There's no way these Canadians could be so funny. They had managed to take the relatively humourless TV programming that was being made, and still is, and shit it right back in our faces, exposing all the flaws with an overwhelming sense of humour (yeah, I'm spelling it the Canadian way). Nothing has come close since.¹ In a sense *SCTV* was almost like watching Charles Bukowski deliver the evening news with Kurt Vonnegut as co-anchor, life as a mad parody of itself.

My first true exposure to the wit and hilarity of the minds behind *SCTV* came in the form of Bob & Doug McKenzie's *Great White North* LP, which of course featured the title track "(Take Off) To the Great White North" with guest vocals by the great Geddy Lee (insert Pavement reference here) of Rush fame. My best friend's older brother had a copy, and we would spend many afternoons after school eating his mother's home-baked bread with organic peanut butter listening

¹The exception being Will Sasso's (another Canadian!) Kenny Rogers' Jackass skits on *Mad TV*. The dairy eating contest skit brought me to tears ("I was raised on dairy, bitch!!!").

to that delicious slab of vinyl, cracking up and always causing the needle to jump when we'd hit the floor nearly pissing ourselves with laughter.

The Bob and Doug sketches were originally conceived to fill a Canadian Content Quota, also known as CanCon. These content regulations were set up by a Canadian Government agency, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), to protect and preserve Canadian culture by using a mandate that all Canadian television and radio programming be at least 30% Canadian content. This was essentially set up to make sure everything we heard and saw up North wasn't just American content, and to give the struggling Canadian entertainment industry a tiny advantage over the Americans. Again, Canadian television and music really blew chunks back in the 80s. Apart from *SCTV*, which was mainly funded by NBC at the time, the only decent Canadian TV series were the Degrassi ones (*Kids of Degrassi St.*, *Degrassi Junior High*, and *Degrassi High*) and the only decent band at the time was Vancouver's Slow. Slow once played an afternoon gig at Expo 86 and caused a riot, but in the words of Hammy Hamster, that's another story.

So, the pressure was on for the producers and writers of *SCTV* to come up with some sort of Canadian content for the show, hence the birth of *The Great White North*, featuring Canadian staples like back bacon and stubby beer bottles. Though only a two minute spot on a 90 minute show, Rick Moranis (Bob) and Dave Thomas (Doug) would shoot over thirty improvised episodes of *The Great White North* at a time, back to back, with only the best ones making it to air.²

In the summer of '84, my mother decided to take my sister and me to Toronto to catch the musical *Cats*. We traveled by rail from Ottawa to Toronto's Union Station, which was right across the street from the Royal York hotel where we were staying, an ancient Toronto landmark built in 1927, then the largest building in the British Commonwealth.³ Once we had checked in and left our luggage in our room, my mother took us out to explore Hog Town and all the tourist traps offered all along the great street known as Yonge St. Every store seemed to be packed with the same crummy tourist T-shirts, trinkets and the latest in Boom Box technology. I remember drooling over the Big Fucking Radios or BFRs (Ghetto Blaster just ain't PC)

² So as not to tread where this zine has been before, see *Go Metric* #18 for Skizz Cyzyk's excellent article on Bob and Doug that compares their feature film debut *Strange Brew* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and in the same issue one can also find a well documented selection of biographies of Scott Wallace Brown's favorite *SCTV* personalities.

³ There is great zine about urban exploration and "going places one is not supposed to go" called *Infiltration* that has featured the Royal York in issues #1,6 and 8. Unfortunately, the creator of *Infiltration*, Ninjalicious, passed away not long ago after a lengthy battle with cancer.

that blared Top 40 rock at us as we strolled up and down what is the longest street in Canada. I was really into breakdancing and rap music at the time, so owning one of these BFRs would make me the freshest cat at my school. It would be another six months before I would receive my first Ramones/Motorhead mix tape that launched me down the Punk Rock Highway I have been riding since. Sadly enough, my mom didn't want to buy me a BFR, so I had to settle for a walkman. I think she just didn't want to deal with a blaring cassette deck at home, the afternoon of overbearing rock on Yonge Street being a great deterrent. Little did she know that two years down the line she would have to put up with bands practicing in her basement for the next eight years until I moved out.

The next day we saw *Cats* then returned to our hotel room for the evening to watch some television. After surfing the available channels for while, I was awestruck when suddenly SCTV was on the air!!! Holy shit! I finally got to see this mythical program. I still remember exactly what episode it was: #101 The Happy Wanderers, or the debut of John Candy and Eugene Levy's classic characters Yosh and Stan Schmenge. It wasn't until I purchased Volume Three of the SCTV DVD series that I saw this skit again. The Happy Wanderers were a polka band from the fictitious Eastern European country of Lutonia. Decked out in the traditional garb of their native land, the Schmenge Brothers would play "classic" polka tunes like "There's Rythm in My Lederhosen" and "Mama Cook Me Cabbage Rolls." Rick Moranis would guest as Linsk Mynik, a fellow Lutonian who had gone onto "superstardom" after his start on the Happy Wanderers show. Linsk would entertain us with his Lutonian translation of the Monkees classic "Last Train To Clarksville," which he claimed to have played at nearly all his restaurant shows. The Happy Wanderers skit was really a three parter. Along with their variety show, we also got to see the advert for Schmenge Travel, offering discount fares to Lutonia for the annual Rites of Spring Festival, and another for the Happy Wanderer's *Looking Back* LP, released by Schmenge Records. Their silly accents, terrible Iron Curtain haircuts and wardrobe brought me to my knees, doubled over in laughter in that Toronto hotel room, my mother asleep and my younger sister wondering what I found so goddamn funny. I had found the elusive SCTV, and though it would be years before I would truly get to experience all of it, that skit has stayed with me all along.

In the late 90s, Canada's Comedy Network, our answer to the American Comedy Central, began airing half hour SCTV episodes that were culled from the original NBC Network episodes (which make up the bulk of the DVD series). Of course I started to watch religiously, hoping to one day again see the Schmenge brothers, but to no avail. It wasn't until I purchased Volume 3 that I would be once again entertained by Stan and Yosh and their polka antics. I guess we Canadians are still lucky enough to get a daily dose of classic Second

City TV characters like Guy Caballero, Lola Heatherton, Bob and Doug MacKenzie, and Johnny LaRue. Some of my favorite actors and their characters on the series are Tony Rosato, who played bumbling Italian chef Marcello Sebastiano, who was never able to keep his lobsters from attacking him, as well as Chick Monk, roadie/marriage counsellor; the Juul Haalmeyer Dancers (Juul was the costume designer for the show); Martin Short's Jackie Rogers Jr./Sr., victims of the Hollywood star machine; Eugene Levy as Phil in the Phil's Nails commercial (which had the line "3456 Danforth Ave, right next to the pile of tires," anyone familiar with that area of Toronto would know how true that was), and Bryan John's "Money Talks." Of course I can not forget to mention the timeless Jeopardy parody "Half Wits" that starred nearly the entire cast as a bunch of really stupid, (and I mean really stupid) game show contestants, with Eugene as the impatient host Alex Trebel.

One of my favorite parts of SCTV was their fantastic advertisement parodies. "Karl's Kuts", a butcher shop skit/advert starring Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas as snout-nosed butchers/film editors, eerily reminded me of the old J & E Grocery commercials when Carl Scutz announces "Free Delivery" just like the old grocery man in the would in the J & E commercials. Other favorites include "Logo World," starring Rick in a horrendous salesman's outfit, touting the tremendous advantages of a good logo in today's business world, and Eugene Levy's ultra-modern (for the 80s) dog food bit. Unfortunately, we Canadians in Ontario now get our American cable TV feeds from Detroit and Atlanta. Gone are the low budget Rochester commercials, replaced with the fear mongering news flashes of terrorist action and urban blight: TONIGHT! DEATH! MURDER! DEATH! ROBBERY! UPS DRIVER CAUGHT WITH VAN! RAINBOW TERROR ALERT!!! LOOK OUT FOR THOSE SAME SEX MARRIGES!! I don't know if the Canadian and US Governments are working with the cable company (of which we only have one here in Canada) trying to scare us Canadians into submission or what, because the news from Rochester used to be so much tamer than the news from Detroit, but at least we're lucky enough up here that we get a daily dose of glorious SCTV.

For more info on SCTV than one could ever use please visit www.SCTVguide.ca, or check out Dave Thomas' book *SCTV: Behind The Scenes*, or *The Second City* by Donna McCrohan at your local library. Volume 4 of the DVD series will be available October 4th, 2005.

For more info on the great zine *Infiltration*, please visit www.infiltration.org

While writing this I was delighted by Rev. Norb's *Positively 12 Stiff Dylans*, *Cursed One*, and Paint It Black's killer *Paradise* album.

(Note: In order to ease relations between Canada and the U.S. this article was edited using Canadian spelling conventions and American punctuation.)

SOAP BURRITOS

Pictures: Lo-Fi Bri Words: The Wheel

I remember throwing soap at cars.
We would go "Soaping" on Friday nights
in high school up on Cougar Mountain.

Probably didn't effect Brett at all but
just made his parents clean something up.

Ummmm...actually
we never did that,

Kids are dumb.

So are adults, and old people
are just plain crazy.

we did fill Brett Ahlstroms family's
mailbox with Corn Flakes...

But the guy who owns the local Taco Del Mar
and claims to be a Mexican College History
Prof seems relatively sane...

or was that the Mormons?

...except for that bit
about how old Mexican
civilizations used to
have huge cities in
Washington State...

...either way it
makes me hungry
for burritos.

Ever set aside a movie night with that
special someone only to have the DVD
from Netflix arrived damaged?

Ever have the cat, who really isn't yours in
the first place—but you have to make
compromises to keep the relationship
going—jump onto the turntable while you're
listening to *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*?

The Pitfalls know such moments.

The Pitfalls are your band, but you
have to be willing to share them.

The Pitfalls are coming to save you.

7" out before the decade's over.

Promise.

In Crowd

TWO 7" Singles

PURE POPPY PUNK

"HELMET"/"CARGO" - DOUBLE A SIDE
&
SPLIT W/SACRED MONKEYS OF BALI

Both for \$5.00 postage paid

Brian Cogan 207 Ocean Parkway, Apt. 2A Brooklyn, NY 11218

Go Metric roadtrips with

Knights of the New Crusade

The Knights of the New Crusade have a beef with Christian rock. Their contention isn't that Christianity and rock music don't mix, rather that Christian rock is insufficiently Christian; that there's too much talk of romance, of relationships with people other than the Lord. So while the Knights are out to spread the gospel as they see it, they focus as much on newcomers as they do those who profess to be Christian rockers but are merely aspiring rock stars dishing out mindless secular tunes in the pursuit of fame and wealth. The Knights are fully committed to their cause. They wear chainmail. They brandish swords. And their lyrics are all based on scripture. (Sorry, Amy, but there's no "Baby, Baby" from these guys.) I learned more about the Bible from the band's debut album, My God Is Alive! Sorry About Yours!—Songs in Praise of Our Lord God and in Condemnation of Sin, then I ever did in Sunday

school. And, as it turns out, The Knights of the New Crusade are also a kick ass garage band, mixing big hooks with musicianship that goes above and beyond what we usually get from bands in the world of underground rock'n'roll.

This summer my band shared a bill with the Knights up in Binghamton, NY, and I had the pleasure of taking a road trip with the two of the Knights, Lumpy and Scoop. What follows is taken from our midnight drive from Binghamton back to the NYC area. (Interview by Mike Faloon)

You guys are experienced musicians and as far as I know this is the first time you've put your faith into your music.

Lumpy: Well, that's not true, because no matter what kind of music I'm playing I'm always putting my beliefs into my music.

Scoop: Jesus is in everything I do.

OK, let me clarify. As far as I know this is the first of your bands where the lyrical content is explicitly based in your faith.

Scoop: That's right. This is my first band, but Lumpy plays various kinds of music; this is the only fully Christian band that we are a part of.

What was the catalyst for taking that step, for putting your faith in your music in a more overt way?

Lumpy: It was an offer that came to us and we were obviously taken with it. I've gotten offers to be in other Christian bands that share my belief in Jesus but none of them have been this straight forward and true.

Scoop: There's a lot of watered down Christian bands out there.

Lumpy: Anberlin.

Scoop: They're not actually talking about Jesus. (Mimics lyrics) "Oh baby, I love you so much/Oh the world's so good and I'm so happy, baby"—that's just a bunch of gobbledygoop.

Lumpy: We have to write songs in condemnation of sin.

Scoop: And supporting Jesus.

Who approached you with the offer to be in this band, who got the ball rolling with Knights of the New Crusade?

Scoop: M1, Michael Andrews. He is the catalyst behind our rocking for Jesus.

Lumpy: I love Jesus just as much as Michael, but he's able to put it into words and organize it so well so it can be effective. I'm all aboard that boat.

How do you accommodate your beliefs while you're on tour?

Scoop: Tour is full of sin and temptation and whores of Babylon trying to tear you down.

Lumpy: But that's exactly where we need to be to preach this.

KNIGHTS TO SEE YOU!



THE KNIGHTS OF THE NEW CRUSADE

Scoop: We're taking the word of God to the heathens and sinners of this world.

Lumpy: We're not just preaching to our friends who share our beliefs.

If I could take a slight more personal tact, I should disclose to readers that there were strippers at this evening's show, not as part of your set, but performing with one of the other bands. On a personal level, did you feel the wave of temptation?

Lumpy: No, not at all. I found it more of a challenge than anything, I mean, it's not their fault that they're strippers.

Scoop: They may have been dealt a harsh hand by fate.

We're trying to bring the word of God to them.

Lumpy: I was saved and they can be saved just as easily.

Scoop: Everyone can be saved.

You seem pretty non-judgmental even when faced with people making choices much different than yours.

Lumpy: You can't be judgmental because you have to leave that kind of thing up to the Lord.

Scoop: We try to guide people to the light.

And you seem pretty secure in your faith, too.

Scoop: You're not going to sway us. Jesus is the rock and we will roll you.

You guys also embrace the idea of replacing democracy with theocracy, removing the separation between church and state. Am I correct in this understanding?

Scoop: That's right, that's one of the lines from "The Knights of the New Crusade," our theme song. It's really all in the 10 Commandments. That's the way to behave, if God says it, it's right.

Lumpy: We know there's never going to be a theocracy in this day and age, but that's what we'd like to advocate in a perfect world.

Scoop: The world's an imperfect place but if everyone could behave according to the 10 Commandments, then the world would be an ideal place to live.

In light of the past two presidential elections, many people feel that the country is swinging to the right because the Christian right seems more influential than ever. Would you say that you're in alignment with those forces?

Lumpy: No, not at all. The Jesus that the leaders of our country believe in is the wrong Jesus. We're advocating the real Jesus and they're advocating the Jesus that's going to win votes. President George W. Bush doesn't have the kind of morals that we have.

Scoop: We are against the war in Iraq. Any killing for any purpose is wrong, including the spreading of the word of Jesus. The new crusade has nothing to do with the old crusades. They were misguided and misled as well.

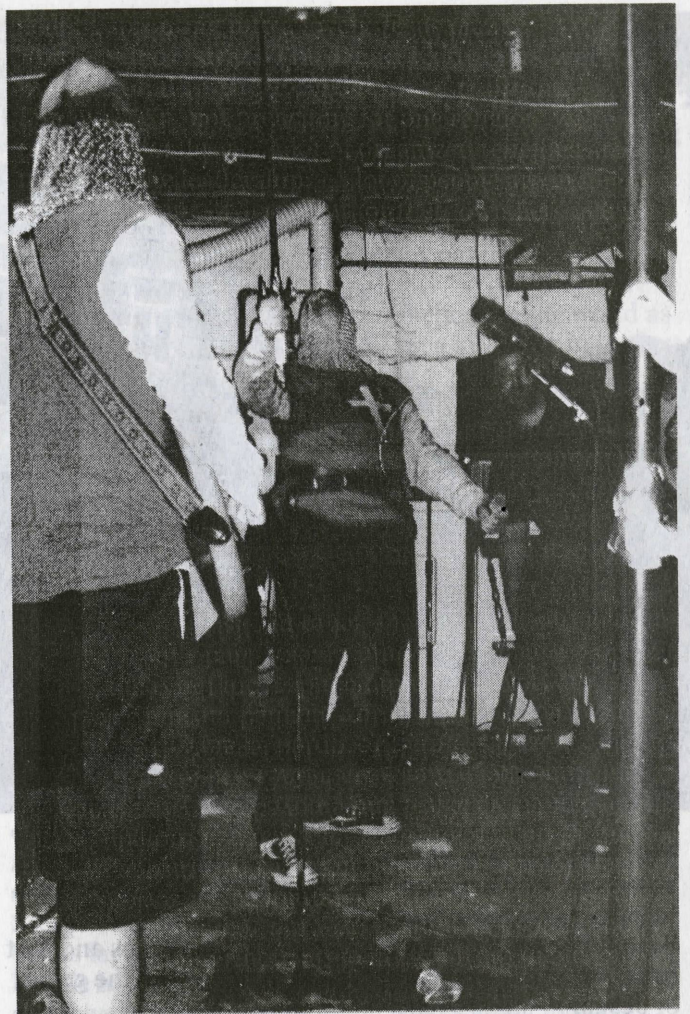
Do you think that people outside of the flock misunderstand the new crusade because they associate it with crusades of the past?

Scoop: We try to make that perfectly clear. We try to tell them that the new crusade is not a violent crusade.

The fact that your singer wields a sword would seem to contract what you've just said.

Lumpy: But we're not hurting anybody with the sword.

Scoop: Nobody has been stabbed yet.



Lumpy: That is just a symbol, a reminder of what people went through to spread the word of Jesus. The sword is an attention grabber. Let's just say it's to show the importance and the immediacy of what we are saying.

Lumpy: People use the sword to defend themselves, and we are defending our beliefs. It's a symbol. We'll never use that sword to hurt anybody.

Scoop: Plus, if Satan were to materialize we'd need some sort of defense.

Is it true that your next record will be on Alternative Tentacles?

Scoop: Yes, we're excited to be on Alternative Tentacles (founded by former Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra). We'll be the only Christian act and we'll be bringing the Christian faith to a wider audience. Jello is a big Knights of the New Crusade fan. He has come to many of our shows. I think we have saved his soul.

Lumpy: Well, I wouldn't go that far yet. I think we've touched him in a way that he's confused about.

Scoop: We've touched him and he may not know what to think about it yet, but we've planted the seeds in his brain and it's sprouting into a lovely Jesus plant.

That's surprising. The Dead Kennedys were pretty vocal in their criticism of religion.

Lumpy: We're not preaching for one religion, we're preaching for Jesus. A lot of organized religions are very misled by the leadership. A lot of people are in it not just for the teaching of Jesus but for their own personal gain.



The Knights no longer play with other Christian bands or at Christian clubs. Did that come down to one particular instance?

Scoop: There was that whole conflict between us and that band Anberlin, who doesn't ever preach about the gospel or Jesus.

Lumpy: It sounds like they're singing love songs.

Scoop: We were just turned off by the whole Christian scene, the lack of strong faith and firm beliefs, and we're trying to turn that all around. Most Christians are scared to preach the gospel because they think they're going to lose their audience. But for us it's not about making money. We're out there to spread the gospel, and if it ever becomes anything but that then we've lost our ideals.

Lumpy: I hate to talk trash but the band P.O.D., they're on MTV every day and not one of the videos I've seen has mentioned Jesus or any teaching of Jesus or the Bible. It's "inspirational" music, but it doesn't talk about the Lord and we need to talk about the Lord in order for people to be saved. I know people who listen to P.O.D. that are borderline Satanists.

Scoop: You cannot claim to be a Christian band and not spread the word of God.

Lumpy: We just want to play Christian music that is sincere.

Scoop: And rock out hard doing it.

Of the people you've connected with, maybe even sparked a conversion, is there a certain type of person who seems to respond better, a certain background?

Scoop: The people that have been raised with some kind of Christianity but then were misguided and led astray, those are the people who tend to grasp onto our message the most. We bring them back around and remind them

that their faith is secure and we give them a balance, something to grab onto; we give them the rock.

Lumpy: Of course, we're just as interested in converting people who have never accepted any version of Christianity.

On the flipside, have you noticed any trends or patterns among the people who seem the most defensive or resistant?

Lumpy: Surprisingly, the ones who are most put off are Christians who think we're too Christian, we're too strong. Some people think it's over the top. They have a hard time believing that a band would actually preach the gospel and transfer the good word, because, as we've said before, most Christian bands you'd think they were just talking about their girlfriend or something. So when a band like us comes around they're just shocked. I think it scares them a little bit.

Lumpy: They shouldn't be shocked by that, they go to church every Sunday, or at least they should.

So you guys are lyrically too strong for their tastes.

Lumpy: And we act according to our lyrics.

What about the style of the presentation, the genre of music you've chosen.

Scoop: That's another problem for them too, you don't see too many garage punk Christian bands. They don't grab onto that very well.

Lumpy: And they make fun of the way we dress. They think that's all a big joke. We're just having fun and we want to present people having fun spreading the word.

It sounds pretty rosy. You've put a positive spin on every aspect of the band we've discussed.

Scoop: It shouldn't be negative.

No, not that you would strive to make it negative, but has there been anything thus far in the band's career that's been hard or disappointing for you guys?

Lumpy: The only disappointing thing is that our Christian brethren cannot accept our beliefs, that they're not as receptive to us as non-Christians are.

Scoop: Oddly enough the only negative feedback we've gotten is from other Christians.

As an outsider it reminds me of the East coast/West coast battles in the hip hop world.

Scoop: That's a completely different ballgame because that wasn't a holy battle.

I meant in the sense the hip hop's harshest critics are other people within the hip hop community, just as you've found your most vocal critics to come from within the Christian community.

Lumpy: We're definitely not trying to start a war with any other Christian bands and we're not trying to advocate any ill will.

Scoop: We're trying to spread love and the disappointment is other Christian bands that can't grab on to that concept.

Lumpy: Our new album coming out is *Knight Beat: A Challenge to the Cowards of Christianity*. And that's not slander against any particular Christian band because we don't call anybody out by name like Tupac called



Biggie out by name. We're not pointing anybody out and saying they're bad Christians, we're just saying there are bad Christians.

Thinking about this evening, I think, despite the wide array of genres, that we had a pretty harmonious evening. But there was one point of contention. My band has a song, "Evolution Revolution," that implies the accuracy of evolution...

Scoop: Umm, evil-ution.

...as opposed to creationism.

Lumpy: But it's just a theory, nobody's proven it.

Did you go to public school? Were you exposed to evolution?

Lumpy: I did go to public school and I did have to learn that but thankfully I had good parents. When I came home every day they would inform me that there are things you learn in public school that are not true according to the Bible. I do not believe in evolution, I do not believe in a world that is billions and billions of years old.

How old would you say the world is?

Lumpy: I would say roughly 5,000 - 7,000 years old.

Scoop: Yeah, five to seven. It boils down to what Jesus said in the New Testament and it's going to be similar if not the same in most versions of the Bible. We just try to stick with what Jesus said and live life according to what Jesus believed.

Just for the sake of clarity, you guys lean toward literal interpretations of the Bible, is that right?

Lumpy: As literal as we can get.

We've been looking back, let's look forward for a moment: Do you think that the end of time is imminent? Is this something you expect to come during your lifetime?

Scoop: The rapture could come at any moment.

Lumpy: I'm hoping that the rapture will happen before our lifetime is over and I believe we're in the last stages.

Scoop: The signs of the end time are coming.

Lumpy: The tsunamis that are happening. It's all there.

