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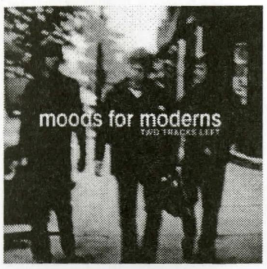

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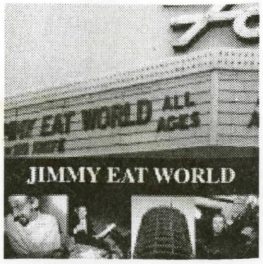

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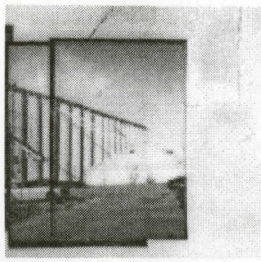

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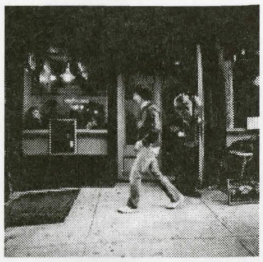

The New Rising Sons
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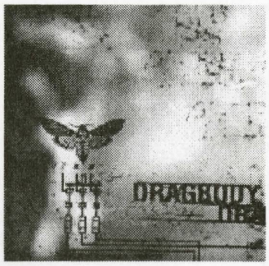

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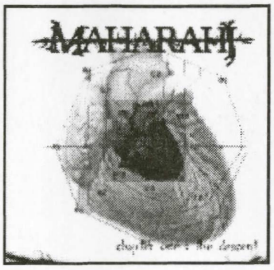

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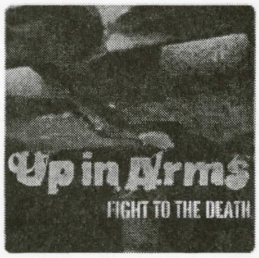

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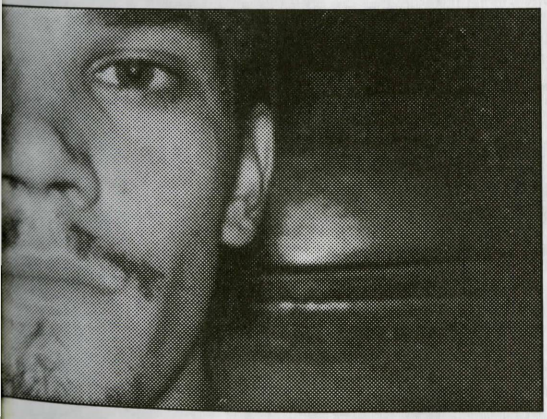

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INTRO

"We finally live in the times we deserve," my friend Paul wrote in a recent e-mail. He couldn't be more right. Tens of thousands of people filled the streets of Washington DC a few months back in protest against the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. I was there too, writing up-to-the-minute reports for punkplanet.com. As my stay in DC progressed, I found the boundary between being a reporter and being a participant blur until there was no difference—I was marching in the streets too, screaming for change.

This issue's cover story is a result of the events in Washington DC. Originally slated as a story about a16 (as the DC World Bank/IMF protests have become known), it has grown into something quite a bit larger—both literally (it's our largest cover story ever) and figuratively.

Instead of simply being about one protest, "Voices of the New Left" is now about the people, ideas and future of the new movement that reared its head in Seattle back in November, found its stride in DC in April and now looks forward to this month's Republican National Convention, next month's Democratic National Convention and onward to WTO meetings in Prague in September and beyond. Speaking with some of the organizations behind this movement, as well as figureheads like Noam Chomsky and Jello Biafra there is a real feeling that something is afoot and that for the first time—certainly in my lifetime—real change in within our reach. "Voices of the New Left" is an inspiring, albeit long read. Please give it the time it deserves.

That's not the only piece this issue that deserves your attention. Aaron Shuman's "Housequake: Can Hip-Hop Shape the System?" is equally as deserving. Chronicling the newfound activism among the hip-hop generation, it serves as a wonderful counterpart to "Voices of the New Left."

In conjunction with "Housequake," we here at Punk Planet are doing something new: We're putting out an album. Actually, it's not a physical album, but it's an album's worth of MP3 tracks available for free download on our website, www.punkplanet.com. Featuring tracks from political hip-hop acts like The Coup, La Junta, Underground Railroad, Anita, Company of Prophets and Los Delicados as well as many others, it's definitely worth the download time!

That's not the only new thing going on around here. In this issue, there are two new sections: See Also and a completely re-thought Music Reviews.

The first one is pretty simple to explain: See Also is a clearinghouse for additional information on the bands, people and topics written about in the corresponding issue of *Punk Planet*. You asked for it [see letters last issue] you got it.

An updated Music Reviews section is another thing people have been asking about for quite some time. After months of brainstorming, we finally came up with a brand new section that we hope you'll like. It continues our tradition of an inclusive review policy—most everything we receive (as long as it's independently released) still gets a mention—but it also devotes more space to standout releases as well as gives you a chance to get to know the individual likes and dislikes of our reviewers. I'm beyond proud of the work Eric Action, Scott Yahtzee and the rest of the review staff put into this issue's reviews. Let's hope it's the start of something great!

I should stop here, there's enough for you to read already this issue. Enjoy!

Have a wonderful summer,

DAN

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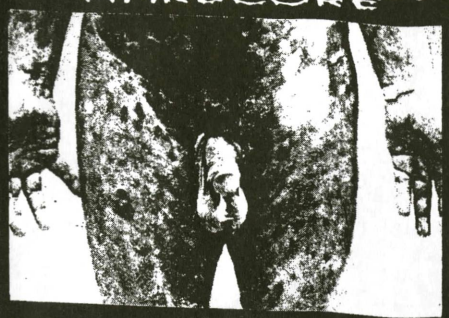

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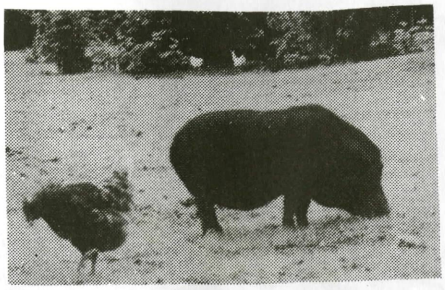

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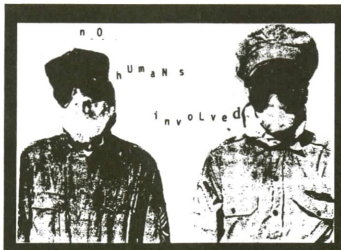

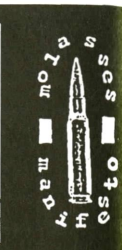

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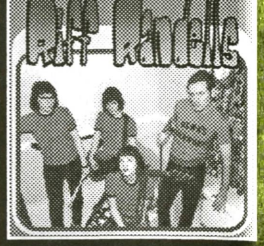

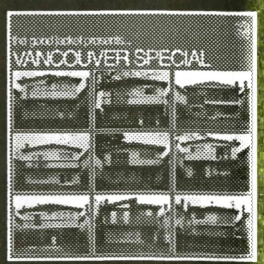

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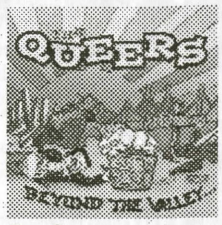

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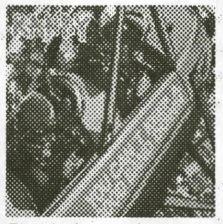

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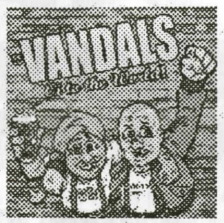

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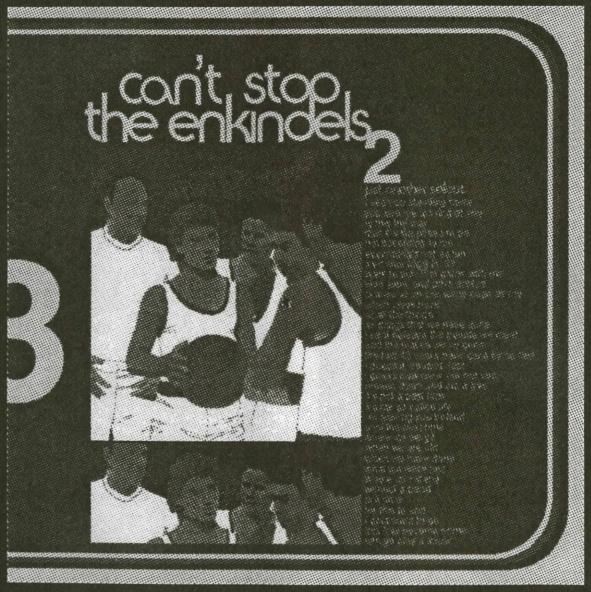

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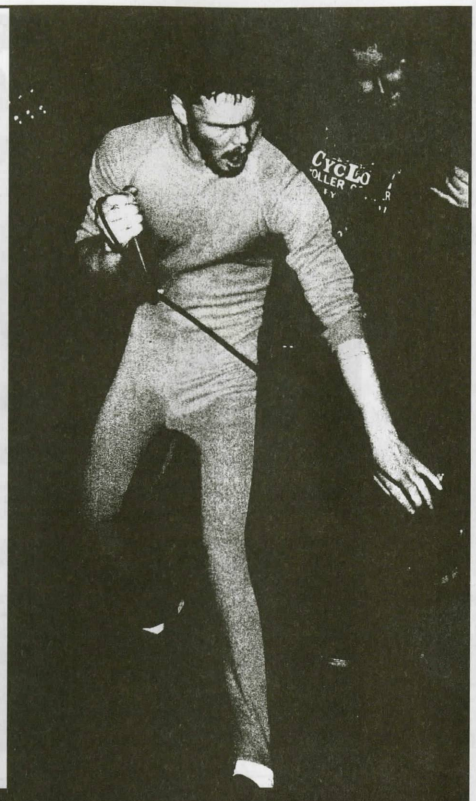

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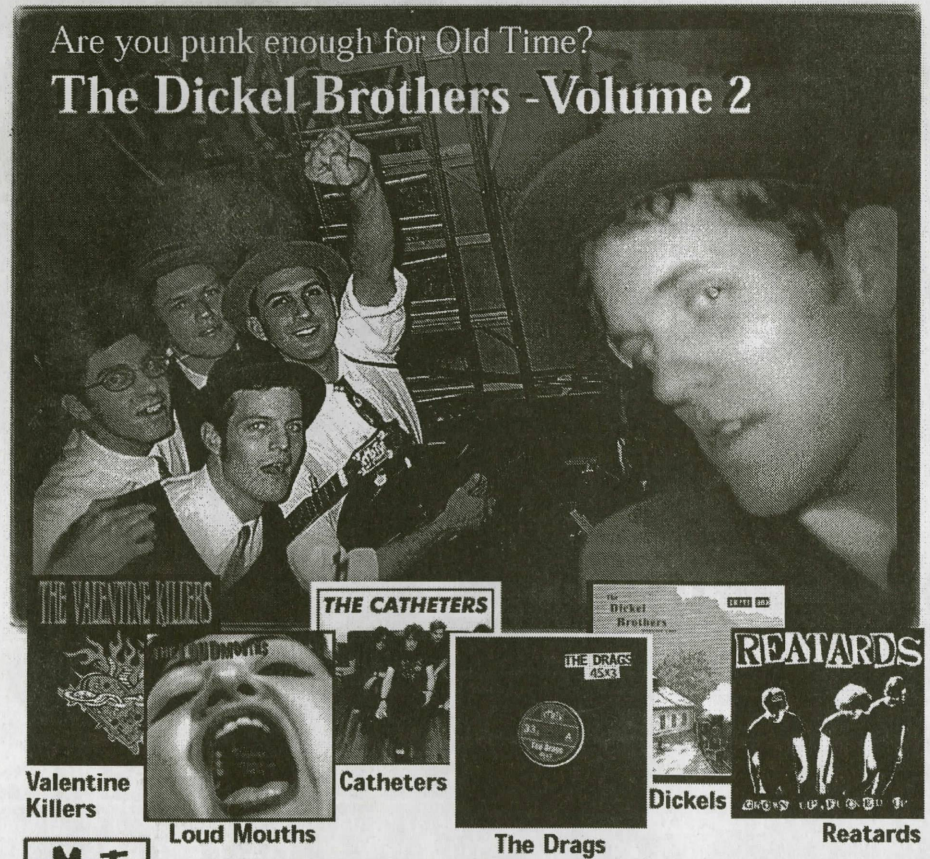

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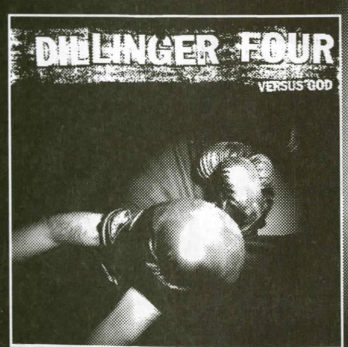

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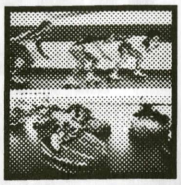

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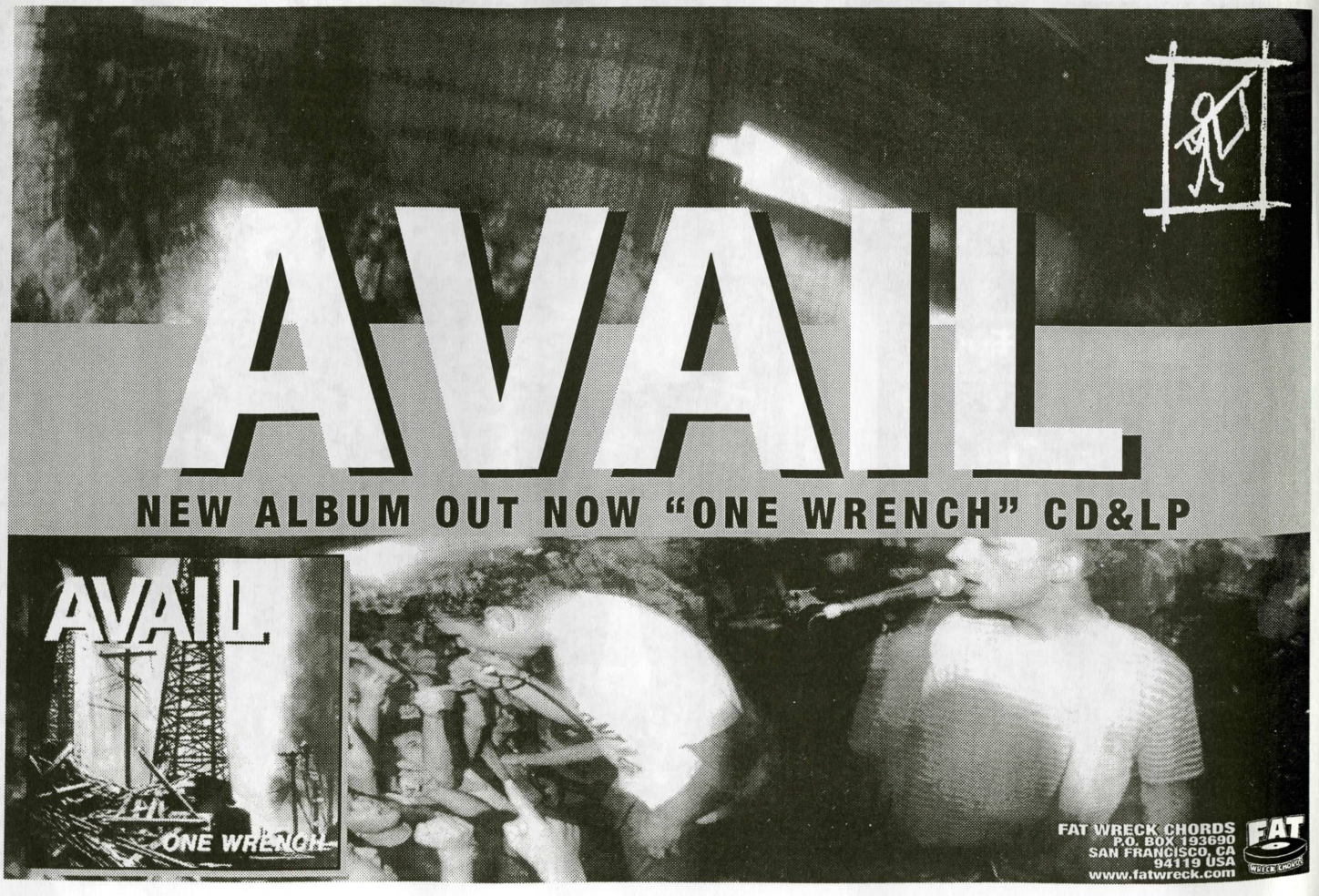

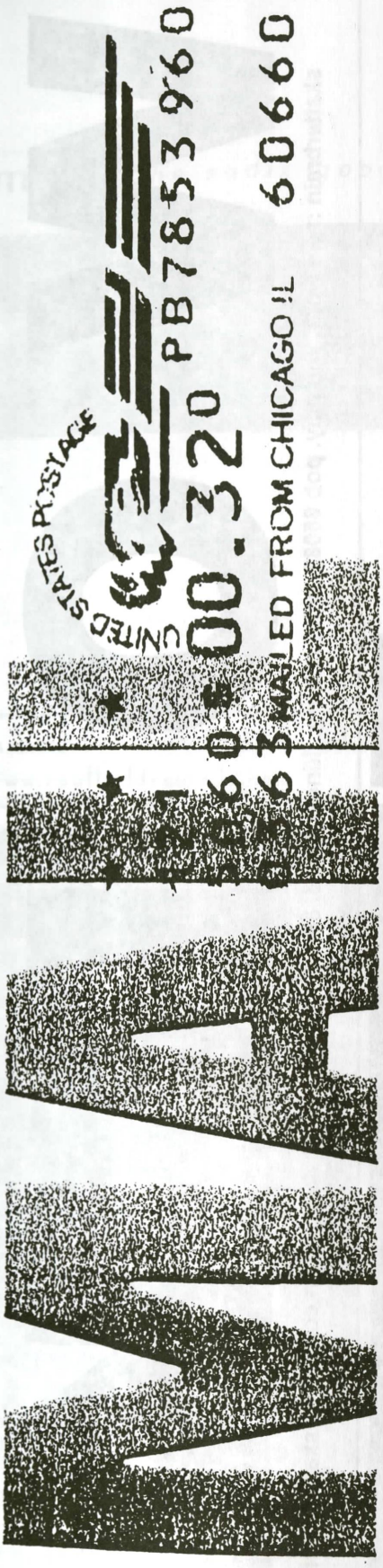

Deneke is not alone...

Hey Punk Planet People,

I've just finished reading the latest issue of PP [PP36] and I just want to say I glad you ran that long piece on the Deneke murder. It seems to me that in this day and age people really don't seem to have any sense of the pain they inflict if it is on a punk.

Where I live in a small town in England called Balsall Common, I get shit everyday if I leave my house just because my T-shirt says DEAD KENNEDYS instead of Adidas and I wear big black glasses and my hair isn't slicked back with lots of gel. Taunts, mocking and attempted beatings are a constant threat and it seems that no one gives a damn because it's me. I'm "odd", I look "weird" so their bullshit attitudes are OK.

It's just like racism or sexism or any other kind of prejudice. I call it "fashionism" because it is hatred based on what you wear.

School was terrible too.

I just don't understand why everyone seems to allow that kind of behavior to go on. They say I'm asking for it by dressing the way I do, when all I want to do is be myself. What shocks me is the desensitization towards the violence they commit. If you beat on a punk or someone who's different it's alright. Like we're Subhuman or something. I shouldn't be scared to walk outside my door and yet a lot of the times I am. Not always scared but just simply tired. Tired of having to fight just to walk to the train station or something.

I too am surprised there hasn't been more Brian Denekes and am sadly not surprised that the killer spent no time in jail. It is all about appearance and this form of prejudice is sadly under-looked.

It's kind of worse in Britain because all of our schools are uniformed and so people are taught from an early age that it is correct to fit in. Those who oppose this norm are seen as odd not only by fellow students but by teachers too. In my school people were "isolated" (sent to work all day in a room on their own and not allowed to speak to friends even at lunch or break) for getting their hair cut too short or for dying it. I was nearly sent there for having my shirt untucked!! This is a normal school...not a private one or a reform center. This is normal, average, run of the mill, suburban schooling. It is sickening.

I hope that maybe some good will come of this in the form of awareness that what you wear means nothing and that just because you have ripped jeans it is not an open invitation for you to have your ass kicked by everyone.

Well done for the piece and my sympathy to all of Brian's family and friends.

I'd just like to end with the lyrics to my song "Not The Freak" I wrote for Raggity Anne here in the UK. It should be coming out soonish and the track is dedicated to Brian:

Why can't I just walk down the street without fearing for my life today?

Why because I wear the clothes I like do other people make me pay?

I'd like to be able to just be me without being beaten up

I'd like for all the trendy logo-sporting dickheads to go and get fucked.

Is it too much just to ask you to just please let me be me again?

Production line homogenized people make me really mad

Intolerant walking ape men mocking me for what they never had

The guts to do just what you want for you and not for anybody else

Looking as I please, liking whatever just plain being myself

Lashing out, calling me weird just cuz I wanna be me unlike themselves who just mimic what they see on TV

What they see on TV!

Won't you let me be?

I'm not the fucking freak

You are the ones who sold your souls away to conformity

Cheers and thanks,

Dan McKee
Academy Morticians

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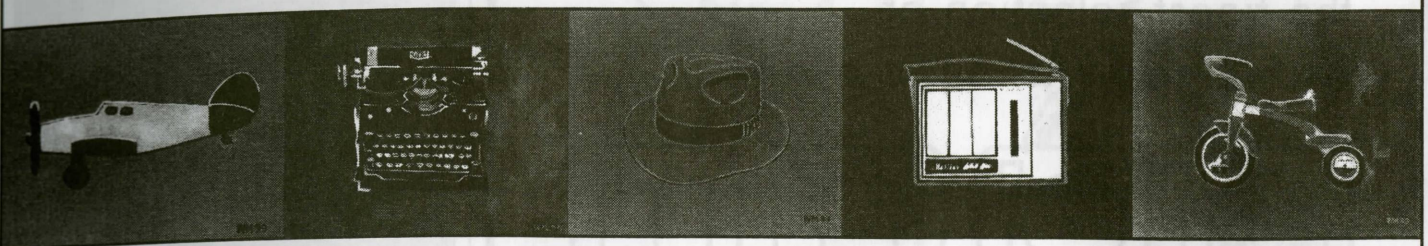
m.i.j. *the radio goodnight*



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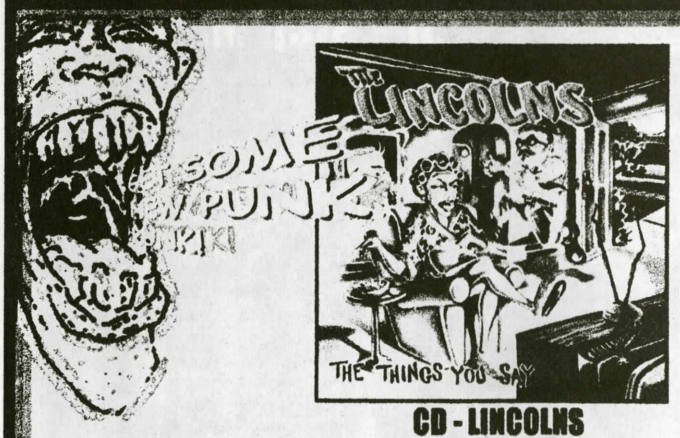

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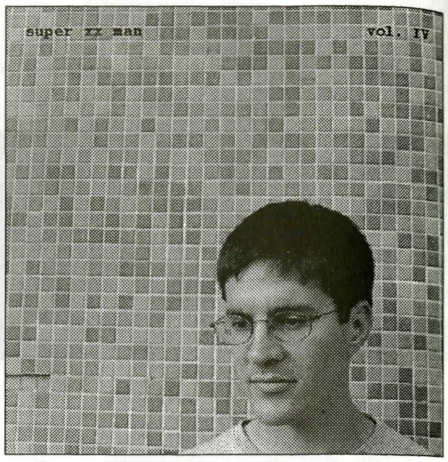

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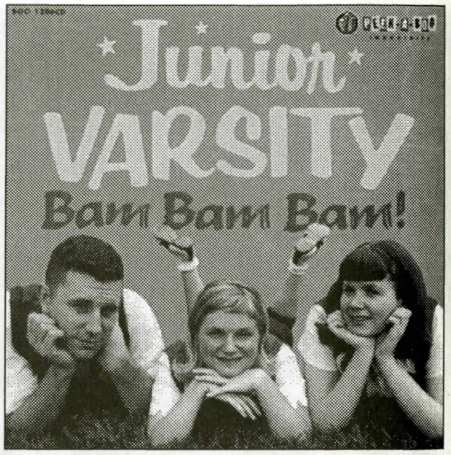

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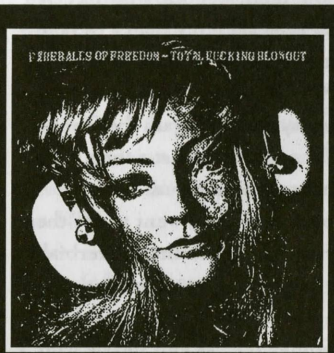

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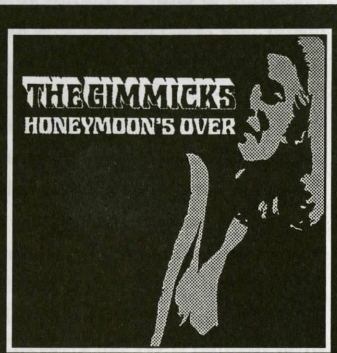

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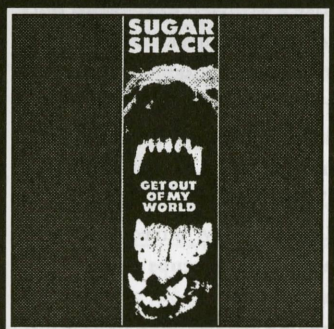

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COLUM

rip it up.

jessica hopper

I have a feeling few people know desperation like my downstairs neighbor. He fronts a David Bowie tribute band. "Tribute" does not just equal covers, but "playing pretend." I know long and loud of said desperation as Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday means three-hour band practices in his living room. 12 plus hours a week of tributing, of dedication to musical miming going on, mere feet below my feet. No matter how much they try, they usually can't get more than a two measures in before my neighbor, the frontman, yells at his refugees-from-high-school-band lackeys that it's "all wrong." It is a beautiful thing to hear four people, play and replay and play again the first 30 seconds of "Man who sold the world" for 45 minutes at a time, with the sort of earnestness last spotted on Star Search reruns.

To be good neighbors, my roommates and I went to see them play recently. The neighbor-singer was going for the proverbial ghetto-Bowie gold, resplendent in a shimmery spandex dance unitard pulled taut over his pushing-40 body, foam moon boots spray painted silver, an array of lavender scarves and nearly bald boas to match his recently disgarded royal purple graduation gown. He pranced across the stage like a drunken deer—arms out clawing the sky, legs akimbo. He did two on-stage costume changes. He made sexual advances to a large houseplant he had brought with him. In between songs he played it coy, tossing his brassy blonde mullet over his shoulder, mugging it for the few cameras that were there, going in and out of an English accent about lesbian vampires and how he's not really David Bowie. There he was, his artistic identity like silly putty, mirroring trace images from the page. All the while the band hiccups along through the hits of Diamond Dogs.

And it was amazing. Even though he was trying to be someone else, it's so obvious it's his greatest dream and he's desperately living it. It's desperation like this that borders on inspiration. It's like that bell hooks quote about what if our autobiographies were written about what we dreamed of being, what we tried to do, rather than being judged on what we really accomplished.

Few people witnessed the blasé, effortless desperation my roommate and I witnessed at a different show recently. We have a secret guilty pleasure style neutral fascination with this British faux-metal/techno band called Apollo 440 and their new album *Getting High on Your Own Supply*. They're on Sony. Perhaps those of you with cable are familiar with the buzz bin video for their "hit single" (hey, that's what the posters said) called "Can't Stop The Rock?" They were obviously signed near the time the Prodigy was getting big, but before the realization that "electronica" really wasn't the next big thing. Anyway, they are undeniably LCD (lowest common denominator) in their perfectly bad-good melange of hip hop signifiers (They have a DJ and a guy who is just in charge of samples!), early '80s metal solos, 1997's finest breakbeats and car-commercial music. Lest we not forget the use of two drum kits—one was electronic, the other made of real wood—two guitarists and a keyboardist. They looked like a chubby version of U2). And the proverbial cherry atop this perverse musical sundae? The Singer. He didn't so much sing as repeatedly deliver the traditional litany of rebel party slogans about getting the party started, getting high, not stopping the rock, going on and on 'til the break of dawn, et al. This little sir—all zippers and cargo pockets—hopped around with a casual buoyancy and at the usual breaks in the chorus, pointed his mic towards the audience of 200. (One must note we were in a venue that has an 1100 capacity) only to discover no one knew the words. He kept expectantly prodding that he could not hear us, Chicago... Of course not, dude, *no one has any fucking idea who you are* (except some dude that looked like Ravewear Ken, sans glowsticks). The band pounded through some mid tempo jam-thems, sweated it up, removed their shirts then blotted themselves gingerly with the towels that were placed around the stage for convenience. Before launching into another calm assembly of rote signifiers with perky beats a-breaking, the singer insisted, with the sort of dead-happy delivery commonly associated with talking dolls, that we put our

SPP38

hands in the air and wave them like we just don't care. Four pairs of hands go up – the kid humping the barrier, the drunk temp worker still in her work clothes, the aforementioned Reviewer Ken (the only discernable fan in the place) and the boy in the front row who nodded knowingly, as if to say "Right on" to the band's onstage banter. They were all ready to raise the roof and rip it up and show the limeys that Chicago *really* knew how to party. Or something like that.

You could tell by the band member's faces that it was entirely possible that it may be one of their biggest crowds yet. But does being technically popular really matter when you have a shiny tour bus, major tour support and clothes with 41 zippers on them? Does being credible matter when there are "street teams" all over the country littering the cityscape with posters decrying "featuring the smash hit" that you don't really have? No, it doesn't. Is it easy to smile when a multinational corporation is footing the bill for all of this? I imagine so.

It is sad thing when all that the major label machinery can buy you is three people in the VIP section, one of which is asleep with his mouth open and that half the press guest list is myself. My roommate and I discussed how in major cities all over America, this is happening. Major label bands spending $4000 a night to play to people who are just stoked to be there because it means they finally won something free off the radio.

After Apollo 440's repeated pleas to the audience to funk it up in the name of their wacktacular metal machine music, kids broke down. A bunch of weird heshian-raver (starter moustaches & phat pants) types who all looked like the guys that deal acid in suburban high schools started petting the air...But both the true highlight of the show and the most *desperate* display of the evening was this kid who obviously a seasoned veteran of raves. He randomly busted into full speed ahead breakdancing and this borderline assaultive kicking thing. He was maybe 17, and definitely on a date with a girl. A perfectly assembled, Abercrombie n' Skechers, puffy pink vested, floral scent style, eleventh grade lady. The boy would erupt in dance for maybe 30–40 seconds at the most over-the-top beat beatdowns, the whole while his head craned behind him to see if was garnering this girl's approval. He would immediately stop, as she, in a sang-froid trance, would limply raise her hand to signify, "Don't go there". We were on a balcony behind them and I could tell she was rolling her eyes. He was trying his best to show 101 moves to justify her love, but alas, his wild style was too much for her. He, on the other hand, was merely overpowered by the funk.

• • •

In closing: 1) I would like to give big ups and shout outs to everyone who "entered" the dance contest at the Dismemberment Plan/Turing Machine/Franklin show at the Fireside a few weeks back. It made for the best time I have had at a show in forever. 2) *Hit it or Quit it* 15 will be out by the time you read this. Pick it up for a good time.

• • •

Soundtrack for spring: Crooked Fingers, Dillinger 4, The Time, The Explosion, Van Pelt, Destiny's Child, Zap Mama, Sunshine, Mos Def & Talib Kweli, Best of the MC5 & presidential debates on NPR.

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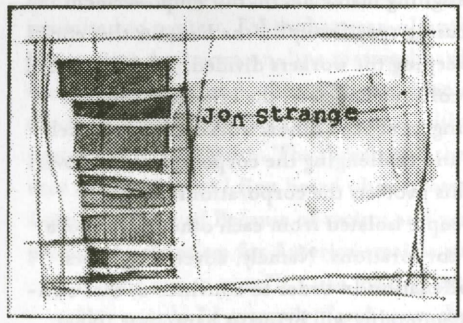


Alienation

As an American, I was taught early on to believe that old people rarely have anything important or challenging to say. They're the people who created the society we've inherited, so they must inherently be the most conservative, right? And as a punk, this has been reinforced with an added twist: old people are completely uncool, and untrustworthy to boot. Generally speak-

ing, this may be a safe bet, but it's not as simple as the advertisement fantasies would like us to believe. In fact, some of the coolest, most radical of ideas have been around for centuries. Challenges to power did not begin with the first safety pin in the ear, and thankfully, they didn't end there. While we do have access to this history if we know which books to look in, often the most powerful sources are the most direct ones.

For years I've been enthralled by the songs and stories of Utah Phillips, a radical pacifist anarchist folksinger and storyteller who must be in his seventies by now. His albums are a mix of his own material and a veritable arsenal of traditional songs, stories, and jokes culled from the folk traditions and oral histories of hobos and working people in America dating back to the beginning of the 1900s. Indeed, Utah often identifies himself as "an elder," and emphasizes the importance of passing along oral history from one generation to the next. In his collection of songs sung by IWW organizers in the early 1900s (the Industrial Workers of the World, certainly the most radical union this country has ever seen) entitled *We Have Fed You All A Thousand Years*, Utah introduces a song with the following comments:

All of us assign blame in our own best interest, right? Well if we assign blame in our own best interest, that means blame is relative. And if blame is relative, then one of the important functions in society becomes: who controls the blame patterns. Why is it that large bodies of workers...in my country assign blame downward, to some "welfare chiselers" down at the bottom? You know, they say 'trying to get a little something for nothing,' and they never assign blame upward, to the handful of big-time chiselers at the top, who get a whole lot of something for doing nothing at all! Well, that's because the blame pattern is manipulated—through the public schools, through the media.

Utah then goes on to teach the audience (it's a live recording) the chorus to "Dump The Bosses Off Your Back"—you can obviously see where his comments are headed, and I couldn't agree more. But rather than focus explicitly on Utah's exhortation that we redirect the blame upwards, I'd like to talk more generally about the effect that assigning blame has on our empowerment.

While Utah is focusing specifically on the benefits that corporate heads reap by keeping the workers divided, I think we need to recognize that in a consumer society, the effect runs much deeper. By pointing fingers at each other, workers are definitely kept from organizing and challenging the corporate control over their working lives. This protects the corporations and their wealth. But keeping people isolated from each other has a more profitable benefit for corporations. Namely, advertising execs prey on our sense of alienation in order to convince us that owning their hottest new commodity will bring us happiness. What keeps us feeling alienated from our neighbors, our community, and even ourselves? Lots of things: television, long commutes in our cars alone, working too damn many hours in a day, and all the time we spend "surfing" the internet, looking at what they've created for our consumption. These factors all reinforce the biggest one of all, which is the focus on who to blame.

Even for those of us who don't fall for the lie that it's the "welfare mothers" who are to blame for all of us not getting what we believe we're entitled to, we still fall for some awfully disempowering blame tactics. Blaming the individual who benefits from unearned social privileges may feel gratifying, but in the end it's not going to get us very far. In her book *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*, Inga Muscio devotes a chapter to the effects of rape—the act of rape itself, and the impact of the overhanging threat of rape on women's freedom. As she offers tactics on how to end the power of rape, and the power of that threat, Muscio talks about blame:

I have thought long and hard about why women are objects of violence. I've been through the Blaming Men Phase and then I passed on to the Blaming Women Phase. Neither phase did me, as an individual, much good. So then, I guess for sheer lack of imagination, I blamed myself. That didn't last long though, 'cause one night I was falling asleep and this cherry '68 Impala Lowrider cruised around in my head, and it had a bumper sticker that said: BLAME IS LAME WITH A "B."

So I thought to explore an option that I hadn't considered before. I decided to love myself. To love my cunt. To love everything it does and represents.

What is the result of women loving our cunts, en masse?

There is no place for rape in a society filled with women who love our cunts. Women can be kicked when we are down, but no one is stupid or strong enough to kick us when we are standing up, all, together.

Again, we're back to the idea Utah expressed, which is that if you keep a people divided, you can keep them down. But where Utah's comments imply that we should turn the patterns of blame around and point the finger at exactly the folks who deserve it, Muscio suggests that the very act of blaming may be part of the problem.

I mean both Utah and Muscio the greatest respect, and don't intend to misrepresent their intentions. I think both are quite right in saying that we've been lead to blame those who are effected by the structures of power, rather than those who benefit from them. I think that's true, and it's a big part of why things are as fucked up as they are. It's a deadly trick. But what I find empowering about Muscio's stance is her suggestion that we could spend our whole lives in anger at those who are truly to blame, but that we would ultimately still be the losers. While putting an end to the tradition of "blaming the victim" is a necessary step, we'll only be successful when we focus our energy constructively.

This is not to say that we shouldn't identify those who reinforce our system of unearned privileges, or those who benefit from it. This isn't to say that bygones should be bygones; that we should blindly forgive and forget. But ultimately, if we insist on assigning that blame, we will have only reversed the direction of the blame without undoing the ways in which our anger feeds into our greater alienation. And finally, what keeps us disempowered, in our individual lives, in our communities, and in society as a whole, is our alienation and isolation.

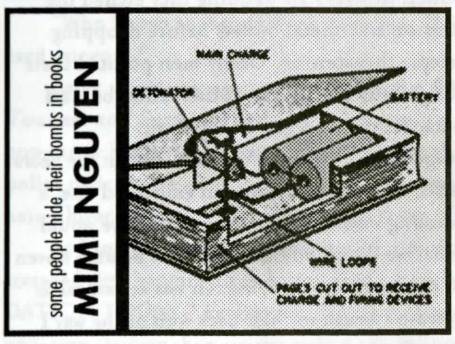
So what am I proposing as a more empowering response? I'm not really sure. I have ideas of what we can do to move in that direction, but I'm at a loss as to what that vision ultimately looks like. I see glimpses of it in Muscio's invocation of her community of "cuntlovin women;" I see it in our small but growing Critical Mass bike rides every month in Columbus; I see it now and then at punk shows and fests, though not as often as I once did. These are some examples of people coming together in acts of solidarity, in acts of love for their fellow people. What I saw on the streets of Washington DC in mid-April was one of the most powerful celebrations of respect, solidarity, creativity, and love I've seen in years. I was pretty hungry for human contact and cooperation when I got to DC, and even still I wasn't prepared for the power of a huge group of impassioned people working, creating, and caring together.

While some of the media called the demonstration "a failure," because the IMF and World Bank were able to meet, they underestimated the success of this convergence as a major step in building a powerful movement. Of course, everyone who participated learned invaluable lessons in tactics, communication, and planning. For me, the most empowering effect of the weekend was our ability to overcome the alienation and apathy that is ground into us, and build our love and solidarity with each other.

• • •

Good eats: *The Need Is Dead*—The Need, *Le Tigre*—Le Tigre, *Goodbye Enemy Airship The Landlord Is Dead*—Do Make Say Think, *Hard Hitting Songs For Hard Hit People*—Hazel Dickens, Flashpapr live, Ted Leo live, *Beyond the Screams*—Martin Sorrondeguy, Shoddy Puppet Company's, *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*—Inga Muscio, *Burn Collector*—Al Burian, *haiku* by Basho, *El Otro Lado*—Sascha Scatter, *Midnight in Sicily*—Peter Robb, and of course, thousands of kids showing off our strength, creativity, and energy in Washington DC on April 16, 2000. Whose Streets?

Please write with any comments, arguments, friendly greetings, or for info on any of the above: PO Box 10013 Columbus OH 43201 jonstrange@hotmail.com



Sometimes I wonder how it is that I got here from a far-flung there. I used to be a different kind of girl: I growled, scratched, ducked my head when I spoke, balled fist always in air. Somewhere along the way I've developed some skills I didn't have before—patience, and a loud clear voice that carries to the backs of lecture halls. I explain poststructuralist feminist theory with (I hope) flare. I'm making an effort here, translating tough girl into academia.

And then I find myself driving around the City, blasting the Blatz/Filth split cassette in my car in a continuous loop, twenty-something mid-term papers on the seat beside me, all of them outlining the trajectory of Asian American cinema to by-now monotonous effect. The "check engine" light blinks at me from behind the wheel and I'm shouting loud and off-key, my words lost out the window, in the wind: "*Berkeley is my baby and I want to kill it!*"

I feel volatile. I want to take a saw to my furniture and a knife to gut the mattress and shred my clothes like flags. Ransack the room, I'd like to throw all my books out the window. There's a dumpster conveniently located below my third-story apartment. Only a removable screen between orderly shelf and big metal dustbin, why not?

Are the months of March and April known for violence? Is it a season for storms, for fierce upheavals?

How did I get here again? On the tail of a tornado, or was it a war?

• • •

Karina and I have been swapping tales from our respective exile communities—hers concentrated in Miami and mine scattered throughout California. (We are distanced from these, ideologically.) She says Elian's relatives are crazy; the twenty-two year-old cousin is prone to hysteria and the uncle—? Driving while under the influence of alcohol. Even her mother, who is no fan of Castro, believes the boy should go home with his father. Her mother says, "Why knows what kind of people the relatives are?" We discuss the videotape, released by the relatives and which looks like a hostage video, psychological abuse, the mayor of Miami, the crowds in front of the relatives' home, struck with ecstatic visions and ideological fervor, swearing to die for the cause.

And I remember something Karina once said to me, grinning, "I was taught in pre-school that Castro loves all the little children. When I saw the grown-ups complain, I figured it was just adults he didn't like and no wonder, I didn't like them either!"

I tell her I am going to a gallery opening; an American Vietnam veteran and artist has created forty lithograph portraits of Ho Chi Minh in an effort to reconsider Ho both as political icon and political revolutionary. The anticommunist Vietnamese community in San Jose and Westminster (Little Saigon) have promised to protest. I show her year-old printouts from a Vietnamese American on-line messageboard, when the controversy centered around a Little Saigon video store owner who had erected a Vietnamese flag (the red one, with the star) alongside a poster of Ho Chi Minh. The threats and the insults are vicious; they mouth slogans I first heard when protesting the Gulf War: *Love it or leave it!* Because of racism and poverty, I find their professed patriotism for America—real or strategic—jarring.

Karina says to me, "It's like looking into a mirror."

"My people," I say wryly, "and yours should get together."

Although we are also refugees, my parents are not inclined to the same fire; I was not raised with the bitterness of lost homelands curdling my tongue. They don't object when I tell them where I'm going; instead, they're merely curious, and a little worried.

My practical father suggested I park the car a few blocks away

from the scene of the protest, saying, "You don't want them to know what car you're driving, you don't want to have to replace your windows." And my mother gave me the same thoughtful advice she did when I first told her I was doing clinic defense, "Wear good tennis shoes, so you can run if they come after you."

It is dizzying, disorienting. (I find out later that there are two thousand protesters here.) Mark and I arrive in the warehouse-business district of Oakland where the gallery is located, driving past crowds and clusters of Vietnamese holding small, paper South Vietnamese and American flags and cardboard signs. We park and approach the block where, it seems, the gauntlet begins: the police have erected barricades behind which most of the protesters are arrayed. The rest wander across the road, with bullhorns, in anticipation of what—?

There is a yellow van painted with three horizontal red stripes. I think a dummy is strapped to the grill—it's too dark to be sure—and there are hundreds of men in their old South Vietnamese military uniforms staring at the small group of gallery-goers congregating by the police car. Collectively, we all agree to make a run for it—the gallery is at the other end of the block. As soon we start half-walking, half-jogging, the cacophony surges like a wave, or a storm.

I wonder if they will recognize me as Vietnamese, and get especially vicious.

I hold my breath and plow through the crowd behind a bald white man in a leather jacket, Mark's flash glaring in continuous bursts as young men behind the barricades call out, "Take my picture! Hey, over here!" Is it a protest or a football game?

I look into faces and look away, elderly grandmothers spitting vitriol: "Are you a VC whore?" "Kill communists!" "You belong in the toilet with Ho!" Their mouths open and shut and open, shouting epithets endlessly, the way fish breathe in water. Because it is dark, their features drift in and out of focus, lit-up ghostly and contorted. (I'm starting to panic.) Shock registers when I pass a large placard with a grim, goblin-like caricature of Ho Chi Minh labeled "GOOK HO," and I wonder briefly if Presidential candidate John McCain taught them the racial slur; I see it repeated once or twice more on homemade signs, printed posters.

A middle-aged man—he is about fifty or sixty—in a yellow sweatshirt banded by three red stripes drags an effigy of Ho Chi Minh by a noose, yelling. In the other hand he carries a long, thin stick. He runs alongside our small, beleaguered group and makes eye contact with me before he begins to beat the mannequin with deliberate strokes, and I understand what he is saying: *You deserve this too.*

Later, my mother says she doesn't want me to write anything about the protests, either for publication or my dissertation, but not because she necessarily disagrees with me. My mother is afraid I'll turn up dead, murdered by the anticommunists, which was an often-enough occurrence in the 1980s.

She says to me, "Don't write anything that will make them mad." I say, "How can I not?"

• • •

I thought I'd purge, like I do every year or two, and had Mark remove precariously-balanced boxes from the uppermost shelves of the closet. I hoard things. Newspaper clippings, flyers, whatever. I revisit former selves I no longer recognize, except this one, and sometimes I miss her because she amazes me. Once violence described my everyday and I wonder how I ever made it out, sane.

It's true: at one point in my life I was surrounded by convicted clinic bombers, stalkers and potential assassins on a weekly basis. It was a game only not so much, calling out names and transgressions loudly, brashly, "Look, it's Cheryl! Remember? She's the one who was convicted of bombing a bunch of clinics in San Diego!" Matt Trewhella –founder of the anti-abortion terrorist group Missionaries to the Pre-Born— once admonished a Midwestern Christmas congregation, recommended good Christian parents buy their children SKS rifles and 500 rounds of ammo. One of the Missionaries working with Operation Rescue California is an "ex-"Nazi, Brian Kemper, the "777" of a South African white supremacist organization tattooed on his thick arm. He punched a woman once, entering a clinic, and participated in "minutemen" attacks—bodily rushing clinics and tearing apart furniture, equipment, files, whatever, in a frenzy of righteousness and just as quickly, escaping in getaway cars idling on the sidewalks outside. He organizes Christian hardcore and ska shows in Orange County, makes appearances on *Politically Incorrect*, once even performed his spoken word at Lollapalooza. In some generic lifestyle magazine—*Swing*, I think—a recent profile on Christian punks featured him prominently and nowhere mentioned his racist past, or his many convictions for violent harassment.

It was endless. Stone-faced children chanted in their high-pitched, munchkin voices, *you're going to hell.* Their parents promised this. We received death threats on our answering machine, we were warned to be careful, to stay away, we were being followed. The disembodied voices were inevitably male, masculine, disguised; they would identify themselves only as friends of the fetus and then, in a furious verbal rush, suggest we stick our heads up our pussies. (I wonder, how did it make them feel to say such forbidden things?) In Redding they etched the names of clinic workers on flat-metal bullets before dropping them on clinic doorsteps, threatening. Godly men pointed their index fingers, squinting along the length of their thumbs, and mimicked the kick-back gesture of a gun being fired.

We would come together for birthday potlucks, go out for beers after work, but the persona of activist became an embodied one, a second skin. While steaming vegetables or playing cards, we would watch the news; at the bar we discussed fundraising. It became woven into the daily fabric of our coming and going. (It was as natural to me as the impatient gesture I brush my hair back with or the way I sometimes cover my mouth when I talk, filtering my words between my fingers.) And when it got to be too much we asked ourselves, quietly, "How much more? Is there a limit to our ability to endure?"

And once, in a strange airport, I picked up a *TIME* magazine, bored, and faltered upon an investigative account on the anti-abortion movement. It was no different than any other piece of

mainstream coverage, full of shoddy background checks and partial histories, but there, in that airport lounge, I became anxious. Wretched, alone, suddenly burdened with a terrible, secret knowledge. I knew who was capable of killing, or capable of convincing others to kill, but who could I tell? Who would understand me? It was an alien language, it would seem as if I were speaking in tongue, hysterical. I looked up at the passive faces standing in line behind me to buy their cheap romance novels and *Wall Street Journals* and was amazed that this panic of mine could pass among them so quietly. I was so used to other bodies. I felt like crying.

• • •

I am always restless these days, not sure what I'm looking for. I prowl the apartment until Melanie calls, invites me over for dinner.

She puts me to work chopping apples and roasted red bell peppers while she sends Sean forth in search of oil-soaked olives, which he finds hidden on a store shelf, covered in a thin layer of dust. It is a full house tonight; Lance, Tom, and Jeff wander in and out while Arwen fills out survey forms for a nicotine addiction clinic, a fat packet of multiple-choice questions and scan-tron evaluations of her moods. ("Do you feel like you need a cigarette right now? What cigarette will be hardest for you to give up? The one you have in the morning? After meals? During stressful situations? Do you feel as if your friends and family are supportive?") Melanie buzzes around the kitchen, cooking pasta in three inadequate pots and despairing of the household's one metal fork. (We are so punk.) Multiple conversations shift around the room—about zines, about advertising, about punk rock, about politics—and we dish gossip and theories about record collectors and creeps along with the food.

We eat with plastic utensils culled from neighborhood restaurants, which are carefully washed afterward, and play a speed-game of Trivial Pursuit. We are ashamed of Sean when he misses the Anne Frank question, and awed by Arwen's supernatural ability to draw every possible question about fish and sea creatures. We decide to cheat on Sports & Leisure since no one could really expect a bunch of punks, geeks and art students to know who was MVP of the NBA in 1984.

"Who knows that stuff?" we grumble. "Let's make it a wild card category."

Later, squatting against the wall in the BART station, I read *Tourism and Sustainability: New Tourism in the Third World*, pop candy hearts in my mouth and wait for the 10:55 train. Two police officers are standing only a few feet away; they discuss my hair— bleached and dyed pink in stripes—as if I can't hear.

As I top the stairs coming out of the station I notice a hand-scrawled sign hanging in the attendant's glass booth: "NO VALIDATION TODAY." Feeling whimsical, I picture the booth as a one-stop therapy shop on days when validation might normally be offered. The neatly outfitted attendant listening patiently through the speaker, reaching out to touch the glass with a kind murmur, "I hear and understand your pain, and want you to know that your feelings are completely valid. You should do whatever you have to, in order to fulfill your needs. The Fremont train arrives in five."

Later still, walking the three blocks home through quiet residential streets, I pass a darkened house. A front porch window is lined with gold tin foil and a giant red crepe-paper heart hangs suspended among white Christmas lights. I stand transfixed on the sidewalk across the street: it seems as if the house, all black and angular against the night sky, has been cut open to reveal its warm, carnival interior, the bright gay heart of a home.

• • •

The knots in my shoulders turned to stone, I need something drastic to force me past this crisis, this lack of output. Turn over new leaves, throw open doors to china shops, take the pins out from the doll. I'm in a rut, bored, restless. Too much substance and not enough style, maybe. Where did my glitter go? No, never mind, give me my old black jeans, shiny with dirt and grease and ass-patched, I want to tie a black ribbon around my hair and commit small vandalisms, like I used to.

I want to clip photographs of technicolor foods, things like cling peaches and blood-red meatloaf, garish groceries found in the old LIFE magazines I've been buying at flea markets and estate stores. (My hands turn black from the dust and dirt.) I will make flashcards and caption each with non-sequiteur slogans from long-dead revolutionaries, like, "No more tyrants!" or maybe, "Rent is theft!" I want to discover the secrets of gelatin molds and that old adage, "If you can bake a cake, you can make a bomb."

I find that I can't write anymore; after pounding out ten pages of lecture notes a week, I feel like my quota's been wasted on reiterating what I already know. (How many different ways can I outline Derrida and *differance*? How do I explain Lacan, the mirror-stage, and the formation of the fragmented ego to bored, boring seniors?) It's not that I don't care about these things anymore, but I feel there must be a better way to teach critical theory to eighteen year-olds. Subliminally, maybe—I could broadcast lectures along the emptied streets at three a.m., pitched at a register where I might trespass their dreams, scrawl Foucault or Spivak like graffiti, all intimate-like.

And maybe all I want to do is this: discover the secrets to spontaneous combustion, catch up on my conspiracy theories and listen to Dutch punk rock with my eyes closed, dreaming.

• • •

Make is an amazing political zine out of Los Angeles. Craig and Jane want you to know that "*Make* is about the dialogues between friends that constitute the backbone of our politics. *Make* is about finding ways to communicate radical, critical thinking that don't cost twenty bucks at a bookstore. *Make* is about ordinary activism: what we see and say, what we do. Make is about making up, making believe, making out, and making war." I want to be a soldier in the *Make* revolution! Get yourself a copy now for a mere dollar from Craig Willse at 1227 N. Genesee Ave. #3 / W. Hollywood, CA 90046.

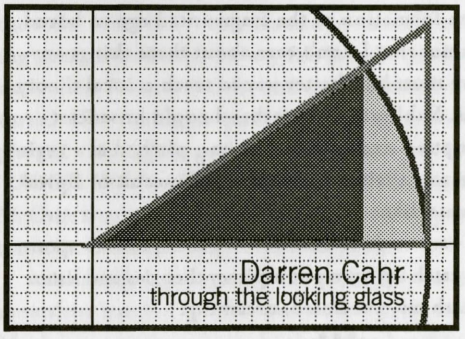
Originally I was going to write my column about a controversy: the "womyn-born-womyn only" policy at the Michigan Women's Music Festival that excludes transwomen from entering

the grounds. Some defenders of the policy claim that the women's festival is a "gender thing," and not a queer event. It's an odd and illogical distinction to make, one that not only denies the lack of a universal "women's experience," but rejects transwomen's claims to non-traditional gender identifications as what—? Illegitimate? Supporters of the policy have also suggested that some women might not feel comfortable around transwomen and that the "safe space" must be preserved, but this ignores how women do not experience their gender the same—differences of race and class, for instance, can't be dismissed. But as black lesbian feminist Bernice Johnson Reagon said way back in 1981 about another women's festival and the need not for "home" but for coalition politics: "Watch those mono-issue people. They aren't gonna do you no good. I don't care who they are. And there are people who prioritize the cutting line of the struggle. And they say the cutting line is this issue, and more than anything we must move on this issue and that's automatically saying that whatever's bothering you will be put down if you bring it up. You have to watch these folks." My whole-hearted support goes out to the transwomen and their allies protesting MWMF. I hope they fuck shit up, and I'll be writing a column about this in the future.

Don't be mad if you see the snippet about the Ho Chi Minh protests repeated; it's part of a longer article I'm writing.

I listened to a lot of Astrid Otto while writing this.

As always, get in touch if you're so inclined. Mimi Nguyen / PO Box 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slander13@mindspring.com.



This is true. So I keep hearing this Blink 182 song pretty much every time I leave the house. I can't escape it. Everywhere I go I hear this damn song, which came out like, what, four years ago, now? Aren't those guys in their 30's yet? They're so '90s...

In any event, so I'm sitting on the L, trying to hum some new song I'm trying to write, and the kid across from me is mouthing the words of the damn Blink 182 song. He's wearing a walkman, and dressed in, perhaps, the most expensive clothes I've ever seen on someone who wasn't a movie star. And he's mouthing the words to this Blink 182 song about killing yourself, or something similar, and I'm marveling at how weird this is, and wondering when I get to escape this song which isn't even particularly good, even for Blink 182, who generally bore me to tears, and then (like a dream) I suddenly hear the walkman next to me start going, and it's the same song—again! I couldn't believe it. It was like I was being pursued, like a weird French new wave film from the '60s, and I was getting a bit freaked out by the coincidence.

In fact, I was beginning to wonder whether or not it was, in fact coincidence. I began to wonder whether or not I was being told, in essence, to kill myself. Or perhaps someone was worried that I was going to kill myself and was sending this song, telekinetically, to me as a warning, or to soothe me into thinking that I shouldn't do it—or perhaps to narcotize me with the pathetic lameness of the song so that aliens could abduct me and take me to a clean, well-lit room where they could experiment on my frontal lobe.

Hey, it could happen.

I'm concerned about whether or not there's some significance to the fact that the first guy is singing about killing himself and he's wearing a Prada outfit that must have cost more than my entire paycheck, and that's just the socks, which are probably made of Vicuna wool or something, carefully harvested by aboriginal peoples in the Andes Mountains of South America. Or whether there's some significance to the fact that the second guy, who may have in retrospect been a girl, who had this really neat eyebrow piercing with what looked like a fly-fishing lure hanging off the end, was in fact wearing a shirt from my favorite live band of all time (the Jesus Lizard) while singing an insipid song I hate about killing yourself that was also being sung by a fashion victim across the car from me.

So after a while I'm finally getting over this freakout, on the L going to work, thinking to myself "Well, maybe they were both listening to the radio, and the song was on the radio, probably that "alternative" station that plays right wing shock jocks mixed in with nine inch nails and Blink 182. That's it, I thought. Just a weird thing.

Or so I thought until I got to work. I made a call as part of my job, I'm put on hold, and, sure enough, THE CANNED MUSIC ON THE TELEPHONE (WHICH I ADMIT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE RADIO, BUT I'M NOT SURE) WAS PLAYING THAT SAME DAMN SONG AGAIN.

At that point, I snapped.

I began to sing the song to myself, robotically, throughout the rest of the day. I hummed it in the elevator, I sang it on the L, and I sang it to my son when I put him to sleep that night. I heard it in my dreams; I felt like I was possessed by the song.

Then I realized what the song was doing—it was trying to convince me to buy the CD! I would not succumb; no, I would not succumb. Clearly, Blink 182 had put subliminal messages in the song, to try to encourage everyone to purchase their merchandise. I had to defeat this evil plan. Unfortunately, there was only one way to do it—as the ad for Pitch Black tells us, fight evil with evil.

I went to the Virgin Mega Huge Gigantic Store (or whatever it's called) and went directly to the listening stations. I put on the headsets and, in the same manner that a man playing Russian Roulette might put the gun to his head, pushed the play button.

The song, by noted multi-instrumentalists N' \Sync, rushed

into my ears, and the infernal Blink 182 song faded from by cerebral cortex, and I felt soothing relief. Now I just need to figure out how to stop listening to synthetic boy bands, and I'll be fine. Really, I'll be fine.

This column is part 2 in a series about one of my trips in Europe. The last column left me in Arnhem, Netherlands, ready to go on tour with His Hero is Gone (Todd, Paul, Yannick, Carl).

Sunday 12 April, 1998 • Groningen, Netherlands

The show venue was some kind of club nearby a youth hostel or center of some sort. The promoters showed us around. "You can have anything you want to drink. Here are the showers. We have clean towels for you if you want them." Sheesh. I was starting to feel pampered. They had some vegan chocolate spread and peanut butter in the backstage area that I attacked with full force.

I took some photos of Mainstrike but was largely disappointed by them. A lot of people I knew in the States whose taste I trust were into them but I just wasn't that impressed. I sat out half their set to talk to Roger, a guy I met the day before who used to play in Feeding the Fire. As we watched the throngs of people swarming around the distro tables he remarked, "You know, shows are really just big supermarkets." We started shouting out things like, "Come get yer His Hero is Gone t-shirts right here! All sizes, small and large!"

The show ended early, around 6, so Mainstrike, Seein' Red, His Hero is Gone, and a few more people went to a nearby Roti shop. On the way there, during dinner, and on the way back to the van, a couple of the guys in Mainstrike were constantly tackling each other, knocking each other about, chanting lyrics to SxE songs, and being obnoxious in general. They bought all these Coke products and posed for some photos with them, which are pretty hilarious. They even wrote all this Coca Cola SxE graffiti on the side of His Hero is Gone's tour van in permanent marker.

We said good-bye to Roger and Seein' Red and went to this guy Songer's apartment. We sat in his room, which had dripping candles, red lights, gas masks, and other assorted macabre decor and watched Toxic Avenger. A few of his friends came over and brought these bestiality magazines called Animal Orgy with them. The editors had generously included English translations of the accompanying stories that I read out of boredom. Todd had gotten the DBX LP that was half white and half black vinyl. Unfortunately, the music (bad metal) did not live up to the cool packaging.

Monday 13 April • Groningen and Bremen, Germany

Despite the rain we walked around and did some touristy stuff. We went inside a belfry and had a look around. At the top we had a nice view of Groningen, marred only by the gigantic McDonald's sign.

Tonight's show was at a legalized squat in Bremen where Marcus from Per Koro lived that was covered in graffiti. I looked around and saw the marks of all these bands from the States and I couldn't resist the urge to add my own "K.B. + His Hero is Gone 04-98" scribbles to the wall next to the merchandise table. Everybody in His Hero is Gone freaked out when they saw the Post-Regiment stencil on a wall in the hallway.

Thomas from Y and Thought Crime had his distro set up next to ours. We joked around about the consumerist frenzy that stopped only for the duration of His Hero is Gone's set. He said we should shout out slogans for our wares like they do at the market. There were people from a few different countries at the show and I noticed that they all spoke English to each other. Punk rock making the youngsters use English—what a phenomenon.

The squat was pretty amazing. It was huge for one thing—about 3 or 4 floors. We slept on the top floor in an enormous room with a bed big enough for two people. I think this was the night that everyone started making up sound effects of different ways to get killed. It started off with nunchucks, chainsaws, and multiple stabbings—typical fare—then got quite elaborate and inventive as time passed. Every two minutes, "Hey, hey—how about this one?" followed by some amazingly accurate and lengthy noises depicting death by bungie-jumping, decapitation by boomerang, and so on. Paul said something about Todd being a pretty boy. "Yeah, I'm about as pretty as a pothole." Paul responded, "Yeah, well at least you don't look like a skeleton." I still laugh about these two remarks, two years after the fact.

Tuesday 14 April • Bremen & Wolfenbüttel, Germany

Man, these European breakfasts. Loaves upon loaves of bread, a million different vegan pates, tons of jams and syrups, peanut butter, etc. Heaven, I tell you. We went to all these health food shops looking for echinacea and stuff for Todd's throat and all we came up with were little bottles of liquid echinacea. We took turns counting out 20 drops for everybody, precariously trying to aim for our mouths in the bumpy van ride. Y (Thomas, Henrik, Matthias, Hartmut) were coming on tour with us plus two of their friends (Jörn and Marian) bringing the grand total to 11 people in the van. Yippee! It brought back memories of the Crudos tour when we also had 11 people in the van for a week.