Do you think that if we were having this conversation a hundred years ago you'd be saying the same thing, the signs are on the wall, so to speak?

Lumpy: No. I can't speak for the people who lived a hundred years ago but as I know my parents they didn't even bring it up until they were older. When they were younger there weren't so many afflictions in the world as there are today. Things have gotten a lot worse in the last 50 years.

Scoop: Heathenism is taking control.

During the show tonight the Mel Gibson film *Passion of the Christ* came up. Would you endorse that picture?

Lumpy: I didn't like that movie, it was centered on gore.

Scoop: It was very gory.

Lots of swords, from what I hear.

Scoop: Yes, lots of swords. It seemed more like a horror movie than a spiritual movie.

Lumpy: But at the same time I can't condemn Mel Gibson because it might not have the precise notion of what we're trying to say but it does present the notion of Jesus as our lord.

Can you think of other Christian bands, or movies or tv shows, for that matter that you'd endorse, another act who delivers the word in a way that's similar to the Knights?

Scoop: There's always the local preachers that are on tv, but as far as the mainstream, no, I can't think of anyone.

People in the mainstream have lost sight of their goals and have concentrated more on what's going to make them money and what's going to get them viewers and such. With money comes power and corruption, and that's what we're trying to fight against.

Thanks for your time, I've enjoyed talking with both of you. Is there a message you'd like to leave with our readers, a sign off that you have?

Lumpy: Hell is a real place full of torment and turmoil and you have to strive so hard not to go there.

Scoop: The devil's real and hell is a real place, and you don't want to be there. When it all comes down to it, wouldn't you rather be in heaven?



My Bands of the Decade

By Josh Rutledge

The most common and accurate criticism of me as a music reviewer is that I tend towards hyperbole. To these charges, I plead guilty and hope that my sentence will be a light one. In a worst-case scenario, I'll be condemned to hell and forced to spend an eternity listening to an endless loop of those early Dropkick Murphys records that I once swore were the greatest things since sliced bread.

I stand before you all today prepared to confess my crimes of excess. Boris the Sprinkler, I now admit, was never the greatest punk band on Earth. Good band for sure, but come on. Neither of the first two Automatics CDs is really an "all-time classic." I understand how wrong it was of me to go door-to-door seven summers ago and threaten people with violent retribution if they didn't purchase the Parasites' *Rat Ass Pie* CD within a week. I probably shouldn't have gone to Washington in 1999 and lobbied for a national holiday in honor of the U.S. Bombs. I regret once referring to the Dimestore Haloes as "more important than the Beatles, Jesus Christ, and the Trix rabbit combined." I feel responsible for the mild financial loss incurred by those of you who took my word for it that the first Stitches album was "one for the ages."

In fairness to myself, I will say that my track record has improved in recent years. When I go bonkers for a band these days, it's usually for a group that deserves the high praise—like the Ergs, Unlovables, or those German garage greats, the Kidnappers. But I have had my moments of relapse, like my ridiculously over-the-top gush-job on the last Jet Set album and my multiple embarrassing flip-outs over the Locomotions. I'm getting better, but I'm not out of the woods yet. There is still much work to be done. I've been taking my medication every day. I've got two appointments per week booked with my restraint coach, Serge. He worries that the Electric Shadows might get their debut album out before I'm completely cured.

This leads me to the question of the hour: out of all the numerous bands I've praised over the years, out of all the groups I've hailed as future immortals or serious contenders for the "best band in the world" throne, how many of them really *were* as great as I thought? Of all the bands I've heard and enjoyed in my ten years as a small-time rockwriter, which ones will leave behind the most "essential" recorded legacy? If a music historian from the future emailed me and asked me to list the very best studio bands from the years 1995-2005, which ones would I pick? That's the premise of this piece, so let's get to my list!

Note: I've adopted some ground rules:

1. This list only covers music recorded or released between 1995 and 2005. Bands that appear below are only being judged on the music they produced in that ten-year period. If you're wondering why the Rip Offs and Teengenerate aren't mentioned, it's because time-wise, they just missed the cut.

2. To qualify, a band must have produced a "substantial" body of work. In other words, no "one album wonders." My general rule of thumb is at least two LPs, or one LP and at least three singles/EPs. I am willing to make exceptions if the situation calls for it.

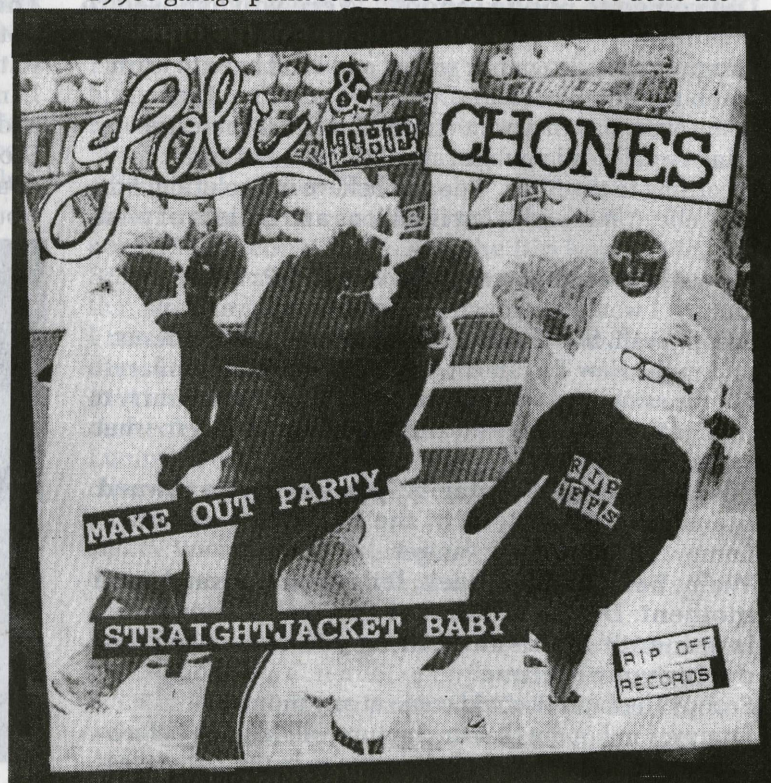
3. I wanted this list to represent a cross-section of the musical styles I "specialize" in writing about: '77-style punk, power pop, pop-punk, garage, and "snotty" punk rock. No post-punk or "indie rock" bands are subject to this discussion.

4. I wasn't sure how many bands to list. Twenty seemed like too many; ten would have been too few. A dozen seemed like a good compromise. In typical Josh Rutledge fashion, I went ahead and made it a baker's dozen. Enjoy.

Here we go...

13. Loli and the Chones

The kings and queen of snot-nosed, trashed-out, hate-fueled punk. They make this list on the strength of their classic debut album, *P.S. We Hate You*, perhaps the most sublimely feral recording to emerge from the 1990s garage punk scene. Lots of bands have done the



obnoxious three-chord thing, but few have ever done it as well as Lori and the Chones. *P.S. We Hate You* is an inspired, exciting record, its catchiness every bit as notable as its belligerence...and that's saying something!

12. Ruth's Hat

Undoubtedly the most underappreciated band on this list, Ruth's Hat's only flaw is that it doesn't have one. This AmeriCanadian pop/punk/rock n' roll powerhouse has put out such consistently great music that perhaps people started to take them for granted. And that's too bad, because the Hat ought to be considered pop-punk hall-of-famers. At a time when most of their contemporaries were merely rehashing the Queers and Screeching Weasel, the Brothers Sloan and co. were reinventing the pop-punk genre, blending it with timeless rock n' roll in the tradition of Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, and the early Beach Boys. The group's sublime harmonies, crooning lead vocals, and oldies radio sensibilities signaled a devotion to rock n' roll classicism, yet the band's buzzing guitars and high-speed attack kept its sound "current" and highly relevant to followers of contemporary pop-punk. Ultimately, though, it was a formidable songwriting prowess that really set The Hat apart. Beginning with the *Too Much Box* EP in 1997 and continuing from there with numerous singles and two fantastic full-lengths, Ruth's Hat has relentlessly delivered incredible records chock full of harmony-drenched, insanely-catchy, high-energy pop songs. In particular, their most-recent CD, *The Hitchhiker's Guide To Rock n' Roll*, is essential listening for any fan of pop-punk or good music in general. Bonus points go to the group for its strong stance against light beer.

11. The Prostitutes

Of all the old Pelado Records bands, the Tutes have held up the best over time. Somewhat like the Stitches, but way better, this Harrisburg, Pennsylvania band carried the torch for rude, crude punk rock in the grand manner of the Dead Boys and G.G. Allin, their music a genius variation on the trashy punk theme. Crazed, raspy-voiced frontman Kevin McGovern was one of the finest punk singers of his day, and behind him wailed a savage, red-hot rock n' roll band. Combining a snotty '77 style with the power and fury of early California punk, this gang of drug-abusing degenerates produced a modern punk masterpiece in 1997's *Can't Teach Kids Responsibility* LP. But the group's singles were just as essential, yielding classics like "Modern White Trash," "1-2-3 Go," and "Get Me Sick." If you can find it anywhere, track down the Prostitutes complete discography CD released by Pelado in 2000, which includes "Suicide Is Fun," one of the greatest punk songs of all-time.

10. The Kidnappers

Sometime around the turn of the century, three kids from Germany called the High School Rockers burst

onto the scene with the catchiest garage punk sound since Teengenerate. Influenced by seminal trashy rock n' rollers like Supercharger and classic power pop groups like the Paul Collins Beat, the Rockers blended two distinct musical styles to create an irresistible, fun-filled sound. Having reached proper adulthood, the Rockers changed their name to the Kidnappers in 2002. The following year, they unleashed their debut album *Ransom Notes and Telephone Calls*, a searing blend of snot-nosed buzzsaw rock n' roll and anthemic punk/powerpop in the Boys/Undertones mold. Besides the unbelievably great "Spanish Girls" single, no new music has emerged from Kidnappers headquarters in a long, long time. With bated breath, I await their next release, which I will obtain even if it requires me to crawl 100 miles in the snow while listening to Color Me Badd.

9. The Beltones

In my opinion, the Beltones were easily the best of the mid-90s punk revivalists. Inspired largely by the great Stiff Little Fingers and greasy 50s rock n' roll, the Tones had the catchiest sound of any 1990s punk band. Singer Bill McFadden had a fierce, raspy voice that recalled both Jake Burns and a young Shane McGowan. He sang with conviction and soul, and his lyrics were nothing short of brilliant. Similarly minded bands like the U.S. Bombs and Swingin' Utters were far more prolific, but if you're talking quality rather than quantity, the Beltones left their Californian counterparts in the dust. The band's first two 7" releases, the *Lock and Load* EP and the "My Old Man" single, are drop-dead classics and should be tracked down at any cost. Lesser versions of the songs from those two records can be found on the TKO-released CD *On Deaf Ears*, which also includes the tracks from the amazing *Naming My Bullets* 7". Check out "Let The Bombs Fall," one of the most honest and heartbreaking songs ever written about human grief.

8. The Hives

Simply put: a great, great, great, great, great rock n' roll band. Am I the only person who thinks *Tyrannosaurus Hives* is even better than *Veni Vidi Vicious*?

7. The Fevers

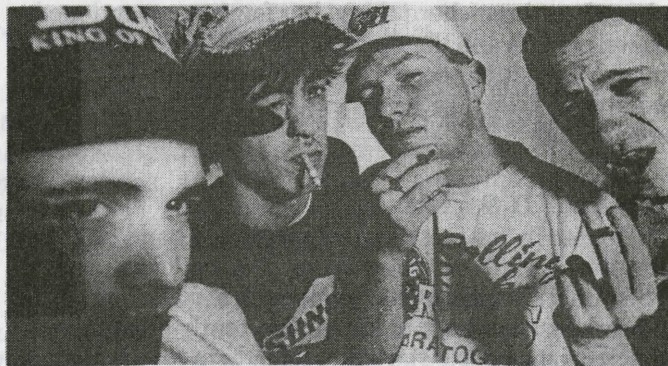
Okay, so how do I describe the Fevers? Let's see... Imagine Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers covering bubblegum pop hits from 1968, with Joey Levine from the Ohio Express sitting in on vocals. I'm talking candy-sweet, superfun power pop, but with a raunchy, Stones-ish rock n' roll edge. Like scruffy Midwestern cousins of the Kung Fu Monkeys, the Fevers create music that'll make you smile, music that celebrates romantic love in a completely non-ironic way. Both of their albums are essential purchases, but the new one *Love Always Wins* is particularly awesome (and even more bubblegummy). It's my current favorite for 2005 Album of the Year honors.

6. Green Day

Umm, perhaps a few of you have heard of this band. There are still numerous Green Day haters out there, which is weird, since hating Green Day is so 1995. And if you poll the haters, they have really stupid reasons for their disdain, like "They're sellouts" and "They're not punk!" Get over it, people! The band's been on a major for 12 years now. Deal with it. And disliking Green Day because they aren't punk is kind of like disliking Albert Pujols because he isn't a pitcher. Come on, we're talking about one of the great pop groups of my generation! And as far as I'm concerned, the band's music has gotten better and better over time, each album surpassing the previous one in terms of pop craftsmanship and sheer listenability. Perhaps Green Day will forever be dismissed as the kings of mall-punk, but more open-minded listeners will probably remember them as the finest mainstream rock band of their time. You can pick up any GD album since *Insomniac* and find at least four or five pop songs that would drive most bands insane with envy. As a whole, Green Day's recorded output since 1995 evidences a seamless evolution from cutesy pop-punk to mature, splendidly-crafted pop. Notice how many times I've used the word "pop" in this entry? Green Day is pop.

5. The BobbyTeens

There's a myth about rock n' roll not requiring any talent or musical skill. We've all heard enough bad music from woefully untalented bands to sufficiently disprove the notion that "three chords and an attitude" are all it takes to make good rock. Still, sometimes the best music *does* sound amateurish and loose and strikingly primitive. Such is the case with the BobbyTeens, who've made a career out of sounding bad in a good way. The group's signature is a sloppy attack that barely achieves the lowest standards of musical competency. But don't be fooled, they know what they're doing, and they sure as heck know how to write great pop songs. It's just that they play them with a reckless disregard for "musicianship," choosing instead to pound away like they just learned their instruments last week. Some BobbyTeens records crappier than others, but at the heart of each of them is a great love for 60s girl groups, the Ramones, early rock n' roll, and the timeless art of lo-fi garage punk. Those bedrock influences, combined with a brazen sexuality that would make even Motley Crue blush, make the BobbyTeens what they are. Singer Tina has improved from throaty screamer to sultry vixen over the years, and 2000's *Not So Sweet* saw the band flirting with well-produced power pop. But for a full taste of the BobbyTeen experience, one ought to look to the singles collection *Young and Dumb*, which compiles the rawest and trashiest of the group's recorded output ("Firecracker" is literally one of the greatest rock n' roll songs ever recorded). Last year's sadly-overlooked *Cruisin' for a Bruisin'* is also a perfectly fine place to start if you're looking to introduce yourself to these notorious bad girls (and guy).



4. The Figgs

Perhaps I'm about to be hung for heresy, but I don't consider *Lo-Fi at Society High* to be anything close to the definitive Figgs album. Heck, I wouldn't even cite *Banda Macho* as the true pinnacle of Figgdom (although it is a fine, fine record). Nope, I reserve my highest acclaim for the next two LPs: *Couldn't Get High* and *Sucking In Stereo*. Anyone who's been reading this publication in recent years has already been subject to a complete education on the merits of the Figgs, so I don't really need to elaborate much. Suffice it to say that on these two albums, a high-energy, raunched-out R&B sensibility combines with the band's usual genius songwriting, resulting in some of the catchiest and coolest rock n' roll ever committed to tape. Especially on *Couldn't Get High*, the group achieved a synthesis of bar-band grit and pure pop hooks not heard since the heyday of Graham Parker. Was there any wonder why Parker himself later picked the Figgs to back him on tour? This era also spawned two great EPs from the Figgs: *For EP Fans Only* and *Badger*. Ah, "The Trench." What a song!

3. Exploding Hearts

Here's where I'm gonna bend my rules a little. Sure, the Hearts left us just one LP and two singles. But even so, they may go down as the best band of the '00s. Musically, they combined the more melodic side of 70s punk with the soulful punch of mod revivalism and the perfect hooks of new wave power pop. But they were far more than the sum of all those things. There was something special about the Hearts, something unique. Perhaps it was the emotional depth of their music, which sprung from their heartfelt lyrics and Adam Cox's vulnerable, everyman vocals. More so than any pop band of their time, the Hearts captured the sad essence of deteriorating male/female relationships. The best songs off of *Guitar Romantic* were poignant odes to broken hearts and lost love, melancholy pop gems in the vein of the Mick Jones side of the Clash. Even the upbeat, Jam-inspired rocker "I'm A Pretender" hints at themes of loneliness, heartache, and girl-crazed despair. Had this band's career not come to a sudden, tragic end, surely these guys would have just gotten better and better. As it stands, the Hearts' recorded legacy consists of 14 officially released songs—all of it pure gold.

2. The Muffs

In 1995, the Muffs delivered *Blonder and Blonder*, their second of two classic albums. It picked up where the band's first album left off, ripping in a rockin' punk/powerpop style that suggested a sordid hookup between the Ramones and a young Joan Jett. This was the album that inspired a thousand female-fronted pop-punk bands (well, maybe it didn't, but "a thousand" sounds more dramatic than "dozens of"), and the first half of it smokes as righteously as any album side in the history of punk. Kim Shattuck delivers her career-best vocal performance here, crooning and screaming with equal aplomb. An ensuing stylistic shift away from the punky furor of the first two LPs alienated a large portion of the Muffs' fan base, but the pretty, laidback *Happy Birthday To Me* was actually a stellar pop album. Last summer saw the release of *Really Really Happy*, an almost-return to form that recalled the less-frantic moments of the band's heyday.



1. Kung Fu Monkeys

It's been seven-and-a-half years since I first heard the Kung Fu Monkeys, and I reckon that the majority of the lovelorn poppunkin' young 'uns who were digging the KFM sound back then are no longer grooving to James Cahill and co. or even buying 7" vinyl at all. So sad. Most of them kiddies went and grew up on us. Got corporate jobs, started listening to rap, stopped frequenting the candy shops. Grew beards, threw their Chucky Taylors in the fire, gave up on love and romance and all that sweet splendidous stuff. Got abducted by aliens, joined homicide cults, sold off all

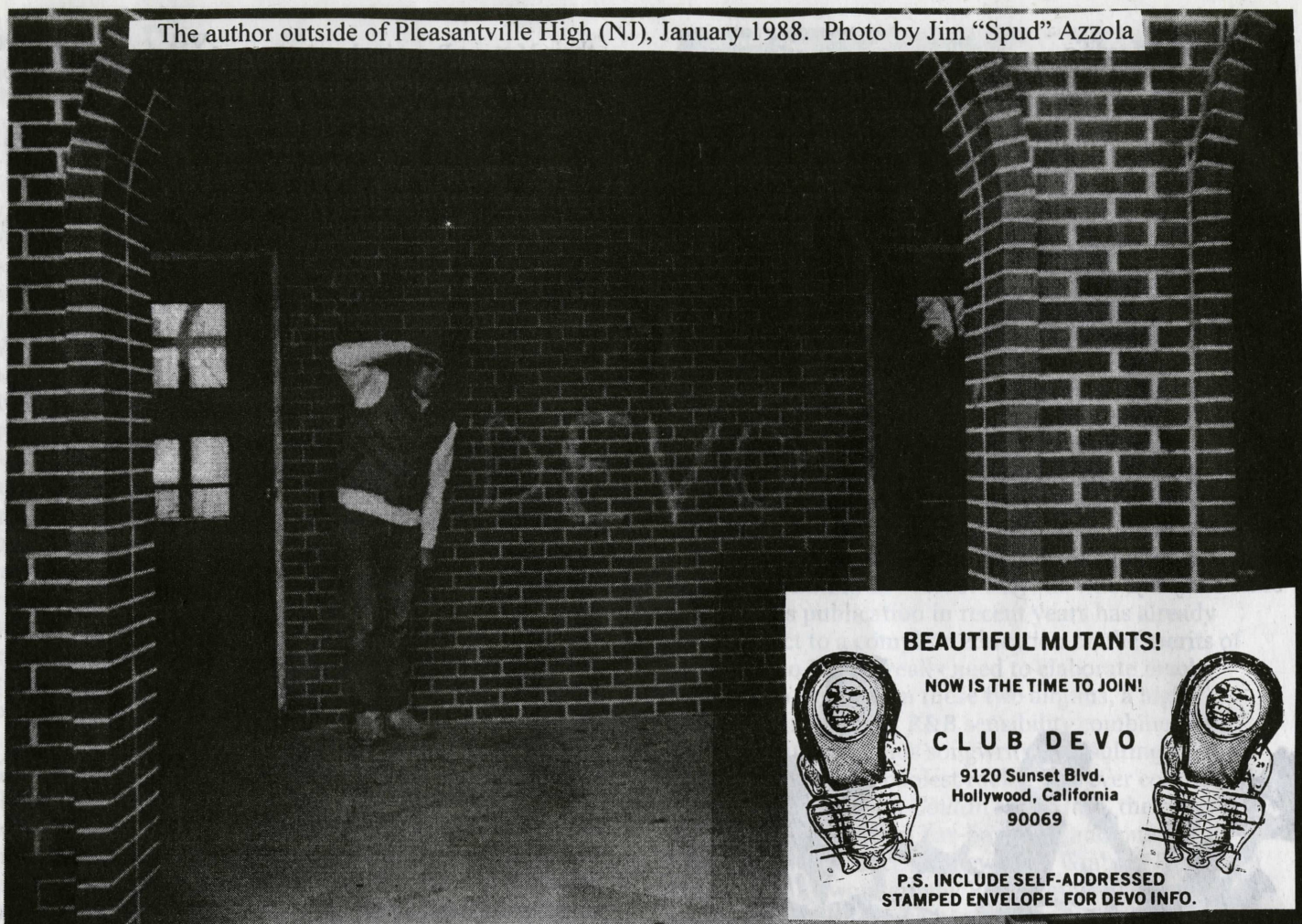
their Mutant Pop singles, and voted for Dubya (twice). Hi ho.

It was around Christmas of '97 when I first came across the first *Shindig* record. Flying from the sky like a thunderbolt of glee, it smashed through my bedroom window and landed square on my turntable. Before the opening 30 seconds of "Summer School" had passed, I had already fallen in love with the Kung Fu Monkeys. Not just because their 60s-inspired, Alvin-and-the-Chipmunks-gone-thrash brand of rollercoaster pop was so different from the third rate Screeching Weasel tripe everyone else seemed to be hacking out at the time, but also because the group's music exuded an unabashed joyfulness and purity of heart that were beyond passe at the time, the likes of Nirvana and Nine Inch Nails having already come along to take all the fun out of rock culture. Cahill's giddy countertenor was a welcome change-up from the generic snot-tones barked out by all the wannabe Joe Queers of the day, and you had to love the fact that the group covered Herman's Hermits! While their contemporaries aped bands that aped the Ramones, the Kung Fu Monkeys went the other direction, evoking the carefree summery merriment of early Beach Boys hits and '60s bubblegum pop. Over the years, the band's recorded output would be limited—but always worth the wait!