As we were leaving the gas station this man came running out shouting and waving his arms so we stopped. After much confusion, Thomas said to us, "Did somebody forget to pay?" I got kind of nervous because I'd stolen some stuff but it turned out that nobody had paid for the gas. "Did you pay?" "No, you should have paid." "No, he was supposed to pay." Et cetera. Todd got all excited when he saw the vegan wafers I'd stolen and made a

ridiculous offer to trade for some Ritter Sport marzipan (which is the best chocolate in the world next to Peanut Chews! Hunt them down if you're ever in Europe). A split second later his hand shot out for more. For some reason I suddenly remembered that I had lived in Memphis for several months about 8 years prior so I mentioned it to Carl. We figured out that we were at the same show at the Antennae Club where there was a riot at Piggly Wiggly (a grocery store close to the club) afterwards and the same Ramones/Debbie Harry show. He even knew my cousin who I lived with there. Small fucking world.

The show was at some kind of youth center in Wolfenbüttel, the town that (I believe) brings us the awful concoction known as Jagermeister. I went on a short walk with one of the promoters but didn't see much of any note. I really don't remember much about the show at all except that they had free candy and there was a bike on a windowsill behind the bands. Afterwards we waited around forever for this guy that wanted to interview HHIG and the interview dragged on forever. I did learn where their name came from though. There was some talk of going to see Unwound who I think His Hero is Gone played their first show with but we weren't sure when there were ferries going to Denmark so we opted to leave that night. Since you had to pay for every person going on a ferry and it was ridiculously expensive, we shoved about 7 people up in the loft and covered them all up with blankets and coats. The poor Germans up there had to endure about 20 minutes of being crammed together while we waited in the line to board the ferry.

Wednesday 15 April • Copenhagen, Denmark

As was fairly common thus far on the tour, we got lost on the way to the show. Fortunately, this enabled us to see pretty much all of Copenhagen which was a crazy beautiful city. Even though none of us had slept up to this point we decided we had to at least see a few things after arriving at the squat. Most of us headed off to this record store called Candy Records which had an amazing selection of old European hardcore. I was a bit turned off by the $20-30 price tags on most of the records so I wandered back to the squat. Carl, a bunch of the Y guys and I went to this gigantic cemetery across the street. It was obviously a cemetery for rich people and had elaborate sculptured tombstones and little edifices marking their graves. It was so tranquil and peaceful there that Carl and I fell asleep on a bench.

Before the show started I went downstairs and helped everyone cook, hanging out and chatting with people from the squat who all spoke nearly fluent English. I met a woman from the US, Genevieve, who was pretty active at the squat. We all sat down together with a bunch of the people from the squat for dinner which seemed to be the custom in Europe. The food was amazing—stuffed bread, black pea salad, potatoes—like the best vegetarian buffet you could imagine. Sitting before a show, eating and talking to people who are organizing it, that work at the squat, or just randomly show up is an incredible experience that is sorely lacking in the US.

There was a large amount of really drunk, loud people at this show which I guess is typical of shows in Scandinavia. There were all these picnic tables on the main floor of the squat and a foosball table. Where the fuck did they get that stuff?! Poor Matthias was really sick and was wearing layers and layers of clothing which made him look really puffy and uncomfortable. He was hunched over in front of this small wood oven, barely conscious, trying to keep warm. Thomas sniffed the air. "Do you smell something burning?" Within seconds he saw smoke coming from Matthias' jacket and some people ran over to him to wake him up and make sure he wasn't catching on fire. They said the back of his jacket was extremely hot. He hadn't even noticed.

His Hero is Gone played a very short set due to lack of sleep and absence of energy and everyone started complaining. People were even coming up to me and complaining about it and all I could say was, "Dude, they're only human. They got no sleep last night." I met two guys from Counterblast (Steve and Joaquin) who were going to be squeezed in the van with the rest of us. Having thirteen people packed in was going to be quite an adventure.

It was difficult to sleep that night. Someone was playing a Pogues tape in the room which is not exactly the most lulling music to drift away to sleep to and at some point this drunk girl came in the room and fell on top of me repeatedly. Even in my state of exhaustion I was up for a good hour or two before I fell asleep.

Thursday 16 April • Copenhagen and Malmö, Sweden

When I woke up, these two dogs covered in orange paint came dashing into the room, furiously tumbling over each other and everything in their way. To this day I still have orange marks on my backpack and little toiletries bag. Genevieve, a friend of hers, and our crew of 13 squished into the van and went to Christiania, a squatted community somewhere in or near Copenhagen. As soon as I walked in I saw little booths set up for selling drugs. Apparently, there are no laws in Christiania. A sign at the entrance read something like "Now entering Christiania" on one side and "Now entering EU" (European Union) on the other. Genevieve told us that all the beautiful houses had been built by hand. I was taking a ton of pictures until Yannick told me about an hour after we'd arrived that photos weren't allowed. Oops. Off in the distance we could see a large tower with a spiral climbing up the side of it. The legend goes that upon completion of the tower, the architect looked down from the top, realized that he had built the spiral going up the wrong direction, and jumped out of the tower to his death.

Unfortunately we were kind of in a rush, as there was a ferry at 4:30 that we had to catch. We made it by about 3:15 and vehicles were not yet allowed in so we walked around and stretched our legs. While I was with Steve and Joaquin we found a car that had what looked like a brand name of Anti-Cimex so I took this hilarious picture of them standing next to it with shit-eating grins on their faces.

The ferry ride was kind of a blur although I vaguely remem-

ber Joaquin playing some gambling video game and everybody lying on the floor because, oddly enough, there was nowhere to sit. Either that or we were just too stupid to find the seating areas. Some of the guys from Y went outside to smoke which was completely insane considering how cold it was.

Tonight was the night we met Thor, the fellow who was organizing the Sweden/Norway part of the tour. I felt really sorry for him, a feeling that grew more and more over the next few days. He was a really, really nice, likeable guy and obviously wanted nothing more than to take care of us but he seemed to have really bad luck and was constantly stressed out over minor details. He was upset that we would all have to split up for places to sleep and that we might not all get beds. He carried around this laptop and cell phone with him and totally looked like a businessman but I guess he's been booking shows for something like 15 years.

When it was time to load the equipment after the show I walked outside and saw this guy passed out on the ground in the alley in the freezing cold Swedish night. I approached him to see if he was okay when Joaquin spotted me. "Don't worry about it. He's fine." I looked at him, "Are you sure?" He laughed, "This happens at every show in Sweden. Usually I'd be right there next to him!" Every time I came out of the venue I saw at least one more person lying next to the first guy and by the time we left there were at least 10 people slumbering right there in the alley.

I don't even know whose apartment we stayed at because I was so fucking tired all I wanted to do was sleep. Everyone else stayed up talking to the guys who lived in the apartment except Carl and I who were assigned the only extra room with a bed. When we walked in we both kind of stopped dead in our tracks because the bed was actually a single or maybe a twin sized mattress but we managed to cram. We stayed up for a little while flipping through some zines that were laying around and for no reason at all, he started reading this Earth Crisis interview out loud to me, using different voices for each band member. Once the laughter subsided we turned out the lights and tried to sleep and were both quiet for a long time. Out of the silence I heard Carl's voice, "You know, I'd feel crazy if somebody read an Earth Crisis interview to me out loud." We stayed up for way too long laughing at stupid things but I did manage to finally sleep pretty comfortably and deeply.

To be continued...

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This past weekend I went to the IMF/World Bank protest in DC which was an amazing event to be a part of. I have to admit I was a bit disappointed by the tameness of it but the feeling of all of us having control of the streets was pretty great. Seeing a pair of smashed up cop cars and witnessing the black block tear up a fence and charge the police with it made the trip worthwhile. I wasn't much inclined to chant as my throat was raw but I was pretty swept up in it when everyone was screaming, "Whose streets? Our streets!" I saw tons of people I haven't seen in ages and for the first time (I never thought I would ever do this) I wore a mask. There were a few times that I thought I'd have to put my gas mask into action but luckily it never really came to that. I guess it wasn't anything like Seattle but fuck, finally I think people are charged and ready to take to the streets and show the world and all the fucks who control the world that we aren't apathetic anymore, that we won't remain silent anymore while our lives and the earth are ruined, obliterated. Seattle was no fluke and I anxiously await the coming of May Day and future manifestations of years of pent-up anger and bitterness.

• • •

Speaking of bitterness, I am learning once again that love is for fucking idiots. I have the absolute worst judgment of people. Either that or I just have a penchant for snake oil merchants. Two out of two, that's not a bad record for having my heart broken, my faith destroyed, and my compassion incinerated by men I loved. I hate myself for being so stupid. Fuck you.

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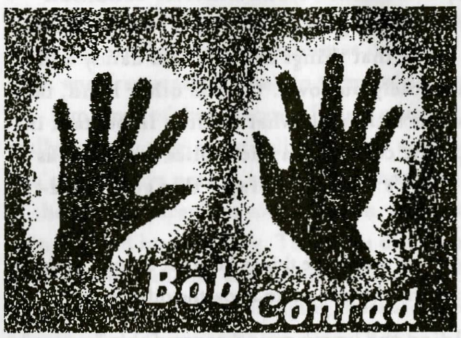

In experiencing relationship dynamics, I have witnessed how friends, cohorts and myself bind ourselves to patterns that guide how we live. Two columns ago I wrote about how it was appropriate to call punk rock reactionary, and because it is so, it in fact embraces the dominant culture it appears so antagonistic toward.

In response, a different view was posed to me. A reader replied, "I argue that while punk does follow in SOME norms of the dominant culture, it does effectively act in ways that threaten that dominant culture."

I agree, and I think this response misses my point.

We know that, in family systems, a perceived threat to the system by a member of that system (for example, a child destructively misbehaving) is often an atonement for another element of the system. A balance *to preserve the system in a state of homeostasis* is being sought in the misbehavior, because it is likely there is goody-two-shoes behavior going on by another family member, or some other family member is experiencing something that is having an effect on the incorrigible child. (An intervention to address the bad behavior in the one child might be for the do-gooder to begin some misbehaving of his own.) Scenarios may vary, and reasons for various family dynamics could be many including transgenerational effects that are often acted out subconsciously (refer to the work of psychotherapist Bert Hellinger for more information about how these often hidden dynamics are revealed).

In other words, the perceived threat is often an act of dire

attachment even if it isn't so obvious. Critical to systems theory is what is implied and where effects of seemingly unrelated forces have a relation to a net result, in this case, the identified family member who is being destructive.

These relationship dynamics appear to hold true for cultural systems as well. In that light, subsystems also play an important role in the holding up the dominant system. This is where punk rock fits in. No matter how spiked the mohawk or how abrasive the music or how innovative the expression of ideas, if the underlying premise is to critique, attack and/or oppose the dominant system, punk rock is then keeping the dominant system in a state of balance.

This isn't to say the actions of street protesters in Seattle aren't important, but rather such actions beg the question: Is attention focused on our disgruntled view of all things dominant, or are we genuinely creating something new for ourselves that is indeed sustainable, more equitable, just, and something to call our own?

Again referring to the field of psychotherapy, if a client is expected to make any movement beyond whatever condition she is in, blaming others only goes so far. I can't imagine too many people would argue that things are fine and dandy and that our problems are solely our own. On the other hand, taking a look at ourselves is ultimately what is often important in an individual therapeutic context. In Alcoholics Anonymous and similar groups, there's a serenity prayer that goes something like this:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

For as much as I find the language and tone of this "prayer" aggravating, I also believe that there is an element of wisdom in this text. That is, at a certain point, to belabor grievances that are well beyond our control ends up a frustrating and tiresome effort that doesn't often begin to address systemic variables; variables that, as we see, play an important role in shaping a larger view of what is happening in our world.

I spent much of my life allowing myself to be pissed off at what others were doing that I disagreed with. Consequently, I spent a lot of time and effort disliking others. Not that I regret it, but I also now see that my energy wasn't productive toward creating something to call my own. I can't say that I have reached that point as of yet. At the same time, I hope that I am beginning to be aware enough to know when I am inappropriately bound to something that isn't productive. And most importantly, how, by being attached to relationships in ways that encourage feedback cycles of negativity, those reactionary relationship end up hindering me from reaching a goal that allows me to actualize a brighter vision of things to come.

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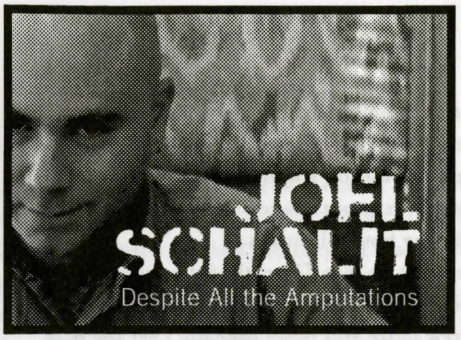


Yesterday morning, while I was out running errands, an old copy of Fugazi's first album got stuck in my truck's cassette player. I tried to get it out, but nothing would work. Every time I turned the stereo on, a near -perfect loop would appear, with Guy Picciotto singing the line "I never thought too much about dying before...Now I'm feeling the dying," every time I tried to play the tape.

I had to laugh. It sounded like a carefully prepared sound bite. "Who would have ever thought Ford could have engineered something like that!" I joked to myself as I pulled into the Stonestown Mall parking lot, giggling. "I've turned my car stereo into a punk rock sampler!" But there was also something of an eerie quality about it.

I'd been thinking quite a bit about aging as of late. All my friends seem to be either splitting up with their partners, or getting divorced. Or they're getting worried about their parents becoming elderly; myself included. My father turned seventy-nine three weeks ago, and my aunt turned eighty-seven not long before him. The day before I'd received a late present for my thirty-third birthday from my older brother David, who'd called me to explain that at age fifty, his body was starting to show signs of wear and tear.

"No shit man," I told him. "I've got so much gray on my chest, it's scary!" The conversation made me think about my ex-girlfriend, and how when we decided to separate, she expressed concern that it would be harder for her to find a new lover because at age 35, she feared that she would no longer be as attractive as she once was. Once again, I resolved in vain to tell her that beauty is ageless.

Feeling particularly saddened by the conflicting emotions that this brought up, I made one last attempt to prevent Guy Picciotto from singing about death. But he just wouldn't stop. I sat there frustrated, worried I was going to have to throw money at the problem. I wondered if for some fucked up reason, my dispirited unconscious had projected itself onto the inner workings of my car stereo. "Forget it Joel," I muttered to myself. "It's just a coincidence."

While I don't normally go to shopping malls voluntarily, there was a CD I'd been looking for which none of the local indie stores carried. It was *Techno Party!*, the new album by the seminal Jamaican dub Dadaist Lee Scratch Perry. No one in town had it, except for this particular Tower store. Being the huge Perry fan that I am, I just had to get it. How can you refuse a man who adorns himself in clothing made out of sewn-together compact discs? It's so anti-musical. It's enough to even make a greasy Negativland fan want to groove out to reggae.

When I got back to my truck, record in hand, I took a long

look at the traffic heading out onto 19th Avenue. It was packed. I decided to sit this one out for a while, so I bought myself a cup of coffee at the Borders Books café, and sat in my car, studying the album's packaging.

On the cover is a very funny color portrait of an extremely stoned looking, sixty-something Jamaican singer, raising a clenched fist, fingers covered in multicolored diamond rings. Pink sunglasses cover his wide eyes and a faux-Islamic prayer hat sits atop his graying, dreadless head. Perry's mouth is wide open, almost as though he's yelling something profound at the Gods. "Ha! Come get me you fuckers!" Perry might be saying. "I'm immortal!"

God, what a freak, I thought. It must be some party. Who would have imagined that someone his age could seem so god-damned vibrant, so full of life? I couldn't stop looking at it. As I drove home, I kept on pulling the disc out of the bag at every stoplight just to make sure it was still there. There was something the record was saying to me—something quite profound. I wasn't quite sure what it was, but I felt terribly excited by it.

When I got upstairs, my roommate Ross greeted me with a big hug. "What's up chief?" he asked with a huge smile. "I just got this amazing CD," I told him, as I pulled it out of the bag. "Check it out man, it's a hoot." Ross took one look and went "Oh I know this guy, he's supposed to be totally nuts." "Yeah," I replied. "I hear he's done one too many hits, but Perry is still amazing. Let's put it on and see how it sounds."

Unfortunately I'd forgotten that I'd chosen to program my CD player to play in shuffle mode. So *Techno Party!* started on track four, with a song entitled "This Old Man," a jungle rendition of the classic nursery rhyme with Perry stream of consciousness rapping his way through it in between a clipped-sounding chorus of a "This Old Man," loop. Perry sounded like a slightly demented patriarch on the set of his own personal musical reciting a psychedelic lullaby to his imaginary grandchildren, getting carried away with himself in the process.

Ross and I began tapping our feet and bouncing up and down while Perry declared "This Old Man," over and over again. I kept on thinking about what a nice counterpoint it was to the previous Fugazi loop about death that my truck had so generously engineered for me. As the jungle beats began to fade out, and Perry's voice disappeared, Ross began to mimic the sampling device used to play back the chorus. "Rasta Man say Auschwitz is Bad Day," he rapped in a faux-Jamaican accent, laughing.

By the time the song had finished, we were both exhausted. "Man, am I out of shape," I thought. "Just that little bit of dancing, and I'm ready to go back to bed." Ross retired to practice his classical guitar scales, and I made myself a toasted bagel with cream cheese and lox. After everything was ready, I sat back down and started reading Friday's *New York Times*' weekend concert listings.

While I don't live in Manhattan, sometimes what the '*Times* reviewers have to say about upcoming local shows can be quite entertaining. Spying a listing for a Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young show at the Continental Arena, I looked down and read a really acerbic, age conscious critique of the old hippie band by Anne Powers.

Powers attributed CSN&Y's enduring appeal to the "baby boom generation's unflagging fascination with the struggle to mature." "God, she's so right on," I thought, nodding my head in agreement. "But why does that generation have a monopoly on such preoccupations?" I wondered. "I'm not a boomer by any stretch of the imagination, and yet it's all I seem to think about these days."

Hence the attraction of older artists like Lee Scratch Perry. For as damaged a person as he might be, his artistic life is as youthful and productive as a person forty years his junior. The reason why I think I've started to gravitate towards artists like him is because I'm searching for a way to mature gracefully, without losing the same kind of childlike ability to experience joy that all boomer counter-cultures, hippie and punk alike, have always strived for.

My only difficulty with Powers' critique was that I identified with it, because there's nothing about my generation's counter-culture I find any less obsessed with the challenges that maturity poses. We just deploy our neuroses about aging differently, by espousing an ideology of anti-professionalism which only leaves room for art that is either primitive or angry, absent of any subtlety, and frequently limited in terms of its intellectual breadth.

I'm tired of that, because I can't relate to it anymore. It's really constricting, artistically as well as socially, especially if you're a creative person and have friends involved in other aspects of the arts that aren't as youth-driven, like writing, filmmaking, printing and bookmaking. Those are disciplines that require a great deal of patience and training. In those fields, you can't be as worried about prematurely aging, because if you do, you'll never have the time to get anything done. You've got a life's worth of work cut out for you, not just something to fritter away a certain and necessary part of your twenties with. If that isn't life affirming, I don't know what is.

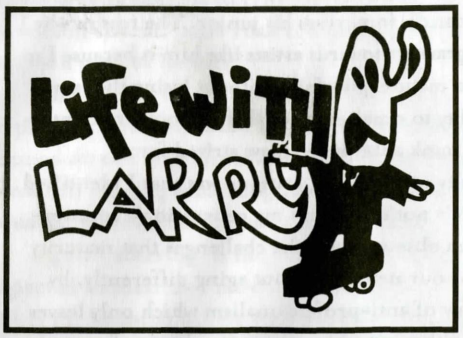
Getting to know people who do other kinds of art has totally transformed me. I know longer see music as a way to forestall certain kinds of inevitabilities, like getting older. Part of that comes from wanting to make art continue to remain relevant to myself regardless of my age, just like it works for my non-musical friends. And part of that comes from not wanting to restrict my sense of creativity to a particular period in my life, precisely because musical subcultures like punk helped me equate art with freedom.

All this came to mind as I worked on prying my Fugazi tape free of the clutches of my car stereo. For a moment, Guy Picciotto's voice rang out again, only to disintegrate into shreds as I pulled the cassette out of the dashboard, and all the magnetic tape began to start shooting out onto the floor.

Curious as to whether the tape player would work now, I hit the power button and popped an unmarked mix tape in, hoping that I hadn't destroyed anything. Not only did my stereo still work, but the first thing to burst out of my speakers was Fugazi progeny Asian Dub Foundation's "Memory War," pounding out

the lines "Who controls the past controls the present/And who controls the present controls the future."

Deeply satisfied that nothing was broken, I chuckled at the irony of what I was now hearing. "Perhaps all this obsession with aging is all about coming to terms with how disappointing the present is," I mused as I victoriously lit a cigarette and sat on my truck's bumper. "That's gotta be it. Especially when you consider how my cassette player created a loop about death just before I sought out a compact disc-shaped guarantee against mortality."



Spike Anarkie's Educated Cousin

Some longtime readers of this column (not many, I'll admit) have been asking what ever became of Spike Anarkie, Berkeley's premier gutterpunk, ne'er-do-well, and all-round loser.

The answer is not surprising; Spike's been lurking in his usual haunts: jail, dumpsters, the gutter, and when things get especially tight, his parents' house. And indeed, that's where we find Spike today, at Mom and Dad Anarkie's roomy and tasteful brown shingle pad on the prestigious North Side of Berkeley.

The occasion is the annual Anarkie family reunion, and while Spike's not normally the type to celebrate family ties, the get-together promises, as Spike explained to his best friend Dirt, "shitloads of food and all the booze you can drink."

Naturally Dirt wanted to come along, but even in his normally addled state, Spike was clever enough to realize that one crusty punk was about as much as even the good-natured Anarkie clan was likely to put up with. "I'll bring you some leftovers and a couple forty-ouncers," he lied.

Like all good Berkeley liberals, Mom and Dad Anarkie are way into multiculturalism, so for this year's party they had settled on a Mexican theme. There was a mariachi band, the red, green and white bunting was interspersed with portraits of Emiliano Zapata and Sub-comandante Marcos, and a host of sharply dressed Mexican waiters dished out tacos, burritos, and freshly made enchiladas to the otherwise completely white crowd.

The party had been underway for a few hours when Spike turned up, so nobody took much notice of his bedraggled mohawk or the fact that he hadn't changed his clothes in two weeks and smelled as though he had spent the previous night in a dumpster (which in fact he had). Anyway, as I mentioned, the extended Anarkie family were a very liberal bunch, many of them veterans of the 1960s protest movement, and thought it was just great that today's young people were continuing the fight against blind conformity and social injustice.

Or something like that. If the truth be told, it was probably more the fact that everyone had been at the beer and margaritas all afternoon and wouldn't have much cared if a fire-breathing Martian had walked in. Spike propped himself up halfway between the fridge and the burrito table and set about the serious business of stuffing himself stupid.

When he'd eaten and drunk about as much as he could handle for a while, Spike got a bit bored, and decided to use a bowl of red taco sauce to write, "Fuck Ur Capitolest Sossiety" on the side of the fridge. He was admiring his handiwork when he noticed a grey-haired guy about his dad's age standing there watching.

Too drunk to either run away or think of a convincing explanation, Spike went a little red in the face. "Sorry, old dude, I was just goofing around, I'll clean it off in a minute."

"Clean it off? What are you talking about? I'd like to see dozens more kids like you. You should be writing anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist slogans all over this decadent festival of hypocrisy!"

Spike didn't know what to make of this. "Dude, what are you talking about? What are you doing here? This is like a family reunion. Did you crash it? That's hell of cool if you did."

"No, no, not at all," replied the old duffer. "You're young Eugene, aren't you?" (As longtime Spike-watchers will know, Eugene is indeed his real name, though he has threatened to kill me for revealing this information).

"The name's Spike, dude. Who are you?"

"I'm your cousin. You've never met me before because I live on the East Coast and I don't get out this way much. My name's Norm. Norm Chompsky."

"Chompsky? Yeah, well you got the wrong family, dude, this is the Anarkie family reunion."

Norm explained that he'd been born an Anarkie, but had changed his name to Chompsky when he got a job teaching at one of those big-time Eastern universities. "I got a bit tired of having the whole class burst out laughing when I'd say, 'Hello, I'm Professor Anarkie.'"

"Yeah, fuck college anyway, those college kids are assholes," Spike offered.

"You're so right, they're mostly the pre-programmed progeny of the corporate elite who are being groomed to play their murderous roles in America's brutal system of political and cultural hegemony," Professor Chompsky agreed.

Spike's eyes widened a bit at this. "Dude, what language do they speak where you come from?"

Professor Chompsky blushed and apologized. "I'm afraid I slipped into my academic mode for a moment there. I certainly didn't mean to patronize you, since it's the instinctive and intuitive knowledge of true scions of the working class like yourself which must ultimately underpin the grassroots organizations that can restore true democracy and freedom to this benighted land."

"Um, yeah, dude," Spike shrugged, "want another beer?"

"I'd be happy and proud to share a beverage and some comradeship with you, my young friend. May I be so bold to infer

from your sartorial semiotics that you are affiliated with the punk rock youth culture?"

Spike wasn't too big on the vocabulary tip even when he wasn't half drunk, but one word he always recognized was "punk."

"Dude, you know about punk?" he asked incredulously.

"Why yes, I've become very involved with the underground punk scene," Professor Chompsky assured him. "I've had books published by the ACK Press, an underground punk collective. Why, I've even appeared on a record with the famous punk rock group Sad Religion."

"Sad Religion, huh? They kind of sold out, but I guess they used to be cool in the old days," Spike conceded. "So what instrument did you play?"

"Oh, I didn't play anything," Professor Chompsky laughed, "I just gave a lecture on how we're all brainwashed into giving our consent to the diabolically distorted simulacrum of democracy that is constantly shoved down our throats by the elite classes."

"Too bad you didn't do it in English, maybe more people would have listened to it," Spike suggested. "Anyway, what's this 'elite' thing you keep talking about?"

"The elite are that tiny class of people who control all of our institutions, who never allow a dissenting voice to be heard. They control the media, the universities, the corporations, the governments, everything..."

"Oh, I get it dude, they're like fascists and shit..."

"Well, they're not all fascists, but you're not far off."

Spike thought for a long minute. Well, any length of time spent thinking by Spike seemed like a long time, but he finally came up with a question that was troubling him.

"OK, so this elite thing, you say they control all the universities and shit. So how come they let you be a professor then?"

"Oh, it's just one of their devious tricks, to make people think that we have freedom of speech in America. They'll let me talk to a few university students, but they never invite me on television to give my views..."

"Dude, it's like I told you, you could probably get on television easier if you'd learn to talk English. You should get on The Simpsons, hell of people watch that. But I know what you mean; I got the same trouble trying to get a record deal for my band the Fucken Shitz. People just don't want to hear us because we sing about how society is fucked."

"Exactly. You see, we're essentially in the same boat, Spike. Dissenting voices are just not tolerated under totalitarian state capitalism. What might frighten the men of property is generally kept far from the public eye."

"Yeah, but at least you got one record deal and a book deal, so maybe a few people heard of you. But it must suck to be so old and still be poor and unknown and all that...Do you have to sleep in dumpsters sometimes too?"

"Oh no," laughed Professor Chompsky, "I'm not poor at all. Why, I've published dozens of books, and along with my university salary, I make a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. And I'm not exactly unknown, either; people all over the world have read my books."

"Dude, you've got that kind of money?" Spike demanded. "Let's put out our own record like you did with Sad Religion! We can have the Fucken Shitz on one side and you can talk your stuff on the other side. Maybe you could even jam with us!"

"You never know," Professor Chompsky smiled. "We've got to form a united front against the forces of cultural hegemony."

"What's this 'hegemony' you keep talking about, is it like when the pigs fuck with you all the time or something?"

"Let me illustrate with something I call the Burrito Theory of Cultural Hegemony." Professor Chompsky reached over and grabbed a luscious vegetarian burrito from a nearby table.

"Look at this bloated thing!" he demanded.

Spike was bewildered. Having eaten several of the things, he couldn't find anything particularly wrong with vegetarian burritos. But with a sudden gesture, Professor Chompsky unrolled the burrito shell and sent an avalanche of avocado, lettuce, homegrown organic cilantro, and delicately marinated pinto and black beans cascading to the ground.

"Once upon time," he declaimed, "before the plague of European civilization unleashed its genocidal forces on the indigenous people of this hemisphere, burritos consisted of nothing more than rice and beans and hand made tortillas of golden maize."

"Oh, yeah, I know, that's the kind we buy when we've only got a dollar," Spike noted.

"But then what happened? Simple, peasant foods were not longer good enough for the new consumerist paradigm. The decent, fundamental rice and beans were overpowered by great unseemly gobs of avocado and cloying masses of California cheese. It represents perfectly the way the perverted values of Western culture have overwhelmed all that was once decent in this world."

"Yeah, I guess..." Spike said dubiously, "but you got to admit that super vegetarian burritos taste hell of better than rice and bean ones."

"That's not the point!" shouted Professor Chompsky, getting a bit red in the face, a condition not helped by the late afternoon California sun and the fact that he and Spike had switched to swigging tequila straight from the bottle.

"And look at this abomination!" he continued, gesturing around the yard at all the well-fed doctors and lawyers and teachers who made up the mostly middle-class Anarkie clan. "Supping on the flesh and drinking the blood of the Third World, that's what they're doing! And bringing in these oppressed Mexican servants to wait on them is just more insult to injury!"

By now Spike was so far gone that he didn't notice or care that he still had little idea what this Chompsky dude was on about. All he knew for sure was that the guy seemed pretty pissed off about something and didn't mind letting people know about it, which meant he and Spike had at least one thing in common. He

also noticed that almost everyone else at the party had moved as far away as possible from the drunken ranting spectacle of the punk and the professor.

"I'll bet you were at the Battle of Seattle!" Professor Chompsky suddenly burst out. "I'll bet you were one of those heroic young people leading the charge against the forces of global capitalism!"

"Well, actually, no, I was in jail at the time," Spike conceded. "Drunk and disorderly. Again."

"See!" Professor Chompsky shouted in triumph. "The forces of repression will stop at nothing to deter youthful idealists from bringing democracy into the streets. First they drive you to drink, then they put you in prison for it!"

Spike hadn't thought of it that way before, but he liked the idea that it wasn't his fault for getting drunk and falling down in the middle of Telegraph Avenue in front of a police car. He should have known all along that it was society that made him do it.

"I'll tell you what," Professor Chompsky said. "Let's stage our own protest against cultural hegemony starting right here and now!"

"Sure thing, dude," Spike agreed blearily. "How?"

"Let's teach these whitebread middle class hypocrites that they can't blithely expropriate and distort indigenous culture. Here they are gobbling down their Mexican foods and drinks that they've stolen from their rightful owners and not a real Mexican in sight except for the servants. I propose we go down to the Mission District and invite the real Mexican people to share at this feast."

This made only a limited amount of sense to Spike, but he sensed the prospect of chaos, so he was all in favor. They hopped into Professor Chompsky's Mercedes and pulled up at the corner of Mission and 16th, in the heart of San Francisco's Latino neighborhood.

"Look at that," Professor Chompsky shouted, his voice barely able to contain his outrage. He was pointing at an enormous Taco Bell, right there on Mission Street. It was packed with customers, too.

"Is there anything more emblematic of how American imperialism is devastating any and all cultures that dare to deviate? How dare an American fast food corporation come set up shop in the middle of this indigenous neighborhood? Let's go in there and tell those fat suburban yuppies that they can't come marching into the Mission District and co-opt its culture."

And march in they did, but even Spike, drunk as he was, was able to see that there weren't any fat suburban yuppies in the place. In fact the yuppies were all down the street at the authentic Mexican taqueria. Here in Taco Bell, pretty much all the customers were poor Mexicans.

But Professor Chompsky was undeterred. He leapt onto a table top and shouted, "*Mis compañeros!* Don't be brainwashed by the white man's talking chihuahua tricks! Don't let them inveigle you into eating their corporate swill and vitiating your culture to the point of extinction! Rise up and follow me into the streets! Reclaim your heritage! Demand your rights!"