Shindig Volume 1 is my favorite 7" record of all-time. But what came after it was just as swell. I've always believed that the collected KFM singles rival or even surpass the band's jolly-good year 2000 full-length, *School's Out, Surf's Up, Let's Fall In Love*. I'm telling you: should it ever become feasible for one label to release the collected KFM seven-inches on one blockbuster CD, it would be the pop event of the decade! Boys and girls in every town would descend upon their local music retailers, their piggybanks in tow, demanding copies of America's favorite band's nifty new singles comp. Bankers and butchers and gravediggers and middle level managers would drop everything and, for no apparent reason, start singing "Let's Go (to Pasadena to Meet Your Parents)." Can't apples would start growing on trees. The president of the United States would be unable to stop shaking his (or her) sanctimonious tush to the joyful jams emanating from every burger joint, surf shop, mall arcade, drive-in theater, ice cream stand, roller rink, and waterslide complex in the land. And the KFM-haters? The Earth would open up, swallow them whole, and put them out of their misery.

That is all. My apologies to Turbonegro, the Ergs, American Heartbreak, and any other band that could have, on any given day, made its way onto the above list.

Josh Rutledge, July 2005
newwavebaby@yahoo.com



IT'S NEVER STRAIGHT UP AND DOWN: MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH DEVO

by Tim Hinely

Saturday, November 13, 1982 at the Tower Theatre in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—the first time I ever saw DEVO. It was the tour for *Oh No, It's Devo*, their highly underrated record from 1982. My four pals and I were in white radiation suits and red flower pots. It was a show for the ages.

I had heard about Devo but hadn't really discovered them until the *Freedom of Choice* record came out in 1980. I don't remember whether it was my sophomore or junior year but my pal Scott Quattrone made me a tape of it and told me to listen to the whole thing, he also said, "the only reason the losers in this school like Devo at all is because of the drug connotation in "Whip It." Good ol' Quattrone, man, I wish I knew where he was these days.

There was a small crew of us from southern New Jersey who dug the band. Most of us were surfers who proudly went against the norm and did everything

we could to distance ourselves from the knuckleheads in our school who loved bands like Loverboy and Toto (this was the early 80s, after all). Anyway, I played the *Freedom of Choice* tape incessantly and needed more Devo. It wasn't long before the band's next record, *New Traditionalists*, came out and that was even better.

Even back then, in my "new wave loser" days, I loved Devo's two earlier (guitar-based) records just as much (once I got them). In fact, their second record, *Duty Now for the Future*, was (and still is) my favorite Devo record. But I digress. I was supposed to go to the concert for *New Traditionalists* but alas, working nights in a local restaurant meant I worked a lot of night shifts and could not get the night off. I had to sell my ticket and vowed not to miss their next tour.

I can honestly say that every time I was in my car throughout 1982, I had Devo in the tape deck.

Every single time. And then it came, that fateful night in 1982 when I finally got to see Devo in the flesh. Who were these quirky individuals who had sent my friends and I into such a frenzy? Well, five guys originally from Akron, Ohio (though by then, living in L.A.), a set of Mothersbaughs (vocalist Mark and brother guitarist Bob), a set of Casales (bassist Gerry and keyboardist/guitarist brother Bob) and big-nosed drummer Alan Myers (*Oh No, It's Devo*) would be Alan's last record with the band). A few of the guys were former Kent Staters (there when the shootings happened) who were screwing around with synths and video long before most other folks were. But basically, and not really surprisingly, they looked like: nerds. But they were guys who were *proud* to be nerds.

I was obsessed. My friends were obsessed. Everything that came out of our mouths was related to Devo and theirs was the music we were listening to all the time. Yes, we wore these white energy suits with energy domes to the concert, and we sang every word to every song, for this one night it felt like planet earth was ours. Then came...nothing.

The band released the very mediocre *Shout!* two years later in 1984 but didn't tour for it and then Devo seemed to vanished. You'd read bits and pieces here and there in music mags but nothing concrete. Then something happened in 1988 that I'll never forget: Devo became accessible. We heard that the band was planning a tour of small clubs and my pals and I planned to be there. The group consisted of Chris "Scratch" Knerr, Tom Matthews (Tom 1), Tom Salerno (Tom 2), Mike "Fry" Friehofer, and me, and our itinerary was as follows:

11/11/88 at City Gardens in Trenton, NJ
11/17/88 at The Chestnut Cabaret in Philly
11/20/88 at The Ritz in NYC

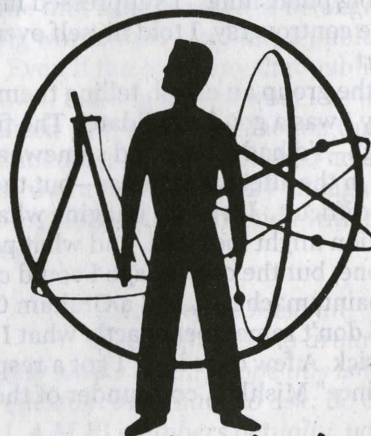
The gigs were amazing! It was a tour for the not-so-good *Total Devo* record, but basically the band played all the hits and oddities and seemed energized and recharged like they hadn't been in years. We spoke to the band members while they were walking around these small clubs. We asked the band questions we had always wanted to ask. We cornered Gerry Casale and asked him about the lyrics to "Be Stiff" and he rattled them off right then and there. We asked Bob Casale the true meaning of de-evolution and he chuckled and said, "Man, you guys actually *care* about that stuff?" Hell yeah.

A funny thing happened at the Trenton, NJ gig. The two Toms and I were chatting with Richard, the bands' merch guy and we all said how we'd like to tour with Devo and then Richard said, "Really? We need a merch guy right now, the other guy quit last night." I couldn't do it, I was in college as was Tom 2, but Tom 1 jumped at the chance. After that gig he went home, packed, and joined Devo at their NYC gig. He said it wasn't all it was cracked up to be but told us some cool stories, mostly about Gerry Casale. They called him "The Vampire" because he was always pale, dressed in

black, and unsmiling/unforgiving. They said he would rattle off facts about de-evolution and truly believed every word of it. It *was* his manifesto.

After the tour ended, we went back to our lives and our love for Devo waned, if just a bit. A few years later, about 1990, we went to a club in NYC called The World and watched Devo film a video. That's where I first my longtime friend, Jim "Spud" Azzolla, the self-proclaimed "biggest DEVO fan in the world." Shortly thereafter Tom 1 was moving out to California and Tom 2 went along for the ride. On the way they decided to make a pilgrimage to Akron to pay a visit to the Mothersbaugh's dad, Bob "General Boy" Mothersbaugh Sr. They stopped at a gas station in Akron, checked the phone book, and called the Mothersbaugh residence. The General replied, "Where are you guys at? I'll come and fetch ya'." From there the Toms spent an afternoon in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Mothersbaugh while they fed them cookies and iced tea and regaled them with stories of the *real* truth about de-evolution.

The song "Jocko Homo" says it all in the lyrics, "*They tell us that we lost our tails/Evolving up from little snail/I say it's all just wind in sails/Are we not men? We are Devo!*" The science and theory of evolution is a crock according to the fine men in the bright yellow jumpsuits. They theorized that we're only smart monkeys. In other words, let's not get too high and mighty about ourselves. The yuppie in the 3-piece suit? A monkey! The supermodel in the bikini on the beach taking high-priced fashion shots? A monkey! The crankster who lives next door amid all the other trailer trash? Just another monkey! Now we might be the smartest monkeys but we're primates nonetheless. We also happen to be the most vindictive and meanest ones, too. And, if you need any further proof as to how we are devolving, just look at the White House.



duty now for the future

LITERARY ANARCHISTS MOBILIZING EVERYWHERE!

By Tim Hall

"Revolution!"

That's what the advertisement said, running down the left-hand column of the online magazine I was reading. "Help us take back literature from the over-educated elites and rich fops! Join the revolution that will bring back meaning and relevance to American letters!"

Now, it just so happens that there are few things in life I enjoy more than a good revolution—especially the rhetorical kind—so I clicked on the link. And that's how I became involved with Literary Anarchists Mobilizing Everywhere!, or L.A.M.E.!

I had just published my first novel, *The Cheese-Thunderer's God*, under my own Boethius Press imprint. If you've ever peddled a self-published novel then you know why I was feeling about as popular as a weenie salesman at the Wailing Wall. I was looking for ways to boost my profile. Being part of a group of literary outlaws—even self-proclaimed outlaws—couldn't hurt. If I was a little unnerved by the claims on the L.A.M.E! website that their goal was nothing less than "toppling the twin towers of modern literature and big publishing," I suppressed my anxiety. A little controversy, I told myself over and over, never hurt.

I sent the group an email, telling them about myself and why I was a good candidate. The first part was easy enough—I'd had a long and somewhat colorful career in the alternative press—but the second part was more difficult. I tried to imagine what a literary revolution might look like, and what part I might play in one, but the only image I could conjure involved face paint, machetes, and a Graham Greene novel or two. I don't remember exactly what I wrote, but it did the trick. A few days later I got a response from Peter "Prince" Mishkin, co-founder of the group:

Thank you for your interest in Literary Anarchists Mobilizing Everywhere! Before we can make a final decision on your application,

we need one more piece of information: what is your name going to be?

I wrote back, in somewhat confused haste, *Umm...Dan Greenbaum, same as always?*

My fingers hadn't left the mouse before Prince's reply ding-donged in my inbox.

Not your real name. . .your Underground name!

I suppose I should have done it before, but it wasn't until this point that I really explored the Literary Anarchists Mobilizing Everywhere website! I mean, *Everywhere!* website. As I scanned the list of L.A.M.E! writers I understood what Prince was asking: all the members (approximately three dozen by my estimate), had adopted some kind of "handle," or nickname, to signal both their solidarity with the cause as well as to differentiate themselves, according to L.a.e site, from the "mindless, lock-step, groupthink hordes" of the "literary-industrial complex."

Besides Peter "Prince" Mishkin the other co-founders were named "Jolly" Jack Crapper and Stan "Squared" Stanislawski. Other members went by handles like Betty Bomb, Nuclear Neal, and Kooky Ken; still others opted for more generic descriptions, such as The Jackal or, oddly enough, Car Door. There were a few members who combined computerese lingo and spellings (DV8or and 71b3r8or, for example), as well as a heavy metal fanzine writer who simply went by the symbol \m/.

Most of them published zines—that is to say, collections of random thoughts assembled at irregular intervals and usually photocopied and stapled at a local copy shop—with names like *Snot Puppy*, *Hell Bastard on Crack*, and the ever-enigmatic and eponymous *Car Door*.

My dinging inbox interrupted my revolutionary studies. It was another email from Prince Mishkin; it seemed to address the confusion I was feeling.

You cannot be a true Undergrounder unless you have an Underground Name. It's the L.A.M.E! way!

Having always been of the mindset that personas worked better in fiction than in reality, I had no idea what to say. I suggested the first thing I could think of. *How about 'Dan The Man'?* I wrote.

Can't. It's taken. It's being used by Stan "The Man" Stanislawski.

I re-checked the L.A.M.E! website and wrote back to Prince a minute later: this Stanislawski person was listed as Stan "Squared." What gave?

"Squared" is for internal L.A.M.E! use only. Stan "The Man" is what he uses for business and formal occasions.

Well, that settled it. Or did it? How many other members, I wondered, had spare monikers just lying around? How many were hogging up good names that they only trotted out on special occasions? Was that fair? I thought I might write a formal letter of complaint. Meanwhile, I dedicated myself to coming up with a L.A.M.E! name.

My first choice was "Dirty" Danny Greenbaum, but "Dirty Danny" was the name of a cartoon character, and cartoonists are notoriously litigious, so after a long list of discarded attempts that included "Dangerous" Dan, Danosaurus Rex, and Dan1m8or, I finally settled on Danny "Ducats" Greenbaum—a wry play on my Jewish heritage as well as what I hoped would be a self-fulfilling prophecy. I sent my choice to Prince Mishkin and waited apprehensively for his approval. Once again, his reply was not long in coming:

Congratulations, Danny Ducats! Welcome to L.A.M.E!

L.A.M.E! life centered almost exclusively around the website. As far as websites went it was one of the worst I'd ever seen: fonts of all different sizes and shapes, lots of text that was bold and ALL CAPS and red or blue, all of it talking about the Revolution, the conspiracy of Big Publishing to keep down the "real" writers in the country, the writers they were afraid of because they told the TRUTH, the ugly truth that nobody wanted to hear! It was too dangerous! That was why L.A.M.E! had been founded, to blow the whistle on it all, to sink the whole decadent *Titanic of American Literature! The Revolution was coming!* The L.A.M.E! Revolution!!!

But what did this revolution actually consist of? What steps would be taken, and what would replace that which was torn down? I clicked through the site, looking for answers. Eventually I settled on Prince Mishkin's daily journal, called "Destroying The Dandies," where he posted regular updates on the progress of the revolution—which, best as I could tell, consisted mainly of attacking the same two or three authors. In fact, as I soon learned, Mishkin had founded L.A.M.E! in order to protest the work of one writer in particular: Jerome Soforth Wiggins.

Jerome Soforth Wiggins! No other man, no matter how evil or vile—mass murderer, insane dictator, or child molester—could move Prince Mishkin to such crescendos of angry ululation, the fugue state of verbal violence that he displayed day after day on "Destroying The Dandies." Wiggins was a fraud, a cheat, and the "poster boy of corruption" in the literary world. He was born rich, raised well, educated in the best schools—and therefore, according to Mishkin, ineligible to participate in the world of letters. Literature, said Mishkin, was the sole rightful province of the lower classes, the farmers and working folk whose copies of Thackeray and Dickens and Shakespeare had been pried from the hands of their

That was why L.A.M.E! had been founded, to blow the whistle on it all, to sink the whole decadent Titanic of American Literature! The Revolution was coming!

wailing, sobbing children by corrupt capitalists sometime around 1900. And nobody embodied these wax-mustachioed, top-hatted villains more than that wealthy banker's son, Jerome Soforth Wiggins, whose great crime against humanity was that he had once applied for—and received—a writing grant that he clearly did not need!

Piggish? Certainly. But to Mishkin that made Wiggins a literary Hitler, the lifelong enemy of real writers everywhere, and deserving of a long and painful professional death.

Day in and day out, Mishkin's attacks continued against Wiggins: Fraud! Charlatan! Silk-diapered dandy! Silver-spooned sophisticate! And I, for a few months at least, was right there with Mishkin cheering him. A lot of modern authors deserved to be knocked off their high perch, especially those of the "ironic" or "postmodern" schools, those callow souls who hid their cynicism behind mockery and insincerity. If Mishkin wanted to knock them down a few pegs, it was fine by me.

I submitted my picture and a short bio to the Webmaster, and a few days later he added me to the L.A.M.E! website. Right away I received a number of congratulatory emails. If I still felt silly about being Danny "Ducats" Greenbaum (and I did), then it lessened somewhat in the wave of genuine warmth and camaraderie with which I was greeted. A few people bought copies of my book, and some even took the time to write encouraging reviews for their zines and websites. As I clicked around the L.A.M.E! website I felt, for the first time, a sense of belonging to something worthwhile. And me, a published novelist, no less! Even if the company that published the novel was my own, making it somewhat less impressive, I soon realized with some satisfaction that I was the only L.A.M.E! member with a published novel at all.

It was a fact that, oddly enough, became the basis for my next point of friction with the L.A.M.E! leadership.

*Dear Prince Mishkin,
I've been kicking around the site for a few weeks now. I hope this isn't a stupid question but I have to ask: do any of the other L.A.M.E! members actually, you know, write anything?*

Thanks, Danny "Ducats"

This time the answer didn't arrive immediately. It was a few days before I got his reply:

Danny, the purpose of *Literary Anarchists Mobilizing Everywhere!* is to awaken complacent readers, attack the mindless and disconnected hacks posing as authors, and completely tear down the corrupt edifice of publishing! We need to give literature back to real people, to the working classes where it belongs!

Prince Mishkin

Hi Prince—

Okay, I hear you...sort of. I guess my question is, awaken readers to what? What's the point if we're not actually offering any alternative, in terms of writing? Also, not to put too fine a point on it, but wouldn't tearing down the existing publishing model also hurt a lot of working people? What about the printers, truck drivers, hi-lo operators and the rest? Is the idea that if they're out of work they'll have more time to read? Just wondering.

Regards, Danny

Another few days passed before the answer came:

DON'T GET HUNG UP ON SPECIFICS! OUR GOAL MUST BE FIRST AND FOREMOST TO GET ATTENTION FOR OUR CAUSE! WE CAN WORRY ABOUT BOOKS LATER! ALL OF OUR WRITERS ARE TRUE UNDERGROUND ZINESTERS AND HELL-RAISERS! THEY'RE TOO AUTHENTIC FOR THE EFFETE LIBERALS IN THE NEW YORK PUBLISHING HOUSES! YOU SOUND LIKE YOU MIGHT BE PRETTY BRAINWASHED, I SEE YOU MADE THE COVER OF YOUR BOOK LOOK REAL PRETTY. WAKE UP AND SMELL THE REVOLUTION!

MY RIGHT EYE — I mean, my right eye twitched. There was that word again: *authentic*. I had always considered authenticity to be something that came from within, and was based on a complex interrelationship of psychology, intellect, and ethics, for starters. It was a goal one strived for, not an end unto itself, and certainly not a marketing tool. The more I explored the L.A.M.E! website the more I realized that, in Mishkin's hands, "authenticity" really described an esthetics of amateurism: a world that favored typewriters over computers, tape over glue, photocopy over offset. And if you rejected the Industrial Revolution altogether and scratched the words out with a stone tool or the point of a charred stick, then so much the better! One was expected not to refine, edit, or exhibit any literary finesse whatsoever. Whether the writing was any good was

not the point; doubters could always be chased away with the accusation that they were not "authentic."

As I looked over the blurry cover icons for the various zines offered by L.A.M.E! members, many of which were scrawled with crayons and markers, I realized with a pang that *The Cheese-Thunderer's God* looked hopelessly competent by comparison.

I had a lot to learn about revolutions.

The Future of Literature—so began one of Prince Mishkin's bromides around that time—belongs not in the hands of the dainty professors and school-marm editors of slick monthlies. It belongs to the real writers, writing from the streets, who are living real lives of real struggle!

It is not the twee, self-involved navel-gazing of a Jerome Sforth Wiggins that connects with the average reader, but the kick-ass raw meat style of a Leo "The Lion" Brutus, or a Joe Typer!

Here again, I felt a twinge—Wiggins, however glaring his literary flaws, had a long publishing career and several bestselling novels to his credit—deflating somewhat Mishkin's claim that Wiggins was incapable of connecting with average readers. I could not have been the only person who noticed this, and I assume somebody called him on it; the next day, without addressing his error directly, Mishkin's post tried to deflect such criticism:

The brainwashed writer believes that "writers write." The brainwashed writer believes that selling a lot of books means a writer has "connected" with readers. Wrong! These are the pretty fantasies that have been fed to them by Big Publishing, and their cronies in the media world!

I decided to turn my attention to more positive pursuits; namely, to investigate those L.A.M.E! writers who Mishkin had held up as shining examples of great Literature *vis-à-vis* Wiggins: Leo "The Lion" Brutus and "Joe Typer."

Of all the emotions that welled up inside me as I first read Joe Typer's stories, it's hard to say which was strongest: pity, revulsion, or outright horror. He was an older man, living in a Southern backwater and playing the *art brut* card to the hilt. He had written 250 novels, none published, because (according to Mishkin) the American people were not ready for his writing. I navigated to Typer's website and found his latest "novel," the likes of which he was cranking out at a rate of 12 or 15 per year. The chapters were arranged by date, so I clicked one at random and began to read:

December 6: Engine light came on in the car. Took it to the garage. Had it checked. Nothing major.

December 7: No mail today. Sunny. Might go for a walk. Had a sandwich for lunch.

On and on it went like that, for 300 pages. And beyond that, 249 more "novels" just like it! 75,000 pages of engine lights and sandwiches! And interspersed with the details of his life, the chronicles of vehicular drama and trips to the supermarket, were constant boasts of how he, Joe Typer, was AMERICA'S GREATEST UNDERGROUND WRITER, better than Bukowski!

Typer was right about one thing: America was definitely not ready for his writing. If someday scientists discovered a planet that was populated entirely by public accountants and model train aficionados, I bet he'd sell like hotcakes.

This was the guy Mishkin pegged as the savior of literature? This was the guy American Publishing was too terrified to publish? This was the man I was supposed to throw a flowerpot through a window of *The New Yorker* on behalf of? Engine lights? I didn't even own a damn car.

I turned away from Mr. o-for-250, Mr. Better Than Bukowski, and with a little more digging, came across the even sadder case of Leo "The Lion" Brutus. I say sadder because whereas at least Typer was out there doing his finger exercises every day, Brutus had written a novel 35 years ago and done nothing since. He had sent a copy to Bill Burroughs, who had written a polite and encouraging note back. That was it! That was his achievement. And it was a western! A bad one! A western filled with characters named Jeb and Clem who spoke like, "Now lissen here, li'l lady, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do" and rode horses...named Hoss! They fought Injuns and made love to squaws! For 35 years! He hadn't written anything since! Did he have writer's block? Had he quit? What did it matter? I figured if Brutus ever wanted more novels he could always ask Joe Typer for a few. He'd never miss them.

I closed down my browser and put the computer to sleep. My normally sunny mood was dark. Is this what I was fighting for? Was this the Revolution? Was this what they meant by "underground," "reality," and "authenticity"?

I wasn't sure what to do. Quit? I remembered how good it felt when I first joined, the sense of belonging, of having a purpose. There were some nice people involved, people I wanted to get to know better. *Give me a sign*, I thought. *Maybe there's still a chance for me to do something positive.*

A week later I had my answer.

It was a strange-looking package, heavily taped and bearing foreign stamps, in a language and alphabet I did not recognize. It had been sent weeks earlier, according to the date on the cancellation stamp. I looked at the return address and discovered it had come from a remote part of Southeast Asia.

It took some doing but I finally got the package opened. It was from Stan "Squared" Stanislawski, who edited a literary zine called *The*

Mucus Times. There were several issues enclosed. Stan lived in a small village and rode his bicycle miles through the jungle to the nearest cyber-café in order to put each issue together. *The Mucus Times* mostly featured the work of other L.A.M.E! members. Figuring it would only hasten my impending resignation, I took the package to the couch and began to read. Only several hours later, as I reluctantly closed the back cover of the last issue, did I get up again. It was brilliant! A little uneven, to be sure, but the best stories had a lot of originality, style, courage—so this was where all the good writing had been hiding! Suddenly it came to me, the idea I was looking for.

I emailed the editor, thanking him for the package. I also mentioned, casually, that if he were ever interested in doing a book, then I would be very interested in publishing it.

A few weeks later I got the manuscript. It was the best writing from *The Mucus Times* and chronicled the activism of L.A.M.E! against the literary establishment, including a number of Prince Mishkin's screeds against Jerome Soforth Wiggins. There were selections from Joe Typer and Leo "The Lion" as well, but in the context of the collection even they didn't seem too bad.

On and on it went like that, for 300 pages. And beyond that, 249 more "novels" just like it! 75,000 pages of engine lights and sandwiches!

I knew that I had to publish the book. It would put L.A.M.E! on the map, and launch Boethius Press into the small publishing legend books!

I spent the next few weeks reading, polishing, and formatting the manuscript. I hired a famous illustrator to do the cover, at only a fraction of his usual rate. I hustled meetings and business contacts like crazy. I wrote to Stan and Prince: the book was going to be huge! Several national distributors were interested! We might need a conservative first printing of 5,000 or more! Looking into securing bank loans and lines of credit! The revolution will be a success!