Everybody had stopped to stare at the seemingly demented elderly man, but they weren't as patient as Spike about the fact that he didn't make much sense. "Shut up, you silly *gringo*," someone finally said, "Can't you see I'm trying to eat my lunch in peace?"

Professor Chompsky carried on undeterred until someone else lost his patience and sent a 7-Layer Burrito winging his way. It caught him square in the forehead and deconstructed itself into a dual metaphor for corporate cultural imperialism and the fact that nobody was particularly interested in hearing about it. It was rare that Spike showed any sense at all, let alone more sense than that of his more highly educated elders, but at this point, he intervened, and led the drunken professor, reconstituted guacamole dripping down his exasperated face, back into the street.

"Dude, I don't think those guys were into what you're talking about," he suggested. "I'm serious, man, if you're going to hang out in California, you really ought to think about taking English lessons."

By now Professor Chompsky was a bit too far gone to talk, let alone drive, so he very unwisely let Spike take the wheel of his Mercedes. They got an entire two blocks before Spike piloted the car into the side of the Valencia Street Police Station, and although the police didn't normally take much notice of the muggings and beatings that took place outside their building, it was kind of hard to ignore this crash.

So, sadly, yet another grass roots insurrection was crushed by the storm troopers of imperialism. Back in Berkeley at the Anarkie homestead, the decadent capitalist party went on far into the night, while Spike and Professor Chompsky spent the remainder of Cinco De Mayo (for indeed, ironically, it was Mexican Independence Day) in the police cells. But don't worry. They'll be back.

In three weeks I will be moving out of this house that I have lived in for three years. I can't believe it has been that long but I guess it has, looking back at the old dates scribbled in my chequebook. It's not that I hate my current living situation, not at all, just that the time has come for me to move onwards and upwards—literally.

I weighed the pros and cons of living in a one-bedroom basement apartment and decided that I need sunlight and co-habitation once again. I need roommates to foist my neurotic ramblings onto (this column only satiates that need on a part-time basis), to make yummy "Patti Potatoes" for, to bring me limon sports drinks when I am sick, etc. Nobody believes my word that the stuff actually works.

Luckily, I have found three future fantabulous roomies with whom I am going to be living in this great house with tons of perks. It is so nice and clean that I think my parents may even approve of my "home-away-from-home" for once. You know, they are typical suburbanites with typical uber-suburbanite wishes for their children. Everything middle child, black sheep Patti does is half-assed, unless I were to suddenly go insane and marry

a doctor or become Miss Korea 2000 (not bloody likely).

All of that to say I am pretty stoked about moving house and into one that is not a magic marker away from having "Student Slum" graffitied across the front of it. Although one of said holes' front lawn, where I fondly watched the house across the street go up in flames, boasted a large broken television with a face drawn onto it for a whole winter's worth of irritating the neighbours. Neighbours who, I might add, would throw bowlfulls of perfectly fine looking potato chips onto our lawn. Like, whatev! But it's hard to get mad at semi-senile, old neighbourly folk, you know? They work that elderly card for all it's worth man. Geez.

Incidentally, the old pad de potato chips is on the same street as my soon-to-be pad de peanuts. I will explain in a moment why I am likening past and present apartments to salty snacks that go lovely with beer but yeah, a little less than two blocks apart from each other. But still far enough from the old house to fall into the small yet existing Koreatown, and the new house to be on the cusp of Little Italy. Just a stone's throw from supposedly one of the Top 10 Hippest Corners in North America according to *Details* magazine, for whatever that's worth (i.e. nothing).

Looks I'd best be getting into the habit of hogging the corner patio table of the cafe on said hip-ass street corner at 9am every Sunday morning. I will watch the beautiful morning freakamazoids walk on by as I nurture my double espresso and wade through the 10 pounds of dead tree that is known as the city edition of the *Sunday New York Times*. Smug with my personalized pen gliding effortlessly through the crossword, caffienated sludge enabling my morning perkiness and perhaps a newly purchased pupu dog yipping about my ankles. I'll name her "Ginny."

So my new roomies and I are discussing the possibility of dedicating one room to be our Peanuts shrine. How good is that. I don't mean to brag but it's just that I rarely meet other kids who are into collecting this shit. It's like being a "freak" in high school and desperately wanting to hang with fellow freaks because they would "understand" and "accept" you. Hee hee. I keep teasing my friends that one of these days I'm going to haul out the huge Industrial-Goth Binder of Shame from my parents' basement and give them the guided tour of my pathetic but prolific teenage clippings. Yah, I was a hardcore kid all right—hardcore the adjective, not the noun, chump.

Recently my friend 5:17 curated an art show titled "Finding Home," which was held at a local artists' living space half turned art gallery. On display were a variety of artists all working in different mediums, but one of my favourite pieces came from a rad lady by the name of Charlotte Blake. She created a wall installation consisting of several small wooden box frames in a row. The boxes themselves were labeled chronologically with street addresses of places she has lived in her lifetime thus far. And situated within each homemade wooden unit was a tiny wine bottle shaped vial, each having a miniscule cork stopper wedged into place. The glass vials contained varying levels of a clear liquid unknown to the casual observer.

Upon chatting with the artist it was revealed to me that the mystery liquids in those individual vials were her tears shed at each place of residence, including her current abode. My immediate reaction to her work was a sympathetic wince and a little "Ohh..." which trailed off into obligatory questions about the technical production of her piece. When in doubt, talk shop. Keep them lips moving baby.

In retrospect, I don't know why I would naturally assume that it was supposed to symbolize years of heartbreak, pain and sadness in general. Maybe it's because young artists often get a bad rap for being emotional derelicts of sorts? For all we know, those tears could very well have been tears of joy, stupidity, frustration, etc. Heck, I have cried all of the above and then some. But I'm never a good point of reference, having had to dab-dab behind the glasses at several points during movies like Babe. "No, don't take all the puppies away from Mama and Papa sheepdog...sniff, sniff...hooooonk..." [Not to mention the tears upon tears of laughter I was crying at Margaret Cho's performance here in Toronto. She is so rock. Damn. Special thanks to Joanne for getting my poor ass into the show. No thanks to the bozos surrounding us who couldn't muster up the strength to feign handclapping motions at the end of the evening. Fuck you. Shitty, unappreciative people should never get such good seats.]

What I found most interesting about Charlotte's piece was how she chose to represent the notion of "home." An evaluation of each house lived in measured via salty fluids and miniature glass bottles—metaphors within metaphors. The appropriately titled show got me to thinking about what exactly do people consider to be home. Is it a place, city or a whole country even? Do we necessarily have to live there? Have a history there? Garnered some sense of territorial right through tenure?

Is it something divided between the two suburban houses you grew up in despite the fact that you were miserable half of the time and pretty much counted the days until you could move out? And now that you have lived on your own in the big badass city for x number of years, is home that stale smelling, white empty room in your parents house with a couple of lumpy futons thrown onto the floor for guests? Dirty yellow tape marks left on the wall where all of your new wave posters used to be?

The same room that your mom tries to get you to move back into with every single phone call—like it's now figured into the standard signing off of the conversation. "Okay take care Patti dress warm do you have enough groceries eat something do you want me to bring some kim-chi downtown tomorrow because I can if you want me to Mommy worries about you all the time you should just move back home! Okay bye. (click)" And that's the condensed version folks.

Ultimately people are going to set their sniffers to their own ideas of what is home of course. I'm just excited to be moving out of this Patti-pea-sized apartment and into the Jonathan-Michelle-Patti-Siue-sized house of summertime BBQs and potluck power. So look for Ginny and I the next time you're in Toronto. I'll be the one sighing as I reach into my purse to answer my singing cell phone and Ginny will be the shrill cotton-ball off yonder pickin' a fight with a disinterested pitbull. Hah. ◎

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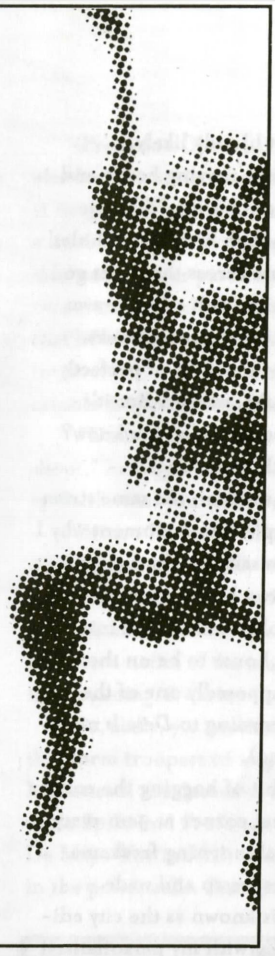

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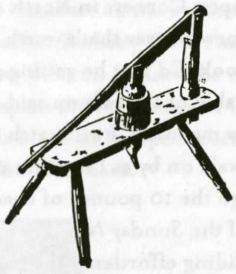

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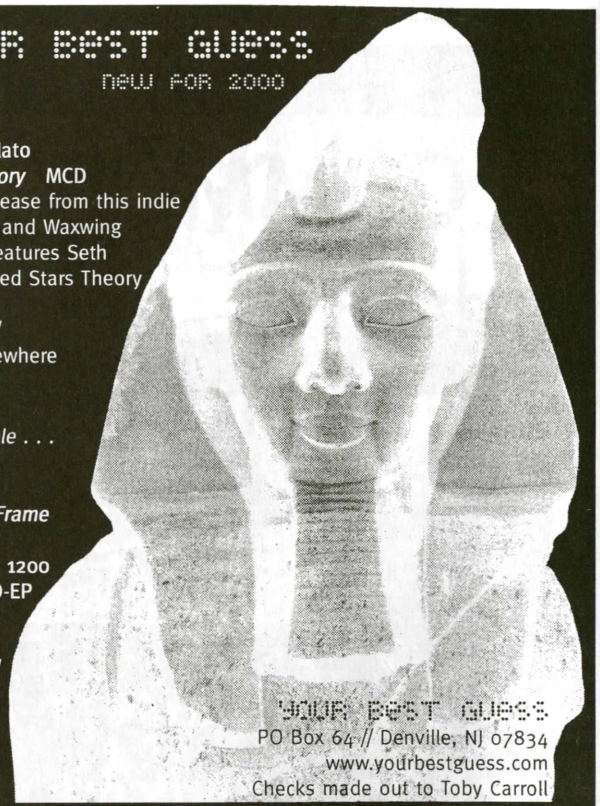

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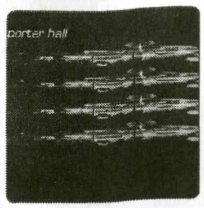

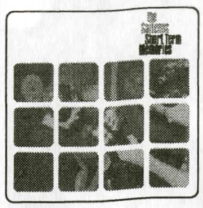

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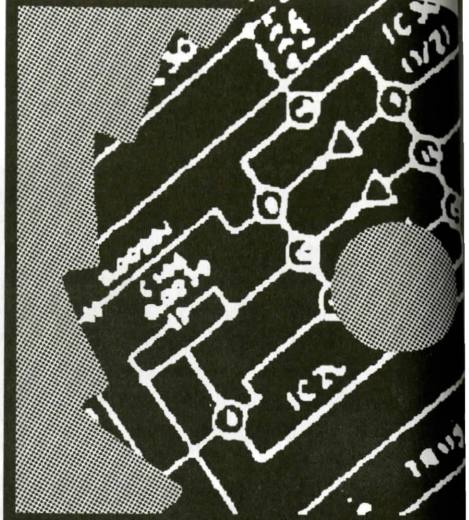

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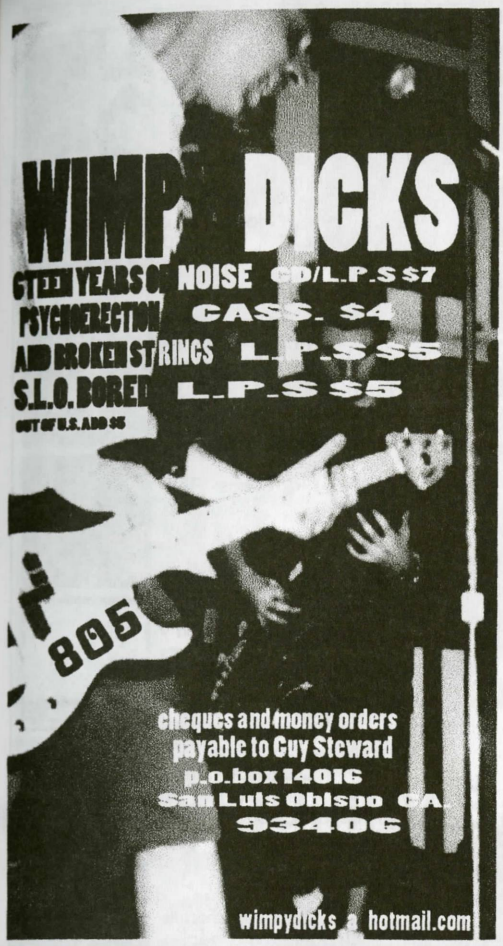

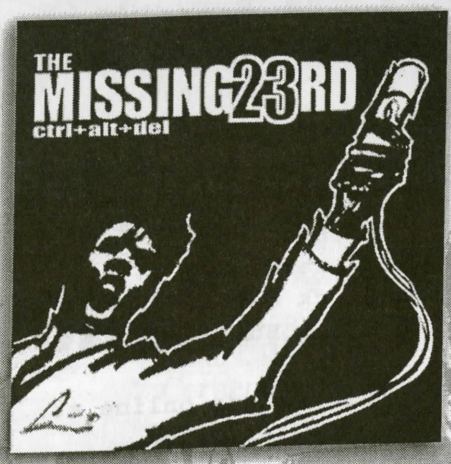

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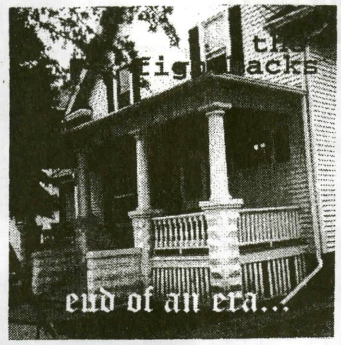

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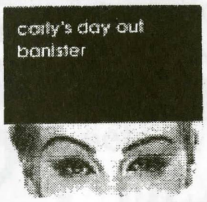

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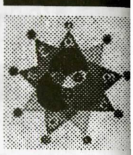

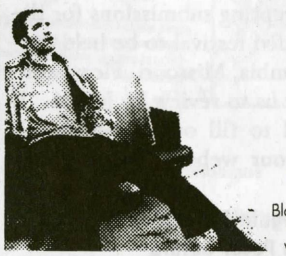

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BOY SETS FIRE!
You've almost got to

BoySetsFire: committed, revolutionary punks or opportunistic, self-serving rock band? This seems to be the question raised these days, as the band continues to increase in popularity and moves further from their DIY roots and deeper into "music biz" territory. The band has been beloved by many since their early singles and ground-breaking *The Day The Sun Went Out* (Initial), which mixed abrasive hardcore with melodic punk and a heavy dose of social commentary. Their latest record, *After The Eulogy*, is by far their best work, further refining their clean, accessible edge when necessary while launching some of their most ferocious concussion bombs at the same time. Some of the songs on the new record are BoySetsFire's most political yet, which is remarkable to some, as it is also the band's first record for the—at best—apolitical Victory Records.

I spoke with guitarist Josh Latshaw (the band is completed by drummer Matt Krupanski, vocalist Nathan Gray, guitarist Chad Istvan and new bassist Rob Avery) about a variety of things—Nathan's public coming out, their choice of record labels, "the revolution," punk rock, DIY, and more.

Interview by **Ryan J. Downey**

Is BoySetsFire a punk band?

Hmm. That's a good question. I guess that I would have to say yes, because it has been such a part of my life for 13 or 14 years. It's something I still definitely claim, but I don't necessarily do "punk" things. I guess the only thing I do that is considered punk is I play in a band. We do still consider ourselves a punk band, because of our ideological philosophy behind what we do. I believe a belief in punk is still threatening to the status quo.

And that belief separates you from other types of music?

Exactly.

In your lyrics, in the live setting and through your merchandise, there is a lot of talk about "the revolution." What does that mean to you—on a movement scale, as it relates to punk rock, and to you as a person?

Wow, good question. "The revolution" is a term that can be thrown around loosely, but I think it can be applied to many things. For me, personally, it's got to start with the individual and how we treat our fellow humanity—to not look at a stranger through the eyes of distrust, but to look at him as a potential brother or potential sister or potential friend. ¶ I do believe in revolution on a world-wide scale, because you're an idiot not to. It's happened so many times, you can't just ignore history! Just because something is one way today, that doesn't mean that it's going to be like that tomorrow. I don't necessarily mean a bloody, full-scale revolution where some sort of czar takes over. Obviously, I don't think anyone wants that. Revolution can be just be some sort of progress. As slow or as frustrating as that can be, I think things are getting better in increments.

So how does the revolution relate to the punk scene?

Well, for me, initially, I was drawn to politics before I got into punk. I got into politics through my mom who was a '60s hippy who protested against the government and stuff like that. ¶ How it relates *now* is tough to say though. You get these 16-year-old punk kids who are already burnt out on politics. And they've maybe only been into it a couple of years! They're already like, "Oh, please, I'm so tired of hearing about Mumia, I just want to skate and drink." I mean, I like to skate and I like drinking, but there's got to be more to it for me.

What, outside of music, do you recommend doing to make a change?

That's a tough one. That's something I've wrestled with myself. For a long time, I know that all of us in the band had a difficult time with that. We wanted to be our own island and not join anything bigger—world-wide movements—because we didn't agree with every little item of any group. Like Refuse and Resist—they've asked if they can become affiliated with BoySetsFire and table at our shows and stuff like that. But we're wrestling with it because we don't agree with every aspect of their agenda. My personal view is that if the majority of it is good, I can take the bad. We're never going to find a movement where I agree 100 percent down the line with them.

Do you still feel like the same band that made your first record?

Actually, a lot has changed. We're still the same band, but for me personally, I'm five years older now. I have two children now—I just had a little baby when we first started. We've gotten a little more jaded, a little more bitter. We thought the DIY scene was better than it was. Which is why, when all these kids who give bands like us shit for signing to a big label, they should really look at themselves. In five years of touring the US, we've been fed maybe three or four times. I was very idealistic about the DIY scene when we first started touring and it did not pan out the way I thought it would. We put on shows in our hometown and we treated bands the way we thought we were going to be then we went out, and it's not like that.

deal with the devil in order to beat him.

I mean, I like to skate and I like drinking, but there's

What would you change about the DIY scene? What things should have been there that maybe would have made you more... I don't know... "committed" to it?

That's a good word for it, because we got burned out. We were living off three dollars a day. There were days when I got up and I didn't know how I was going to eat, and that sucks! I think that America should look toward how the European punks do it. We got breakfast and dinner everyday. We didn't stay in hotels, we stayed in people's houses and we were just treated very nicely. People kept spare mattresses in their basements for when bands came! Maybe it's because so many bands tour the US, but I think the only way to be a real DIY band is to have some sort of trust fund or something! Me, Nathan and Chad were living on our own, not at home. We were all married in the beginning—Nathan is not married now; Chad and I are still married. We had rent and all of these bills. I remember going out on our first couple of tours and thinking that the DIY scene was a lot stronger than it is—or was.

Your vocalist, Nathan, is openly out as a gay man.

Yes, he is now.

How did he come out?

Well, there were always rumors about Nathan—about a lot more things that just being gay. [laughs] For a long time, he was decided it was no one's business. But then he was like, "I could maybe give a people a lot of strength through this." It's kind of funny, he officially came out at two different shows. The first time he did it, he didn't even tell us he was going to do it. He did it at Stalag 13 in Philadelphia. It was really emotional. Everyone got totally still; there was a silence over the crowd. Then he came out the next night in Buffalo and someone told him it wasn't as good. [laughs] "You came out much better last night!" [laughs]

Has that made it more difficult for the band, operating in a sometimes homophobic, intolerant and often violent hardcore scene?

In some areas. It hasn't been as bad as I thought it was going to be. In Philly, we had a little incident, but there's never been blows or anything like that. Nathan has never even been threatened. The band has been threatened a little bit, but it's been through e-mail, and we don't care too much about that! [Laughs] It's all been pretty smooth. People have actually been pretty supportive, which put a little bit of faith back into me. It also helped that Nathan came out and he was already the singer of a popular band. I'm not saying that was his plan, but in retrospect...

How much work does the hardcore punk scene have in front of it, as far as being a genuinely understanding and progressive community?

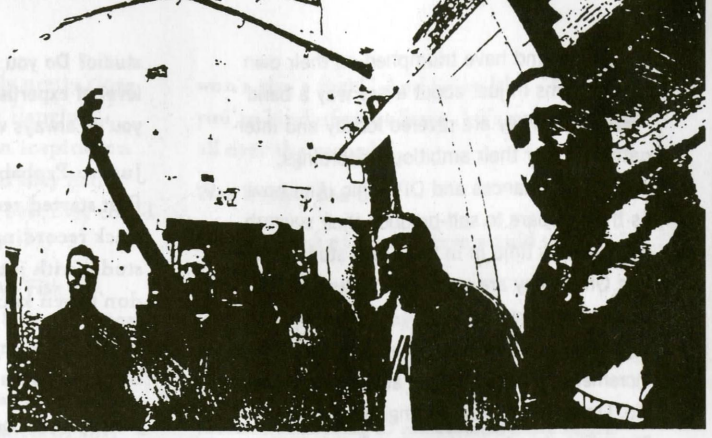
At some moments I would say a lot, sometimes I would say we're not too far off. Like the whole Nathan being gay thing, it's been pretty accepted. No one really cares. But if you go to any hardcore show in most scenes, you're not going to see many women involved and you're not going to see too many blacks involved. I don't know, but I would guess there are not too many openly gay people involved, either. What can we do to make those people feel more accepted? Even the fact that I just said "those people" says that we have a pretty long ways to go. [laughs] I don't know. That's something we're all going to have to work on. We're all going to have to brainstorm and have an open dialog about it. Maybe we should have more rap bands? ¶ We played a Mumia benefit at the Wetlands in New York, and there was like a reggae band, a hip-hop band, BoySetsFire, Fahrenheit 451 and a DJ. It was great! Every type of person you could think of was there: raver kids, hip-hop kids, some of the people from Mtv's Lyricist Lounge were there... Everybody got along really well, and it was actually a really cool feeling. So it *can* happen.

To diverge for a second, why leave Initial Records?

We were about a week away from re-signing with Initial when Victory gave us a deal, and it was just too good to pass up. We had actually gone outside at practice and talked and decided to just go with Initial. We talked to every label out there, and it was like "Oh, they're not all that different!" Some suck a lot, some don't suck as much, and at least we knew that we would be the main focus for Andy at Initial. But then Victory faxed us this offer, and we were like "Well, let's go for it and see it works out." So far it's been both good and bad.

To be fair, Victory Records eventually apologized for the racism and idiocy of the One Life Crew record they released. Yet to many, that label continues to epitomize violent, macho and thuggish mentalities, as well as crass over-commercialization and commodifi-

got to be more to it for me.



cation of hardcore and punk. All of these things have always seemed to be the antithesis of what BoySetsFire represents. How do you respond?

As far as the commodification of punk rock and hardcore, if you are any label that puts out CDs and has national distribution, you are commodifying punk and hardcore. All of the labels we talked to *wanted* to be Victory Records. If you even mention that to them, they're like, "Oh... We'd love to be in Victory's shoes!" We knew we were dealing with the devil on one level, you know what I mean? I can't say we lost faith in DIY, but it was so freaking hard for us that we decided to kind of go the other way. [laughs] That's why we got a one-off deal with Victory. If it sucks, we won't do it again. We talked to so many labels and they all want to make money. I'm not going to name the labels because we still have friends there, but they are all the same: It's the bottom line—money. You have to be like that in America. You have to sell records or you go out of business and you can't feed your family. I mean, who is Victory exploiting? They're not laying off thousands of workers like GM. It seems like a pretty cool place to work.

And as far the perception that Victory epitomizes violent, macho and thuggish mentalities?

People are going to have to get over that. Grade is on Victory. So is Reach The Sky, who are not thuggish. Snapcase certainly isn't thuggish. Trust me, I've heard all of these arguments, because we argued about them in the van, so much. I was the one initially who was like, "Yo. Let's go with Victory. Fuck it!" And they were all like "Well, what about this? What about that?" And I was like, "Well OK, look at Initial: The Enkindels and Ink & Dagger, two of the biggest asshole bands in the scene. Ink & Dagger steals shit from people. How come you guys aren't freaked out about aligning yourselves with *that* kind of mentality?"

Are kids saying these things to you guys a lot now?

To be honest, the backlash wasn't the maelstrom we expected. There haven't been protests outside our shows. [laughs] People haven't been chaining themselves to the freaking merch table in protest. More people have been supportive than not. They're like, "Good for you. That took guts." I was shocked

What's more important? Music or message? Ideology or medium?

I think we've always had a really good balance. I love music; I've played music most of my life. I would listen to my parent's tapes of Beatles albums and stuff like that when I was like five or six. But I've also had a real passion for politics. I think we've all been like that. I think they're equally as important to the band. ¶ Our most "radio friendly" song, "When The Rhetoric Dies"—it almost sounds like a John Cougar Mellencamp song—is one of the most political things Nathan has ever written. It's about GM layoffs and how it effects real lives of people who have to work and survive—people who don't give a fuck about who Green Day signed with.

The Clash succumbed to bad '80s pop, after some bad line-up decisions. Rage Against The Machine, in some people's opinions, shoot themselves in the foot by being involved with Sony and other corporate entities, thereby negating their message. Peter Tosh was assassinated. Chumbawamba look doomed to wallow in one-hit wonderdom. In your opinion, has there ever been a *truly* successful political band?

Well, I would have to disagree with those statements about Rage. I love Rage. I think Rage is having a real impact. I mean, they're having Fraternal Order of Police protests outside their shows. To say that they negate their message by being involved with Sony? From a totally purist standpoint, I can see the point, but shut the fuck up. You've almost got to deal with the devil in order to beat him. The DIY and the underground scene doesn't have the means to do it on the level that Rage has done it. They are still outspoken. I've seen Zach on news shows talking about issues. That's more impacting than a kid babbling incoherently in front of twelve kids in some basement somewhere. Not to mention Bono's work towards forgiving third world debt—I consider old U2 to be political.

So do you consider Rage and U2 successful political bands?

I'd say they are.

Have there been others?

I don't know. [laughs] You mean successful as in bringing this rotten society down that surrounds us, or as in making money?

As in having an positive impact.

Well, The Clash had an impact on me and *I'm* somebody. Oftentimes, The Clash were kind of unfocused in the political aspect. But at least it's something. At this point, something is better than nothing. ◎

Unwound have triumphed on their own terms in just about every way a band can. They are revered locally and internationally for their ambitious recordings, fierce performances and DIY ethic. And now, as they prepare to self-produce their seventh album—this time in in their own studio, Mag Rec One—they are unreservedly turning the knob all the way to 11.

Since forming in 1991, Unwound has incrementally become more at home in the studio. Under the tutelage of engineering wizard Steve Fisk, band members Sara Lund, Justin Trosper and Vern Rumsey have made each record more polished and ambitious than its predecessors. They have gracefully walked the fine line between studio-nerdery and punk rock. It's a line few bands have ever found, and fewer still have pursued it as confidently and tastefully as Unwound have. As producers and engineers of both their own musical projects and those of other bands, Vern and Justin don't let their grasp of the technical cloud the point of the process: making good records, not Rush records.

What Vern and Justin have already accomplished with Mag Rec One is deeply encouraging. They approach the studio with just the right blend of dedication, innovation, whimsy, crappy furniture and cigarettes. Currently, Mag Rec One is lodged in the basement of what can only be described as a quaint farmhouse; one of a few that punctuate the pasture land and tree stands just outside Olympia, Washington. It's the kind of sylvan setting that can make even the crankiest fucker get all poetic.

I got a chance to speak with Vern and Justin about their studio not long after they finished recording the newest Unwound album.

Interview & photo by **Peter Brant**

I remember reading a while back that Steve Fisk was really impressed by how much time you took to get to know the room when you recorded. But why build your own studio? Do you feel like you've attained a level of expertise, or is this just something you've always wanted to do?

Justin: Probably both a little bit. When we first started recording, we'd done four track recordings; then we went into a real studio with just like racks of things you don't even know the name of.

Vern: They were just black boxes with blinking lights.

Justin: In the beginning, we just let whoever was doing it do it. But we started learning things on our own. By the time we did our last record, we could kind of talk the talk a little bit in the studio. It helped us communicate better and get more done.

Vern: Even when we first put this studio together, we didn't know anything about it. As far as room stuff goes, I think we've always been good at getting used to room sounds.

Justin: We've made so many records pretty much in two studios with the same people. We thought it would be good for the new record to do something different. That usually means going to a crazy studio—some huge thing the label can't afford. Or we could take the money that we'd be spending in a medium size studio and make our own. That kind of took our band philosophy a little further—we're doing things for ourselves and we're also giving back to the community.

So the plan for the studio came about as you were looking forward to recording the next Unwound album?

Vern: It's kind of been an idea for a long time. Years and years ago I bought Pat Maley's old analog stuff when he went to ADAT. That's where the idea came from. But that stuff also sat in my office for three years before we decided to buy the cables and other stuff that we needed. Once we got started with that, we thought it might be cool to upgrade our stuff with Kill Rock Stars' help. It's something that they can take advantage of too if they ever feel like it.

Justin: That was one of our selling points: "It's not just us, it's everybody!" Bands can do demos here if they want—although we haven't even got to that realm yet. We've been focusing mainly on bands on Vern's label and friends of ours.

Was figuring out how to put the studio together similar to starting a band or learning to play an instrument, or did you have to get a book and study?

Vern: A little bit of both

Justin: Most of the stuff is done by just sitting there drinking beer and going, "How the fuck are we gonna get this to work, man? Let's plug it here. No, that's not working, do this."

Do you foresee the studio getting bigger or becoming a business?

Justin: Maybe in a few years we'll go to 16 or 24 tracks.

Vern: I'd like to get more tracks, but we're doing fine with what we have.

Justin: We still have *tons* to learn. We've only scratched the surface on an 8 track recording.

Vern: We aren't rushing into making this a "business" because the primary reason for

having the studio is for us to record in. In the future we might turn it into a "business," but we will not record bands that we don't find interesting just for the cash.

What advice would you give somebody trying to put together a studio?

Justin: Be resourceful. If you know anybody that has a studio that they're upgrading, they're likely to give you a deal. Some of the stuff we bought new because we wanted to have some stuff new. But there's so much fucking gear out there. I'm kind of a scavenger but I don't have enough energy to go all over.

Vern: We don't avidly hunt, but we're always keeping our eyes open.

Justin: It all just depends on how much money you have. You just have to be patient, especially if you don't have a lot of money. That's the thing that sucks about studios—there's always something better or some other piece of equipment you could get. Calvin [Johnson] is a pretty good example, because he scavenges and gets stuff, but he's not the kind of guy that says "I need to get this new compressor I read about in Pro Audio Review." He has gone to radio stations and got a lot of old shit. He acquires a lot of stuff through this weird luck he has but he doesn't sink a ton of money into his studio.

The look of this place reminds me a lot of the pictures I've seen of Lee Perry's Black Ark studio.

Justin: Yeah this is probably pretty close to Lee Perry's philosophy. [laughs] Those guys are definitely an inspiration just in their weirdness. And they had crappy studios and did the best they could with what they had.

Has working closely with Steve Fisk on Unwound records influenced how you record bands yourselves?

Justin: Steve has been a really big influence because he knows all sorts of shit you wouldn't even think of. He knows all about keyboards and the history of recorded music and such. When we recorded with him, we'd sit around talking and he'd be like, "Well we did it this way in the '70s..." And we'd be like, "Oh let's try that!" So we tried to incorporate a lot of Steve's influence. That makes our records a little different than your average rock records because he's such a unique producer.