The next time I went to the L.A.M.E! website, at first I thought I had gone to the wrong place. The old, shoddy-looking site had been replaced by a smooth, clean template design. The link that once read "L.A.M.E! Writers" now said, "About Our Members"—and that section was hardly recognizable. Next to almost every member's name there was now a title: Prince Mishkin was "Director of Operations"; Jolly Jack was "Chief Marketing Officer"; there were now also an Ombudsman, a Public Liaison, a Chief Technologist, and a Public Events Coordinator to deal with.

There were T-shirts for sale, coffee mugs, postcards and key chains, all bearing the L.A.M.E! logo. The crummy, photocopied zines for sale on the site were now being called "exclusive hand-made limited editions" and the prices had all been jacked by a factor of three. There was also a notice for the launch of L.A.M.E! Press: "No manuscript rejected! Once in a lifetime opportunity! National sales force! Anticipated sales of 10,000 L.A.M.E! books by end of summer! Print on demand is the publishing revolution! Don't delay! Send your manuscript to our Chief Literary Officer today!!!"

I began getting emails, from other members. Intrigue was flying, lines were being drawn. Jolly Jack was on a frantic manuscript grab for his print-on-demand scheme. Other L.A.M.E! members were launching presses, like "Real L.A.M.E! Books" and "Original L.A.M.E! Editions, LLC." The message boards were filling with accusations of rip-offs, espionage, and ominous phrases like "intellectual property."

I wrote to Prince: What the hell was going on? What happened to revolution? Toppling edifices and all of that? What happened to working together? This time, it was nearly two weeks before I got the response:

Thank you for your inquiry. After careful consideration we have decided that your request must be handled by our Chief Marketing Officer. Please keep in mind that in the future we will not be able to answer any inquiries that have not been sent through our Public Relations Officer. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely, Office of the Director

I was still reeling when the electronic bell of my email program rang again. What I found there did not surprise me:

Dan: After careful consideration I've decided not to do the book with you, as Prince informs me that you seem insufficiently supportive of the Cause. Besides, we're talking with some folks at Blue Embryo Press and they've got foreign distribution as well as some movie people on board.

It was signed, "Stan 'The Man' Stanislawski."

I emailed the Webmaster—excuse me, Chief Technologist—and told him to remove my picture and bio. The next day they were gone. As I left the L.A.M.E! website for the last time, I stopped by Prince Mishkin's page for a final look. I read a part of "Destroying The Dandies" that once again seemed indirectly addressed to me:

Say a prayer and fond farewell to the failed ideas of the past! Say good-bye to those poor

deluded dandies who do not grasp the L.A.M.E! strategy and vision! Bid adieu to those who think they can achieve anything on their own, without the power of a Group behind them! Speak "adios" to those sad individualists leftover from the last century, living in a fantasy world. And say hello to the Revolution!

I deleted the L.A.M.E! bookmark and closed the browser. I sat for a long time, thinking. Then I opened a new file and began composing a letter to Jerome Soforth Wiggins.

ADVERTISEMENTS

THE NEEDLE EXCHANGE HOUR was created by two New York City writers — Tim Hall and Ken Wohlrob — as an outlet for underappreciated, underground writers and artists to showcase their art. Having grown weary of insular reading nights, stacked with already well known authors who presented tired material, the two decided New York City needed a place for underground voices to be heard.

In addition, they wanted to bring back a bit of the 1980s punk, DIY ethic, making **THE NEEDLE EXCHANGE HOUR** a group effort by various writers and artists from around the tri-state area. www.needlex.net



Mrs. Scott's Hot Box

By Mike Faloon

Wayne Burke wiped the sweat from his brow again. Getting in trouble wasn't so bad after all. Here it was the middle of the school day and he could flip through his baseball cards as slowly as he wanted to, examining each face. He didn't even have to sneak, leaving the stack of cards right on top of the desk. He had been listening to the guest speaker, but he'd also been looking at his cards, so Mrs. Scott sent him to the hot box.

Ever since he was in first grade Wayne had been hearing about the legendary hot box. Every teacher at Split Rock Elementary was known for something—Mr. Candini always let his class stay out for extra recess, Mrs. Kreevich always wanted to tie your shoes even if they were already laced, Mrs. Ashburn threw out your homework if it was wrinkled or didn't have your name on it (even though she could tell it was yours from the handwriting)—and Mrs. Scott was known for two things: collecting more Campbells soup labels than any other teacher in the district, to help the school earn new playground equipment, and sending kids to the hot box.

With her glasses hanging around her neck and her hands covered in chalk dust, Mrs. Scott didn't look mean, but she made Wayne nervous, nonetheless, or at least the stories about the hot box did. The hot box was really just a big janitor's closet, complete with buckets and mops, a shelf of bottles and cleaning rags, and the brightest light bulb ever. The room got its nickname because of the heating ducts that ran overhead, criss-crossing right above the school desk that sat in the far corner. It was the hottest room in the building, probably on the planet. Kids came out of the hot box dripping wet, their shirts dark and matted with sweat, their eyelids drooping and their parched tongues hanging out of their mouths. Their first words were always, "Sorry, Mrs. Scott." And the hot box was quiet, too, the walls thick enough to block out any sound from Mrs. Scott's or any other classroom. When you were in the hot box, you were really alone, and really bored, too. Kids went out of their minds with nothing to do. The hot box made kids wish Mrs. Scott would just take out a belt or a ruler and go through the old "this is going to hurt you more than it's going to hurt me" routine. The hot box was Mrs. Scott's way of dealing with students she didn't want to put up with, kids who talked back or

used the springs in their pens to launch ink cartridges across the room or worse, didn't pay attention to a guest speaker. That drove her insane. That was a capital offense in Mrs. Scott's book. Other teachers sent kids to the office, but Mrs. Scott always said the office had enough headaches to deal with. So Wayne sat there by himself, sweating, staring at the players' faces on the cards, wiping his forehead on his shirt sleeve, half-heartedly trying to hear what was happening next door.

His class was studying the American Revolution, reading about Paul Revere and Crispus Attucks, taxation and representation. The guest speaker was Mrs. Shattraw, a woman from the Everson Museum of Art in downtown Syracuse. She was quiet and had short, black hair, and she wasn't much taller

than the students. Mrs. Shattraw had come to show colonial portraits to the class. She was talking about how portrait artists tried to reveal what their subject was like through the person's facial expression and dress and hair, the way they posed and what was placed in the background of the painting. They used all of these things to show a person's personality and status, along with what they did for a living and what their family life was like. So a wealthy lawyer would wear a powdered wig and his finest jacket, and pose in his study, desk and books on display, while the window over his shoulder would look out onto an enormous estate, children playing in the foreground, a horse stable off in the distance.

As Wayne was listening to the woman from the museum, the

baseball cards in the front of his desk caught his eye. The card on top was a pitcher for the White Sox, Clay Carroll. He looked mean. Some pitchers wanted to scare hitters a bit, so it'd be easier to get them out. Apparently, Clay Carroll didn't just want to get you out, he wanted you—the kid holding the card—to tremble in fear. He wanted to hit you with a ball or a bat or a rake, anything he could get his hands on. Wayne realized that this picture didn't capture Clay in the middle of a game. Clay chose to pose this way for his baseball card. He didn't want to just intimidate major league hitters, Clay clearly wanted to frighten the kids who were collecting cards now, the major league hitters of tomorrow. This was a man investing in his future. Wayne was lost in thought, captivated by the cruelty in Clay Carroll's furrowed brow, trying to further decode the player's personality, when Mrs. Scott looked his way.

"Wayne Burke what are you doing?" Mrs. Scott bellowed, slapping her hand on her desk, bringing Mrs. Shattraw's presentation to a halt.



"Uh, Mrs. Scott, I'm just..."

"Don't you talk back to me! Mrs. Shattraw, class, please pardon the interruption, but Wayne's behavior is inexcusable. Wayne, we have a guest in our room and you're staring at your desk?" Mrs. Scott signed, one of those judgmental teacher sighs that filled the room. "Need I remind you that you're not just representing yourself and this class, young man, you're representing the entire Split Rock Elementary School community, and what kind of impression are you making on Mrs. Shattraw and the Everson Museum of Art?"

Mrs. Shattraw gazed at Wayne. So did the rest of the class, all of them waiting for a good answer.

"But Mrs. Scott, I was just..."

"Enough back talk, Mr. Burke. Go to the hot box! You may rejoin the class when I know, not when I think, mind you, when I *know* you've learned your lesson!"

Wayne's cheeks were brighter than usual. He felt bad about being yelled at. He didn't like receiving attention at school, from the class, from Mrs. Scott, and he'd never been to the hot box before. Luckily he had another small stack of cards tucked in his shirt pocket.

Wayne took out the cards after closing the door behind him. The top card was Darrel Chaney and normally Wayne would have flipped to the back to study the stats, but today Wayne lingered on the picture, looking at it like it was a portrait, trying to figure out Darrel Chaney's personality. Darrel Chaney was easy to figure out; he was sad, on the verge of sobbing, like a kindergartener frozen in the moment just after his lunch has fallen into his lap and just before he realizes that crying very, very loudly will alert someone to his predicament. Darrel Chaney had the kind of face that invites pity, even from a third-grader like Wayne Burke who'd never had a hit in Little League. More than anything, the expression on Darryl Chaney's face looked just like Mrs. Schneider, Wayne's neighbor across the street. Wayne only saw her in the spring and summer, either kneeling in the flower beds in front of her ranch house, pruning rows of marigolds and sweating over bunches of petunias, or pushing a wheelbarrow full of weeds across the street to the fields where everyone in the neighborhood dumped their yard scraps. No one talked to Mrs. Schneider, but Wayne's dad did talk about her. He said that no matter how late he walked the dog at night, Mrs. Schneider would still be up, all the living room lamps turned off and the flashing light of the TV illuminating her curly-haired silhouette. Never Mr. Schneider, just Mrs. Schneider. And come to think of it, Wayne never saw her talking to either of her kids, which was weird because they were always outside when she was, Larry shooting hoops in the

driveway and Sue roller skating around the block. Wayne started feeling bad for Mrs. Schneider. Then he started feeling a little sorry for himself, stuck in hot box, so he flipped to the next card.

He found himself looking at Steve Stone, another pitcher for the White Sox, but a guy who probably didn't hang out much with Clay Carroll. Wayne had looked at the card dozens of times but he never realized how much Steve Stone looked just like his dad's old friend, Mr. Zombrowski; the big, curly hair, the gold chain, the unbuttoned shirt and chest hair, the glassy eyed look. Wayne figured that Steve Stone was probably just like Mr. Zombrowski, a big talker who never let the facts get in the way of self promotion.

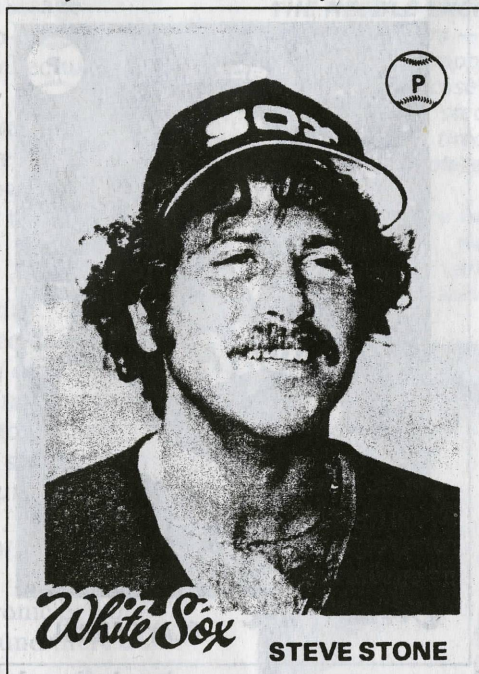
Mr. Zombrowski was the former town supervisor for nearby Camillus and he'd come to know Wayne's dad because their bands used to play

together. Mr. Zombrowski spoke with a slight southern accent, despite being born in Schenectady, and even though people took his stories and promises with a grain of salt, he was still a likeable guy; Wayne's dad called him a "character." Mr. Zombrowski was a regular at Burke backyard barbeques in the summer and he told the same stories every time, like how he helped produce the Monterey Pop Festival back in the 60s and nearly became the Mamas and Papas tour manager. But no one in Syracuse had famous connections—it was such an isolated city—so everyone wondered why a guy who said he'd hung out with the Who and Otis Redding and watched Jimi Hendrix light his guitar on fire from backstage was working as a

small town supervisor and hanging out with teachers and salesmen who played music on the weekends. The summer before, the last time Mr. Zombrowski came over, Wayne overheard his mom ask his dad how much of Mr. Zombrowski's stories were true.

"I think he helped stack chairs at Monterey, I guess they ran short on volunteers at the end of the festival," Mr. Burke said, "and maybe he brought a sandwich or two to Mama Cass. The rest is bullshit, though, just wishful thinking."

Mr. Zombrowski liked nothing more than to talk about his old band, the Kennesaw Mountain Boys, who nearly got their big break back in 1973, at least according to Mr. Zombrowski. The Kennesaw Mountain Boys, a five-piece country rock band who billed themselves as "the perfect middle of the road experience," were considered by a management company who later signed pop singer Leo Sayer. Mr. Zombrowski assumed Leo's success—the top 10 hits, the concerts, the *American Bandstand* appearances—were rightfully his, so every time "You Make Me Feel



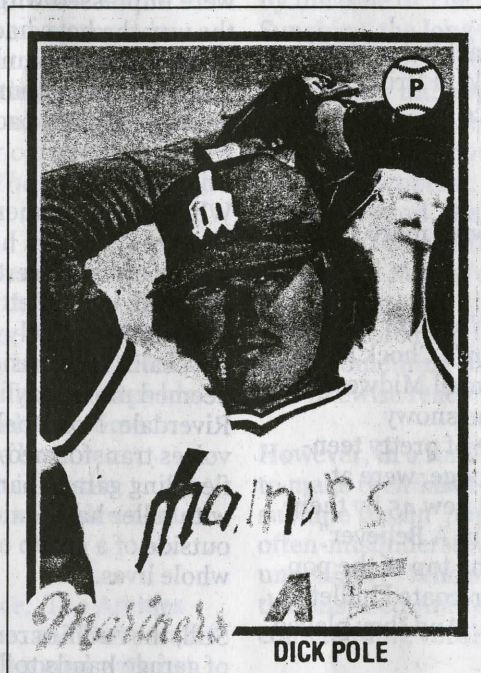
Like Dancing" or "When I Need You" came on the radio he'd say, "That should be us! That should be the Kennesaw Mountain Boys on the radio right now! They took food off my table when they signed that clown. And he's not going to last. I'm in the music business and everyone knows American bands always outlast English singers." Then Mr. Zombrowski would explain why it wasn't the Kennesaw Mountain Boys on the radio. "If we'd had our regular drummer the night that management company came to see us, I'd be on the radio now instead of flipping these burgers and dogs. That's money you can count on."

Mr. Zombrowski would go quiet for a few minutes but as soon as anyone spoke to him about anything—the band, the burgers, town politics—he'd start talking about his unfulfilled dream, the project the Kennesaw Mountain Boys were never able to even begin: recording *A Candle Burning Bright*, a country rock opera about a day in the life of a Canadian mountie. Wayne realized that every adult had something they repeated at every cookout, a saying or a joke, but Mr. Zombrowski was the only grown up he knew who gave a sales pitch every time. Wayne's parents would roll their eyes and make a quick departure because they'd heard it so many times, but Mr. Zombrowski always gave the speech and always with the same fervor, whether he had an audience of one or a dozen.

"I've got something in the works now, though," he'd say, feigning reluctance and rotating a couple of hot dogs before continuing. "It's kind of like Charlie Daniels doing *Tommy*, you know, by the Who? You got a good thing going there, right? Now throw in just a bit of the Marshall Tucker Band. This Canadian mountie, you see, he's kind of like the last of the sheriffs from the old west. He's gotta balance those long, lonesome rides in the wilderness with a home life, a wife and kids who miss him. It's all about duty, to your family, to yourself, to the law, and the Mountie never completely sorts it out, but he keeps going, he keeps burning, the whole time. He might flicker, but he won't go out. That's where I got the title, *A Candle Burning Bright*."

Mr. Zombrowski would pause again and tend to the grill. "It's going to be a double album, with a full-color gatefold cover. I can hear side four in my head already." Here he'd do this thing where he talked faster and quieter, his excitement coupled with his need to have someone else believe in his vision. "Side four, you see, is a suite, one long song with four parts. I was thinking of using a lot of flutes for these songs, but then I thought to myself, wait, flutes are Jethro Tull, I'm going to use fiddles. This is a country rock opera, after all. So, the mountie, Jim—a common name, you know, something that's easy for people to

relate to—he's down at his local watering hole, half way through a bottle of whiskey, and he's thinking about not going home, about moving on to a new life. He's having a crisis of faith, but he goes home and works it out with the Mrs. Then we've got the finale with Jim and his family and the bartender and the ice skater, everyone, and then the side ends with an alarm clock going off. It's the next day and he's back at it, back in the saddle. Of course, *A Candle Burning Bright* is all in the first person, not like *Tommy* which gets bogged down with so many third person songs. I've thought about this a lot. Might include a poster, too. I've got the artwork back at the house, but I'm going to wait until I have the money to do the whole thing right, really take my time writing and arranging, really take my time in the studio. This is something to craft and nurture, no rush job. And I'm going to get top sessions musicians, guys from Nashville or New York, no one local."



DICK POLE

A Candle Burning Bright is why Mr. Zombrowski got fired as town supervisor. He got caught embezzling ten grand from the annual Kings Park Summer Cookout. His plan was to use the money to finance and promote the record, then pay back the town, with interest, once the album went gold. He told Wayne's dad that, really, when you thought about it, he was just investing the town's money. People should have thanked him, it was money they could have counted on.

By now, Wayne was almost used to the temperature in the hot box and he started wondering if he knew anyone else that had gone to jail like Mr. Zombrowski. He had just flipped to the next card, a player named Dick Pole, one that always made his dad laugh, when Carol Micek knocked on the door.

"Mrs. Scott says you can come back now, Wayne. We're lining up for lunch." Carol left the door open and a cool breeze flowed in.

Wayne leaned forward, separating his sweaty shirt from the back of the chair, popped the cards back in his pocket, and started thinking about his apology to Mrs. Scott.

("Mrs. Scott's Hot Box" is from a novel in progress. It's also the story I read while touring on the Perpetual Motion Roadshow this past summer. Thanks to my tour mate, Lev, and all of the people who organized readings and/or put us up for the night.)

Ever wonder what would have happened if pop figures such as Buddy Holly, Ian Curtis or Stu Sutcliffe hadn't made such early departures from this mortal coil? What if the Clash hadn't broken up? Or if the Archies were a real flesh and blood band? Don't be embarrassed if you have never entertained such flights of fancy, our writers have and they've got you covered. What follows are band histories re-written the way they could have unfolded in real life. It's an opportunity to re-direct fate, kind of like the Marvel Comics series "What If...?" In fact, that's where we got the name for...

Go Metric's "What if...?" Pop, Rock, and Punk Bonanza

Contributing writers: Jake Austen, Michael Baker, Carl Cafarelli, Bob Ethington, Frank D'Urso, Will Drist, Russ Forster, Gary Pig Gold, and Brian Wallace

The Archies

It all started with a jukebox. Don't you wish more stories started with a jukebox?

The jukebox in question was a beat-up Wurlitzer that used to blast out the hits of the day at Pop's Chock'lit Shoppe, a popular teen hangout in the small Midwestern town of Riverdale back in the 1960s. One snowy afternoon in December of 1966, a couple of pretty teen-aged girls, Betty Cooper and Veronica Lodge, were at Pop's, giggling and dancing to the brand new 45 by their favorite singing group, the Monkees. "I'm A Believer" was just beginning its short journey to the top of the pop charts, but it was already #1 with a sugar-coated bullet as far as Betty and Ronnie were concerned. And they played it over and over and over again.

The activity at the jukebox did not go unnoticed by the boys at Pop's, particularly Archie Andrews and Reggie Mantle. These two boys and two girls had known each other since childhood, and they had a tangled relationship. Archie and Reggie were frequent rivals for Veronica's affection, while Betty was head-over-heels infatuated with Archie, and therefore Veronica's de facto rival; Archie, for his part, could never seem to decide between Betty and Ronnie. Yet the rivalries never tore them apart; Betty and Veronica remained always the best of friends, and while Archie and Reggie certainly got on each other nerves, they generally stayed on somewhat friendly terms, at least.

And on this particular afternoon at Pop's, the two jealous boys were cooking up a scheme together. If the girls seem so interested in a rock 'n' roll group, they reasoned, why not form a group of our own? Bet *that'll* get the girls intrigued, for sure!

But what began as a simple (okay, make that convoluted) ploy to impress the opposite sex led to the formation of one of the most fondly-recalled pop bands of the late 60s, the Archies. It was an inauspicious beginning; neither Archie nor Reggie was really a musician, but Archie did have a battered folk guitar (a left-over from an earlier summer camp escapade) and was able to fumble a few chords, and hyper-active Reggie attempted to flail away on the drums. Archie brought in his best pal, Forsythe "Jughead" Jones, to try his hands at the keyboards, and this embryonic version of the Archies was born.

And they were terrible. An inept garage band with no chops to speak of, all they had going for them was the exuberance (and, dare we say, arrogance) of youth. Still, that's often all you need in rock 'n' roll, and as they kept at it, thrashing their way through covers of the hits of the day, they got a little tighter, a tiny bit better. The girls were impressed with the Archies' efforts, but not in quite the way the boys had imagined. Before long, Betty and Veronica were members of the band, both singing and banging on tambourines ("The only kind of banging either of 'em did back then," Reggie would later recall wryly.)

While the instrumental roles were perhaps oddly chosen—Veronica had played piano since grade school, and would have certainly been better on keyboards than Jughead, while Betty was a more than competent guitarist—it's likely that the girls were initially relegated to vocalist/percussionist positions simply because it was deemed more ladylike in pre-Women's Liberation Riverdale. Nonetheless, the addition of their singing voices transformed the Archies immediately, from a fledgling garage band to...well, a fledgling garage band with killer harmonies, the kind of harmonies you can't get outside of a group of people that have sung together their whole lives.

Still, the Archies remained just another one of hundreds of garage bands toiling in obscurity across America, and their story might well have ended right then and there, if not for a concerned, protective father and a spurned music mogul, and the weird way their paths collided.

Veronica's father, wealthy industrialist Hiram Lodge, had never been terribly fond of Archie, and always felt his daughter was wasting her time with him. Now that she was frittering away her ambitions by being in—ugh!—a rock band with that Andrews boy, things had gone too far. Lodge was not an unkind man, nor an unwise one, but he knew there had to be a way to show Veronica that the Archies would never amount to anything. To do that, he contacted an old acquaintance: Don Kirshner.

Kirshner, an ultra-successful music executive, had just parted ways with what was probably his most successful project ever, the Monkees. Originally hired as the Monkees' musical supervisor, Kirshner had helped the band become the most popular rock 'n' roll group in America. But the Monkees bristled under Kirshner's tight control, and eventually rebelled, dismissing Kirshner

from his duties. Furious, Kirshner vowed to find another band to supervise, one that wouldn't question his authority.

Like, maybe, a band of teenaged amateurs from Riverdale.

Hiram Lodge arranged for Kirshner to hear the Archies play, figuring that Kirshner would make them see that they had no real future in the music biz. But Kirshner loved the Archies—not because they were a great band (Lord knows!), but because he saw potential in their look, their image. “America’s typical teens!” thought Kirshner. With the Archies under his aegis, Kirshner was sure he could make the world forget the Monkees had ever existed.

The Archies were ecstatic—who wouldn't be, in such a dizzying environment? Although they certainly wouldn't be playing on their records, they would provide all the vocals. Kirshner did (wisely) suggest some changes in their instrumentation, as Reggie moved to bass, Jughead became the drummer, and Veronica settled in at the keyboard; Betty was still stuck with a tambourine for the time being. The Archies increased their concert schedule, and began recording their first album, *The Archies*, which was released in 1968.

Unfortunately, the Archies' initial chart action was unlikely to make the Monkees quake in their Thom McCann's. The first single, “Bang-Shang-A-Lang,” made it to respectable (if unspectacular) # 22, but the album never got past a pathetic # 88. Sensing that perhaps his time-tested formula might finally be ready for some tweaking, Kirshner did what would have been unthinkable for him when he was supervising the Monkees: he let the band have a bit more involvement in the recordings.

Such a simple thing, such a big difference. The Archies had become a pretty good combo by now, and Betty was even finally allowed to fatten the group's sound with her own guitar playing. The next single, “Feelin' So Good (S.K.O.O.B.Y.-D.O.O.)” had already been recorded by session musicians, and it missed the Top 40 entirely. But the Archies' third single would feature singing and playing by Riverdale's Finest. And, to further Kirshner's revenge, it would be a song previously rejected by the Monkees, an irresistible pop confection called “Sugar, Sugar.”

Words can't express how huge the “Sugar, Sugar” single was. # 1 for four weeks, and by some accounts the biggest record of 1969, “Sugar, Sugar” made the Archies into superstars. The concert tours became bigger, the TV appearances more frequent, the dollar signs written larger in bright lights and starry eyes. Briefly, brilliantly, the Archies were on top of the world.

As is so often the case, such giddy success sowed the seeds of its own demise. These five teenagers had been so close for so long, and that's likely the only thing that kept

them stable in the eye of this hurricane. Because they were together now *all* the time—in planes, hotels, recording studios, *everywhere*—and all the old complications became even more magnified. Archie and Reggie argued constantly, and the Archie-Betty-Veronica love triangle remained unresolved. Jughead was content to keep the beat and scarf down an endless supply of hamburgers (his relatively benign vice of choice), but the band was in imminent danger of imploding.

The Archies were unable to translate their singles success into album sales. The awesome “Jingle, Jangle” single (featuring Betty on a shared lead vocal, the first time Archie hadn't sung all the leads on an Archies single) made it to # 10, but the album of the same name—as brilliant a pop record as anything released in 1970—languished at an utterly shameful # 125. The end was at hand.

By the time of The Archies' fourth album, 1970's *Sunshine*, the long-simmering rivalry between Archie and Reggie had reached a boiling point. Reggie was particularly unhappy; he was stung by criticism that the group hadn't played on its earliest records, and was now seething with jealousy as one of the Archies' old opening acts, Led Zeppelin, was fast becoming one of the hottest groups around. Reggie was done, and he announced his intention to leave the Archies and form his own hard rock group, Old Man Weatherbee (flippantly named for an administrator at Riverdale High School). Archie had already tested the solo waters with a country single, “I Need Something Stronger Than A Chock'lit Malt,” and was likewise ready to move on.

However, in a final show of solidarity, the Archies rallied to make their last record a great one. *Sunshine* is a sublime rockin' pop album, a fitting farewell from this often-misunderstood band. The highlight of *Sunshine* was undeniably “Who's Gonna Love Me” an exuberant track that inspired Andrews to give his most soulful, commanding vocal ever.

Ultimately, after all the bickering, the Archies parted as friends. Archie went on to his solo career (though his solo debut, *This Is Love*, was credited to the Archies, to fulfill a contractual obligation, and a legal issue prompted him to use the pseudonym Ron Dante for his second album, *Ron Dante Brings You Up*); he eventually moved into artist management, and even wound up as the publisher of the highbrow literary magazine *The Paris Review*. Reggie moved to England and remained a fixture on the hard rock circuit for years to come; he produced Spinal Tap's *Shark Sandwich* LP, and is rumored to be the bassist on KISS's 1979 disco hit “I Was Made For Lovin' You.” Jughead became an in-demand session player, Veronica began a film career, and Betty retired from show business entirely.

For years, The Archies repeatedly turned down multi-million dollar offers for a reunion tour, though they did agree to a touching, emotional on-stage reunion at Live Aid. That reunion was temporary for the band, but far

more permanent in a matter of the heart: Archie and Betty rekindled their relationship, and were married in 1987. Veronica was the maid of honor, Jughead was the best man, and Reggie, bless 'im, presented the happy couple with a voucher for unlimited studio time at his recording complex south of London—just in case they were ever taken with an urge to get back into the game.

In 2005, all five of the Archies returned to Riverdale for a retirement ceremony honoring Pop Tate, whose teen bistro Pop's Chock'lit Shoppe had been the start of everything for them. The same jukebox was still there. Sure, the records had been updated and changed many times over the years—and each of the Archies' singles had earned a permanent spot on the jukebox—but *the* record was still there.

Giggling like the teens they once were—and, in many ways, would always be—Betty and Veronica rocked the coin right into the slot, and the decades melted away as Micky Dolenz again testified that he was a believer. Sometimes just believing is its own greatest reward.

—Carl Cafarelli

Good times for... **Badfinger**

The year was 1974, and former Beatles protégés Badfinger were at Caribou studios in Colorado recording the album that would make them the lasting pop superstars that they are today: *Wish You Were Here* (coincidentally also the name of the Pink Floyd record that left them playing the pubs after alienating fans made with their hit album *Back Side Of The Moon*). Elton John was down the hall recording his '74 flop *Recorded at Caribou*, which couldn't be saved even with genius cameos by the Badfinger boys. Everyone treated Elton like a star and Badfinger like peons (including future Sex Pistols producer Chris Thomas), little realizing that in six months time those roles would be fully reversed.

They risked everything with the record, spending way past their budget and writing their most adventurous and unusual material to date, and it all paid off handsomely. The first big hit off the record, "Know One Knows," showcased singer/ guitarist Pete Ham's ability to nail a killer hook, and threw in some whispered Japanese cooing to boot. From there, practically every song on side one became a monster smash, and rock radio was filled with the band's pop brilliance for the whole of 1975. Only Big Star came close to pushing the 'Finger off the #1 spot, when "What About The Memphis Kings?" battled with "Should I Smoke?" for becoming the most asked question in the summer of '75. But fans knew who the *real* kings of pop were in the end.

In the late 70s Badfinger topped itself by releasing a double-record set that sold over 60 million copies worldwide, the stellar *Hole in the Wall*. The infamous t-shirt from that album and tour, showing a boy in wooden shoes putting his middle finger in a dike, shocked many and delighted many more, winning the band an unexpected "punk" audience. Though they have never

topped the success of that epic release, they have had many hugely successful tours and plenty of other great albums that have kept them in the public eye for thirty years. Pete Ham paid back his debt to George Harrison (who played guitar on many of the band's early releases) by producing the former Beatle's last hit album *Cloud 10* and forming the Traveling Hillbillies with Harrison, Tom Petty, and Roy Orbison. Unlike Elton John, who committed suicide in 1976, despondent about the failure of *Recorded at Caribou* and unreleased demos recorded a year later, Badfinger are pop music survivors whose old and new songs are in constant rotation to this very day.

—Russ Forster

The Beatles – Part I

"You fookin' sod!"

Paul was pissed.

"We go on in a half hour, what's the matter with you?"

The addressee lay asleep in his trailer bunk.

"WAKE UP!!"

This was to no avail. Someone had been taking quite a few pills of late, since his wife had left him for a real estate developer.

Outside, a soundcheck was in place. "Give me some more kick!" yelled the wildly coiffed sound guy. The guitarist set alone in the corner, apparently tuning, muttering to himself.

Meanwhile, the fellow remained sleeping, despite his old friend kicking, threatening to roll him out of bed, and blowing pot smoke into his nostrils.

"All right," Paul suggested in desperation. "There are funnel cakes to be had."

"Funnel cakes?" John sat up.

It would be a banner year at the 2005 Akron Rib Burn-Off!!

—Bob Ethington

The Beatles – Part II

What if... Stu Sutcliffe lived?

Okay forensic scientists, we've reassembled the pieces of this young man's skull, let's reanimate!

We know that Stu left the Beatles (Silver Beatles?) when he realized that he couldn't play an instrument all that well, but what if he had stuck it out (and didn't get his head kicked in?)

a. The Beatle's haircuts would have changed from one style to the next much faster as his girlfriend/wife Astrid would have had more access to the Beatles' heads.

b. Stu, ever the art student, would've migrated to "playing" a xylophone, perhaps in the style of a piano, maybe just tinkering on the higher keys. Klaus Voorman would have joined the band on bass. Paul and John on rhythm and George on lead—a great little sextet!

c. Stu and Klaus would take to reciting obscure German poetry during long instrumental breaks, this caught the imagination of the lost art Deco Germans.

d. The Beatles would record "My Bonnie" but Tony Sheridan would be almost drowned out by the weird sound effects introduced from the art instruments that Stu built in his spare time.

e. "My Bonnie" catches on in the art scene in England, a version with Klaus and Stu swearing at each other in German is quite the hit. Kids buy the 45 by the truckload just to hear "swear words."

f. American hackles are raised once word of "My Bonnie" crosses the pond, thus causing American teens to seek out the record with the German swear words. US Veterans groups are up in arms, saying "we didn't fight no war over there in order to hear that filthy language in our own homes." Charles Manson is intrigued by the neo-Nazi possibilities of the words that he is hearing in his head, then turns the record player on for his first listen of "My Bonnie," gets excited and goes out and kills seven people at a truck stop near Amarillo, Texas.

g. Every Beatles album is a concept album, however, they don't really sell that well.

h. Pete Best stays with the band, because after all, Stu is a much better looking dude so John and Paul don't get jealous.

j. The Beatles come to America with money they made selling their records to the academic college students and artsy poetry folksie audiences. Traveling coach they arrive to a crowded airport terminal filled with travelers. They watch Ed Sullivan on TV.

j. John and Paul sit in with various folk musicians along Bleecker Street and eventually meet up with Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul, and Mary fame.

k. "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "Love Me Do," and "All My Loving" become big hits for Peter, Paul, and Mary during 1964 and 1965. American audiences love the songs but the band doesn't make much headway with their own recordings.

l. The Beatles record *Sgt Pepper's Hearts and Clubs Banana* in 1965. In America it becomes the number 14 highest selling children's album of the year.

m. The Beatles decided to move to Brooklyn and all live in a huge converted factory living space, kind of like Andy

Warhol on the cheap. Ringo shows up and they decide to have two drummers.

n. Meanwhile, George Martin uses Alan White for some session drumming. Martin also, on his way home one day, buys *Sgt. Pepper* for his daughter. She dances on it and scrapes it up badly so that the record skips on "When I'm 69." Martin and his daughter are left with a track that sounds like, "number nine—scritch—number nine—scritch—number nine—scritch..."

o. The Beatles are barred from ever entering England again because they have not paid taxes on the money earned from *Sgt Pepper*.

p. During a visit to an art gallery, Stu drags John away from Yoko Ono, calling her a "senseless prat." John agrees.

q. The Alexis Korner Blues Incorporated band comes to NYC to play some pub gigs. Harmonica player Mick Jagger and guitar player Keith Richards hang out with John and Stu. Their barmaid that night was a young actress named Cherilyn Sarkasian (soon to be known as Cher). This evening of drinking inspired Mick and Keith's solo effort *On Her Satanic Majesty's Request*. Basically and adult version of *Sgt. Pepper*, the album becomes a worldwide hit, though neither John nor Stu receive any credit for inspiring the record. John does take some satisfaction in bashing of British blues bands with the song "Hey Blues Dog."

r. The Beatles are invited to play their music at the Monterey children's music festival in 1967, their first US live music gig. They get paid with plane tickets beef jerky and eggs. Stu calls John the "egg man."

s. Members of the Warlocks are in attendance at this concert, working as janitors and security guards. The performance inspires them to add a second drummer and become "Grateful Ned," singing children's songs for hippies.

t. Billy Preston, while cruising for shemale prostitutes, accidentally runs over Ringo. Ringo eventually returns to health and joins the band as the eighth Beatle. Excited right wing red necks decide to burn all children's records because of the racial mixing. The records are piled up in a lawn in the shape of a cross. Stu's famous quote, "That's a big jeezers," gets the band banned from the newly formed PBS.

u. Tricia Nixon invites her childhood favorites to perform at her White House wedding. Astrid steals the famous Lincoln ashtray and paints a peace symbol on it. Popular youth culture latches onto the image of the peace symbol and Nixon is swept out of office in the 1972 elections, replaced by George McGovern.

v. Stu and Astrid decide to renew their vows, and then decide to stay in bed naked for a week in a hotel in

Toronto. Tommy Smothers shows up for some reason and they have to eventually get a restraining order against him.

w. The Beatles continue to record a wide range of experimental and creative children's albums throughout the 70s. After the band's record company remixes "disco" versions of various Beatles songs, they, the Beatles, invent punk rock with their *ANGRY* album, which contains songs about upset people and temper tantrums.

x. The film version of *Sgt Pepper* is made, Aerosmith co-stars.

y. Elvis dies on the toilet listening to the Beatles *White* album. The Beatles made albums for every color they could think of.

z. A sleeper agent, who, coincidentally, is a family friend of then vice president George Bush, is activated to kill John Lennon because the far right is stirred up by the lyrics to Lennon's "Imagine a Sky Diamond."

Stu, ever the faithful friend, steps in the way of the bullet.
—Frank D'Urso

The Clash

In 1979 the Clash released *Give 'Em Enough Rope*. It consisted of 10 tracks on a single record. The next year they released *London Calling*, which was a double album, and the following year the triple album *Sandinista*. If this trend continued and the Clash never broke up and Joe Strummer was still walking the earth and CDs didn't replace LPs as the standard musical format, in 2006 the Clash would be releasing an album containing 27 records weighing approximately 16 pounds. (That's 12.0957965 catty if you live in Thailand.) Unfolded, the record sleeve would cover 27 square feet and could be made into a canoe or a bomb shelter in emergency situations.

—Brian Wallace

Dead Kennedys

What if Walter Mondale had defeated Ronald Reagan in the presidential election of 1984? The Dead Kennedys would have recorded a song entitled "Minnesota Über Alles," and liberal democracy would have gone ideologically bankrupt twenty years earlier than it did.

PS Had Mondale defeated Reagan, Jello Biafra never would have suggested "Mondale" as the ultimate heavy metal band name.

—Will Drist

Buddy Holly

(or, *Those Should Have Been the Days: Had Buddy Holly Not Taken That One Last Ride, That Is*—Gary Pig Gold Channels the Cricket That Got Away)

Yessir, that last tour was sure a sumbitch, wasn't it? "Winter Dance Party," my lone starred ass! More like a

near month hauling all across those snow-cruised heartlands in the back of a school bus, sleeping with our guitars and our Jack Daniels and our rolling crap games. And precious little else, believe you me! But I suppose if they'd paid us what they were supposed to, we may have started flying between gigs instead, and that might've been even worse.

Sure was good to dump my brand new band and finally get back to New York City and my brand new wife, you bet. And even though the past (in the form of former bandmates and management) kept calling—too bad there weren't any answering machines back in the summer of '59!—I certainly had lots of songs to write, melodies to sing, work to do...and fun to have. My good bud Phil Everly immediately helped see to that: he always was promising the minute he dumped his brother, and me my Crickets, we'd just walk that block or two south from my new apartment through Washington Square Park and begin to seriously trawl the grand new sights and sounds of Greenwich Village.

So we did. For a year or two, in fact, we did little else! And of course it was there, in some greasy little basement off MacDougal that we first saw, and heard, and then made an important point to meet, this scrawny kid from the Midwest name of Bob. He was a funny little feller that continually swore we'd somehow locked eyes when I played the Duluth Armory...though unlike yours very truly, he'd only wear his glasses off stage. Still, he could sing up a storm, and soon enough write up one too. Too bad management again—his time, not mine—prevented me from taking him into the studio like we were busy planning. But nevertheless, he signed with Columbia Records rather than me and Phil's own label, and made out pretty darn well for himself. You oughta read his *Chronicles* book, by the way. It's a good one.

Anyways, money doesn't talk, it swears, as Mr. D. once said. So eventually Phil got back together with Don, I hired back a couple'a Crickets, and we all headed off on a joint tour of England. Opening up for us here and there were these four new guys from Liverpool who'd simply slapped Everlys harmonies over Crickets instrumentation, and the rest was soon, well, Beatlemania it was called once I'd gotten them safely over the pond and onto *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

They were good guys, though, and wisely recognized I, not they, had actually invented that so-called British Invasion. Only back in Lubbock in 1958, you see: "Listen To Me," "Think It Over," "Not Fade Away"—"There's yer fookin' Merseybeat, mate," as the Chief Beatle kept telling me and everyone else who could hear. I had to agree. Though he never wore his nice big black specs on stage either, by the by. But my, what a lovely character that Johnny Rhythm was.

So yep, those Beatles recorded my very own "Words Of Love," and I have to admit those powerful royalties kept Maria Elena and Charles Hardin II in gas and grits as all my own musical monies remained tangled extremely up

in legal limbos. Still, I eventually made good on my dream to record an entire album of Ray Charles songs, and duetting with that afore-mentioned Zimmer Man on his *Nashville Skyline* brought in a few deep dollars to boot. But then, like so many, many of us, the Seventies and especially Eighties were tough, empty years full of too much energy but too few (creative) outlets. At least I made it out pretty alive. My man Elvis, to cite the most obvious, didn't, did he?

So here I sit today, luckily not being called a Golden Oldie as much the Godfather of alt. Country—whatever the heck *that* means. But I can still headline any damn PBS musical fundraiser I choose to, especially when an original Cricket or two care to join me. And while Maria Elena may be long long gone, our boy Charlie is still ringing his Strat in a honky tonk right near you this very night no doubt. Better that than doing Vegas as "Son of Buddy," I guess.

Oh, and that Weezer song? It really did suck, y'know...

—Gary Pig Gold

Joy Division

I prefer early Joy Division—an odd statement given their incredibly abbreviated although incendiary history—to their latter work. I actually find comfort in the swirling, dark miasmic sound of the debut, not to mention the paranoid, strangling, angsty postures and words from their great front man, Ian Curtis. It's a house that is collapsing all around you, floor by floor, particle by particle. In May of 1980, however, the epileptic, swooning, and charismatic Curtis hanged himself; within eight months the remaining members re-grouped, named themselves after yet another Nazi atrocity, and galvanized hipster, college educated doofuses and their dance floors with New Order. But what if Ian had not hanged himself?

Children, gather around: Joy Division was a giant, the essential growth spurt between punk's spitting, trenchant ferocities and new wave's What the Fuck? danceability. They were the greatest singles band since CCR; they blew up audiences' minds when performing; they established Factory Records as a *player*; and in Curtis, they had the missing piece in the puzzle of 1980's lead singer ethos: part early baroque Iggy and part slithery Vegas shaman Morrison, the theatrically distraught Curtis and his ageless booming stentorian voice prefigured a good part of rock in the last 20 years: Depeche, Cure, Interpol, Dears, Cabaret Voltaire, Wedding Present, well, sheeeit, that's only a fraction, a fraction that forgets (thankfully) about every Midwest indie bar band in the 80s not circle jerkin' to either Fear or R.E.M.

This "What If?" is the subjunctive mood: a dreamy grammatical exercise that allows for hope, unmoored id impulses, and bright cheery pictures of sunsets and oceanic ebbing. But be careful: it's a tool that in the wrong hands could blur reality and appearance—it's better suited for creaky Jewish musicals ("If I Were a Rich Man"), letters to Jodie Foster ("If I were to take the

8:05 to New Haven we could..."), and fantasies about Carmen Electra ("*FILL IN BLANK*"). But let's play: a live Ian would have thrived for a few more solid, thought provoking years—money was around the corner (the transcendent "Love will Tear Us Apart" was a leftfield hit *three* times in the subsequent months and years); marriage to Debbie would have calmed him down (Hell, it's made me a fucking zombie); there would be no New Order, retrospectively, an OK aesthetic thing; the band would have had to hire a drummer eventually who could actually drum; and most importantly, the band would have been better. I hear New Order elements in the later work as it is, so imagine that lush, loping bass sound, the muted musical affirmation on the later singles, and Curtis further investigating both studio sonic collages and a type of modern musical theater, a theater of corfusive guitars, indictments of spurious celebrities, and dark spaces of silence. I think of a PIL mixed with Brechtian impulses: finger pointing, non-climatic circular drone music, a wavering but intransigent 4/4 back beat.

The mid-80s Joy Division would have been fiercer than the Smiths, less monochromatic than PIL, less insipid than every New Wave band in the world, and meatier, tougher than Wire and Gang of Four, two bands locked into increasingly futile musical *cul de sacs* by their second albums. On *Closer* the song "Twenty Four Hours" is almost impossible to describe: imagine Pixies through a subdued Melvins (Hey, isn't that Nirvana?), or Sonic Youth backing Jack Jones, and yet: this is music that challenges, gets into your head, makes you tap your left foot a little differently: this is the direction of my subjunctive Joy Division: thwarting anticipations, pianistic colorations, and interesting dance hooks. For his work on the bitterly ironically entitled *Closer*—a benchmark in pop culture—it's easy to see Ian Curtis's answer to the *If I were* equation—I am who I am and those aren't rope marks around my neck but traces of god's fingers.

—Michael Barker

The Monks

What if...the American G.I./German Beat scene-based punk pioneers the Monks had gone, as planned, on a 1967 tour of Viet Nam rock clubs (a tour circuit which saw bands being killed) instead of breaking up?

John Kerry would be president.

—Jake Austen

Suicidal Tendencies

What if Suicidal Tendencies had never seen your mommy? Your mommy would have gotten you that Pepsi.

—Will Drist

You, the world at large, give us media to assess; we, the reviewers, provide the right "take."

Reviews written by Mike Faloon unless otherwise noted. Thanks a ton to Anthony Bartkewicz, Matt Braun, Justin Kearby, Johnny Reno, and Steve Reynolds.