Vern: He never forced anything on us either. If you listen to all of our records in order, it's like: first record no effects, second record a little, and then on to where you hear a lot of overdubs.

Justin: Steve would be like, "You guys don't have the balls to put flange on that!" And we're like [whimpering] "Well it sounds stupid and weird" And he'd say, "You guys don't have the fucking balls man! Come on, just do it! Are you gonna sit around and be a hardcore band the rest of your lives? Wait 'til you're 40, you won't give a fuck!" And we're like, "Uhh you're kind of right Steve, let's put effects all over the record."

Was it really like that?

Justin: Kind of, yeah. Steve would totally challenge us.

Vern: [impersonating Steve] "I have a really good idea, but I don't know if you guys could *take* it."

Justin: I'm starting to understand Steve Fisk a little more now and where he was coming from. Sometimes it's just like, "Well this is really dry and kind of boring, but that's how they want it and that's fine."

Vern: Sometimes we throw things in without telling the band to see if they like it better.

Justin: Yeah, you do subversive things and see if they notice. And if they don't, you probably should say something...

Vern: But you say it more toward the end of the mix like, "Are you sure you guys like the reverb on this" and they'll be like, "What reverb?' And you say, "Oh, well its been on there the whole time."

Justin: So they're all, "Well take it off!"

Vern: And then you take it off and it all dries down, and they're like "Oh well maybe it did sound better".

Justin: We've been humbled like that too, so we have a more well-rounded idea about the whole process. ◎

LES
SAW
FAY

On their second album *The Cat and the Cobra*, Les Savy Fav confirm their status as one of the brightest stars in the post-alternative rock firmament. Moving seamlessly from minor-key jangle to fury which holds a knife to art rock's jugular—and all within the confines of a single song—LSF shows that it's still possible to escape the mediocrity of the micro-genre. They aren't retro. They aren't proto. They aren't even mired in the boggy depths of irony. They just make wonderful music, the sort that grows on you with each listen until you suddenly realize that you're standing in the middle of an enchanted forest you don't want to leave. I got a chance to speak with lead singer Tim Harrison shortly after the band returned from a tour.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

The band formed in art school, right?

Yeah, we formed about four years ago at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Originally it was myself, Syd Butler playing bass, Seth Jabour playing guitar, Gibb Slife playing the other guitar, and Pat Mahoney on drums. Before *The Cat and the Cobra*, Harrison Haynes took Pat's place. We're now down to a four-piece, because Gibb has left in order to devote more time to his painting. But we're still an exclusively RISD outfit. Syd and I both studied film and video. Harrison painted. Seth studied illustration. Pat, the original drummer, was a sculptor. And Gibb was a printmaker and painter.

Where do you think your art school roots are most apparent?

In our overall aesthetic. Everything has to be Savy. We do all of our own design. Our live performances are very stylized—we always try to do something special rather than just play. As far as the future goes, there's a certain level, where if you're more successful, it becomes a challenge to take advantage of that without turning into Van Halen with a baroque stage show. When we're playing live, we try to do it half-assed to a certain extent. We want to be casually brilliant—executing something perfectly is boring. [laughs] That idea comes across in our live show, where things aren't executed perfectly at all!

Your songs are such a mix of moods and sounds—how do you go about writing them?

In anarchy mode. Everyone writes and everyone has a right to tell someone else an idea on what they might play. Our policy is all votes, no vetoes. So, basically, anyone's allowed to add anything to a song, but you're not supposed to ever say no.

That might explain why your songs have so many internal changes.

That's the exact reason! It makes writing kind of slow. There's never really a lead person writing. Everyone's just sitting around, trying to mash it out and clip it apart and put it back together a million different ways until we're happy.

How long did it take you to do *The Cat and the Cobra*?

The Cat and the Cobra we probably wrote over the period of year. But we had already written some of the songs on *The Cat and the Cobra* before our first record *3/5* came out. We had been playing for two years around Providence before we released anything. We had all these songs sitting around but we were completely sick of them, so we wrote entirely new songs for *3/5*. But we returned to some of our early ones for *The Cat and the Cobra*.

Did you approach things differently on the second album?

One thing we started working on when we were doing *The Cat and the Cobra* was trying to be more relaxed in the studio. When we made our first album, we were really uptight recording it. And afterwards we were pretty unhappy—no one's really that into the way that record sounds. We were really conservative and wanted it to just be live. So ever since we recorded that record it has kind of been chasing us around. When we go in the studio now, we really try to get specific with ourselves and be much more conscious about the recording in order to make it sound the way we want it to sound.

So you have become happy with the divergence between the live sound and the recorded sound?

Yes. And because of that, we're getting much closer to having the records and live shows convey the same feeling.

How complicated do you get in the studio?

We record the tracks straight. We try to get different mike sounds and experiment with different amps. When we're writing, we're always changing things around. When we're playing live, we're always changing things around but we found that when we were recording, the songs would die at first—you'd record them to tape and then it would just be a matter of setting levels. That was the problem on *3/5*. So now we try to keep the whole recording process much more dynamic. Once we've recorded a song straight, we collaborate in playing it through the equipment. We record a lot of times at home—we built a practice space where Harrison and I live in Brooklyn—and sometimes things come out really good. For example, on *The Cat and Cobra*, major parts of the song "This Incentive" were recorded with just one mike at our practice space onto Mini-Disc. We recorded the song again in the studio and took parts of both recordings and overlaid them. That one we really collaged together.

So the music is written collaboratively—do you do the same thing for the words?

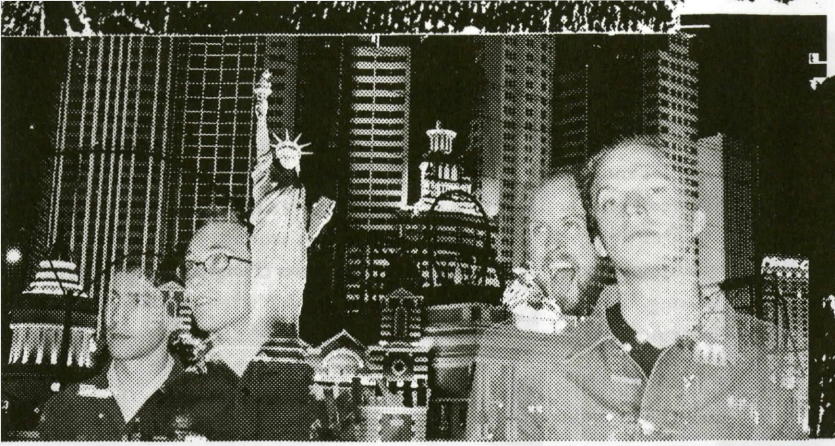
No, the words are usually my thing. At practice, I'll make up vocal lines. I have a book full of lyrics which I'll start snipping together in weird ways to see how they work. A lot of times it will end up that the music is 90 percent done but the lyrics will only be 20 percent done.

So is what you're describing a cut-up aesthetic, where you'll have a source text that you then play with?

Yes. And a lot of times I'll write a line and phonetically replace everything. So the first and second verse will be syllabically almost identical, but with different words.

Where do you get the inspiration for your lyrics?

Because I do have this cut-up aesthetic, it would be hard to nail it down to one thing. But I'm a big reader and love all kinds of music. And I'm a film person too. Lyrically, I'm really into the idea of telling a very specific story. That doesn't mean that the song literally has to say "This happened and then this and then this and then



it's better to be doing all you can possibly handle yourself than to sign to a major label and become the smallest fish in that label's pond.

this..." But I do try to tell a realistic story, where it's not just shorthand.

Can you give an example?

We recently sent a recording to Pacifico in Seattle, because we're doing a 7" with them. It's for the song "Reformat" from *The Cat and the Cobra*. That song's always been a story, so we wrote a six-minute radio-play version of it in which we all acted. The 7" is going to be a live version of the song and this dramatization of the lyrics. It's really interesting. That song's all about this crazy submarine captain who drives the oldest sub in the fleet. He feels threatened by the nuclear subs, so he's always trying to prove that his old sub is good. But he pushes it too far and kills everyone on the sub except for himself. And then he gets publicly executed.

That's a cheery story, but I'm not sure the average listener would be able to extrapolate that from the song on the album!

Among ourselves, we're always talking about elaborate little storylines. We were talking to somebody else about our approach to songwriting and came up with a good metaphor for it: If an album is a city and each song is a neighborhood, we try to put in as many details as possible to make each neighborhood really specific. And sometimes the neighborhood's dialect is another language, so it wouldn't necessarily be something that an outsider could understand. But if you could decode it, you would find an interior logic to the song.

Is there a political undercurrent to your work? I'm thinking specifically of the song "Who Rocks the Party."

We're not political the way Fugazi is. Yet we come from that school, in a sense. I listened to New York and New Jersey hardcore in high school—super-politicized music. In the end, I found it to be so outrageously heavy-handed that it became pointless. But there is a politics in our music. Someone pointed out to me that I rarely say "I" in our lyrics, I'm always using "We" and "They." There is a politics there, which is the politics that I have in my real life. "Who Rocks the Party" is all about the servants taking over the house. And "Boxes" is kind of a political song, because it's from the perspective of some sketchy master of industry. A lot of our songs have a love-hate relationship with technology, they show a weird futuristic, capitalistic world.

Where does your interest in this kind of message come from?

I worked all through high school and college in this fancy resort town—Newport, Rhode Island—at this beach club for rich people. And it has sort of always stuck with me. [laughs] "Who Rocks the Party" is specifically about that experience.

It seems like there's a bit more of an edge to your songs than you typically find in arty guitar pop. Do you make a conscious effort to cut the sugar with a dose of spice?

We're always trying to just follow our instincts and never specifically plan what we're going to do before we do it. But we come from Providence. And the scene there—with Six Finger Satellite, Lightning Bolt, and other bands on Load Records—tends to be pretty hard. Those are the people we were playing music with. Most of them, except for Six Finger Satellite, are the same age as us and were starting bands at the same time. That scene has been a major influence on us. Like a lot of our peers, we were into really loud music when we were coming up, but we've never felt completely comfortable with the posture which that sort of music has—its super-aggression and manliness. And, at other end of the spectrum, straight pop has never been appealing to us either. We take what we like of each and try not to worry about which side of the fence we come down on.

The first song on *The Cat and the Cobra* is "The Orchard," which begins with the line "My eyes are smaller than my stomach is." Does this statement mean something in terms of the record as a whole—or even the band as a whole?

Obviously we weren't thinking "Write this first line for the first song on the album," but we did want "The Orchard" to set the tone for the album. If there are two sides to the band, one brash and cocky and one quiet, "The Orchard" represents our quiet side—but it's a quiet brash side! [laughs] That lyric is the opposite of "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach." It means, "You have a bigger appetite than you act like you have," and that's a good place to start. As a band, we think it's better to be pushing the extreme of what you're capable of doing. It's like our decision to put ourselves out instead of signing to a label—it's better to be doing all you can possibly handle yourself than to sign to a major label and become the smallest fish in that label's pond. It's always best to not exceed your own demand, to supply exactly what's wanted. ◎

Charlie Bertsch is a writer and teacher living in Vallejo, CA. You can contact him by e-mail <cbertsch@atdial.net>

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE ZINE CHICKEN IS GOOD FOOD

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

We've been doing it since 1997, now we're working on issue #7, the Food and Drink issue.

2. How long do you plan on doing it?

Until it's no fun.

3. What would cause you to quit?

Being utterly broke.

4. How do you distribute your zine?

We have tons of small distributors, like Quimby's Queer Store and See Hear. Until the last couple of issues they've been our main source of distro, but now Desert Moon and Tower have recently picked us up, too.

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

We named it *Chicken is Good Food* because I'm obsessed with the way the word "Chicken" sounds. We've gotten our fair share of flack from vegans and the like, which is pretty funny since most of the people that write for the zine are vegetarians. I haven't had a bite of flesh since 1992.

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

It was going to be called *Where is Christine diPiero* after a friend that I lost touch with, but then she magically appeared again, so *Chicken is Good Food* became the name.

7. What would you rank as the three main subjects you cover?

1) Whatever we think is funny.
2) Whatever we think is semi-amusing.
3) Music.

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

Distro, no doubt.

9. What is the most rewarding part?

Having people read our nonsensical rantings.

10. Are you doing your zine for free records?

Hell no! For every 100 CDs that come in, I maybe keep 30. There is an overwhelming amount of crappy music being produced today, and 90% of it makes it's way to the pages of *CIGF*. That's not to say that there isn't worthwhile independent music available, there's lots of it. You just have to wade through a sea of garbage to get to it.

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

The best interview was probably with Ben Weasel in issue #4. We talked for nearly two hours, and I really thought that it went beyond the mundane "what are your influences" type questions, and got into some interesting stuff. The worst was the IQ test I gave to the Teen Idols. I was way too drunk to be giving an interview.

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

Issue number one, in an interview with Guttermouth: "What if NOFX changed the way they sound? Would you guys change too?"

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

We definitely need other writers, if for no other reason than to help review the metric ton of records we get each issue. Summer and Jeremy write the bulk of the content, but we use friends from other zines, and have on a couple occasions used submissions.

14. How is your zine produced?

We use Punks with Presses. Jux prints the zine with a full-color cover and offset black and white on the inside.

15. Handwritten vs. Typewriter vs. Computer?

It depends on what medium you're good at, and the resources you have at your disposal. Many zines produced by people on computers look like hell because the publisher knows nothing about layout or design—I think those types would be better off doing handwriting or typewriting. Of course, there are zines like Cometbus that wouldn't be the same if they were done electronically. It all boils down to what you can do best and what matches your content and philosophy.

16. What other zines inspire you?

Ben Is Dead, *Hit List*, (the late) *Might*, *Muddle*, *10 Things*, *Probe*.

17. What is "selling out"?

Working 40 hours a week at a job you hate just to pay the bills.

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

See question 17.

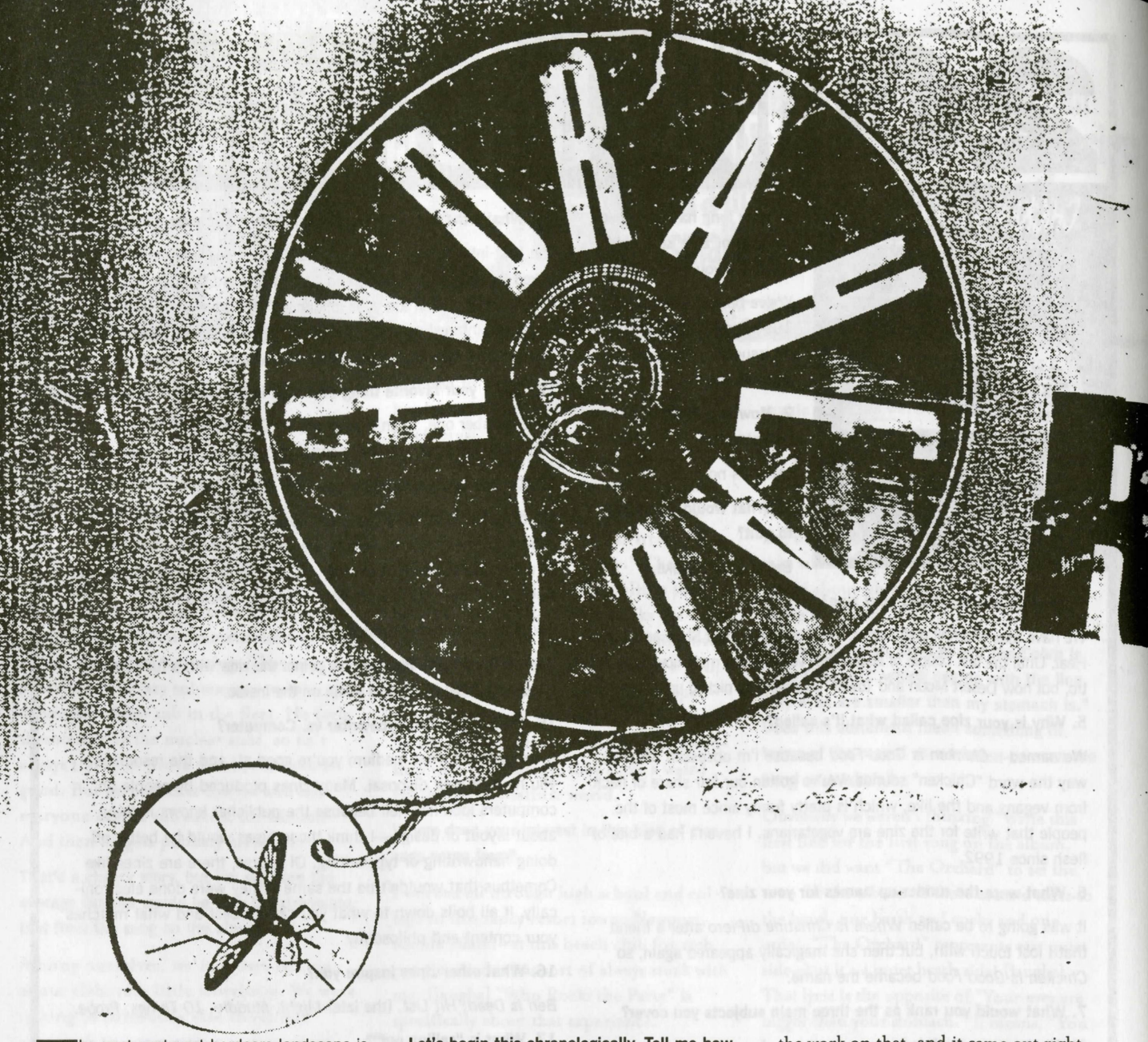
19. If you had a chance to interview someone who you would most likely never have a chance to talk to, who would it be?

JD Salinger, because he's the ultimate genius recluse.

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

Either a) Mike Ness at a tattoo shop while he's getting tattooed, or b) Joss Whedon on the set of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

Chicken is Good Food Po Box 642634 San Francisco CA 94164



The post-post-post hardcore landscape is dotted with as many divergent sounds and ideas as the cultural studies program at Columbia University. It's a difficult task to separate the wheat from the chaff; the clean line heading north from the one that terminates in confusion. Hydrahead Records has secured a healthy, forward-minded position against that tide, and continues to bolster that position with both an experimental sonic roar and an intelligent dedication that embraces technology as readily as it hews to folk-crafted uniqueness. Conversation from Boston with label founder Aaron Turner.

Interview by **Patrick Kennedy**

Let's begin this chronologically. Tell me how you got started.

I started doing Hydrahead informally as a distro when I was living in New Mexico, where I grew up. During my last two years of high school, I started buying records from other labels and taking them to local shows to sell them, but that wasn't enough for me. I had been trying some other stuff, like a zine, but none of it was that satisfying, so I decided to try putting out a record. I had booked a show for Coalesce and some other bands in Santa Fe, and the guy who was roading for them gave me a demo of his band and said that he was looking to put out a record. I did most of the work on that, and it came out right after I moved from New Mexico to Boston.

What year was this?

The record came out in the fall of 1995, and I began the distro in 1993.

So what precipitated the move from New Mexico to Boston?

I graduated from high school in Santa Fe, and wanted to go to art school, plus my brother was living out here, and the allure of the Northeast hardcore scene drew me as well. Things with Hydrahead really didn't start to get going until I moved here.

Was that first release successful for you?

ECORDS

Not particularly—we still have a bunch of them laying around. It was a 7" by this band called Vent. But the next release was a 7" by a band called Corrin and that actually did pretty well, especially for a second release—it sold something like 1,600 copies.

So at this early point, you were pretty much home-based?

Yeah, there were a couple of other people semi-involved, but nothing very serious. For the first three years, I was pretty much on my own with the label. I was still doing the distro at that point too, but I liquidated that the second year I was here because I didn't want to deal with it anymore. The first CD we did was the Converge collection of old stuff called Caring and Killing, and that really helped out the label a lot, because obviously you don't make that much off 7"s, which was what our first six releases were. The CD did well, and it was cost efficient.

But you obviously have an affinity for collector's edition vinyl.

Oh yeah, totally. The CDs are where the largest part of our income comes from, but our joy in doing the label, as far as the aesthetic part, is the vinyl, and that will continue.

Well, were you modeling yourself after the paradigms set by hardcore labels in the past, like Revelation or Dischord or Victory?

At first, the label that influenced me was definitely Ebullition, like when they were doing Iconoclast, Econochrist, and Born Against, and things of that era. That was what I was really into. Most of what I was exposed to in New Mexico was very crust punk oriented. But I met some kids who were into straightedge, and I started listening to a lot of the early Victory catalog. I definitely listened to a lot of the crusty shit, like Logical Nonsense—they were from Santa Fe, and they were the band that got me into punk for the most part. Then I

like labels that just have overt personalities, so when you see or hear one of their records, you know immediately where it came from.

started listening to bands like Neurosis and Buzzov-en, then things like Outspoken, and Unbroken, and early Iceburn.

Is Hydrahead actively signing bands, or just doing one-offs?

We have technically never *signed* anyone. It's all been pretty informal, and it's stayed that way, but things are getting kind of scary, because it's getting to the point where Hydrahead is big enough where if we don't go about things in a more business-like fashion, we're going to end up getting fucked. I'd like to keep it at the informal level it is now, but as things progress, that's not going to be viable.

With such an informal way of doing things, who forms your essential stable of artists?

It fluctuates from time to time. There are bands we work closely with that also have relationships with other labels, big labels even—Coalesce, for instance. They were never really one of "our" bands, but we ended up doing a lot of stuff with them. As far as bands who are sort of exclusive to us, Cave-In definitely, because they began getting attention around the same time we did, and we both grew in a parallel line. Botch also did their first full-length for us, and the split for the Sabbath series, and we just did their new record. But we've done records for tons of other bands.

It sounds a lot like what Frank Kozik has been doing with Man's Ruin, in the sense that artistically, there is a fundamental idea being pursued, but there are very few actual "signed" bands; more or less it is a lot of one-offs and friendship deals.

I like that relationship. I'm glad we have a close connection with Cave-In and Botch, but it's cool to be able to work with a lot of other bands at will, pretty much.

Let's turn to the aesthetic part of the label—the artwork and packaging. What characterizes most Hyrdahead releases is the attention to detail in your packaging—things like embossing, and die-cuts, etc.

I do a lot of that myself. As far as aesthetics are concerned, I was influenced early on by some of the more hand-done stuff, like the early shit that Gravity was doing. I was really impressed by that, and the whole scene that sprung up from that—all the silk-screened covers, and all the inventive packaging ideas. Early on, pretty much all of my stuff was hand-done except for a couple things that friends did on their computers. After that, the aesthetic changed when I was able to use a computer more. It has definitely advanced a lot since the beginning because of technology, and the time we've had.

Graphically, you have achieved a very consistent style. You can see a record on the shelf at the local record store and immediately know that it was released on Hydrahead.

Yeah, that's cool. I like labels that just have overt personalities, so when you see or hear one of their records, you know immediately where it came from.

Interestingly, you're in a band of your own, Isis, but you've never released anything on Hydrahead—why?

There are enough problems that arise when you are in a band situation, so I didn't want to be the one to blame if something went wrong with a record. So it is a dynamic that didn't need to be added. Plus, I didn't want to take the easy way out by releasing my own band, I wanted to see if there was anyone else who actually would be interested.

Isis sounds a little less hardcore than most of the Hydrahead bands—it's a little heavier, and a little quieter at times.

There are equal parts metal and experimental in Isis. Our influences are very diverse and far-reaching beyond the hardcore realm, so that's probably why it's not a typical hardcore-sounding band.

The albums Hydrahead has released, by and large, don't have a typical hardcore sound either.

Definitely not, but I would like to think that what we are doing is hardcore, and that in retrospect, maybe in 10 years from now, people will remember hardcore from this era as sounding like that. It definitely sounds nothing like what hardcore sounded like 10 years ago. ¶ It seems that a lot of this sound was borne out of the AmRep noise scene, particularly bands like Unsane, and Today is the Day, because there was really nothing else like that going on at the time. And even beyond that, in the mainstream realm, Helmet becoming big was an important development in hardcore, because there was nothing in metal on MTV that was that noisy and abrasive, and that straight-forward. Those guys were no frills. The AmRep stuff that was going on back then really influenced hardcore as it is now, and the Deadguy album that came out a few years ago that brought this new wave of really chaotic shit was heavily influenced by the Today is the Day records that had come out years before that. A lot of people don't get the connection, but I think shit like the Melvins have had a fucking enormous influence on this music, but most people from this younger generation have been removed from it—not that I'm old school by any means.

But at least you are cognizant of where things come from.

Everything is a progression, and comes from somewhere else, and we are in a transition of influences right now. ◎

Jade Tree

Kill Rock Stars

Prank Records

Initial Records

G-7 Welcoming Committee

Kolazhnikov

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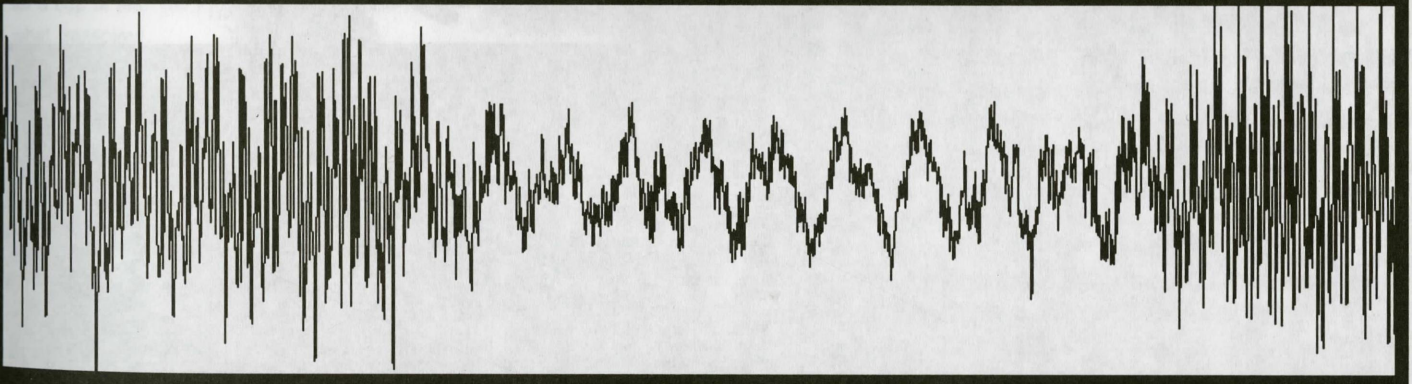


on punkplanet.com

out beyond people, and I used to sit in the dark and just listen to the sounds.At times I've lived out in the woods, way out beyond people, and I used to sit in the dark and just listen to the sounds.

Up in woody Olympia, Washington, punk multi-instrumentalist, record producer and outright renaissance man Joe Preston is developing a solo career that may out-do his best known work as bassist for The Melvins. Over the years, Joe has played with bands such as the Slim Moon-led Witchy Poo, Vancouver's multi-guitar outfit Superconductor, Eugene's legendary Snakepit, Olympia darlings C Average and The Need, the misanthropic Men's Recovery Project, and of course the venerable and sadly departed Earth. Joe's 1992 faux-Kiss "Joe Preston" "solo" album with The Melvins promised that punk would not be the same after it had slipped through his fingers, and that promise is playing out in the atmospheric and intense second Thrones album, *Sperm Whale*.

Except for the cover of the theme to the spaghetti western "Django," *Sperm Whale* is a series of pieces Preston wrote and composed himself over the past three years. They eschew the traditionally urban inspirations of punk rock, with their throaty, eerie melodies and a cave-like, rumbling guitar work whose glacial melancholia at times recalls the ambient noise of Godflesh. These are pieces of grinding distortion and electronic hum that describe landscapes which Preston admits are anything but urban.

On the eve of *Sperm Whale*'s release, his second record for Kill Rock Stars, Joe came over to my apartment in San Francisco for a cup of tea. The following conversation is what transpired.

Interview by **Megan Shaw**

What exactly are you singing about?

Sometimes the vocalizations don't have words and sometimes the words to one song are not the same from one performance to the next. I don't even know what all the words are to some of the newer pieces. It's not so much what the words are that makes the song be "about" whatever it's about. On *Sperm Whale*, the pieces are about bears. They're inspired by the woods, by big animals and by the dark. At times I've lived out in the woods, way out beyond people, and I used to sit in the dark and just listen to the sounds. A lot of this music is inspired by just listening in the dark. The record tapers off to the sound of frogs croaking, which I recorded outside my house at night in the woods.

How do you compose?

I just try everything until I find what works. Usually tunes and sounds come to my head, and it's best if I'm near a guitar right then, because I usually forget them if I don't start playing with them right away. Then I play the different parts on guitar, on bass and through distortions, until I get to the sound I want. I practice really rarely, which is stupid, but I get practice playing my songs live.

And when you play live?

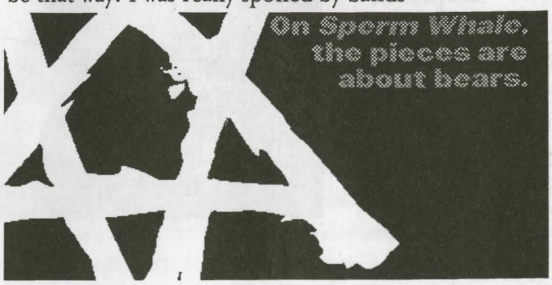
I get into a groove with the audience, I just play whatever feels right. I like performing live, but I don't like to improvise, if that's what you mean. I tend to plan out the course of each piece before playing it in front of people. Then when I play, it's usually just me and the guitar and the various boxes, and I know what I'm doing.

Do you feel like what you're doing is punk, even though it sounds quite different from traditional drum-guitar-and-anger combinations?

Oh definitely. I mean, where else would it fit? It's true that in my very early days I was inspired by metal, but then I also kind of liked New Wave in the early '80s, which was not acceptable to the heavy metal crowd. So I found some new kids to hang out with, punks, whose musical world was as heavy as metal in some ways, but there was also a lot more to it. I felt more at home with that. ¶ And now, it sounds corny to say, but being punk is as much about the fact that I don't have a booking agent as anything else. I mean, I do all my own tour organization, which is a real hassle. But I've never had a booking agent, and probably never will have one. I love touring the US, which I've done pretty extensively, but I'd like to also tour Australia and Europe. But the prospect of organizing a tour like that is a lot. I'd probably prefer to go if someone took me as an opening act. I went to Japan with Men's Recovery Project when I was also playing with them.

Coming back home, what's the Seattle area scene like these days?

Well, it's weird, because after the whole grunge thing, the scene really broke up into little factions that don't have much to do with each other. There are the Sub Pop bands, of course, and then there are these people who moved to Seattle because of grunge, and haven't really given up on it. You can see them working in coffee parlors, still dressing like that, and wondering what to do with their lives. And then there are labels like Estrus that do a whole lot, and once in a while you see a whole pack of garage rockers on the street, but there isn't really one "scene." ¶ A lot of people came to Washington to make money playing rock'n'roll, and it's still pretty much like that, even in the punk community—but probably less there than other places. I mean, I feel a little self-righteous saying so, but what's great about being punk is that at least it's okay not to be that way. I was really spoiled by bands like Black Flag when I was growing up. Back then, it was really daring to do what they did, to go around the country looking weird and doing something that was not about money. Back then, there were some true alternatives and it was possible to be subversive. They were really out there doing something just to do it, not to make money at it. But today it's different. At least that's what I'm aware of. Actually, I don't leave my house very much, so I don't know.



You don't feel like punk is still subversive?