The A-Sides – Hello, Hello cd

It was Socrates who dished out the bit about knowing thyself, the importance of focusing on what you do best, right? Well, in that sense the A-Sides are one mighty fine Socratic pop band. They know what they like—larger than life Technicolor pop confections with psychedelic undertones, ala the Zombies *Odyssey and Oracle* and Brian Wilson's *Smile*, or, on the contemporary plane, bands like Of Montreal—and don't stray from their strengths. (And if you don't trust me concerning the band's aspirations let the album's subtitle do the talking: *The Misadventures of the Lion from the Future and Kevin*.) I've yet to pin down a storyline here—something vaguely about hanging out on a rainy day—but that's the only dent in this brilliant pop opus. (Unless it's an attempt by the A-Sides to further stake their claim as a Socratic pop band; the album's storyline is something for us to figure out, it's delivered, so to speak, via a dialogue between band and listener, which adheres to the Socratic model of teaching. It's not forced down our gullets like a lecture.) The hooks are abundant and the songs flow seamlessly from one to the next, driven by the band's considerable chemistry and the simple, yet spot-on production, and topped off by lead singer Jon Barthmus' delightful ability to arrange and deliver always-tasteful harmonies. (Prison Jazz – 431 Birch St., Scranton, PA 18505)

The A-Frames – Black Forest cd

Did you ever see *24 Hour Party People*, the movie about the music scene Manchester, England? A big chunk of the movie revolves around the genius of Joy Division singer Ian Curtis, and while I agree that the band's story is interesting, their music wasn't all that great; a couple of great tunes and a lot of dribble. They should have kept the Joy Division story but inserted A-Frames songs, or maybe A-Frames versions of Joy Division songs, which, in fact, might be what the songs on *Black Forest* are. The end of civilization is imminent and that ain't such a bad thing, at least according to the A-Frames. Like NPR pledge drivers, the A-Frames, are always on message. That part of the equation is consistent with the band's first two records, and most of the sounds are, too. However, there are more quiet moments sprinkled in. Conceptually that's a good move, you know, branch out try new things, but those added moments of release diffuse some of the sustained tension that made past records, especially the second album, such a downbeat joy. Still, it's a good record and if you're going to have an apocalyptic dance party, the A-Frames are still your band. (Sub Pop)

Terry Adams & Marshall Allen – Ten By Two cd

I never like it when jazz guys and gals tackle pop tunes. Gone are the dynamics that distinguish the genres and you're left with the worst of both worlds. The only thing worse than hearing Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven," for example, is hearing a quasi-jazz version on which the vocal melody is carried by a half-hearted sax and the backing band does their best to disappear, shrugging in response to a producer extolling the virtues of crossover appeal. Then there's Terry Adams and Marshall Allen, of NRBQ and Sun Ra's Arkestra, respectively. They cover a handful of classic pop tunes (Irving Berlin, Burt Bacharach), but don't waste a second trying to water down what they do best, namely making a beeline for uncharted waters. They use the main melody when it serves their needs, portions of "Blue Skies" and "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" are recognizable, for instance, but generally use the originals to serve as springboards, a meeting place from which to launch their wild piano and sax collaborations. Also included among the ten tunes, drawn from performances at the Toronto Jazz Festival ('97) and the Brooklyn

Museum ('96), are originals and jazz standards (Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk). I'm a rank amateur when it comes to commenting on jazz, but Adams and Allen consistently find unique ways to twist songs old and new and that's enough to keep *Ten By Two* in steady rotation. (Edisun)

Aluminum Knot Eye – Trunk Lurker cd

Once a record label has released one certified brilliant record, as Trick Knee did with the Catholic Boys' debut disc, I tend to give anything that label does the benefit of the doubt. *Trunk Lurker* strives to be weird and raw, and while it earns "A"s in both categories it lacks that third characteristic that'll keep me on board. Hooks or faster tempos would be enough, but they're in short supply here. The band's got a good thing—Tom Waits vocals, raw nerve, shitbox guitar sounds, eerie keyboards—but the material hasn't caught up yet. (Though they nail it on "The Thing on Your Doorstep," a full-throttle, psycho freak out.) (Trick Knee)

Antennas Erupt – Magical Energy lp

All right, dig this, a band with two saxes, a cello and drums, pretty much no singing, knocking out some fine jazz tunes that are alternately melodic and free form; the Magic Band without Captain Beefheart (not so much a mutiny on the part of the band as much as them saying, Don't sing on these cuts. The captain always said he'd rather be painting in the desert anyway, right?). For me, that's been enough to keep this platter on the turntable the past few days. But I know GM readers are a discerning bunch. You all will have a good time trying to decode the murky story that lies in the depths of *Magical Energy*. (I get where songs like "Marching From the Womb" and "Healthy Vaginal Walls" fit into the picture, but can somebody help me with "Monumental Urkeling"?) Another recommended release from your friends at SS Records. (SS Records)

Jake Austen – TV a Go-Go book

Best known as the editor of *Roctober*, the long-running chronicler of "dynamic rock'n'roll," Jake Austen is stunningly knowledgeable, an enthusiastic, insightful, "big tent" kind of writer who can make the most obscure acts appealing to fans of mainstream entertainers while also

being able to pick beneath the surface of well-known pop singers and find something of interest to die hard cynics. And yet Austen never backs down from his opinions, like a rock'n'roll anti-Clinton, he doesn't dilute his arguments to appease perceived critics. To the contrary, the most engaging parts of *TV a Go-Go* are those in which Austen defends an unpopular position; for example, going to bat for lip-synching and the artistry of music videos and fake bands. Though there are a couple of points where the sheer volume of information to be covered yields passages that are more list-like (keep in mind that "rock'n'roll" to Austen encompasses everything from the pop music family tree: rock, pop, R&B, hip hop, soul, punk, etc.), Austen chooses to focus on favorite themes within the realm of pop music on the tube rather than attempt to document all TV rock from the past 50 years. (As he says in the introduction, the book collects 10 "freestanding but interlocking" essays.) Topics include punk rock on TV (focusing on Fear's appearance on *SNL*), the African-American music experience on TV (Austen, like David Shields, is the rare white writer who writes intelligently about race), fake bands, cartoon bands, late night 70s rock shows; I even gobbled up the chapter on *American Idol* and other "reality"-era TV pop. *TV a Go-Go* is a great read and a book that I'll always keep within arm's reach for research, but if I've yet to convince you of the tome's merits, I'll leave you with this: what other book carries, and deserves to carry, blurbs from Ian MacKaye and *Soul Train* dancer Nieci' Payne? Highly recommended. (Chicago Review Press)

The Baby Shakes – s/t cd-r ep

The Baby Shakes are so close to having an amazing thing going for them. They're mining the right territory (Nikki and the Corvettes, the Ramones most bubblegum moments) and have the voices to weave some wonderfully infectious harmonies. With taste and talent in the bag, they just need to add some umph to their performances, the songs sound samey one to the next. Very good demo, though, so stay tuned. (BabyShakes.com)

The Banditas – s/t cd

Ever wonder what the first Superchunk album would have sounded like had the band been treated to a better recording?

Nothing glossy, mind you, just a bit more sonic space among the instruments? Anyone? Well, I have and I'm damn grateful to the Banditas for uncorking this long player. Like your better Superchunk records, the low end is high in the mix and drives the songs, perfectly locked in with the drums. (Floor tom fans will delight in *The Banditas*.) Are you going to dig the squawky, Mac-like vocals the first time? Maybe not, but you'll come around and listen to this record a lot. I do. (Last Drag)

Baseball Furies – All-American Psycho cd

Holy shit, do I regret missing out on these records when they first came out. I love *Greatest Band Ever* ('02), but I could have had the riff from the title track rumbling through my head for the past six years if I'd caught on to the Baseball Furies back in 1999 when the bulk of these tunes came out. (The disc pairs a 10" from '99 with a 7" from '98.) Friends say they hear a lot of the Stooges in the Baseball Furies and theoretically I hear what they mean, and more so here than on later records, but I'll take the Furies any day. With the Stooges you had one nutjob, Iggy, on the attack 24/7. He was fronting a good band but there was an intensity drop off between frontman and backing band. With the Furies the whole band is always on and the songs are just catchy enough to keep me coming back for more. (Big Neck/Flying Bomb)

Baseball Furies – Let It Be cd

From Buffalo, New York, the Queen City, by way of the Windy City, Chicago, home of your 2005 World Series Champions the Chicago White Sox, come the Baseball Furies, and if you're not listening to them RIGHT THIS SECOND, you, my friend, are a gaybar. Is there a better band in America? Let's see. There's the Knockout Pills. There's Dillinger 4, and Toys That Kill. Dirtbike Annie has, alas, packed it in. Ooooh, the Marked Men. FM Knives! The Catholic Boys! The Girls! Okay, so there *may* be a better band in America, but, holy Christ, what's wrong with you? I mean, when did this become a competition? The Baseball Furies are superb. The first track on side one, "Taking Turns at Ground Zero," sounds at first like you're playing it at the wrong speed, but you're not. It's just their way of saying, "Hello, we're the Baseball Furies, better BACK THE FUCK UP

YOU SONS OF BITCHES, NOTHING SHORT OF AN ALIEN INVASION DURING AN EARTHQUAKE ON HALLOWEEN WILL PREPARE YOU FOR *LET IT BE*." They're right. Dear God, they're right. "I'll be the fucking ruler of the fucking world, 'cause I'm a fucking trooper, and I'll fuck your girl." That's the SINGLE. This is a record you can listen to with your parents, if your parents were in the SLA. My favorite full length this year. (Big Neck)

—Johnny Reno

Brook Benton – At His Best cd

My dad has many, many excellent qualities. He's gentle, he served on a submarine in the fifties, and he skis fifty or sixty times a year. He also, like you and me both, has his flaws. He believes everything Bill O'Reilly says is the t-r-u-t-h truth, he's a bit of a racist, and when you're in the car with him for long periods of time he plays music like this, which he insists is rock and roll. It's not. There's a word for songs like "Rock 'n' Roll That Rhythm (All Nite Long)" and "Love Made Me Your Fool." That word is "pleaseputonsomegene vincentthisassholeiskillingme." This is the kind of shit that forced Marty McFly to get on stage and blow out Van Halen at the sock hop. Still, you have got to hand it to Collector's Choice. They are releasing all kinds of obscure stuff, with liner notes and everything. Even when it's not for me I'm glad to have heard it. (Collector's Choice)

—Johnny Reno

Jello Biafra and the Melvins – Sieg Howdy cd

The press sheet tries desperately to present *Sieg Howdy* as being anything but a collection of outtakes from a side project band, but it's an uphill battle when the record opens with a cover (Alice Cooper's "Halo of Flies"), closes with three remixes (remixes always signify a lack of new ideas), and tosses in a remake along the way ("Kali-fornia Uber Alles (21st Century)"). Still, the disc contains a bunch of good (or better) material, including the kickass 1-2 combo of "Those Dumb Punk Kids (Will Buy Anything)" and "Wholly Bun Bull"—songs that could go toe to toe with the best stuff from either the Dead Kennedys or the Melvins—and I have to admit the "Kali-fornia Uber Alles" update is as good as it is (painfully) timely. (Alternative Tentacles)

Black Dahlias – “Wednesday Night” + 2 7”

The A-side has the hooks and the curiosity factor (no one writes songs about Wednesdays), but the hits are on the flipside. Both tunes are weirder and more distinctive. I like ‘em. What? Can’t a guy be concise for once? Get off my back. I’m going to spin the Black Dahlias again. (Plastic Idol)

The Blowtops – Mad Monk Medication 7” ep

I can never tell what the Blowtops are singing about and I do try to decipher their lyrics because their song titles are intriguing. What is “Mad Monk Medication”? How about an “Engine Fire Wig Flip”? The third cut, “Red Velvet Nightmare” moves pretty slow but even there I could make neither heads nor tails of what was going down. (Big Neck)

The Bobbyteens – Cruisin’ for a Bruisin’ cd

When a social occasion calls for a Bobbyteens record, I reach for their *Young & Dumb* compilation, which is chockfull of the band’s early trashed up bubble punk. They drifted from that sound on subsequent records, some would say for the better, setting course for a more glam rock/hard rock sound—less Archies, more Joan Jett. Ah, but here we have a return to form. They still write lyrics like the kids your parents warned you about, but more pop and fewer stadium rock moves. *Cruisin’ for a Bruisin’* is a welcome return to form, if you will, and now there are two top-flight contenders when it comes to choosing a Bobbyteens disc. (Estrus)

Sonny Bono – Innerviews cd

In the late 60s everyone was putting out psychedelic albums, even a square peg like Sonny Bono. And no matter how weird you’d expect a Sonny Bono psychedelic record to be, *Innerviews* is weirder. Take “I Just Sit There,” for example. It’s odd that Sonny would cook up a 12-minute rewrite of “A Day in the Life,” and it’s odder still that he’d open the record with said song, but it’s bizarre that he’d actually succeed in writing a good song—“Tripper, strippers, hips and squares/ Divide the line and tell me where.” Yeah, Sonny, yeah! From there it’s straight back to squaresville with a trio of conventional “ain’t love painful” songs. Which brings us to act three, wherein Sonny rains on his own parade with the 8-minute “Pammie’s

on a Bummer,” an uncomfortable, anti-drug lecture made all the more awkward by Sonny’s relaxed regard for singing on-key. It’s an anti-climatic end but *Innerviews* is still a record you need to hear at least once. (Collectors’ Choice)

Brutally Frank – “Angel in a Nightmare” b/w “Murder Crazy Cannibals” 7”

Camped out somewhere betwixt the Cramps and Rev. Horton Heat, Brutally Frank have everything you’d expect from a psychobilly band, right down to the bass player named Steevo. The songs are all right and made sense right off the bat, but the cover art confused me. At first I thought we were being treated to the sight of some sort of bare-assed man-eagle, like Hawkman’s derelict cousin (or, for the Marvel fans in the room, Thor’s derelict cousin). Then when I saw the severed head on the back cover I realized that it’s a decapitated angel we see on the front. I’m slow at times. (Wee Rock)

Buzzov-en – Welcome to Violence cd

Here’s where I mark myself as *Go Metric*’s odd man out: my appreciation for the Figgs, Dirt Bike Annie, the Replacements *et al* is matched by an appreciation for the likes of Eyehategod, Celtic Frost and Slayer. With that warning out of the way: bass-driven sludgy metal/hardcore with occasional punk rock tempos. Little in the way of hooks, plenty of negativity, and lots of dialogue samples that date these recordings squarely in the early/mid-’90s when the out-of-print records that make up this compilation were made. I dig it; your mileage may vary – greatly. (Alternative Tentacles)

—Anthony Bartkewicz

Cadiz – Breakers cd

I lived in Copley, Ohio for a year and though I opted not to stay past that year, I can understand the appeal of writing a set of songs about your hometown in the Midwest, like Robert C. Lee did about Cadiz, the Ohio town where he grew up. But I also realize that unless you have a reason to spend time in one of those places, none of their charms will sink in—there’s got to be something remarkable to make you slow down and take notice. So while I bet these lyrics mean a lot to Robert, the songs aren’t interesting enough to keep me from moving on. (Cadiz Music)

The Carrie Nations – Be Still cd

Wonderful rock and roll from Indiana. This is bashy stuff, free of distortion and heavy on funfunfun. There’s a lyric sheet in the form of lovingly detailed comic strips, and I still have no idea what the songs are about. I wish I knew these guys and they wanted me to be their best friend and watch *Batman Begins* with them on dvd. Geez, this is good. What else are you going to do with \$5? Buy drugs? Come on, man. Five dollars worth of crack won’t even get Vern Troyer off. (Plan-It-X)

—Johnny Reno

Sean Carswell – Barney’s Crew book

A couple years ago I interviewed Scottt McCaughey from the Minus 5. He’d just finished recording an album with Wilco and he was talking about how Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy encouraged him to put the vocals higher in the mix because he, Tweedy, likes to be “right in the listener’s ear.” That phrase kept popping into my head as I read *Barney’s Crew*. Sean Carswell accomplishes the same goal with his stories; he isn’t just writing for you, he’s talking to you. His tone is approachable and conversational, like a good friend holding court at a bar whose voice doesn’t have to loud to cut through the din. Coupled with his style is a cast of colorful characters that are easy to relate to. Conflicted professors, teens struggling to make sense of rites of passage, smartass baseball fans, philosophical surfers, Carswell tells their tales in such a way that it makes perfect sense for a renown photographer to hang out an illegal dog rodeo or for a college student to hitchhike a thousand miles to surprise a guy she’s barely dated or for a dude to head to South America to visit his fugitive friend. Carswell has a knack for capturing those pivotal moments when a person makes a decision they know they will likely regret, but they have to move forward regardless. All of which is sufficient to recommend *Barney’s Crew*, but there’s more. Carswell is a subtly clever plotter and infuses his characters with deceptively simple wisdom, and it’s those touches that vault him to the forefront of contemporary fiction writers. “Framing Invasion,” for example, is a memorable story on the surface—a crew of construction workers take their revenge on a local auto dealer—but becomes all the more appealing and impressive when you break down

its structure. Carswell is a great storyteller, it really is as simple as that. (Gorsky Press)

Caterpillar Tracks – s/t cd

We had to do some of those corny “get to know each other” activities at work today. They’re always a back-to-school favorite with administrators. One thing we had to do was interview a fellow teacher and then “introduce” them to the rest of the staff, telling our colleagues, among other things, what the person’s favorite band was. Two things were revealed in the process: my fellow workers are plagued with bad taste (Dave Matthews was the top vote getter) and there is a considerable age gap (Kate: “...and Mary’s favorite bands are Z.Z. Tap and Steven Miller.”) That’s what came to mind when I saw the last song on this disc, “Con the Consultant.” (Phrantry)

Catholic Boys – *Hurt to Hate 7” ep*

The Catholic Boys released two singles this year. I snagged this one, which was released by a new label out of Michigan, and missed the other one, which was released by some dude in France who, it would seem, leaked all of 12 copies stateside. One out of two works in most situations, but not with the Catholic Boys. The three tracks on *Hurt to Hate* pack all of the invigorating wallop of the band’s brilliant debut cd yet squeeze in more pop hooks. It’s an anomaly to be sure, but it’s not my place to question brilliance, just soak it in, appreciate it, let it remind me why life is worth living and, when given the chance, pass on the good word. Or, if you prefer the more direct approach, which I’m assuming anyone who digs or will dig the Catholic Boys would: THIS RECORD IS FUCKING AWESOME. If only I could get my mind off of that import single. I know those songs are just as good. Fucking French. (Bancroft)

Chinese Telephones – “I Think I Can Breathe Now” 7” ep

Yellow vinyl out of Milwaukee, home of the how-much-conflict-of-interest-can-you-stand Bud Selig owned Brewers. At their best, the Chinese Telephones call to mind the late Dirtbike Annie, but for some reason I can never remember what this sounds like without putting it on. Ah, hell, I like rock and roll, and the Telephones sure sound sincere. Besides, yellow is one of my top six favorite colors. I’m a winter. (Dingus)

—Johnny Reno

Crimson Sweet – “Boulevard” + 2 7”

The last song I heard from Crimson Sweet was their great contribution to the *Let’s Get Killed* compilation (a sorely overlooked gem that should be in every home). It’s one of those rare songs where there doesn’t seem to be a clear distinction between verse and chorus and it doesn’t matter in the least because that one part, regardless of how you label it, is so good. I was disappointed to find none of that swell pop action on the a-side to this ep, but that’s to be expected because boulevard songs are always rock songs more than they are pop songs. Expectations were high as I moved onto the flipside yet quickly wiped out by a scan of the song titles: “Blood Transfusion,” “Waste You, Taste You.” I got what I expected: awfully unpleasant rock songs. I hope they bring back the pop next time out. (Shake It)

Crimson Sweet – *Eat the Night* cd

I like one song on this cd a lot. It’s called “Night” and it’s somewhat slow and pretty with a “Be My Baby”-type beat for the verses. It actually reminds me of the B-Girls’ “Alibi,” and that’s a good thing. It’s really the only song I thoroughly enjoy on this cd, though. “Lady Linda on Fridays,” a faster poppy rock song, is also pretty good. The rest of the songs are hard rock & roll with mostly gravelly vocals. I much prefer when singer Polly Watson sings instead of rasps. (Shake It Records)

—Justin Kearby

The Cripples – *Culture* cd

Culture is what I would expect to hear if I ever listened to Tubeway Army, the band Gary Numan was in before “Cars” hit. Gobs of synthesizers slathered over post-punk songs with big hooks, none of the mopiness of “Cars.” (I know we have to move past the combustible engine at some point in time but, really, how do you fuck up a song about cars, Gary?) But, like a synth punk cavern, the further you go into *Culture*, the darker it gets. There’s a pair of big pop tunes at the start/entrance to lure you in and then it gets darker and creepier the further you walk. It’s a worthy expedition, just be careful not to hit your head on the stalactites! (Dirtnap)

Dash Rip Rock – *Recyclone* cd

It’s amazing to think that after 20 years that Dash Rip Rock are still out on the backroads of the U.S., peeling the paint off the walls of dives

everywhere with their mix of rockabilly and country-inflected punk. *Recyclone* is a 20-track collection drawn from the band’s eight albums which presents all the various facets of the only original member left, singer-guitarist Bill Davis. His songs veer from straight rockabilly (“Johnny Ace”) to power pop (“She’s Got a Lot of Nerve”) to dirty Southern Rock (“BFE,” a-k-a Bum Fuck Egypt) and—surprisingly—almost mainstream-sounding rock (“Snows in Mississippi”). Davis’s strongest suit as a writer is his ability to mix in humor into his lyrics without sounding too hokey, as in the post-bar-hookup anthem “True Drunk Love.” And any Dash Rip Rock collection would be incomplete without “Let’s Go Smoke Some Pot,” the parody of the Danny and the Juniors 1957 hit “At the Hop.” *Recyclone* includes a new version called “Pot 2005,” where Davis pokes fun at today’s current breed of neo-hippie rock like Galactic, String Cheese Incident, and Jack Johnson. *Recyclone* is a great introduction to one of those criminally overlooked bands that are still somehow out on the road trying to make a living. (Alternative Tentacles)

—Steve Reynolds

The Detonations – “Spy You in a Magazine” b/w “T.V. Has Eyes” 7”

Mid-tempo punk that talks more about danger (“You’re mixing cigarettes and gasoline”) than embodying it. The flipside, a Chromes cover, is better but still short of remarkable. (Big Neck)

Dirty Fingers – *Name of the Game Is Cocaine 7” ep*

When I burn a piece of toast in the morning there’s only so much time I’ll spend scraping off the burnt parts before I’ll toss out the toast and move on. Same goes for songs, there’s only so much time I’ll spend trying to get past clichéd lyrics (“The name of the game is cocaine”—thanks, Mr. Clapton!; “Girl to Fuck,” “She’s a Slut,” you get the picture) before I move on to a better record—like Big Neck’s *Pain in the Big Neck* compilation. (Big Neck)

The Dissimilars – *Landmine 7” ep*

One of my favorite bits from the Dr. Demento radio show was/is “The Rock’n’Roll Doctor,” a mock call-in show where the good doctor would recommend a drug or combination of drugs to complement a particular concert experience. The Dissimilars, despite their name, take a comparable

tact by dishing out lyrics that match various troubling situations with chemical remedies. Have lady problems ("Landmine")? Take wine, crack, or Jack Daniels. Need some time alone ("Turn Me Loose")? Try beer and/or grass. Boredom ("Crushin' Up Pills")? OxyContin, Xanax, somas, or qualudes. As for sounds, the Dissimilars sound pretty similar to Dick Army but with more distorted vocals. (Plastic Idol)

The Divebomb Honey – s/t 7" ep

Perfectly acceptable new-new-wave ruined for me by the lead singer's rock and roll growl. This stuff has to be ICY to work. Neat name, though. Do-it-yourselfers throw your hands in the air: They recorded this on a 4-track in a bedroom, and there's drums and keys and everything. (Jilted! Records)

—Johnny Reno

Duplex – Ablum cd

My first reaction was, Wow, another cd by David Greenberger of *Duplex Planet* fame. But whereas *Duplex Planet*, Greenberger's long-running zine, features stories from the retirement home crowd, Duplex, the band, is aimed at the *Sesame Street* crowd, both the kids who are "of age" and the adults who watch over their shoulders. *Ablum* is a mix of goofy novelty tunes and genuinely appealing pop songs. There are times where it leans too much on funk, but I know this will be a big hit with my aunt and uncle, NPR junkies and proud parents of a four-year-old and five-year-old who love dancing around the house. File along with Jonathan Richman, They Might Be Giants, and the Trachtenburg Family Players. (Mint Records)

Nob Dylan and the Nobsoletes – 12 Positively Stiff Dylans cd

When Robyn Hitchcock released a double disc of Dylan covers a couple years ago (*Robyn Sings*), I liked his versions but they didn't change my views on Dylan: his songs are all right when done by others but I don't need to hear the originals. *Positively 12 Stiff Dylans* sparked a completely different reaction. The first time I heard Nob (aka Rev. Norb) and the Obsoletes (aka the Obsoletes) tear through "I Wanna Be Your Lover" I thought maybe I'd just heard the wrong Dylan songs over the years—their cover was that good, and while it's the best song on the record, it's hardly the only time Nob/Norb and company rise to the occasion.