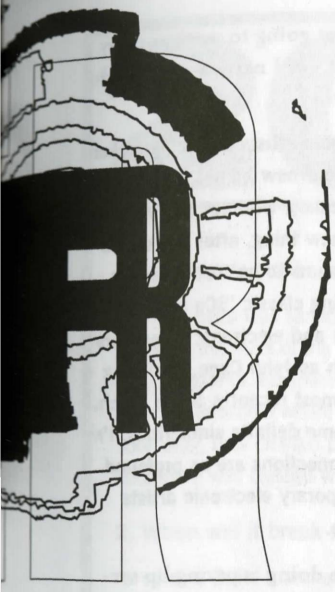
Well of course there are people who are really political and who are doing things with punk rock. But from my perspective, I don't feel like what I'm doing is very subversive. It's different, maybe, and I'm glad there's room for that. But I think there's a difference between being original and being subversive. ◎

LESSER

It's very hard to try and introduce an artist like San Francisco's J. Lesser without failing to adequately explain what it is he actually does. Part computer geek, part composer, a punk in spirit, but for all intents and purposes an electronic artist by vocation, over the course of several EPs and split CDs on Vinyl Communications, Lesser has earned the distinction—at least in my household—as being the first post-electronica artist.

Whether Lesser ever was enough of a follower of any genre to be regarded as being "post" anything is beside the point. For all intents and purposes, Lesser hijacked the recording methodologies fueling the current beat-driven boom and by-passed electronica entirely. Lesser's sound is a style of making music all his own: part noise, part collage, a tad hip-hop, always confounding everyone's expectations. Irreverent, yes, unconventional, absolutely, hysterical, even more so. Just listen to his Adam and the Ants, Throbbing Gristle and Easy-E "covers," and you'll know why.

Lesser's music is emblematic of a whole new generation of musicians who've cultivated their talents under the influence of computer-based editing and multi-tracking environments, such as his former label mates Kid 606 (with whom he recorded a split EP) and venerable laptop rockers ORI. However, over the past year, an increasingly visible Vinyl Communications decided to go on hiatus, and Lesser was left without a label. Little did he and his colleagues know how many people in the so-called "business" were actually listening to them. In came



Matador Europe, for whom Lesser is currently recording his first-length, along with Chicago indie Kult Box, who're about to release his newest 12" EP Mensa Dance Squad.

In his not-so-spare time, Lesser works as an audio software expert for an online company, masters records for friends, and manipulates CDs containing his own samples for his collaborative side project Disc, as well as San Francisco art rockers Matmos, with whom he toured Europe last year.

The following conversation transpired in the comforts of my foggy Richmond District home this winter. We cover everything from Lesser's unique way of putting together records, to the current interest in electronic music being taken by punk and indie labels, the meaning of working alone, and the importance of not taking oneself too seriously.

Interview by **Joel Schalit**

When did you start working with computers? Even on your 1995 split with Rob Crow, it sounds like classic hard drive-based cut and paste.

There was a lot of computer-based work on that record.

In some respects, doing that back in 1995 was very early, regardless of how commonplace computer-generated music is today.

Yeah, it was. Before that record, I did everything with an E-Max sampler. About that time I started to have access to a computer at home. I'd make little pieces with it by chopping sounds up. But most of the time I worked with other people's computers. Otherwise, my guitar, drum machine and my sampler were my primary tools.

You'd make DAT backups of you recordings and then play along with them?

Yeah, I'd make two track things and put the edited parts on DATs. Just after that, I moved to San Francisco, where I began using a computer at home full-time. That's when I really started working the way I do now.

Have you always worked on Macs?

Yeah, I have. When I was 20, I got a job coloring comic books, and they used Macs, so I got into using them then. Up until that point I'd never been interested in computers. I was kind of surprised by them at first, but thought they were really cool.

What kind of influences got you working the way you do?

I'm a meddler at heart. I listen to everything—metal, punk. But I grew up mostly listening to metal. I started making music by playing the guitar, rather badly. I was also in this metal band. When it broke up, I started to spend a lot of time by myself—I was taking a break from relationships, and I didn't want to play solo electric guitar—so I got interested in the idea of trying to work alone and see what would happen.

You became a one-person band.

Right, but there were other reasons that happened as well. Writing music has never been about writing songs for me. It was always about experimenting, trying to figure out what kinds of sounds things make. I wanted to make sounds that were both messy and simple. The more you keep doing that, the more you create pathways to new kinds of music and sound. Now it's the same thing. I have a Pro Tools system and I ask myself what I can do with it that'll generate sounds that I haven't heard before.

That's interesting. When you were playing me tracks that you've been working on for your new record, it didn't sound anything remotely like traditional electronica such as techno or drum and bass. I couldn't come up with the slightest genre reference by which to categorize it. "Collage," or perhaps "noise" are adjectives one could use to describe facets of your current shtick, but that still wouldn't do it proper justice.

I would never inflate my originality. I think my work suffers from the fact that I'm really not trying to make music. I'm just trying to see what happens. It's not that I'm ahead or behind the times.

Of course not. You're completely sidestepping everything by operating in a different universe of sound. To my mind, that stands as a very definite form of refusal. It's a really unique way of not conforming.

The last couple of records, I tried to make drum and bass. I wanted to make something exciting and new. It just seemed like another thing I could mess around with. But I wasn't setting out to try and make any kind of music out of that genre. What I did is

not so far out there that people say "What is this? I can't believe this is music!" The point is that it *is* music, but it's not techno or drum and bass. It's just hard to sell.

Who do you think your audience is?

Computer geeks. It's really weird now to play shows and see what I would consider to be normal people with normal lives, because to me, my work is not what one might call "easy listening." You can't just put it on and leave it playing in the background. It's more demanding than that.

So many indie and punk rock people are computer professionals these days, it was inevitable that there would be certain kinds of music that they'd end up listening to more than others. Look at how many folks conflate techno with the Internet—they see it as the soundtrack.

That really cuts out a huge section of people who listen to music. I don't sit down and listen to it. I usually only put it on when I'm doing the dishes. There are a very small percentage of people that will sit down and do what I do when I'm making my music, which is to keep listening to it over and over again in all of its details, like picking out the things that are subtle and the things that are gross. Most people don't have the time to do that sort of thing. It's a real ghettoized sort of community. When I do see people that I didn't expect to show up at my gigs, it's always really exciting. I'm reminded of the fact that there are people who listen to music like mine who aren't musicians.

You'd be surprised. Most of the people I know who listen to your records have no musical inclinations.

Right, I agree, but it still continues to surprise me that people who aren't musicians would care about my music at all because it's pretty unlistenable. There's no coherent thing happening that you can follow from one moment to the next.

What kind of audience do you think Matador will pitch your records at?

Well, the computer geek rock scene is not what you would call very big. I mean there are magazines which cater to it—*FAQT* for example—but they don't sell many copies. However, I think music like this sells pretty well in Europe, but in America, I have no idea. I think it would be a bad idea for them to release it in the 'States. ¶ Just look at how everyone has failed at trying to push electronica here over the past two years. I mean it's bigger, but it hasn't blown up the way punk did. Part of the problem is that American electronica takes itself too seriously in an intellectual sense. Punk can do that because it's such a visceral, heartfelt sort of thing. But with the exception of big beat bands like Crystal Method, artists like Aphex Twin who sell a lot of records abroad are too idiosyncratic to have the kind of mass appeal that would make electronica an American household genre.

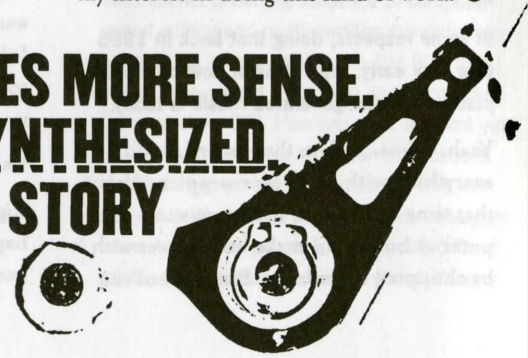
I could cite a million other reasons why I don't think electronica will ever shift the kind of units here that it does in Europe. Europeans never gave up on disco, whereas, we totally rebelled against it. That's why when Americans admit to liking techno, they either imbue it with all this mystical, pseudo-hippie mystical bullshit such as psychedelic trance, or they over-intellectualize it like Spooky does with Illbient. Because they're insecure that they like a kind of music that's been taboo amongst the hipsters for a very long time, except when it's ironic.

I just don't think that electronica is very fun. On the whole, it's not very engaging music. It doesn't have a sense of playfulness. And I'm certainly no exception to the rule. Unless you have a really weird party, you're not going to put on a Lesser record. Even if I do something really catchy, it's still not going to work as party music. But you know, I never set out to do stuff like that anyway.

All kinds of electronic artists are being picked up by labels like your new home, as well as labels like Thrill Jockey, who put out Mouse on Mars. It's the new thing, after punk. The assimilating link seems to be techno artists like DJ Spooky citing classic '50s and '60s experimental noise and electronic composers as influences, such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and most recently, Steve Reich. While there are some definite similarities, I'm not certain the connections are as profound as a lot of contemporary electronic artists profess them to be.

All those folks are doing is paying lip service to that kind of stuff. That's something that really bums me out about a lot of other people who do electronic music. They tend to go, "Here's my musique concrete piece, here's my ambient piece, here's my this, here's my that." That's why I try and do the exact opposite. I try and make every kind of music that I'm interested in happen at exactly the same time, in the same piece, rather than have several different songs which explore different genres. For me, the way I work makes more sense. Everything just gets synthesized. End of story. ¶ Something that I feel really good about is that now, after all these years of work, I'm really just getting started. It has taken a hell of a lot of time, but most people I know who are in bands are pretty much finishing their musical careers, or they're starting to repeat themselves, whereas now I'm feeling like I'm just beginning to *not* repeat myself. I'm starting to enter some new territory I hadn't had access to before. It had gotten pretty depressing; it didn't feel like I was going anywhere. But right now I feel like I'm hitting a new learning curve, and that renews my interest in doing this kind of work. ◎

FOR ME, THE WAY I WORK MAKES MORE SENSE. EVERYTHING JUST GETS SYNTHESIZED. END OF STORY



20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND RHYTHM OF BLACK LINES

1. When did your band form?

14 AD; Macro was sarificing with the augers at the temple of Vesta (enjoying the fruits of the virgins) while Tigleanus the threshes of the Cloaca Maxima. Meanwhile, Longinus recieved Mithridates at the banquet of Trilmalchio where he tickled Pompeia's throat with his feather. Soon after, they crossed paths in this glorious year, the year when every household was blessed with the splendor of Isis and the Golden Ass.

2. When will it break up?

As sure as Sulla marched on the eternal city, we shall never turn our lictors upon ourselves.

3. What have you released so far?

We have released all the pultry from the estates on Alba Longa; thusfar one CD EP on Sixgunlover.

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

For we know not how to till the soil or sow the seeds.

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

When we were children, to scare us, our parents told us Hannibal was at the gates. Or equally so, the emergence of Ox.

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

The Crowning of King Tridates at the Golden House, c. 63 (or quite possibly any show with At the Drive-In, Trail of Dead, Pavo, Black Heart Procession, 5ive Style or Tristeza).

7. State your purpose.

To inflame the hearts of every child, man-servant & elder with the beauty of the tortoise who gave his life so that the baby Hermes could pluck the glorious tendons of his half-shell.

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

The Chancellor.

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

We need not describe ourselves to the elders. Young and old alike attend our gatherings. Whether to gaze upon Eos' enchanted you stock such as one Jim Kieke or to partake in Bacchanailian rites, such as one Boris Brodsky.

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

Hocus-Pocus with a dash of alacazam sprinkled with a little abracadabra.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

Who shall posess the Neronian lyre.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

The ramblings of Heliogabulus as told through the annals of Josephus.

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

When we were children, our parents told us Hannabal was at the gates.

14. What is selling out?

Rendering unto Ceasar what is Ceasars.

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

We have accumulated enough denarii and sesterces to provide grain for the populace and declare a free day of worship at the festival of Saturnalia.

16. Where do you practice?

A 10x10 tomb on the island of Kyclopes.

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

The Stones, Headhunters and Saxon... and Soft Machine.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

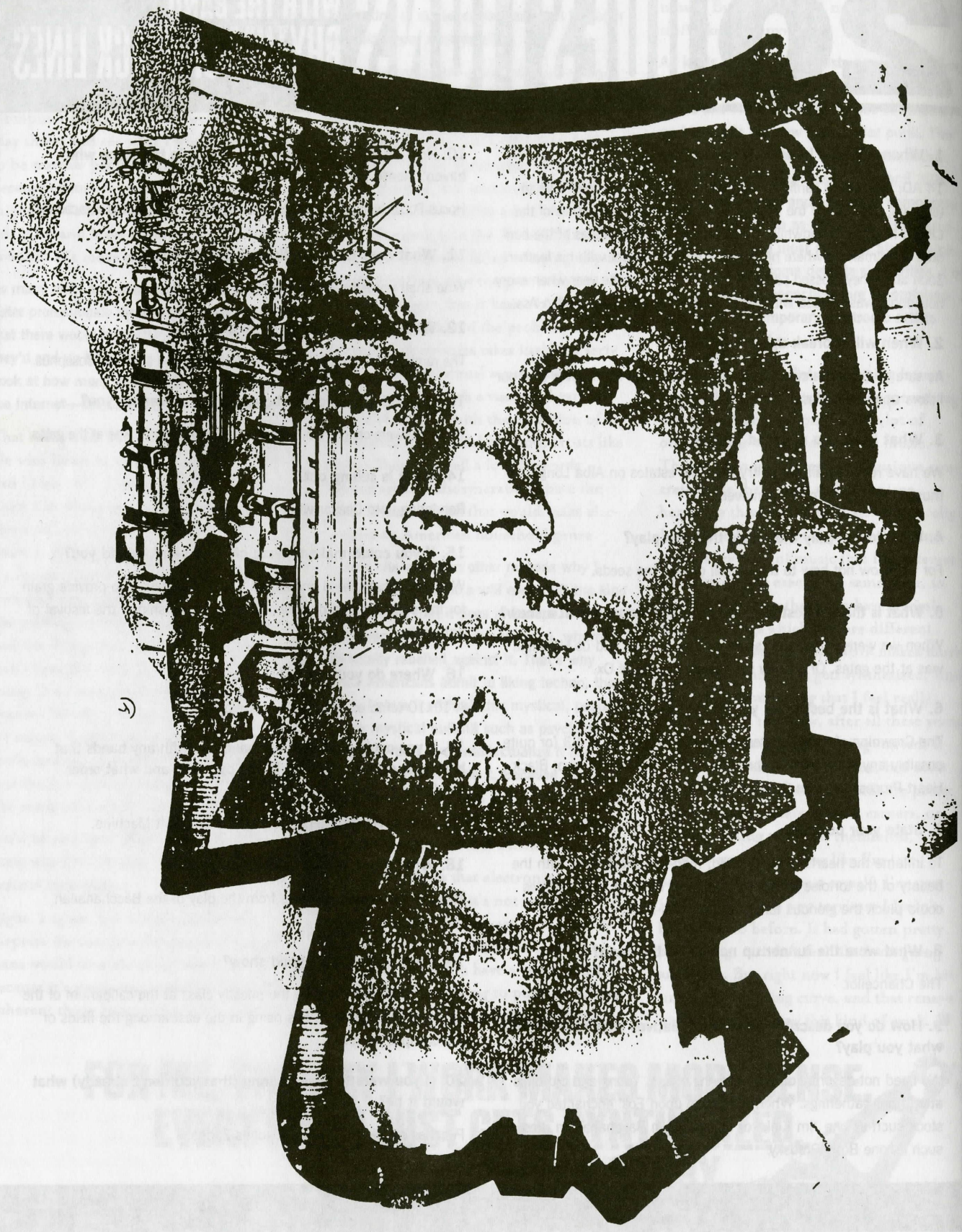
To seize the head of Crassus from the play of the Bacchanalian mysteries.

19. What makes for a good show?

Any gathering attended by the priestly class at the calidarium of the baths of Caracalla with Eos rising in the east among the fields of the Campus Martius.

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

Peaches en Regalia by one F. Iulius Zappa.



The next revolution, I predict, will not be televised, but will instead quite possibly be conducted by e-mail. And it may very well begin with a message that will make you smile:

"THIS IS GREAT NEWS. I just got up and ran through the office screaming PUNK PLANET! PUNK PLANET! PUNK PLANET! I'm doing an interview with PUNK PLANET! I'm going to become the male KATHLEEN HANNA!!!! I never got this excited for *60 Minutes* or the *Washington Post* style section. Because those places are SQUARE. Let's do it."

That was the first e-mail I ever received from publisher Sander Hicks. Begin corresponding with him seriously, and one thing will easily become evident before the end of the second e-mail: Sander Hicks is going to change history.

Hicks is the president and CEO of **Soft Skull Press**, a company he formed while working middle management at a major copy-shop on 12th street in New York City (hint: it rhymes with "Stinkos").

He is a publisher bold enough to deal with new thoughts and new thinkers. He's published punk poets and musicians, radical revolutionaries and new political pundits. He's taken on the big boys, facing the fierce corporate conservatism of TV's *60 Minutes*, and St. Martin's Press.

And that's just his night job. Hicks runs Soft Skull out of the basement of one of the two buildings where he serves by day as the super. He plays a major role in deciding which books his company publishes. He serves as an activist, not just in print, but in action. He was a member of the International Socialist Organization. He ran an anti-war newspaper during the Gulf War. He's organized against the death penalty. He's fought for workers' rights.

Did I also mention that Sander Hicks is punk rock down to his idealistic core? He is. Ask him about the band he fronts, White Collar Crime. Ask him to tell you what high regards he holds for Fugazi's Ian MacKaye. Ask him about his favorite albums. Go ahead, do it.

Listen to a man who walks the walk better than the best talkers give lip service to a lifestyle they claim to live and love, and then change when the big corporate paychecks start floating in. Listen to what he's accomplished, where he's been, where he's going, who he's going with—and how it's going to affect us all.

Because, someday soon, America is going to have a sit-down with him, and ask, "What do we need to do, how can we fix what's so fucked up already?"

And he'll probably have an answer. And if he doesn't, he'll know someone—probably one of Soft Skull's authors—who does. Sander Hicks is someone everyone could learn something from. So listen in. Because the future is waiting.

Interview by **Will Tupper**

Let's start by talking a little bit about the history of Soft Skull Publishing.

Soft Skull started in the back of the Kinko's on 12th Street. The Vietnam of Kinko's—a tiny, packed swirl of stress.

What was your motivation for starting Soft Skull?

I didn't want to work another god damned shitty job or be under a stupid boss. If your mind is going 500 miles a minute, then working at Kinkos, or a drugstore, or a landscaping crew, feels stifling. Of course, all these things involve discipline, and I'm using that same work ethic here, but I feel so much happier running my own life.

How does Soft Skull's politics and publishing tie into the punk movement?

Punk is not just going to shows. It is a life lived outside of shelters, where you're the only one, up against a lot, up against a threatening system. But the shows, our rituals, our culture, train us to be fierce and defiant and to have a lot of style while fighting back. There are comparisons to other revolutionary movements, the Wobblies, the early Bolsheviks, the Goldman/Berkman social anarchists. These people realized it was better to create a counter-movement than participate in the artifice and suffering of normal life, and so they formed a culture and a new kind of organization. They created discipline out of their chaotic, blinding rage. ¶ However, you can't claim that Left politics somehow own punk, or that one stems from the other. Bands like Crass are fun because they are so full of vitriol, and they attacked everything—even lefty punks like The Clash. They attacked so fully, with an all encompassing worldview. Nothing is good enough. Everything is tainted by capitalism. Yeah, I'd say that's right. ¶ Another band that's continued to teach me things repeatedly is No Trend. Again, not traditional Left wing thinkers, and they would have spit at you if you asked them something about communism. Instead, their live show and their lyrics were about constant opposition. And, many times, they turned their harsh lights onto punk itself, mocking and alienating themselves from the DC scene by claiming it was all a pose. ¶ You can imagine these bands live—attacking the audience, as they should. Their records continue to attack the mind, and reform it according to stronger principles.

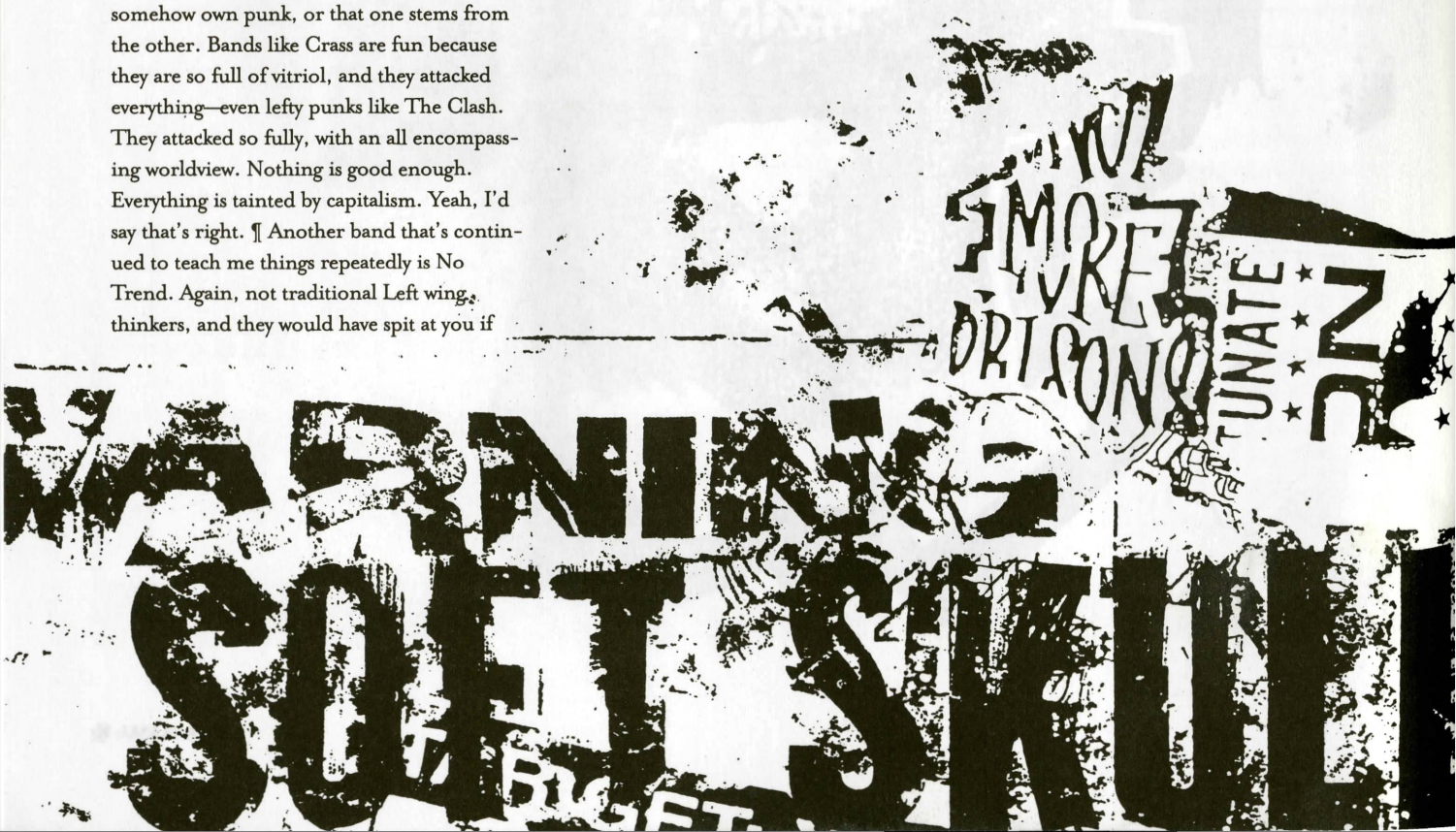
When I describe Soft Skull to my more musically-inclined friends, I've said that Soft Skull is much akin to the Dischord record label, and you're "Publishing's Ian MacKaye." Do you think that's a fair comparison?

I'll take it. No doubt. I've got a lot to say about the man, he was a big influence. In the late '80s in high school, we used to sneak out of the house to see a series of the first Fugazi shows at a little club called DC Space. Punk was raging hyper with speed metal influences, crossover bands like DRI, and straight edge was painting itself into a corner by becoming a jock club. But Fugazi at this time brought out a new sound, and a new vibe—even a new way of dancing! At these shows, the whole room was taken up in a unified pogo/bop. You could hear it in the lyrics—language was a tool again. The band was a threat. It was defeating punk rock stereotypes.

Where do you see Soft Skull—or yourself—in five years? Ten years? Twenty?

We're going to be bigger. One thing people have always assumed about us is that we would be like Dischord, and keep things small-scale. Not true. There's a big difference between the NYC mentality and the DC-area one. We want to steer history towards a more just and equitable world. You don't do this by just running an underground, small-scale business. We are out to win over the hearts and minds of the masses, and smash the things keeping international capitalism in such a strong position. ¶ I'm thinking of running for Congress; I'm thinking of starting a political party; I'm thinking of starting an organic foods co-op in the front room of the office; I'm full of grand schemes. I'm certain it will all work out in the end. ¶ It looks like Soft Skull might merge with a bigger entity, and become something more powerful, in terms of funding and research. You have to unify with like minds. We can't do it alone. More on this later, when I can say for sure.

Is this possible merger with the company Razorfish, as mentioned on your website a while back? You don't have to answer if you don't want to, I'm just trying to be a responsible journalist here.



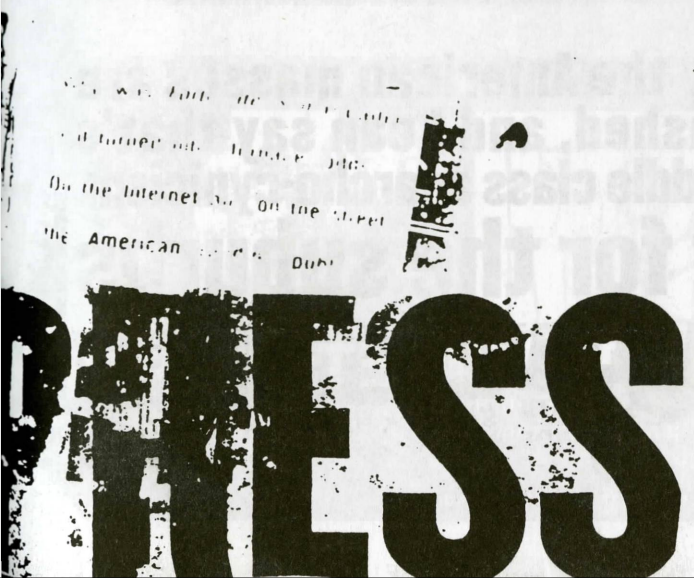
You're close, but no cigar. Last year, Razorfish was dropping a lot of loose talk about acquiring Soft Skull. And I was flattered—and a little mesmerized—by them. But in time, I realized we didn't really have much in common, and now I feel a little used. We collaborated on a book together—actually, they came on board after I already had this book lined up. It's a book I still like quite a bit. But what their little cultural production wing does best is capitalize on a glamorized, slick view of "hipness." Towards the end of our joint venture, they acquired I-Cube, a web company whose major client is defense contractor McDonnell-Douglas. I realized there was not going to be a deal. You can't serve two masters. You can't be "cool," *and* design websites for people who sell weapons of mass destruction. Call me a communist, call me what you will. Just don't call me cool, if that's what cool is. ¶ The company that might merge with us is much younger than Razorfish. They have offered me senior management status and 100% control over my end of operations. It would be a way to achieve accelerated growth and improve our infrastructure immensely. If it doesn't happen this year, it will happen sometime later. It boils down to capital. If you want to change things, you need access to capital. If this deal comes through, I keep telling myself, things will be better. I would still be a punk from DC with a publishing company, but I would have more at my fingertips.

You're not the only indie publisher on the block though. Let's talk a little bit more about your relationship to your contemporaries. What are your views on indie publishers Gary Hustwit, of Incommunicado Books and legend Henry Rollins who runs 21361 publications?

Gary at Incommunicado is a friend. He's a fellow punk of publishing and, next to Hank Rollins, Gary is the original. He had a huge amount of success early on with his *Releasing an Independent Record* book, and his *Getting Radio Airplay*. These were real DIY books and are still in print. ¶ Rollins is a war. He has an independent perspective on the world, which is something everyone should aspire to. No matter who you are, you need vision and if you can make your vision strong, no one can control you. The thing people don't get about Henry is that he's not a bully, he's the product of bullying. He built himself up to be able to defeat the self-destruction and self-loathing he was taught by society. He was originally a skinny kid from DC, in a fucked up religious high school—not unlike myself. There's so much about Rollins that's triumphant, but I've also been frustrated in past years. I think Henry is getting too comfortable. Some of his spoken word shows seem too light-hearted—there are too many condom jokes, too many dick jokes, too many frat types in the audience loving him. He's *ours*! I'm so jealous. ¶ There's also something really strange and American about his character; he's really open and you can see all the programming. It's like inside him are these military codes. It's almost as if there's no way to be independent and disciplined if it's not informed by the culture of American soldiering. Which is itself the product of the World War II nostalgia industry, all those films, all those myths of our "noble" role in that war. But if you research the topic—or read *Saving Private Power*, a new Soft Skull book by Mickey Z, pardon the product placement—you see those myths are just stories, just constructions. WWII, like all wars under capitalism, was about the competition for scarce resources, about controlling the globe, about who would have imperial power in the 20th Century. But I can understand why Rollins would identify with a soldier. It's the soldiers who know first-hand the horror of war. The war profiteers and the politicians talk the talk and bring us to war, but they don't understand war first-hand.

Let's switch gears slightly, and talk about another "war": the fight to change people's minds. In America, it seems the dominating belief is, "If you work hard, you'll succeed." But I've lived near areas my entire life where I've seen that belief simply is not true. It seems that the "American Dream" is only achieved if you've got money, and are most likely white. Minorities and the poverty-stricken are most often left out in the dust or struggling for athletic scholarships. I guess what I'm wondering is, how will any political system impress on the masses—who have had their ideology pounded into their heads since birth—that the way things are run now *don't* help everyone, *don't* aid the working class, and so on?

Most people feel income disparity on a very real level. A lot are working two jobs and raising a family, and yet hearing so much hype about this Internet economy boom. You don't have to convince working families like that that the political system isn't serving them. What you do have to work on is convincing them that socialism, or a new form of socialism, can truly create a better world, because it got isolated and destroyed last time. ¶ Half of our challenge to the Left is to abandon our assumptions about people. We are working on a great new book by Zack Exley a young former union organizer for United Auto Workers. He saw great potential in the American people that was systematically going ignored by the union and by an academic, isolated "Left." Rather than saying, 'the people are all brainwashed by the media and education system of capitalism,' he saw what he calls "organic leaders" in the workplace, people who were like one out of 10—not the vanguardist one out of 200. These people were respected, good, common-interest serving folks who were experienced in political fights. His theory is that a *real* left will be



lead by those people. Not academic leftists, not the isolated, clubby left groups. ¶ To quote Zack: "The brainwashing is a lot shallower than Lefties think. People are capable of holding several opinions at once. In one conversation a worker can say, 'Things are good these days' and in another conversation rant about how 'the little guy's getting screwed in this economy.' Just to get rid of an annoying Lefty organizer on his door step, this worker might use the first opinion: 'What do I want a union for? Everything's great.' The organizer never sees the full range of possibilities of this guy's consciousness."

Where do you see America in 50 years?