Neither tribute record nor parody, *Positively* is saturated with the sounds of a band having a blast playing their favorite Dylan songs. Norb plays it straight—singing rather than affecting a characterization—and the Obsoletes offer perfect support—simple, solid work from the rhythm section and tuneful, tasteful soloing from guitarist Tim Schweiger.

Another part of the success is rooted in the decision to focus on one period of Dylan's 40+ year career (all but two of the songs come from Dylan's 1965 albums *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited*). This is so good I went back and read that copy of Dylan's *Chronicles* that my step mom gave me last Christmas. (Alternative Tentacles)

The Ergs! & Modern Machines – split 7"

For fans of poppy punk rock this split is like Foreman and Ali going the distance, two titanic talents slugging it out toe to toe. It seems like it has taken decades for me to hear the Modern Machines. (I ordered a copy of their first record from the guy in the Onion Flavored Rings, but he never sent me the album. Someday I'm going to bike over to that dude's house and do my best impression of the paperboy from *Better Off Dead*: I want my six dollars!) They open with a cover of my favorite Hollies song, "Bus Stop," and then come back with "She Doesn't Know That She's Alone," which feels like an outtake from Husker Du's *Flip Your Wig*. I'll take all you got, guys. The Ergs!, knowing their work is cut out for them coming out swinging with "More Vox in the Monitor," a track that could have worked well on the band's most recent album, *Dorkrockcorkrod* (in addition to being further proof that Jeff Erg just might be the best guitarist on the planet right now). Then things get surprising. The Ergs! turn in a good Beatles cover, "Not a Second Time." They don't hit the mat, they're not knocked against the ropes, but they take a knee. The judges want to call it a tie, but their scorecards tell them they have to give the match to the Modern Machines. "Not a Second Time" is a decent choice of covers and it's rendered well, yet it's merely good, and this is the Ergs! we're talking about. Fans will wear out copies of this wonderful split 7" and debate the final decision for decades to come. (Grateful)

The Fall-Outs – Summertime cd

At first I was confused by the fact that this record carries such an upbeat name and song titles, yet such bitter songs. When I first saw song titles like "So Good" and "Staring at the Sun," I assumed I'd be hobknobbing with a pack of optimists for the next 30-40 minutes. But Fall-Outs singer Dave Holmes sounds downright steamed when he belts out "*The sun shines on my face, yeah!*" on the opening cut ("What Does That Make You"), as if any reminder of the outside world just makes his bad day worse ("Chirp on your own damn time, sparrow!"), and that's not typically what I want to spin in the summer months. Then I was reading about how the Greeks used to devote their spring festivals to tragedies because they wanted everyone to flush out their negative vibes and be free and clear for the upcoming growing season. In that way, *Summertime* is an amazing summer album. From stem to stern, it snarls like the best 60s garage bands and delivers hooks on par with the best 70s power pop acts, and through it all the Fall-Outs are venting about how much the world continues to disappoint them; out with the bad, in with the good. (Or as the Acoustinauts once sang, "*Inhale Einstein, exhale Hitler*") I have one other Fall-Outs album, 1994's *Sleep*, but it doesn't pack the same 1-2 combo of punch and pop that *Summertime* does. It really is a good time record—and a great one at that, I've been airdrumming to it for months—but everyone involved, band and listener, has to ante up their baggage in order for the record to reach 100% efficiency. (Estrus)

The Feelers – Learn To Hate the Feelers cd

Well, hate is an awfully strong word, isn't it? *Learn to Tolerate the Feelers* or *Learn to Empathize with the Feelers* would have been a wee bit more accurate. Hate is a powerful emotion and, I dunno, bro, I'm just not feelin' it. They dress like the Briefs, they sound like the Oblivions, but the songs simply aren't there. I've listened to this thing time and again. Faloan keeps saying, "But what about the Feelers? I bet you liked the Feelers cd I sent you, right?" I just give him this half smile/laugh/nod thing that really says nothing. I put it in the van thinking that, if I made myself listen to it while I was driving around I'd get more into it. It didn't happen. Yeah, I guess if they played a

show I was going to anyway I wouldn't head straight out to the other room for bourbon and tater tots; I'd give 'em a chance and all, but I wouldn't go out of my way. Minus two points for the simple fact that it took five people to make a record this blah. (Dead Beat)

—Matt Braun

The Feelers – *Learn to Hate the Feelers* lp

Who are the Feelers, and what do they want? I could find out, but that would involve research, and, being as how I'm sitting in a lukewarm bath to soften up my thrombosed hemorrhoids, I just don't have the time. I'll have to live with mystery. Spazzy punk rock that you will enjoy. I especially appreciated "The Rev" and "Stuttgart (Looking Motherfucker)." Do you like the Orphans? Of course, you do. Did you catch Ashlee Simpson's second SNL performance? Of course you did, but only for irony's sake. This record is right up your alley and you'll like it tons. There's a cat named "Red Menace" in this band. Would you have come up with that? What? Liar.

—Johnny Reno

The Fevers – *Love Always Wins* lp

When Rev. Norb reviewed this record—which I believe to be an unqualified gem, by the way—for *Razorcake* he gave it a mixed review and a big part of his assessment hinged on the fact that *Love Always Wins* opens with an unsuccessful tune, "Slow Dance." His argument being that a song about a slow dance should itself be a slow song. If one is focused on external factors, then there is logic to his assertion; but he's wrong. See, "Slow Dance" is a fast song because the main character, who's in the process of asking a girl to slow dance with him, is terribly nervous, his heart racing as he confronts the possibility of rejection; you need to focus on internal factors to get "Slow Dance." So whereas Norb categorizes *Love Always Wins* as an album that gets off to a weak start, I hear it as a record that kicks ass from the get go. One point on which we agree is that the Fevers save the best songs for last. The final three cuts are bubblegum at its best. *Love Always Wins* is a brilliant companion piece to the band's stellar debut from a few years ago. This is a case where you and me, the pop music loving public, win. (Alien Snatch)

Gas Huffer – *Lemonade for Vampires* cd

I'd swear this is Gas Huffer's thirteenth record—I've been seeing ads for their albums ever since I began reading zines—but this is only their seventh. In all that time I've only heard one song of theirs (and it was a cover from a split 7"), hardly a large sample. Given how varied the songs are here, I'd say that *Lemonade for Vampires* is a good jumping in point; you get a bit of everything, well, "everything" in my book, which equals fast rock'n'roll songs and slow rock'n'roll songs. Whoever in the band votes to use organ on songs is the guy I'd support as band dictator, the songs with organ tend to be the best cuts. Unfortunately, it sounds like Gas Huffer is bogged down in a representative democracy, so there are only five or six songs that I like. It's a very good EP, but I can't wait for the coup. (Estrus)

The Gentlemen Callers – *Don't Say What It Is* cd

The Gentleman Callers can date my daughters any time. They're seemingly polite lads and clearly quite careful in crafting their bluesy British Invasion-era garage rock, from the fuzzy guitars to Kevin Schneider's Mick Jagger-meets-Eric Burdon vocals. But while they've got all the accoutrements of the genre, they lack the pizzazz. A few mid-tempo cuts would work well—I like "You Oughta Know By Now" and "Treat Me So Bad" just as they are—but other numbers are crying out for the band to push the tempo; a faster version of "I Was Blind" or "Hurt on Me" would throw some much needed diversity into *Don't Say What It Is*. (Wee Rock)

Giant Haystacks – *Blunt Instrument 12"* ep

I don't care how many interviews I read with these guys claiming that they sound as much like Wire or Gang of Four as they do the Minutemen. They're full of it. This is full on 100% econo-mofo-Pedro stuff right here. Like EXACTLY. And that's not a bad thing. Still, I would have called it *History Lesson Part 3* if only because anything with "blunt" sounds a little too mid-90s hip hop for my liking. And, yeah, I would have cussed more in their songs and cut down on the guitar solos. Oh yeah, bonus points for using the suddenly resurgent 12" 45rpm format! (Mistake Records – P.O. Box 22071, Oakland, CA 94609)

—Matt Braun

David Greenberger & 3 Leg Torso – *Legibly Speaking* cd

With 3 Leg Torso providing a background of spot-on atmospheric jazz (I'm not sure how *Downbeat* uses that term, but I use it to mean "wonderfully malleable instrumentals played in a jazz vein"), David Greenberger (*Duplex Planet*) reads 11 monologues from his interviews with residents of a senior citizen home. Early on the anecdotes are generally short and amusing, giving way to longer stories later on the disc. Greenberger is the only reader yet each person's voice comes through, reflecting his sympathetic renders as well as 3 Leg Torso's ability to accentuate the tone of each piece. So many topics are covered—marriage, class, education, tragedies, pets—all with such wit and wisdom, culminating in the spirited outlook of Alfred Levitt, 100-years old at the time of his interview: "Life is full of motion, I never stand still. Every moment adds to the richness of my understanding of life... You know, I've never felt better in my life. I feel that I could take somebody for three rounds. I'm in perfect health, I was never sharper. I was never clearer mentally than I am right now because I'm peaceful with the world. I know why I'm here and I'm very thankful to the planet for having raised me, and I'm ready to die. If I die tomorrow or this moment, I've lived a rich life...I spend my time looking to understand the beauties of life. That is, to me, the elixir of life...essentially we're here to do good." (Meester/Pel Pel)

Thee Heavenly Music Association – *Shaping the Invisible* cd

I like the band name and when I saw that they closed the disc with a Kate Bush cover I skipped straight to said tune, "Running Up That Hill." Sadly, they slowed it down to "mope" speed, gave it a semi-ethereal backdrop—like the quieter bits on *The Joshua Tree*—and killed the melody. The rest of the record, considerably less effective, works ye ole shoegazer racket. Do people still take ecstasy? (Rehash)

Humans Bow Down – *A Mirror* cd

I love reviewing records, but it's records like *A Mirror* that have forced me to seek out assistance in plowing through the stacks of review records that find their way to the GM headquarters. In fact, during my last physical my doctor said I had to cut back on my exposure to emo rock. Well, he used the phrase "stilted rock

music characterized by quiet verse/loud chorus song structures and lyrics that strive for importance sung over a bed of music so deliberate you can practically hear each of the musicians thinking," but I knew what he meant. (Phrantry)

Immaculate Machine – *Ones and Zeros* cd

Hey, this is pretty good! It's pop. Maybe it's indie-pop or power-indie-pop or some other combination of words, but it's based in pop. I don't know if it makes sense, but I keep thinking of Papas Fritas. The two bands don't sound the same, but they have similarities: 1. Both bands play pop music (but Papas Fritas are catchier and more fun). 2. Both bands consist of two males and one female (though Immaculate Machine's Kathryn Calder plays keyboards and sings, while Papas Fritas's Shivika Asthana plays drums and sings). So, I guess it's just the combination of pop, male/female vocals and harmonies that reminds me of Papas Fritas. This is definitely more mechanical and rigid. I'm also sad to say that after the first few songs (the first few are definitely my favorites!) I lose interest. It's pretty good, though! (Mint Records)

—Justin Kearby

The Impacts – *Wipe Out!* cd

I can't help but feel this would sound sooooo much better on vinyl found at a garage sale, but I'm a surf fiend and I'll take what I can get. The forceful Impacts deliver with saxophone, reverb, and sharp suits. Usually, you only get one or two tracks from bands like this, on compilation cds, and it's nifty to hear them stretch out on a full length. I would have LOVED to have seen these guys toss songs like "Fort Lauderdale" and "Steel Pier" around at a school dance or a battle of the bands. There were SEVEN of these motherfuckers. Seven.

—Johnny Reno

The Jet Set – "Let's Get Broken" + 2 7"

Man, I swear the a-side is a garage rock epic—three parts, no less—and while the second movement drags a bit the opening and closing carry the day. If the guys in Yes had learned to tell their Topographic Tales with such efficiency, well, they'd still be Yes, but their records would weigh less. Let's get back to the Jet Set...they keep the ball rolling on the b-side—trashier, catchier, and better than their debut disc from last year. Some of the

credit should probably go to the new keyboard player (who, I hope, has plans to follow in the footsteps of Yes' Rick Wakeman and stage a rock opera on ice). (Wee Rock)

The Jim-Jims – *Boxed Lunch* 7" ep

"Slow Bang" reminds me of walking through the guitar section of a music store and hearing guys rock out to Zeppelin and Bad Co licks. Let's depart post-haste. (Wee Rock)

Karate Party – *Black Helicopter* lp

Chris Woodhouse is best known for engineering some of the best records of the past 10 years (Bananas, FM Knives, A-Frames), a reputation that overshadows his impressive credentials as a performer. Before setting sail with buzz pop bands like the Pretty Girls and FM Knives (yeah, it's strange, he was in FM Knives, but I swear more people think of him as the guy who recorded their album rather than the guy who played guitar in that band), Woodhouse was at the helm of the Karate Party. Fusing the Fall's simple but melodic guitar lines with piledriver bass lines, the Karate Party's music consistently works to great effect. The vocals, though, often sound like they were tacked on as an afterthought, marking the dividing line between songs that are merit a "very cool!" and songs that register an "eh." The rapid fire delivery on "Masters of the Donut Room" pushes a great song over the edge (and onto many a mix tape), while "One-Two-Three-Four" could kick unqualified ass if the lyrics rose above "1-2-3-4/I don't like you anymore/1-2-3-4/I don't like you at all." (SS Records)

Kill the Hippies – *Erectospective* double cd

I teach for living so there is not a chance in Hades that a punk rock record can tire me out. Or so I thought before encountering *Erectospective*. (Yeah, I know, it's a dumb name for a record but they've been saddled with a name like Kill the Hippies since 1993 so I'm pretty sure they come up with dopey monikers to amuse themselves.) With 77 songs spread over two discs, *Erectospective* is amazingly thorough, collecting songs from 7"s and compilations. (You can trust that a band has left no stone left unturned when they've included their contribution to a Lisa Suckdog cassette-only tribute.) And while it's a workout getting through *Erectospective* it is well worth your while. Kill the Hippies are playful and inventive and tuneful. They twist

punk songs like Calder twisted me'al and provide countless "what the hell was that?" moments. At one point I'd settled on describing them as "early Devo covering Dead Kennedys songs" (or vice versa), but then along came a song the reminded me of Mission of Burma; then another that reminded me of the Heartbreakers; then Queen; then the Buzzcocks. Then, finally, the realization that they sound like nobody else on the planet. I've come across about 30 songs on here that I love. How many records can you say that about? (Pretty much everything from '99 forward is great, which suggests that 12 years into their existence Kill the Hippies are just getting better.) Maybe this will lead to them getting a fraction of the respect and attention they deserve. (Rock'n'Roll Purgatory)

The Krunchies – *In De Winkle* cd

A lot of things went wrong with 80s hardcore punk but nothing has caused more lasting damage than the fact that most bands that were influenced by the Dead Kennedys, for example, got it all wrong. At their best the DKs were a goofy surf band locked in hyper-drive. Sure there was atonal yelling and didactic politics but there were also a sense of humor along with melodies. When I first got into punk I went in search of other bands with similar dynamics and found none. Now, years later, along come the Krunchies. They play at blistering tempos and yell a lot, but the songs have hooks and variety and the lyrics have humor (well, that last part is an assumption, I can't understand a word they're singing). Basically, the Krunchies have put back all the good parts that have been missing for so long. These kids today ...they got it right! (Criminal IQ)

The Kung Fu Monkeys – *It's Coast to Coast with...* 7" ep

With another school year on the horizon, a KFM platter, the embodiment of all that's cool and sweet about *el verano*, isn't so much welcome as necessary. I read a review of this record that stated something to the effect of "good songs, but nothing new," and I have to take issue with the second half of that. Just scratch the surface and you'll find that while the songs are just as catchy and satisfying, James and company toss a few subtle twists into the mix. Check out the way they incorporate violin into the still rollicking "Chapel Hill, Surf City," or the acoustic guitar that drives "From

Eagle Rock with Love," or James' guitar work on the instrumental "Kiddie Pool (Landlocked in Lubbock)." (I hope there's a longer take of that song out there somewhere, it's just too short as is!) And for those who prefer to talk about themes rather than sounds, well, just re-read the song and ep titles next time your discussion group comes over. Always a pleasure and never quite the same! (Swimmingly)

Veronica Lipgloss & The Evil Eyes – *The Witch's Dagger* cd

How am I supposed to review something like this? Here goes: Weird, noisy, odd, lots of bass, saxophone, strange female vocals, dark, sometimes creepy, reverb, unappealing artwork, funky, punky, synths, etc.... A comparison to Radio Vago wouldn't be inappropriate. Ultimately, it's just not my kind of thing. (Gold Standard Laboratories)

—Justin Kearby

Manhandlers – *s/t* cd

Rough and tumble garage punk from four ladies who could easily beat me up. It's not my bag—they scowl and scream more than they sing—but *Manhandlers* ain't without its virtues. First up, the band's guitarist is known as Christeen. I've always thought Chris Teen would make a great punk rock nickname and though Christeen isn't the same, it's close enough. Second, the last three songs kick a fair amount of ass. Yeah, they still opt for yelpin' but the guitar riffs are brilliant, laced with that 'surf band on a bender' sound that fueled the first Dead Kennedys' record and the Fitts (one of Alicja Trout's side projects), for that matter. (Criminal IQ)

The Marked Men – "Nothing's Changed" b/w "She Won't Know" 7"

The Marked Men are going to cost me my driver's license. Whenever I get a speeding ticket I revert back to the old "five miles over the speed limit" style of driving. I try to stick to that for as long as possible. Hell, the court costs are nearly as expensive as the fine itself. But I love listening to the Marked Men's *On the Outside* when I drive home work and when I'm on Route 684, which is posted at 65 mph, I try to keep it to 70 mph and, without realizing, my speed, apparently, increases each time I turn up the volume. Before I know it I'm going 85 and my little Corolla is begging me to ease up. I am not certain that the human race has ever

produced a more satisfying record than *On the Outside*. But this review is not about that record, it's about the band's follow up single, two songs which nearly scale the dizzy heights of *On the Outside*. That's a remarkable feat and these are great songs. (Shit Sandwich)

Masters of the Obvious, aka, M.O.T.O. – *Raw Power* cd

Years ago my friend Brett put a Guided By Voices song on a mix tape and it was one of those rare instant connections with a band, and when I learned more about GBV my reaction went past "How did I miss this band?" to "How did everyone so completely miss the boat on such a great pop band?" Last spring I had a similar experience with M.O.T.O. A friend got me hooked on the band with one spin of one song ("You Don't Have to Be a Dick about It"), and then I heard that M.O.T.O. has been around since the early 90s and has released a barrel full of singles and cassettes. M.O.T.O.'s Paul Caporino seems to be one of those guys who exhales pop hooks involuntarily (though his tunes have a strong Ramones undertow compared to Robert Pollard's British pop influence). He also has this sense of being a rock'n'roll cheerleader, though a goofy, self-effacing one. What else do you make of a guy who opens a record by singing, "2-4-6-8/Rock'n'roll/It's rock'n'roll" and who later adds "Flipping You Off with Every Finger of My Hand." I never really under M.O.T.O. lyrics but I always sing along. (Criminal IQ)

Terry Melcher – *s/t* cd

Terry Melcher was best known for his work as a producer for the Byrds and Paul Revere and the Raiders, but he started out making music with future Beach Boy Bruce Johnston in the early 60s under the name The Rip Chords. The two teamed up again in 1974 to produce Melcher's just reissued solo debut, which snugly fits in the self-confessional singer-songwriter mold that was so popular back then. But not many singer-songwriters sounded depressed like this. Every time Melcher sings it sounds like his heart is breaking anew and he wants to end it all. His rendition of Jackson Browne's "These Days" (with backing vocals by his mom, Doris Day!) is so depressing that it makes one want to stop the disc player, go outside and find someone for a hug. Overall *Terry Melcher* is a very interesting period

piece, but not recommended if you are clinically depressed. (Collectors Choice)

—Steve Reynolds

Monoshock – *Runnin' Ape-like from the Backwards Superman: 1989-1995* cd

With a sound that was heavy and skuzzy and certainly louder than most gods, Monoshock lumbered across the earth during the mid-to-late Grunge Period sounding somewhere between Blue Cheer and Mudhoney (most likely because they grew up on a similar music diet as the former). I'd probably be raving about Monoshock had I been into them at the time. They seem to be one of those bands for whom the surviving artifacts capture only part of the picture. Still, there are good tracks to be found here ("Primitive Zippo," "Halloween Party," a cover of Radio Birdman's "Burn My Eye," "Mexican Dentistry," "Cabalgando a la Luna"). (SS Records)

The Minds – *We Got the Pop 7"* ep

My wife walked into the room as I was spinning "Don't Want to Die in My Sleep Tonight" and said factiously, "Oh, that's nice." She said the song was morbid and repetitive. She's nuts. This ep is full of positive declarations. "We Got the Pop"—we've got the sounds that are sure to please; "The Brain That Wouldn't Die"—minds are resilient; "Don't Want to Die in My Sleep Tonight"—we wish to go on living so that we may produce more pleasing pop songs in the future. This is a 3-for-3 gem of a record. (Plastic Idol)

The Missing Planes – *In Honor of Your Departure* cd ep

I walked by a guy the other day whose t-shirt read, "Home taping is killing music." Point A: he's a dipshit. Point B: he never met Matt Barber, a goodwill ambassador of underground rock'n'pop whose home taping efforts do bands worlds of good. He's one of those people who's always sending you cool mix discs of bands you've never heard of. About half of the bands are pure pop bands (those are always my favorites) and the other half are from the slower, more introspective world of indie rock (I'm hit and miss on those bands). The *Missing Planes* is the perfect outlet for Matt. He gets to champion a band he loves (he plays drums while Michele Buono sings and plays guitar), and he gets to play those

styles of music that show up on his mix discs. My favorite cuts here are the poppiest songs, "Everything That Hides in the Dark" and "Hundred Year Cause." The balance of the disc taps into things indie rock; I like moments along the way but not entire tracks. To get the big picture, think Pixies, Versus, and/or Superchunk. (Blackbook)

Thee Missouri – *In Voodoorama* cd
Most of *In Voodoorama* is based around drum loops and samples. Over that, there's some mellow guitar and bass and some breathy crooning. Occasionally the tempo rises a little and Thee Missouri sound kind of like Foetus trying to get play in coffee shops. Industrial-pop-lounge-funk? I imagine that it's supposed to be sexy or seductive or something. It didn't work on me. Not my bag. (Blue Disguise)

—Anthony Bartkewicz

The Nice Boys – "You Won't See Me Anymore" b/w "Lipstick Love" 7"

The Nice Boys might dress like tough guys—sunglasses, ripped jeans, sleeveless t-shirts—but both sides of this fab single are pure pop. With harmonies that soar, guitar solos that jangle, and backbeats that shuffle, these guys are tough enough to be delicate and the results are a beautiful thing. When I was out of town last weekend, I didn't listen to any music for three days—a rare thing for me—and these songs echoed through my mind the whole time. Think Nick Lowe or the mellower Exploding Hearts songs, let a smile dance across your melon, and then pick up this single. (Discourage)

Novillero – *Aim Right for the Holes in Their Lives* cd

Most of *Aim Right* matches pleasantly peppy R&B hooks with socially conscious lyrics and reminds me of the Style Council. Not bad, but not the first thing I reach for. There are a couple of songs that break from that mold a bit, aiming for different parts of the Brit pop landscape—"Abbey" reminds me of Badfinger and "Insomnia" sounds like Blur—both of which are excellent. I could see these guys sharing a bill with Ted Leo. (Mint)

The Observers – *So What's Left Now* lp

You know, I don't like to throw around terms like "instant classic," but if I were you I'd duck because I am fully prepared to toss such claims around regarding this here record and those claims are headed straight for your unsuspecting noggin. Everything is note-perfect on this release; its ten lean tracks, the artwork (in spite of being hand drawn (quick, name the ten best records of all time with hand drawn covers not done by Raymond Pettibone. If you can do it without being forced to include Dinosaur Jr.'s *Where You Been*, I'll send you five bucks)), the production (which manages to make this whole thing sound like it was recorded for \$140 on Memorial Day weekend, 1984 (even though none of the Observers may have been alive then)), it's all here. Enough parenthetical digressions—get thee to a music retailer! (Vinyl Warning)

—Matt Braun

The Patsys – *On the 13th Track* cd

It took awhile to get my bearings with *On the 13th Track*. The Patsys made a strong impression when I saw them live. There wasn't a lot of movement on stage but the songs were solid. I assumed the cd would win me over quickly. Mixed in with the garage rock I was expecting, however, were flashes of arena rock, like the big stage guitar flourishes sprinkled into the homestretch of "God Bless Elliot Dicks." (Is that a wah-wah pedal?) Then I dipped into the band's single, which has a kickass a-side and reverent cover of the always-good-to-hear "Teenage Kicks." (Both cuts are included here.) I went back to the cd and noticed that the Patsys opted to fade out "Elliot Dicks" at the 2:45 mark. No self-respecting arena rock band would fade out a song short of three minutes. Those small choices make a big difference. *On the 13th Track* is a good record, but I bet their next one is better (especially since Jim from the New Bomb Turks has signed on as the band's new guitar player). (Anyway)

P:ano – *Brigadoon* cd

Like a Robert Altman movie, I'm thinking of *Nashville* in particular, *Brigadoon* isn't a great work but it has great moments, which is essential to keeping me in my seat when a disc comes equipped with 22 songs, which, as you know, is far too many songs for anyone to put on a record (excepting the Minutemen, obviously,

and no, not Husker Du because *Zen Arcade* would be better were it a couple songs shorter). A few of the early cuts remind me of the twisted pop songs that surfaced on Shimmy Disc releases in the late 80s/early 90s (I'm still surprised not to find a Dogbowl credit here somewhere), and I like those. Most of the other songs lean on the keyboard too much and lead to regular indie rock, neither unpleasant nor remarkable. Like a Robert Altman movie I wish I'd had a say in the editing room. (Mint)

Picture Frame Seduction – *Sex War* cd

12-year-old British lad: Dad, the guys at school were showing me funny pictures in the schoolyard. Can you tell me about, well, you know, sex?
48-year-old dude from Picture Frame Seduction: No, son, but I will tell you about The Sex War! "You beat me up, you crack me up/I'm puking up, I'm feeling rough/It's not enough, so please shut up/You fuck me up, you fuck me up." The Sex War is on!