It could get ugly. In the next 10 years alone, a lot of the Baby-Boomers are going to retire. The Stock Market is buoyed right now and flush with cash, mostly from these ex-hippies' retirement plan money. It's a bull market for now, but the busts are inevitable, as we all know but don't want to admit. When the Boomers start retiring en-masse, they will pull investment cash from the system. It could spark a recession or even a depression. Look how the Nasdaq went bonkers this week [4/14/00]. It's like a gawky teenager with no confidence. It seems to be displaying an alarming sense of worthlessness. $2 trillion in value vaporized this past week, with one of the worst weeks in Nasdaq history. ¶ I think with WTO and the protests against the World Bank and IMF, a lot of Americans are waking up to the fact that impoverishing the third world is bad for the labor market here. We don't want to keep those people in poverty, that means they'll work for very low wages. They'll get screwed, and we'll get screwed. ¶ You can say the American masses are all brainwashed, and I can say that's just your middle class anarcho-cynicism. Save it for the suburbs. The World Bank protest in DC and the WTO conflict in Seattle were all inspired and partially lead by organized labor, the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO out there in front, saying the current order is unfair, and deadly.

Do you ever think that with so many worthy causes out there, and so many people working on so many different things, that there's just too many fragments? Sometimes it seems that nothing will successfully get done if everyone is working on their own little thing, and not coming together to look at the bigger picture.

It's a good question. Do we want to be activists who are "issue-oriented" and concentrate on just that one issue, or are we something broader. You can probably tell that I'm the later. When anyone mentions "issue-oriented" activists, I think of lobbyists in Washington, like environmentalists lobbying for better Clear Air/Clean Water-type legislation. It all boils down to: what's your vision of a better world, and more immediately, how are we going to get there? If you believe that this system must be overthrown with organization, mobilization, and militant struggle, then your world-view is probably not just "issue-oriented." But then again, the only "issue-oriented" person I was ever close to—and I mean *really* "issue-oriented," cause she moved to DC to lobby and all—was a pretty ideological person, one of these anarchists who is an anarchist because she hates the intellectual mediocrity of people like the ISO or the RCP.

Earlier, you mentioned the Internet economy, but we haven't really talked about the Internet at all. Do you think it's an essential tool for small businesses to use, or is there a glut of net-savvy, aspiring internet start-up hype out there?

It's more than that. The tech is going to change society top to bottom. Let me break it down for you: At Soft Skull, our e-comm. is taking off. We did $0 in e-comm last year. This year, we're on target to make $16,000 in gross e-comm. Why? I think there's something universally appealing about making your business direct, grass-roots and going right to the merchant. We can discount heavily, and still make more money than we would by going through all those boring middle-men.

Do you think that, on a larger scale—with the Internet or publishing in general—that the bigger publishers are missing the boat? It seems to me that many of them share a mentality that folks our age simple don't read, and all we do is sit around and watch TV.

There are a lot of good books by larger publishers. You can't generalize. Look at Colson Whitehead's *The Intuitionist,* a precisely well made first novel on Anchor, a Random House imprint. To generalize about the books on the majors is not easy. It's not as simple as saying, isn't it weird that most of them owned by German media conglomerates? I like a lot of what I read on Knopf. It's like that age-old question, like in music, if the majors are so bad, why did we love the Clash? It's because the quality of the work is bigger than the dysfunction of the capitalist machine that has picked it up and professed it's undying adoration. We know though, you and I, that the capitalist enterprises by their very natures have a very fickle, transitory decision-making process.

What's the greatest lesson running Soft Skull has taught you?

There are some lessons to be learned from capitalism, from running a small business. Saying this kind of thing got me kicked out of the ISO, but what the fuck: Performance, delivery, reliability are really important things, they build relationships. And if you are creating a worthwhile product, small business capitalism can seem like an end in itself. In a lot of ways, all we have—no matter what the political system—are our relationships with others. We all want work that is meaningful, right? I feel like I'm using capitalism as a training ground for something bigger, something more important than this. If we can make it here, we'll make it anywhere. ◎

You can say the American masses are all brainwashed, and I can say that's just your middle class anarcho-cynicism. Save it for the suburbs

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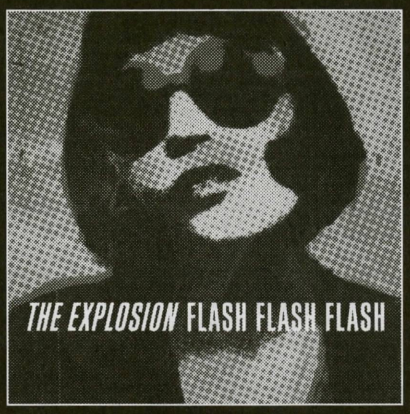

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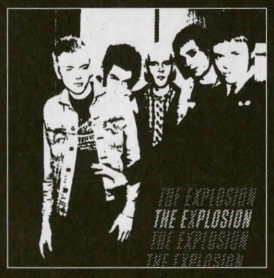

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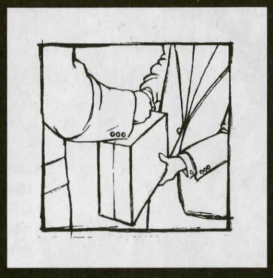

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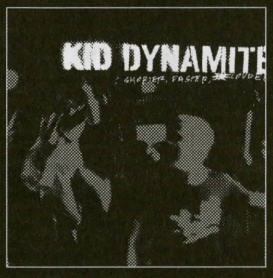

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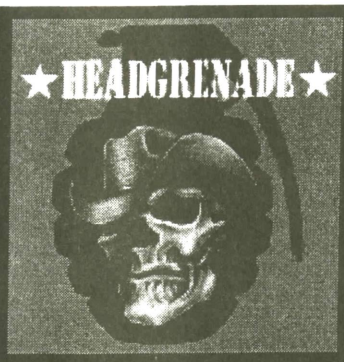

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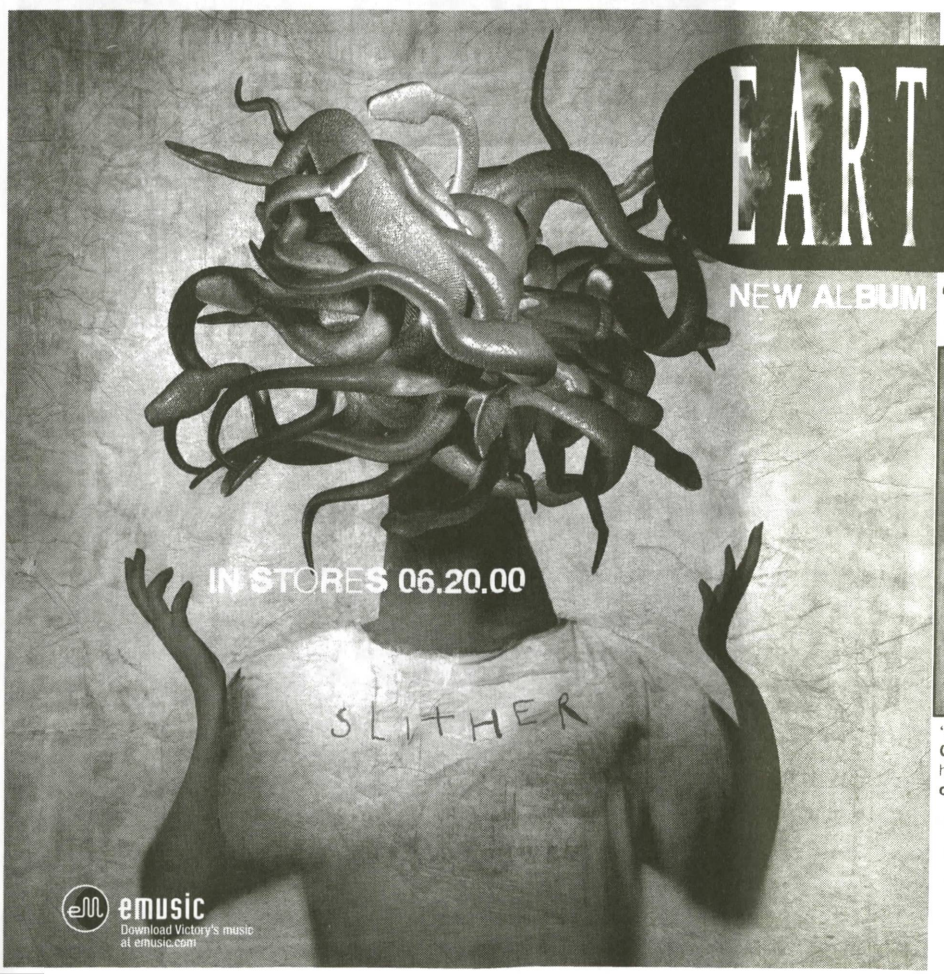

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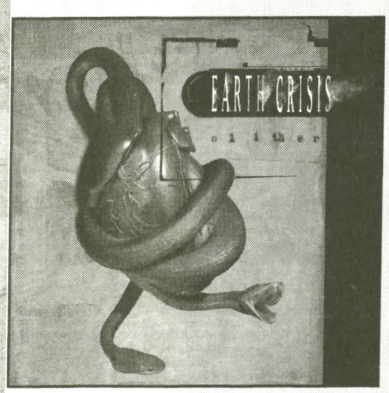

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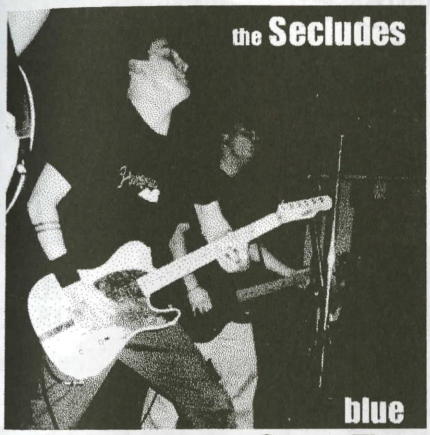

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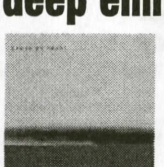

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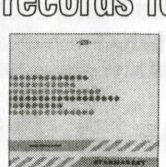

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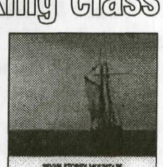

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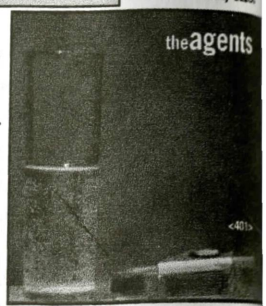

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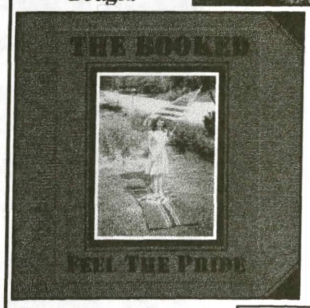

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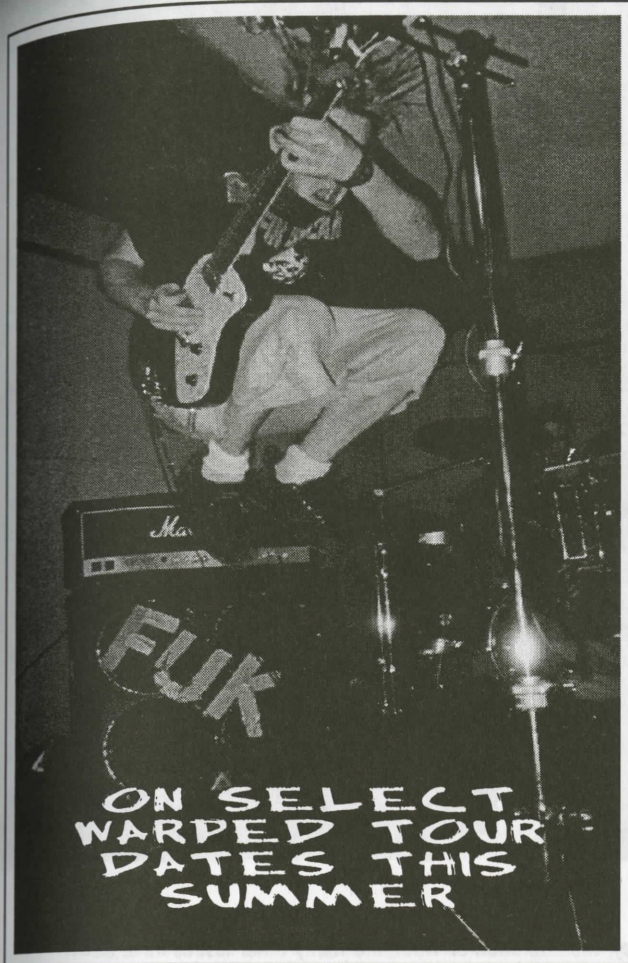

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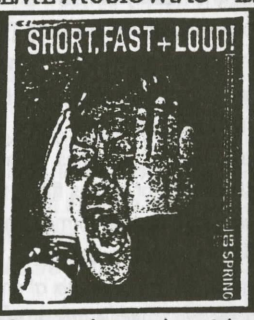

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The roar of the crowd was deafening as the 25 police officers in full body armor clutching three foot billy clubs and riot shields turned around and disappeared down F street. The last few minutes had been some of the longest of my life, as 100 rag-tag activists occupying the intersection of 18th and E stood facing the heavily armed riot cops. As the cops turned tail, the band of activists spontaneously sang Twisted Sister's '80s schlock anthem "We're Not Gonna Take it," and a dance party broke out.

This was the morning of the April 16th protests against the Washington DC meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—"a16," as it has become known. But it was more than just tens of thousands of bodies filling the streets of DC, a16 tested the coalitions and networks that formed back in November of last year around the WTO protests in Seattle.

This coalition, a tenuous mix of anarchists, environmentalists, trade activists, progressive religious groups and old labor, has captured a great deal of attention since tear gas filled the streets of Seattle eight months ago. Successful in shutting down the WTO meetings and in bringing the work of institutions like the World Bank into the forefront of the public debate, this "new left" coalition has carried the day.

Since Seattle, institutions like the WTO, the IMF and the World bank have found their agendas opened up for public scrutiny and questioning. But it goes beyond international finance, as corporations like Nike, the Gap and Starbucks have found themselves on the defensive as well, as their use of sweatshop labor, anti-union sentiments and corporate greed are exposed by puppet-wielding leftists on the evening news. Rainforest destruction, the corruption of democracy, the liberation of Tibet and many other issues have all found themselves on the evening news. The agendas of the groups involved in this movement are as disparate as the groups themselves. So disparate that it can be overwhelming.

But it is this disparate nature that puts the "new" into new left. Instead of focusing on specific issues, activists are looking at the big picture and finding common ground. Coalitions have been formed across groups that rarely have seen eye to eye in the past—environmentalists and unions, for instance, or anarchists and religious groups.

So where did this come from and where does it go from here? These are questions on the lips of many and the answers are as complex as the new coalitions that have allowed us to ask them.

Assembled on the next 25 pages are six interviews with people and organizations that are a part of the new left. Some have been involved in progressive struggles for decades, others have just started out. Each brings their own unique perspective to this burgeoning new movement. This is, by no means a complete list of active people and organizations. A thorough series of interviews would be close to impossible; these simply represent six voices in a chorus of thousands.

Our series of interviews leads off with a talk with Han Shan, program director of the **Ruckus Society**. Ruckus is a unique organization—it trains people for direct action, both at the actions themselves and at "action camps" held around the country. And Ruckus takes its work seriously. It teaches people how to climb buildings and drop banners, how to lock themselves to each other—or to barricades, trees, and

roads—it teaches effective organizing of actions and how to deal with the media. If it happens at an action, Ruckus teaches it. But it also teaches the philosophy of actions and the power of the people.

Noam Chomsky is one of the most outspoken progressives living today. Chomsky is in a class by himself. Plus, he's probably the only professor at MIT to have released split records with Jello Biafra, Bad Religion and Chumbawamba! Having been a part of every major progressive movement since the '60s, Chomsky brings a unique perspective to this series of interviews.

Direct Action Network best embodies what's "new" about the new left. A network of people across the country—and growing internationally—DAN operates under a non-hierarchical model. DAN isn't an organization that sends "its people" to a protest, "its people" *are* the protest. Formed just prior to the WTO protests in Seattle, DAN hasn't even been around for a year, yet it was one of the organizations at the forefront of a16 organizing. Firmly committed both to its autonomous principles as well as to creative direct action, DAN has arrived. *Punk Planet* spoke with Chris Crews, a 23 year old member of DAN's continental spokescouncil.

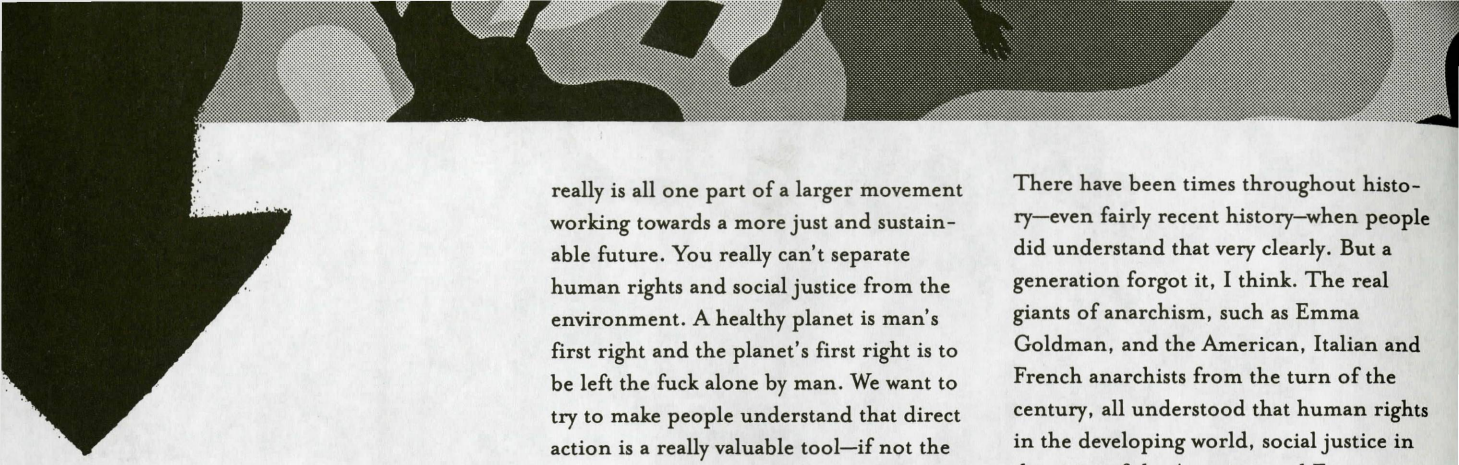
While groups like DAN span the globe, **Queer to the Left** is content doing local organizing. Bringing the new left critique of global capitalism to the local level—and into queer politics—Queer to the left has mobilized in Chicago around issues of gentrification, AIDS and police brutality. It's important to remember that sometimes the biggest changes can be made on the local level; Queer to the Left's story helps demonstrate that. *Punk Planet* had a chance to speak with Queer to the Left's Jeff Edwards.

Jello Biafra has been active locally, nationally and internationally since his days as singer of the Dead Kennedys, one of the most influential punk bands of all time. Now Biafra spends much of his time doing spoken word tours and records. Biafra returned to music at the WTO protests, as he lent his vocal talents to the No-WTO Combo that played at the Seattle Uprising. Always outspoken, Biafra spoke with *Punk Planet* about the new movement.

Finally, *Punk Planet* talked with **Global Exchange**'s co-founder Medea Benjamin. Interested in both changing the future *and* the present, Global Exchange brings a welcome pragmatism to the new left coalition. Through working directly with farmers and craftspeople in impoverished countries, Global Exchange helps bring a livable wage to areas ripe for corporate exploitation. Through programs like this, Global Exchange helps demonstrate that alternatives *are* possible.

There is change in the air. Some days, like the five in Seattle surrounding the WTO protests or the two days of the IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington DC, the air is so thick with change you can taste it. A change that overwhelms the senses—deafening chants, beautiful puppets, the whiff of vinegar—used on cloth to counteract the effect of tear gas—the touch of hundreds of open hands. Other days change is just barely there, like the hint of spring that hangs in the frigid February air. "Voices of the New Left" is for those days—the other days, your energy is better spent in the streets.

Interviews by **Jeff Guntzel**, **Joel Schalit** and **Daniel Sinker**.
Introduction by **Daniel Sinker**



Ruckus is an interesting organization in that it's so "behind the scenes." You're not organizing protests, you're organizing people. What was the impetus behind that idea?

Ruckus has been around for about five years now. Mike Roselle founded it. He was one of the co-founders of the Earth First! movement as well as the Rainforest Action Network. He also was the first action team coordinator for Greenpeace. There was a model by which Greenpeace and a couple other organizations would put together these training camps. They would teach themselves the technical aspects of direct action. The first camps started as action camps for Earth First! as well as ex and current Greenpeace forest activists. But it was very focused on forest and wilderness defenders. The idea was to impart an essence of excellence and a validity to direct action because every single important, effective movement for social change has employed the tactics and strategies of nonviolent direct action. ¶ There were so many people who didn't understand the history of the giants upon whose shoulders we stand. People who didn't understand where they had come from and didn't understand what the strategies of nonviolent direct action meant. Thus became the action camps that we put out, the first several of which were in the woods of Montana and Oregon, where Earth First!ers would learn technical tree climbing, road blockades to stop logging and things like that. ¶ Over the last two and a half years, we've significantly broadened our scope to include social justice activists, human rights activists, animal rights activists and folks working on trade and labor. We recognized that every single disparate facet of this movement really is all one part of a larger movement working towards a more just and sustainable future. You really can't separate human rights and social justice from the environment. A healthy planet is man's first right and the planet's first right is to be left the fuck alone by man. We want to try to make people understand that direct action is a really valuable tool—if not the most valuable tool—in our toolbox. But it has to be recognized that it's not a strategy unto itself, it's a tactic that can fit into a strategic framework and it has to be understood as such.

When you started to broaden your scope, was it something that you felt you needed to do, or was it that all of a sudden because there were organizations outside of the environmental groups you were working with that were approaching you for training?

It was a pretty organic process. There's been a realization and an evaluation of thought within the "new American left" if you will, that you can't have one without the other. You can't separate these struggles. All struggles for justice and sustainability, for human rights and for social justice are deeply intertwined. So yes, there were definitely groups and communities contacting Ruckus looking for training and looking for assistance in their campaigns. But parallel to that was a natural evolution and understanding that we have to work together. Steelworkers and Tibetans, animal welfare activists, hippies and anarchists all have to realize that we're working towards a common goal. We might have different visions about how it comes about, but basically we're trying to turn back the corporate takeover of our planet. We're looking towards a world that will actually be able to sustain itself.

Why do you think that realization has finally happened now? That's one of the really interesting things to me. Having been active in leftist politics for 10 years now, it used to be that no one talked to each other. All of a sudden we're seeing these seemingly disparate groups putting aside their differences for a common good.

There have been times throughout history—even fairly recent history—when people did understand that very clearly. But a generation forgot it, I think. The real giants of anarchism, such as Emma Goldman, and the American, Italian and French anarchists from the turn of the century, all understood that human rights in the developing world, social justice in the cities of the Americas and Europe, factory workers, and nature all had equal rights. The struggles to secure rights for all those different things were indeed totally interconnected. I think that recognition has been there throughout history, but it has been forgotten somewhat. ¶ The reason I think that it is being understood again is somewhat complicated. But I think one of the best reasons is that we've watched our adversaries find common ground even when they disagreed strongly on things—common ground enough to slaughter us and put into place a power structure which is killing the planet. Looking at their model, realizing that they've been able to put aside their differences, we've recognized that we have to as well. ¶ There's another phenomenon that I think is probably the most important one in the year 2000, particularly among young, white, middle-class Americans. There are a lot of people growing up without their own struggles, without being affected parties within any of these dynamics that we're talking about. They're not struggling to feed themselves, they're not running from the cops every day, they're not worried about what kind of job is going to be available for them, they're not dealing with toxic waste in their backyard. What they're realizing is that there are so many symptoms that it's impossible to work on them all. People are looking at the underlying economic paradigms, they're looking at the international financial institutions, and they're looking at capitalism as a whole. ¶ It's like you're standing on the side of a riverbank with a group of your friends and babies keep floating by in the river. You're jumping in to try to save them, but they just keep coming. Eventually, you have to leave a

few people by the river to catch babies, but you've also got to fucking send a team up to the bridge to find out who the hell is throwing the babies into the river in the first place! And right now, there are too many babies! There are too many symptoms. We need to look at the underlying illness and treat the disease as we treat the symptoms. ¶ In the '80s particularly, there was a lot of do-it-yourself environmentalism that placed the blame on the consumer, like recycling. Of course that's stuff's important, but no one was really allowed to look at the underlying paradigms like the consumer culture that created so much waste in the first place. People are forced to do that now because it's absolutely overwhelming to attempt to deal with the struggle in Tibet, with sweatshops, with poisoned rivers, toxic sludge in communities of color, nuclear waste on native land, ongoing militarism, Iraqis dying under a ridiculous embargo, and global racism. There's too much going on! So people are looking at capitalism because it's the economic paradigm upon which so much of this oppression is based. ¶ That's why people are looking at the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF. These neo-colonial financial institutions are foisting an imperialist economic system upon the developing world, making sure they have export-driven economies that are making the business elites in their country—and corporations in G-7 countries such as our own—very rich while leaving the majority of the people extremely poor. Not to mention destroying the environment and shredding labor standards in the process.

How many camps do the Ruckus Society run? How many people are you guys training for this stuff? Are you seeing your numbers increase?

The number of camps that we do each year hasn't changed a lot. There are a few reasons for it. Since late last fall with the WTO uprising and the confrontation at the IMF meetings, this spring, we were very, very busy being involved with the organizing around those two events. Those two things took the resources that *four* camps could handle! There's also been some turnover. The Ruckus community is definitely a tight family, but sometimes it's 50 people, sometimes it's 120 people, it changes. But to try to estimate numbers of folks that we're training, it's pretty difficult. We've trained well over 2,000 people in our main action camp program and then there's folks that would self-identify as Ruckus all over North America who are offering discreet trainings to people all the time.

So what happens in a camp?

The core curriculum that everyone has to go through is nonviolence. It's what we always start with. We talk about the history, philosophy and practice of nonviolence. We discuss Thoreau, Ghandi and Martin Luther King. We talk about some tough issues, like "is property destruction nonviolent?" We don't have an answer to that question; we just want to make sure that people are considering these things. ¶ Then we teach people action planning and strategy. We go through a checklist of what it takes to put together different kinds of actions. We talk about different models for organizing actions. We talk about spontaneous actions. We talk about very planned out, team-oriented actions that are much more technical, like hanging a banner from a building. We talk about mass-action strategy organized with clusters and affinity groups and the problems of speaking as one voice when you're thousands. We talk about strategic campaigning so that people understand the framework and infrastructure that you need to build in order to have an action make sense. That's the theoretical stuff. Then we get into tactics. ¶ We teach blockades—low tech and high-tech. We teach people how to use their bodies as obstacles, how to use bodies with other bodies to block streets, to take intersections and logging roads. We teach high-tech blockades, where we deploy very heavy things that are hard to move, like junker cars or busses or trucks that we lock down to take a road. Or things like sleeping dragons that would take a logging road and prevent a logging crew from getting in and starting to cut. We teach tripods, we teach bipods. Then we get into climbing.

a16 photos/Daniel Sinker

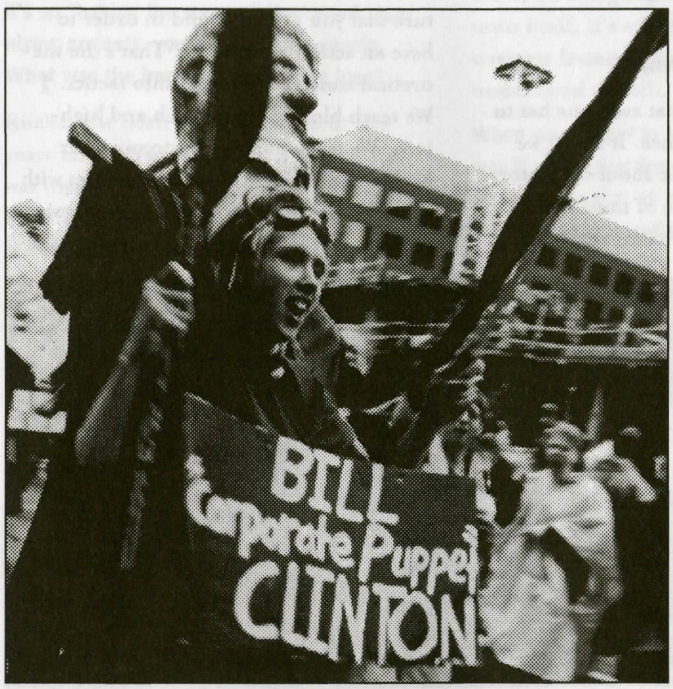
These a16 activists have locked themselves together with U-Locks around their necks.

RUCKUS SOCIETY

"If we were allowed to exercise our first amendment rights as they were intended and speak truth to power and allowed to be a part of this process, we wouldn't have had to resort to such tactics." —Han Shan interviewed by Daniel Sinker

RUCKUS
continued...

Something that we're best known for is constructing a 60-foot scaffolding to mimic a building. We teach folks to rappel and to hang banners and do hanging blockades. We've blockaded shipments of old-growth lumber and driftnet ships by hanging in their way off bridges. We teach technical tree climbing as well to do tree sits. We teach people how to build a tree village, to take an entire grove if they have to. ¶ For the climbing and some of the more tactical, physical stuff it's also very very powerful because it challenges people. It challenges people to do things that they didn't know they didn't think that they could do. And we make sure that they succeed—actually *they* make sure that they succeed. There's a real power in watching people overcome obstacles. It's kinda corny and Outward Boundy, but people leave very transformed by that experience of overcoming heights and trusting their friends—maybe friends they just made that morning—trusting their gear and seeing that it's not magic, that we can all do it, that we can all take power back and we can all throw our bodies into the machinery and shut down the machine if we need to.



Puppets large and small filled the streets of Washington DC.

"Whether you're talking about the sellout of healthcare to HMOs, whether you're talking about the prison industrial complex and how it's thriving, whether you're talking about human rights in China and Tibet, you're talking about corporate power standing in the way." —Han Shan

I was in DC for a16 and it was the first time that I'd really seen a lot of the strategies of the environmental movement taken outside of the forest. Obviously, that was also used in Seattle to great effect. Why do you think that those strategies have begun to filter into the streets and into actions that aren't about logging and things like that?

Particularly for environmentalists, there's been an ongoing recognition that even though you should always leave a team in the woods defending the growth, you also have to go find the folks that are making the decisions and creating the laws—or lawlessness—that is making that cut possible. The tactics and the organizing structures are only natural because it's what the forest defenders know—it's what they've been practicing for so long. So when they go to the streets, they take those practices with them of course.

But eco-tactics like sleeping dragons are really starting to be employed by people that aren't just environmentalists.

By "sleeping dragons" you probably mean lock boxes. In DC, cops called them "sleeping dragons" but those were really lock boxes. A sleeping dragon is when you bury something in the road, like rebar, so it can really only be used in soft roads, unless you're really ballsy like the fuckers in England who go and tear up the highway the night before! [laughs] But basically, it's when you bury something in the road—a bunch of concrete or rebar or something—with a pin in it. You dig a hole, cover it up a little bit and in the morning, right before the loggers come in, you run in and slip your arm right into the road and lock yourself into it. It's impossible to remove you. The only way for someone to move you is to put you in so much pain that you unclip yourself. That's pretty much the strategy that's used by law enforcement more than any these days 'cause they recognize that the weakest link in that chain is you. That's what a sleeping dragon is. ¶ Lock boxes are what folks have been using a lot of in the streets. In Seattle there were hundreds and hundreds of lock boxes out in the streets. Most of the lock boxes that were made in DC were confiscated by a little sting operation a couple nights before.

What's the theory behind the lock box?