12-year-old British lad: Huh?
48-year-old dude from Picture Frame Seduction: "Unity is strength!"
12-year-old British lad: I'm so confused. (Cult Jam)

Pilot Scott Tracy – *Any City* cd

My favorite kind of record is the one that someone you know and trust insists you listen to, and then it turns out to be as good as they said it was, reminding you how lucky you are to have good-looking friends that are thrifty and kind yet would still flip off cops if they thought they could get away with it, and as an added bonus you get a bitchin' record that may (Rock and Roll Adventure Kids) consist mainly of some nut going 'CAW! CAW!' or may not (The Girls, The Catholic Boys, anybody, really that isn't the Rock and Roll Adventure Kids), but, if you're like me and you need new music RIGHT NOW or you'll BURN EVERYTHING DOWN, THE BUILDING, THE BLOCK, THE TACO PLACE, EVERYTHING, you need someone beside the Feds watching your back. Let's not get into politics. There's another kind of record, the kind you never saw coming, and, see, now, here's a honey. Pilot Scott Tracy, five "dedicated employees" of PST Airlines, play super-tight pop songs about confronting the angel of death and what different animals may symbolize (e.g., "snake" is to "hate" as "dove" is to "love") and how some babies grow up to be truck drivers, yet

others don't. Sometimes the Stews sing on robotic, bored, swell new wave stuff, but mostly it's the Captain or the Pilot, and those songs will make you think about the Pixies and sometimes the keyboards take over and you go real super-briefly into the land of Mannheim Steamroller or the Minds and sometimes they're real nervous like Possum Dixon. It's all enjoyable. This is such a fine record. Could you survive a water landing? Start your training today.

(Alternative Tentacles)

—Johnny Reno

The Posies – *Every Kind of Light* cd

The Posies first proper studio album in seven years certainly lives up to its name. Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow touch upon every kind of their influences and styles through these 12 tracks. You want a great bitter pop song? Try "Conversations." In the mood for a straight ahead rocker? Play "Second Time Around." Looking for a country-influenced song with great harmonies? Then just play "Sweethearts of the Rodeo Drive." *Every Kind of Light* is easily the band's most diverse album to date, but a couple of the tracks stray too far from the power pop blueprint that the Posies are best known for. "I Finally Found a Jungle I Like" is obviously an homage to the Who, but there's a thin line between a tribute and a ripoff, and this track crosses it. And the blues of "Could He Treat You Better" seems a bit out of place on a Posies album. Hopefully this very satisfying album will mark a full-time return of The Posies to the recording ranks.

(Rykodisc)

—Steve Reynolds

The Pulses – *Gather Round and Destroy All Our Records* cd

70s Brit punk filtered through the bold pop experimentalism of XTC or Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd? Yes, please! The Pulses accomplish what Blur wanted to do on that yellow record (and every one subsequently)—create sounds you've never heard before but would also want to hear again or, in the case of *Gather Round*, crave. Think of all the accolades heaped on blowhards like U2 and then redirect them toward the Pulses. *Gather Round* is a kaleidoscope of a record, sounding different every time I listen to it, evolving in unexpected ways. This just might be the new pop.

(Dirtnap)

The Put-Ons – *Get Your Kicks 7"*

Two, count 'em, two power pop rubies from Huntington Beach in lovely Southern California. It sounds like 1980 in here, and I mean that in the best possible sense. I'm a sucker for kick ass lead guitar lines and lyrics about girls who talk in their sleep. So are you, punk. If you can find a better use for \$4 go to it. (Puke'n'Vomit)

—Johnny Reno

Recent Photo – *The Monster Within* cd

My cousin loves swimming and lives on a lake in Maine but he never swims in that lake because the water is murky. He says it's unsettling not knowing what he's up against, that he can't relax wondering if a fish is about to nip at his toes. I think he's nuts; buy some aqua socks, dude, either that or move. Why own lake-front property if you're going to spend the summer trapped indoors watching reruns of *The Apprentice*? Still, his argument kind of works for *The Monster Within*. I dig low budget indie rock, but these songs are too murky stylistically for my tastes. I wish they were either faster and more aggressive or poppier and lighter.

(RecentPhotoMusic.com)

Jim Ruland – *Big Lonesome* book

When I first mention historical fiction to my students, they shrug. It's not a genre they often read, but they light up when exposed to the right stuff. So when I tell you that Jim Ruland writes terrific historical fiction, stick with me; there's more to it than that. Ruland, writing with a range and confidence of someone several books into his career (*Big Lonesome* is his debut), takes us back to WWII (with the pitch perfect short story "Night Soil Man," which personalizes the story of British zoo keepers forced to slaughter zoo animals in anticipation of German air strikes, and "Red Cap," which reconfigures the tale of Red Riding Hood as a young girl in Nazi Germany) and turn of the century Chicago ("A Terrible Thing in a Place Like This") like he lived through those eras. And, like I said, *Big Lonesome* is more than historical fiction. My favorite stories were Ruland's wiseguy tales, "Pronto's Persistence" and "The Hitman's Handbook." It might sound like a jarring experience, leaping from place to place, but I found myself thoroughly immersed in each story. (Gorsky Press)

Sex Robots/The Megahurts – 7"

Here's the stuff. Two well-matched bands from Saint Louis, the gateway to the west. Sex Robots sound like they have been together for years, so confident and stylish are they. The Megahurts sing about rock and roll and the rock and roll lifestyle, which normally pisses me off, but sounds dandy here. Who likes guitars? You? Well? There's a great pink cover, and if you unfold the sleeve you can see that both band photos are actually two halves of a picture with all these sons-of-bitches in a line drinking and smoking. Punk rock is the most, cats and kittens. This is the best split so far this year. (Roadhouse Tunes)

—Johnny Reno

The Soviettes – *LP III* lp

How do they crank these things out at this rate? Could it be that their moniker is not just some cutesy/clever wordplay but also an apt description of their workman-like (workwoman-like?) attitude towards rocking, rolling, and recording? Whatever the case, these four are able to crank out a far more consistent and quality conscious product than the borscht-loving denizens of the now defunct CCCP ever were.

(Fat Wreck Chords)

—Matt Braun

Spanish for 100 – *Metric* cd ep

I wonder if this was sent to *Go Metric!* because Spanish for 100 felt a kinship between this zine and their EP title. SF100 use a lot of countrysque pedal-steel guitar in their songs, but the rest of the band makes their way through power pop and oddly dated grunge elements. It's sort of like if Old 97's, in pop mode, had a fascination with 90s alt-rock. With lots and lots of pedal steel guitar. SF100 did make me realize, however, that after three years of grade school and high school Spanish, I don't actually remember how to say "100." "Diece"? Something like that? ("Cien," amigo—El Editron) My teachers would be terribly disappointed.

—Anthony Bartkewicz

Sugar Eater – *Nine Songs* cd

"All you need today is good looks and bad clichés" ("For Emo with Love and Splendor"). Indeed, whereas the pop music industry was once a thriving meritocracy—talent and substance guiding all decisions regarding who deserved "to make it"—things have been reduced to mere matters of

style. I blame the tv. And dungarees. Given the subtle references in the band name and cd title (both apparently nods to Dischord Records; the band Beefeater and the Fugazi record *13 Songs*), I thought Sugar Eater would avoid the pitfalls of cliché. What do you think?: "I long for something real, something pure, something bright to take hold tonight" ("Is There Something Wrong with Me?"); "The days are getting shorter/The nights are getting colder and with every passing hour I feel so much older than I should" ("Walking Alone"). (Eyephat)

The Sultanas – "You're the One" b/w "Move On Now" 7"

Did you ever see *Badlands*? Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek play Kit and Holly a young couple from South Dakota who kill her father and hit the road running. It's great and even though it's set in 1957, it's devoid of pop culture references. Aside from the cars people drive you could never pinpoint the time of the movie. Except for this one scene where Kit and Holly, who have set up camp in the woods, are dancing to Mickey and Sylvia's "Love Is Strange," which is one of those "why don't they make 'em like that any more?" songs. Well, they do. Make 'em like that, that is. At least the good people at Boom Boom Records of Renton do. "You're the One" and "Move On Now" are much fuzzier than Mickey and Sylvia's hit, more 1966 than 1957, but classic pop is classic pop. (Boom Boom)

Swing Ding Amigos – The Mongolita Chronicles cd

I was expecting to be really into this CD. I mean, I have played my Knockout Pills records so much that even I was getting sick of them, and this was supposed to slot in as a replacement. Why hasn't it? They play fast fast fast, which I dig, and there's a reverb attack three songs in that's almost psychadelic, but after a where-did-that-come-from Husker Du thing, the record stalls for me. I wish the first song on this thing wasn't called "Pootie Tang," but it is. This is so close to being a great record. (Rock'n'Roll Purgatory)

—Johnny Reno

Sweet JAP – "I'm Only Moonlight/Found There 'No Go'" 7"

Oh, Dirtnap, you're so good to me, and after what I did to those co-eds I

found trespassing near my 'hunting' cabin, too. Two gruesomely good tunes that kind of sound like someone is throwing tractors at you from a great distance, perhaps with a trebuchet-like device, perhaps with telekinetic powers we can describe but never fully explain. (Dirtnap)

—Johnny Reno

Teenage Bottlerocket – Total cd

Only in the most backwater parts of the country (seriously, if you live in Wyoming where do you even find three other guys that want to be in a punk rock band with you, let alone three that can do a more than competent job of it?), where the idea would have time to ferment, could someone actually start a band that was nothing but a Riverdales rip off and then actually find a way to make it work. Sure this record is totally retarded but it's also completely effective in doing exactly what it sets out to do. There's a track or two where they don't quite pull it off but by and large the boys in TB manage to take three chords (and often times just as many words) and pack them with so much energy that it's hard to argue with. (Red Scare)

—Matt Braun

This Is My Fist! - I Don't Want to Startle You but They Are Going to Kill Most of Us 7"

I had an uncle that, believe it or don't, what do I care, could hit like 690 free throws in a row. He was trying for the World Record, which, it turns out, is WAY more than 690. You get that far and you miss and you have to start over again, you know. My first impression of this EP was a bit like that. It's a skirt-fronted, serious-minded trio high on the volume, which is good, but low on the fun, which is surprising because the name This Is My Fist! has an explanation point in it, which seems to suggest fun. I kept listening to it, partly because one of the songs is titled "I Realized My Error on Harrison Street" and partly because the *Razorcake* zine people are so foggy over them, and I came to like this record a bunch. The riffs are familiar but the lyrics are intense and thoughtful and, although you're worried it's a hardcore record because of the tank on the cover, it's not. 690 free throws! In an afternoon! Sheesh. (Left of the Dial - P.O. Box 3941 Oakland, CA 94609)

—Johnny Reno

Tractor Sex Factory – Live It Down 7" ep

One man's twisted post-garage art punk is another's grunge rehash. Never cared for Jesus Lizard, personally. (Big Neck)

The Trailerpark Tornos – Mata al Contacto cd

At first I thought the title was Spanish for "kills on contact," but then I realized it means, "No, sorry, Mike, this cd isn't for you. Well, it is 'for you' as in 'you may maintain possession of it,' it is not 'for you' meaning the pleasures of the disc shall remain beyond your grasp. It would help considerably if you would develop an appreciation for serial killers, in which case you might dig 'Do the Dahmer' or 'Lick the Knife,' but otherwise, sorry, no go." (Big Neck)

Trixie & the Merch Girls/The Jim-Jims – split 7"

Trixie and the gang lead off in fine fashion. "Going Far Away" is quiet and acoustic and pensive, a song of resignation, but in a good way—"leave me alone, I'm staying in today." It made me glad that I stayed in today to review records and it's a nice follow up to their previous ep. I remember liking the Jim-Jims, but something on their part or mine has changed. "She Knows How" is a decent goof, but "Shakes" is pretty bad. Recommended for "Going Far Away." (Wee Rock)

The Tyrades – s/t lp

Am I a man, as my age would suggest, or am I a child still, wary, scared, in need of warmth and attention and sympathy? Here, at Melrose's excellent Headline Records, surrounded by kids wearing Crass patches and the black squares of Dickies T-shirts yet unsold, I stare at the Tyrades full length and confront a question that nags at my very soul. Can I take it? Fuck, yes, I can take it. I once threw a bike at my brother, and I threatened my next door neighbor with an axe when I was eleven. I can hold my breath for like six minutes. Which will take you about halfway through the first side of this record. All the intensity from their famous "I Am Homicide" 7" remains, and the burden of actually being homicide has not improved the Tyrades' mood. Nine songs, a sound as big as an airport in a medium-sized city, an insert with a cut-out of a chalk-outline, and that's pretty much all you get, which makes you a lucky

punk rock fan, fucko, because anything more might well physically hurt. You might as well buy this. *Something* going to kill you. (Broken Rekids)

—Johnny Reno

V/A – Kamikaze Ass Chomp n' Stomp – Vol. 4 cd

Don't think I don't see what's going on here, Faloon. Anything you deem either too "Rock n' Roll" (read: tired and done a million times before) or too "Punk Rock" (read: retarded) is being foisted upon me while the cream of the review crop (whatever that may be) sits collecting dust in your already overly bloated record collection. Well, big surprise that this release is no exception. "Hey Matt, I got some new stuff for you to review," he says. "It's got The Knockout Pills and the Mummies on it," he says. Well, what my ol' pal Mike neglects to mention is that both those tracks are previously released and aside from them this is largely pretty lame garage rock noteworthy only for its general mediocrity. (Estrus)

—Matt Braun

V/A – Pain in the Big Neck cd

Bart Hart, proprietor of Big Neck Records, need never wonder whether or not his bands like him because so many of them donated great material to *Pain in the Neck*. (Either that or the guy uses Mob-style tactics of persuasion to get what he wants. I don't know, I've never met him or heard stories one way or the other.) What a pleasure this record is. It's virtually unheard of that a compilation storms out of the gates with 10 good (or better) songs in the first 11 tracks. Among those pitching in for the cause are bands familiar to Big Neck fans (**Sweet JAP, Moo-Rat Fingers, the Baseball Furies, and 7-10 Splits**) along with cuts from new faces like **Jack Jimmy Hoodlums, Mockra, and MHZ**. Now, add to the mix a trio of bands who turn in the best songs I've ever heard from them (**Radio Beats, the Tears, and the Locomotions**), and all that's left is a strong second half. The disc stumbles there—I only liked three of the final nine songs—but the deal is already done by that point. (Let's name those bands, shall we: **Catholic Boys, Sick Fitts**, and the unfortunately named yet still right fine **Afterbirth Tycoon**.) "Garage punk" is probably about as overused as "grunge" was 10-15 years ago, but I use the term as a positive and *Pain in*

the Neck is the best damn garage punk compilation I've heard in ages. 13 for 20 = .650. [I didn't dig the **Lost Sounds** or **Functional Blackouts** songs here, but their inclusion will probably sweeten the deal for garage punk enthusiasts.] (Big Neck)

Vee Dee – Furthur cd

Surprise, surprise...my favorite song is also the shortest (1:30)! This is pretty cool mid-tempo punk rock & roll from Chicago. It's thick, dark and distorted, but it also has catchy enough choruses and guitar solos. What I like best is the extremely fuzzy bass. A couple of the songs start out with the fuzzy bass and I have to stop what I'm doing to listen to it. Somehow, it makes me happy when I hear it. Maybe I'm weird. I've heard people compare Vee Dee to the Buzzcocks, Agent Orange, Radio Birdman, the Cramps, and the Misfits, so maybe if you can combine the sounds of all those bands in your head, you'll have an idea of what they sound like. Oh, they have a song called "Blood Zombie," and I'd like to take this moment to mention that I'm sick of songs about zombies. (Criminal IQ)

—Justin Kearby

The Vents & The Teenage Sensation Glasses – split cd

The Vents have top billing here but they're completely upstaged by the Teenage Sensation Glasses. Supporting evidence: The Vents are working a tired genre, Lookout-style pop punk, and doing so with threadbare lyrical ideas ("These Days"??? It's been nearly 20 years since someone wrote a good song titled "These Days" (see R.E.M.'s *Life Rich Pageant*). 10,000 Maniacs tried and failed. Gaunt tried and failed.) The Teenage Sensation Glasses, on the other hand, have graduated from pop punk high. They've got keyboards percolating at the proper times and a healthy Devo influence that pops up throughout songs like "TSG (done dirt cheap)," "Secret Weapon," and "Girls Are From Venus." Then "Wait" jumps out of nowhere with a Beach Boys-like intro. Hop in your golf cart and skip to the back nine. (Whoa Oh)

The Yuppie Pricks – Brokers Banquet cd

I like to think I've got a good sense of humor. I enjoy comedy. I've paid good money to see Bob Newhart in concert. I dig rock music too. From

Jonathan Richman to Nine Shocks Terror. But "funny" music? It never really works for me. But wait. See, the Yuppie Pricks are Yuppies, right? And they sing about—oh my god, hang on a sec, I'm cracking up here—everything that Yuppies are into! Like you know how Yuppies love money, the stock market, and SUVs? Fucking-A dude, the Yuppie Pricks have songs about all that shit! Hilarious, right? Oh yeah and cocaine. How could I forget that one? And did you say song parodies? Fucking-A again, dude! The YPs have song parodies coming out the wazoo! You know that Damned song "New Rose"? Well the YPs, as I'm now calling 'em, changed it to "New Rolls," you know, as in Royce? Goddamn not only are these guys funny as shit they remind me of all the reasons I totally HATE Yuppies. But there's more! They do another song, "Damn it Feels Good to be a Yuppie," that puts the YP spin on that Getto Boys classic "Damn It Feels Good to be a Gangsta." And yes, it blows Weird Al's "Amish Paradise" out of the water! Even the album cover is funny! Apparently it's a rip-off of the Rolling Stones *Beggars Banquet*! Three cheers to the Yuppie Pricks for breaking new ground and leaving no stone (get it?) unturned in pursuit of cracking me the fuck up! (Ok, now if I dare, I'm gonna break character here for a sec and tell you, gentle reader to waste neither your time nor your hard earned money on this pabulum. This is like worse than horrible and, any given page of this issue of *Go Metric* is undoubtedly both more rockin' and more hilarious than this sonic drivel. And is that really saying all that much?) (Alternative Tentacles)

—Matt Braun

Bands and labels, send your records to Go Metric, 801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509. We promise to keep the good ones for ourselves and force the crap on Braun. We love giving him the illusion of having the last word, that's why we never respond to those parts of his reviews where he takes his potshots at our esteemed editor, here writing in third person. When it comes down to it, Matt needs to sell that van of his, which is always breaking down and draining tons of money in repair bills, and use the proceeds to buy records he likes, which, in turn, he should review for Go Metric. But if, on the other hand, you feel for the guy and his lousy van—he only bought it so he could cart around his band and other bands in the area, which is pretty nice—and want him to review your record(s), then write "Attention: Matt Braun" on the package. It'll confuse our delivery guy, but we'll work through it.

TRouble AT THE TAlENT SHOW

story by Joe Martinez
art by Unlovable Frank
frank@theunlovable.com

Last year I wrote about the time my friends and I played a song from SCTV at our high school's talent show. The article ran in Rocktober and I received this email in response.

Ed →



...My name is Joe Martinez. I'm from Chicago. I read your article and laughed my ass off!



I just bought the SCTV box set. The punk band sketch was great. It was like Cheech and Chong's first movie, how they saw punk rock.



My Brother did a breakdance act in the talent show with his friends.



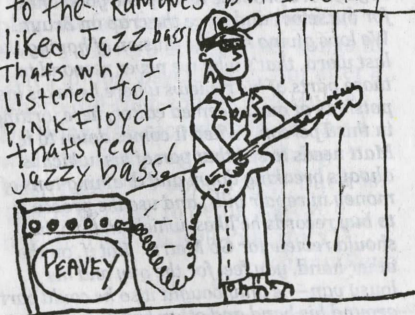
I didn't enter the talent show but if I did I would read comic books, either AKIRA or Lone Wolf and Cub.



I didn't collect too much DC or Marvel stuff. I always received that stuff on my birthdays, so I would go to One Stop Comics in Oak Park and exchange them for good shit like Aardvark the Destroyer.



Another idea I had was to play bass alone in front of everyone. I played bass to the Ramones but I really liked Jazz bass. That's why I listened to Pink Floyd - that's real jazzy bass!



...and I would spit chew on everyone, SKOAL or Kodiak.



I was the only 10 year-old with a dipping problem.





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