It's easier to take a street. The hardest part is that people say it's illegal. You're fortifying your ability to trespass. But I couldn't disagree more. Especially around Seattle and DC, we saw dozens of city blocks become police states in which it was illegal to protest, in which the citizens were locked out of the process once again. It was made very, very clear that we the people were not to get anywhere near the meetings where these unaccountable bureaucrats were making decisions behind closed doors. My answer would be if we were allowed to exercise our first amendment rights as they were intended and speak truth to power and allowed to be a part of this process, we wouldn't have had to resort to such tactics. It's a fortification. It's a way of saying, you won't allow me to be here and you'll beat the shit out of me for being here, but I'm going to become an atom in

this human molecule, and so you have to deal with this. On the morning of the 30th in Seattle, there were hundreds of people running around with lock boxes on their right arm looking for someone with a free left arm to join up with. It was very, very powerful—these individuals, these "free radicals" running around in the streets looking to become a molecule. There's real metaphorical power in that, but it's also about strengthening one's position when our bodies and our voices aren't given the credence that they should be.

In a way, that's a metaphor for all the training that you all are doing. How effective do you think it's been?

It's kinda funny. Certainly I think we've been incredibly effective, if the index by which we judge our success or failure is if we get people to talk about macro economics and get people to look at the underlying paradigms upon which so much that we work on is based. People *are* talking about the WTO. People *are* talking about the IMF and the World Bank. We have allies. ¶ The thing that's really important to understand is that when we talk about this burgeoning new movement, it's not new at all—it's just new here in the United States. I rode in a cab the day before a16 talking on my cellphone like a dork. The cabdriver could tell by what I was talking about that I was a "protester," as he called me. He asked if I was a protester and I said I was. He said "Well, I just want you to know that I was in my first IMF riot 30 years ago in Nigeria. And I'm really glad you guys are out here. But I have to say one thing: it's about fucking time you woke up to what's happening in your back yard and it's about fucking time that Americans realize the privilege that you have and what goes on for your supposed benefit around the world." That was a very humbling experience. ¶ Here we are, a part of this brand-new movement which in fact has been going on for 50 years, essentially since institutions like the IMF were formed, and folks have been protesting what is essentially the new colonialism all along. Yeah, it's new here, but we've just started to join this party and we started pretty late in the game. That's really humbling, but at the same time I'm also really excited. We all feel like we're part of something new, that's big, and that's also growing.

Do you think the movement is sustainable? The last eight months or so have really been easy. In order to keep things going, you have to get more numbers in. You have to cross more boundaries with groups, organizations and communities that have different outlooks and different ideas and agendas. That is in some ways much more challenging than working with mainly—at least here in the US—middle class white people.

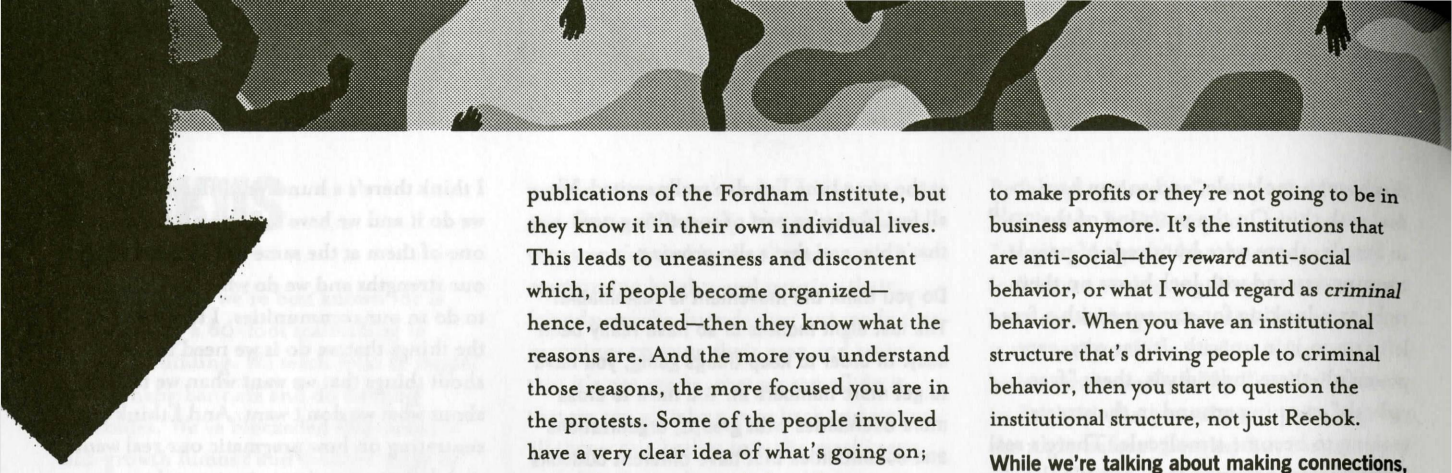
Absolutely. It's a huge challenge. First of all, if we are to build a populist movement, we have to be communicating to people that what we are fighting for is all the same thing. And very importantly we have to demonstrate that what we're not just fighting *against* stuff. We're not just trying to ban things, or trying to end this or that. We're also talking about beginning things and building things. What we want is really pragmatic, it's not a pipe dream. We're just saying that we want to make livable cities. We want to reclaim the streams and rivers we want to protect biological diversity. We want to prioritize education and healthcare over incarcerating people. We're talking about a kind of family values, essentially. ¶ Certainly, we do have a lot of class and racial divides that we all need to bridge. And that's not just for white kids to bridge to communities of color, it goes both ways. I have great hopes for the conventions this summer, for people coming together with a lot of disparate issue focuses but with an understanding that at the root, we're talking about the hostile corporate takeover of planet Earth and about prioritizing communities over corporate profits. Whether you're talking about the sellout of healthcare to HMOs, whether you're talking about the prison industrial complex and how it's thriving, whether you're talking about human rights in China and Tibet, you're talking about corporate power standing in the way.

So how do you start moving forward then? How do we go about making these connections so other people can make connections with us?

I think there's a hundred different ways that we do it and we have to work on every single one of them at the same time. We work to our strengths and we do what we know how to do in our communities. I think one of the things that we do is we need to talk about things that we want when we talk about what we don't want. And I think concentrating on how pragmatic our real wants and desires are is important too. I mean yeah, I want art and beauty and truth, but I also want livable cities and green space and education for my kids. I want our government to stop being militaristic imperialists. We have to let people know that what we're proposing is not some austere, horrible future where everyone has to live in the cold and eat tofu. [laughs] We're not just a bunch of angry idiots that want to smash and destroy everything.

Do you it's possible to achieve these goals in a timeframe that people won't lose interest? Right now, it's all so young and so exciting, but already—in mainstream media circles at least—it's already becoming yesterday's news. Seattle got huge coverage, but DC, not so much.

I think if we use our coverage in the mainstream media as an index of success or failure, then we're doomed. It's great to come together in these huge carnivals of resistance in Seattle and DC and come speak truth to power en masse. But in the end we really need to go back to our communities and talk to one another and talk about how we're really going to work together. We need to make people understand that decisions being made on local levels are often far more influential in our lives and probably the only real way—unless we're able to radically change the way our one-party Republicrat system works—to make change. Local politics never registers on mainstream media screens so who cares? The bigger question is do I think it's possible? I think we don't have a choice. Either we do turn back this fucking corporate takeover and take back democracy, or we all perish by it. That sounds so cynical, but implicit in that is hope because when folks understand how desperate the situation is, they'll wake up to it before it's too late. ◎



What lessons do you think we can learn from what happened in Seattle?

The Seattle demonstrations were the tip of an extremely important iceberg. This is an unusual mobilization because of the diversity of the constituencies involved, both domestically and internationally. They went all the way from third world peasant movements to the American labor movement to activists and direct action groups. Environmental groups too. It was extremely broad, and it reflected a lot of popular international unrest about the direction which global economic integration is headed. They are issues that most people don't understand, but they know about their effects. Liberalization of financial capital is not a topic that a person on the street can give you a lecture about, but they're feeling its results—lower wages and deteriorating social and economic conditions in general. ¶ Only people who really follow the literature will know what's happened to so-called social indicators in the United States; these are measures of things like hunger, illiteracy, child abuse, and wages. In every industrialized country outside the US, there's an annual government report on social indicators. America hasn't had one since the Hoover administration, but they are monitored. Fordham University has an institute that monitors them and puts out regular publications—their data is solid. The general tendencies are pretty clear: Up until the mid-'70s, social indicators improved in tandem with the GDP [gross domestic product]. But in the mid-'70s, they started to separate. Economic growth continues, but the social indicators start to decline. Now they're back to where they were in 1960. ¶ People may not read the publications of the Fordham Institute, but they know it in their own individual lives. This leads to uneasiness and discontent which, if people become organized—hence, educated—then they know what the reasons are. And the more you understand those reasons, the more focused you are in the protests. Some of the people involved have a very clear idea of what's going on; others have the same feelings but can't articulate them the same way.

It seems like more and more people are putting the pieces together and turning an emotional reaction into more self-consciously focused action. I'm thinking of all the people who've entered into activism in the last few years, through the anti-sweatshop movement, the anti-sanctions movement, the movement to close the School of the Americas, and all the anti-globalization issues that pulled so many people together in Seattle and DC.

That's the general tendency. If you go back to the '60s, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, those movements began pretty focused. "Black people should be allowed to ride the buses" and "We shouldn't send troops to Vietnam." Those are very narrow—yet really important—specific issues. But within a couple of years, it became an effort to gain a critical understanding of the way the whole international economic system and the internal system in the United States worked. It's very natural to move from a specific issue—say, sweatshops—to asking, "Why are there sweatshops and what general framework imposes this kind of condition?"

Do you see that happening in the new protest movements?

Yes, it always happens. Throughout history, people start with a particular evil they don't like and then begin to ask questions about why it's there. Take sweatshops for example. If you talk to the CEO of Nike or Reebok, they have a plausible reason why they run sweatshops: they have to live in a competitive capitalist system that compels people to undertake exploitative behavior. It's built into the system. They don't have a lot of choices. They can improve things somewhat, but they can't stop exploiting people in order to make profits or they're not going to be in business anymore. It's the institutions that are anti-social—they *reward* anti-social behavior, or what I would regard as *criminal* behavior. When you have an institutional structure that's driving people to criminal behavior, then you start to question the institutional structure, not just Reebok.

While we're talking about making connections, I had an interesting experience recently. I gave a talk at a Criminal Justice class, very much outside of the activist community—many of the students were studying to be Federal Law Enforcement officers. I talked about death row work I've been doing and then I talked about the situation in Iraq. At first they were hard pressed to make the connection.

But that's the genius of the so-called educational system: it's supposed to prevent you from understanding such connections. You're supposed to see things separately; you're supposed to *be* separated from one another. One important thing is to keep people scattered and another is to stop them from seeing how things are connected. Don't forget that activists fall for this too. Take international affairs for example. There are people who are concerned about apartheid in South Africa or the war in Vietnam, or Central America, and so on. Inevitably they become a kind of specialist on Nicaragua or South Africa. You're not supposed to look at the fact that it's all right here. ¶ Criminal justice is an excellent example. The American judicial system is closely related to the new military aid going to Columbia, but a lot of people in criminal justice don't see that. They don't see that the prisons are exploding because of the criminalization of victimless crimes, which is part of social control in the United States. And another aspect of it is social control of peasants in Bolivia and Columbia under the pretext of a drug war, which is just as phony there as it is here. The fact is that these are all coordinated policies. In fact, they are actually related to the World Trade Organization in ways that anti-WTO demonstrators may not be aware of. Why are peasants in Bolivia and Columbia producing coca? Well, that's

because they've had neo-liberal economic programs imposed on them. They're driven by external forces, mostly from the US, to become rational peasants producing for agricultural export, unable to produce for local markets because they're being flooded by subsidized American agriculture imports. When they try to do things like, say, stabilize commodity prices for coffee, they get smashed. Put together all these forces and you have people growing coca and then you send in troops to kill them.

I think it's important to try and make the connections you speak of not just in your mind but also in your actions. But the problem becomes how you decide where to focus your energy. It all can be really quite draining.

There's no answer to that. There is just way more than any human being can possibly do, so you have to choose your priorities. How you make such decisions depends on all sorts of things, from your personality to your background.

For the many people who are just getting involved in activism, how can the energy and the focus and the creativity that has been displayed in Seattle and in Washington DC be sustained?

Good question.

I don't know that there's an answer.

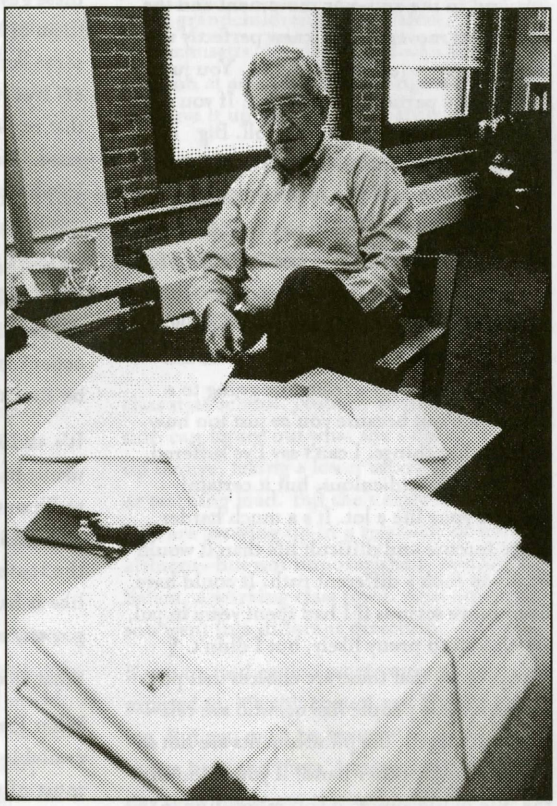
There isn't one.

Can you think of people that you knew, say, in the anti-war movement that couldn't stay involved? Could you explain why they lost their commitment?

A lot of people burn out. In fact, I had friends who committed suicide, which is the ultimate in burnout. There were a lot of tensions in the anti-war movement. For example, one very important tension had to do with the rise of the feminist movement. A lot of that came out of the anti-war movement itself, out of internal critique. In the mid-'60s, the anti-war movement was extremely sexist. Slogans like "Girls don't say 'no' to guys who don't go," were all over the place. And women were expected to do the shit work. They would sit in the office while the men were supposed to do all the exciting things, like giving speeches and so on. Naturally that caused resentment and all of a sudden, courageous 18-year old activists who'd decided go to jail or go into exile were being told, "Look, you're an oppressor." That was pretty hard to take. A lot of people recognized such truths, but it undermined their moral strength. They could do these things because they felt morally strong, but this undercut their struggles, and that was a very hard thing to face. ¶ It led to all sorts of reactions, all the way up to suicide, not to mention constructive adjustments. But they're not easy to make. What happens to your life? The external institutions do not reward you for trying to undermine them. That's true whether you're trying to turn to college teaching, working in the media or whatever it may be. You can't expect to be thanked by the powerful and the privileged for trying to undermine their power and privilege, or for trying to organize other people to understand it. The punishments can range widely. For example, if you're a black activist in the ghetto, you could get murdered, like Fred Hampton was. If you're a privileged white person, you're more likely not to get a job and be out in the streets or something. These are hard choices. ¶ But there are also compensations. You can have a very rewarding life if you meet great people and live with the kind of people you like who understand that you're doing good things and so on. But the kinds of rewards that you're trained to want: material consumption and opportunity to impress people and so on, those "rewards" though they are in fact destructive, you're unlikely to get if you decide to challenge and confront and so on. ¶ I've known plenty of people who have fought their way through all this, but not without harm. For example, I know people who have wanted to go into the academic world and are doing extremely top rate scholarship, but are teaching as adjuncts for $10,000 a year—if they can even pick up a job teaching students in the evening. Many can't get a teaching job at all! Now that's not like getting killed, but it's not nice either. On the other hand, they wouldn't do anything different because they prefer that to the alternative—to their former collegues at Princeton or wherever who are now in their plush academic offices but doing things that these people regard as disgraceful.

Can you recall a point in your own life when you had to make these choices?

NOAM CHOMSKY



photo/Tim Owen

"When you have an institutional structure that's driving people to criminal behavior, then you start to question the institutional structure, not just Reebok."

—Noam Chomsky interviewed by Jeff Guntzel

CHOMSKY
continued...

Oh yes, very clearly.

What punishments did you expect and what were you prepared for?

In the early '60s, when I was moving up in an academic career, I had very happy, young children, and a family. Everything was fine. I had to make a decision whether to go in that direction. I had always been politically active, but here there was a real choice: Do I go on that way and just make statements, sign petitions and write letters, or do I really get involved in the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement? I knew perfectly well what the consequences would be. You just can't have a partial commitment. If you start, it just extends and takes a big toll. Big enough that my wife went back to college in the '60s to get her degree because I was pretty close to a long jail sentence, and probably would have gotten it, if it hadn't of been for the Tet offensive in '68. ¶ Being a committed activist changes your life enormously. A lot of things that would be fun to do, like having dinner with a friend or going to a movie, are out because you're just too busy doing other things. I can't say I've suffered, that would be ridiculous, but it certainly changes your life a lot. It's a much harder, more intense and difficult life than it would be if you took a different path. It could have been more serious if I had spent years in jail, which looked pretty likely, but I didn't. ¶ The point is that these are choices that people make. For people like us, who are relatively privileged, the punishments are not so severe. On the other hand, if you go down the line to the guys that you're meeting in jail, the punishments can be quite oppressive. If you go off into our dependencies in the third world, they can be brutal. ¶ What's more, people are murdered and hidden from history. Take El Salvador's Archbishop Romero for example. We just passed the 20th anniversary of his assassination in effect by US Forces. I had a friend in Chicago check the media coverage. It was very mild. There was something in LA because they have a huge Salvadoran population but nothing in the national press. A couple of months before that, it was the 10th anniversary of the assassination of six leading Latin American intellectuals in El Salvador killed by the same hands. The same friend in Chicago covered the media on that and their names didn't appear in the news media anywhere. You live in Chicago, if you go to the University of Chicago in the faculty club and ask people who they were, nobody will know. It's not like dissidents in Eastern Europe whom everyone knows. If you get your brains blown out by troops armed and trained in the United States, you're not only dead, you're gone from history as well. Many of these guys were intellectuals, it's important to them to have their books read and to have some lasting impact, but they're gone forever. Not just in El Salvador, but in a world that regards itself—ludicrously—as enlightened. That's not going to happen to privileged dissidents here, but it does happen in our domains pretty commonly.

Do you see any advantage to citizen lobbying of legislators in the United States over taking the peoples' message to the street with direct action? Is there a healthy balance that can be struck?

It's all useful. You just do what comes naturally to you. For some people it's natural to be out in the streets. I did a lot of that and I don't like it—I hated it to tell you the truth. But I did it because it seemed like it had to be done. However, I never got any enjoyment out of it.

What kind of causes are you involved in today?

What I'm doing now is just trying to be available, like for this interview. I spend most of my life either doing interviews or traveling and giving talks.

That's enormously helpful.

Well, it's the kind of thing I can do. I don't have any particular illusions about what I can or cannot do. If I was asked to help organize steelworkers, I couldn't do it. What's the point of pretending?

There seems to be a major social movement in this country every 30 years. What do you think it will take to have a strong and effective movement similar to what we saw during the civil rights struggle and the Vietnam War?

I don't quite agree with that assessment. In my opinion the '70s were more active than the '60s and the '80s were more active than the '70s. Now there's more activism than ever. ¶ The '60s were very lively and vibrant and had a big effect on the country, but overall it was pretty narrow. An awful lot of it was students in elite universities with not too much participation elsewhere, and it was mostly a youth movement too. ¶ The '70s were much broader. If you think about the movements that grew out of the '60s and remained, like the feminist and the environmental movements, they're from the '70s, not from the '60s. ¶ And that continued into the anti-apartheid and anti-nuclear movements during the 1980s, which were huge. The biggest were the third world solidarity movements. They were not as visible, but they were much broader and much deeper. Take for example Witness for Peace, who actually went and lived in villages to try and protect people. Doing things like that never even occurred to people in the '60s. In fact, it had never occurred to anyone in the history of imperialism to do such a thing. Just look at the whole history of imperialism: There were protests, but I can't think of a case where people actually went and lived with the victims to try to help protect them against marauders or soldiers from their own country or who were trained by their own country. That was astonishing. That was the '80s, and it came from pretty conservative sectors. In fact, a lot of it emerged from the evangelical churches. ¶ Today, it's far broader. Domestic activism is integrated with other parts of the world, not just the third world, it's also integrated with Europe in interesting ways. Take biotechnology, genetically modified organisms. For a long time that was a huge issue in Europe and the third world but not here. Not many people here were involved or knew about it. Last year it hopped across the Atlantic and became a big issue in America. It made a huge difference. As soon as the movement crossed the Atlantic, it immediately saw effects. Monsanto publicly apologized and backed down, and a corporation *never* does that. These are new developments. Events like these were not so common in the '60s and the '70s.

That's helpful. More and more I'm hearing the phrase "Just like the '60s."

The image of the '60s that younger people have now is not participation but the way it's depicted. That can be misleading. People forget that it really wasn't "the '60s," it was the *late* '60s. And It was very brief. Here in Boston—a pretty liberal city—we couldn't have public demonstrations against the war until 1966. They'd be broken up. 1966 was five years after the US started bombing South Vietnam. A couple of hundred thousand troops were there already. If you tried to have a meeting in a church, you'd be attacked. Things changed pretty rapidly and it lasted for a couple of years. Then this phase of the '60s declined, although the impact remained. It was different in other parts of the country, but it was not as though in the '60s everything blew up. That's not what happened.

How have you seen things change around this campus with student activism in the last few years?

The '60s were very quiet here [at MIT]. This is a science and engineering school. Until 1968, activism here was just a small group of students, many of whom are now doing similar things, like South End Press and *Z Magazine*. In 1968 it blew up and became campus-wide. It changed the Institute enormously and those changes remain, although they're not so visible now because everybody accepts them, such as styles of dress. If you went back to the early and mid-'60s, I'd be sitting here with a jacket and a tie. That was symbolic of relationships between faculty and students, so these are not superficial things. The concern for the uses of technology became a big issue. That stayed. ¶ If you look at direct activism today, it's more constrained than it was in those couple of years in the late '60s and early '70s, but that's for a lot of reasons. For one thing, the powerful interests recognized right off that it's very dangerous to allow students to be free—they have to be disciplined. This was said pretty openly. Read the Trilateral Commission report in 1975. It was concerned with what it called the "institutions responsible for the indoctrination of the young." They're getting out of control, it said, they're not indoctrinating the young people properly. And this represented the *liberal* spectrum of international opinion—it wasn't the right wing. ¶ The major concern of reports like this was how to discipline people. There are a lot of ways to do such things. One way to do it is evident in student life today. A student comes out of MIT today in debt whereas in the '60s, it was a growing economy, you could assume that you could take off a couple of years and be an activist and then go back and pick up your career. Very few people believe that now. If you don't tow the line, you're going to be cut off. It's kind of like the third world—you've got a big debt burden. That has a strong disciplinary effect. The options available are much more constrained. If you want to go into teaching for example, you're very likely to be a temporary, low-paid worker who will be kicked out in favor of other temporary low-paid workers. The path towards mainstream tenure positions is being much more restricted. ¶ There still are quite good social justice groups functioning, but it's harder than it had been to get students to involve themselves in it. I think the same is true in the rest of society. Workers in the United States have the heaviest workload in the entire industrial world, and that has a disciplinary effect. If two people are working 50 hours a week to keep food on the table, they don't have time for a lot of other things. The stagnation of incomes, the increase of workloads, and the decline of public service: all of these things constrain people's choices. ¶ They are also constrained by propaganda. We are deluged from infancy with a massive amount of information intended to mold people into a certain form, to impose on them certain expectations and desires, what, in fact, are called 'created wants.' This process begins with two-year olds. You're taught from infancy that the only thing that matters in life is getting $200 sneakers or $30 Pokeman cards or whatever. This has a disciplinary effect. If that's the way that you conceive of your worth, your life, and your existence, other questions just don't come into your mind.

You have children, and now grandchildren. Short of keeping the kids in a box and opening a slot for food three times a day, how do you shield them from this assault?

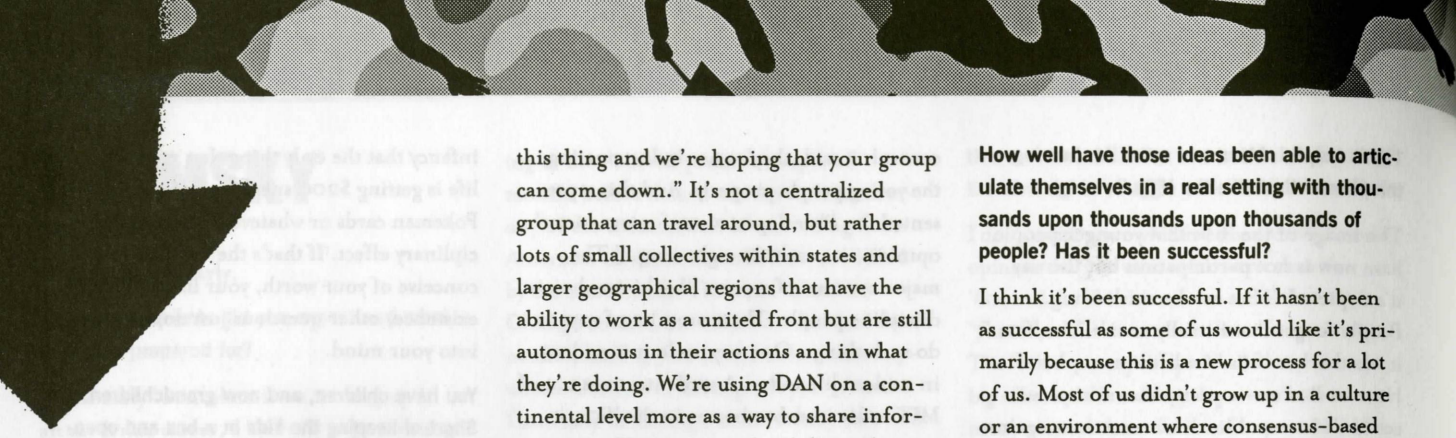
[Pulling out a picture of his grandchildren] My children have made their own choices. Here are two of my grandchildren. They live in a poor area in Nicaragua. Two of my other grandchildren live in Salem, Massachusetts. My daughter had a tenure position at an upscale New England college and gave it up to work at a mainly working class state school. Nobody in that profession can figure out what she's doing, giving up tenure, taking a lower salary and a higher teaching load. But she's ecstatic. So her kids are growing up in a relatively non-affluent—but not impoverished—sector of Salem, a working class town. And my other son went in a different direction.

If you try and control what your children are exposed to, it's still control and it's still limiting. But you must be tempted to throw in a nudge here and there. I assume come birthday time you're not thinking "Should I get the Bertrand Russell book or the Pokeman cards?" But there must be some temptation.

Well actually, I have to show you another picture that her father claims wasn't staged. [Chomsky proceeds to show me a picture of his granddaughter: Three years old, on a couch reading a book almost as big as herself, called *International Terrorism*.] He claims he just saw her sitting there like that! [laughs]

I have no further questions! ◎

"You're taught from infancy that the only thing that matters in life is getting $200 sneakers or $30 Pokeman cards or whatever. This has a disciplinary effect. If that's the way that you conceive of your worth, your life, and your existence, other questions just don't come into your mind."
—Noam Chomsky



How did the Direct Action Network form?

I can share my experiences since Seattle, which is when I first got involved working with DAN. I'm not actually sure of the pre-origins as far as who took the initiative to get DAN started in relation to organizing for WTO—I know it was a lot of West Coast, Seattle and California people that had been active for a long time. I think within the larger left generally there has been a need for more coherency in our organizing. We weren't networking well enough and making use of all our resources. Along with that, there's a prevailing mood of frustration with traditional activism within the American progressive movement right now. Direct action seems to be the next step that needs to be taken in order to get things moving again.

So how does Direct Action Network address that? What makes DAN fundamentally different than the activist organizations that came before it?

I think there are two major differences. The first one is the fact that we're trying to act less as a group and more as an actual network.

What's the difference between that?

That's a common question people ask. Our goal is to have lots of small, autonomous groups all over the country that are doing organized direct actions and are interested in linking up with what they're doing locally and what other people are doing on the state level and national level to make that more effective. If we can have the Direct Action Network as a way to help communicate and share information, resources and ideas then it helps facilitate that process. Instead of someone calling up DAN in California and saying, "Hey we want to do this thing and we're hoping that your group can come down." It's not a centralized group that can travel around, but rather lots of small collectives within states and larger geographical regions that have the ability to work as a united front but are still autonomous in their actions and in what they're doing. We're using DAN on a continental level more as a way to share information and it gives you the ability to have 300 groups that say, "We support this IMF/World Bank action coming up and we want to use our collective voices to put out one uniform message behind the Direct Action Network banner." But it's difficult because we don't have a wide enough base to be able to have 50 groups all calling for solidarity actions. We haven't gotten there yet because it is very early—DAN's not even really a year old! ¶ Something that's been frustrating for us has been trying to balance everyone's vision of what we want DAN to be with the reality of what we have to work with so far. It's caused some problems with some local groups that want to do one thing or they don't like the way the national vision has changed. We've been trying to encourage groups by saying, "Good, we support your local autonomy, that's part of the main reason we're doing this is that we don't want to dictate how your local group functions except to help you organize and communicate better."

Going back to the initial question about how DAN is different than progressive groups that came earlier. To me, one of the interesting things is that right in your name is a commitment to direct action.

I think that is one of the most obvious things, but within that framework there's a lot more that's new. A lot of the principles of DAN have an anarchist, anti-authoritarian grounding to them, which isn't new, but what *is* new is that we have a national network that is not only direct action-focused, but is pushing for a radically decentralized, democratic society that functions in collectives and uses the spokescouncil model for making decisions. I think that, besides the specific focus on direct action, is the biggest difference and one of the most exciting facets of DAN.

How well have those ideas been able to articulate themselves in a real setting with thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people? Has it been successful?

I think it's been successful. If it hasn't been as successful as some of us would like it's primarily because this is a new process for a lot of us. Most of us didn't grow up in a culture or an environment where consensus-based decision making and the spokescouncil model is a familiar process. It certainly wasn't for anyone that I've worked with. Part of the process with both Seattle and DC has been to introduce people to the spokescouncil model, how spokes work, what's a cluster, what's a collective and what's an affinity group—doing the organization-building educational things that are essential to making this larger vision work. I think that as we have more of these actions and as the networking and the organizing proceeds and grows, there will be more people who are familiar with the spokescouncil model, so we don't have to spend an hour describing what a spokescouncil is and how it works. We can just jump in and start dealing with the issues.

If you can condense it without suffering too much from oversimplification, how does the process work?

The easiest way is to think of three concentric rings. In your central ring—and no one ring is better than the other—is the *spokescouncil*, where the empowered spokes from each group are bringing ideas together, sharing and discussing and making decisions based on the input they've been given from their group. You go out to the second ring from the center and that's the *cluster*, where your larger groups are. That could be anywhere from 50 to several hundred people. That ring is the group of people that say, "These are our ideas, here's what we want to happen, now as a spokesperson you go to the spokescouncil and you relay our information and our concerns." So you've got the spokes in the middle and then your clusters in the second ring. Your outside ring consists of your *affinity groups* of eight to 20 people that say, "OK, we want to do something, but we need more people or more resources. Let's get four or five other

small affinity groups together and talk about what we want to do and elect a few spokespeople that will be able to represent us in the cluster meeting and then also in the spokescouncil meeting."

And so that's how it worked in DC?

In DC, I think it was just a spokescouncil and a ring of affinity groups.

So when do you introduce that second tier of clusters? I can understand affinity group to spokescouncil, that's a pretty direct route—you get one person to represent you. But how does it go from affinity group to a middle tier to spokescouncil?

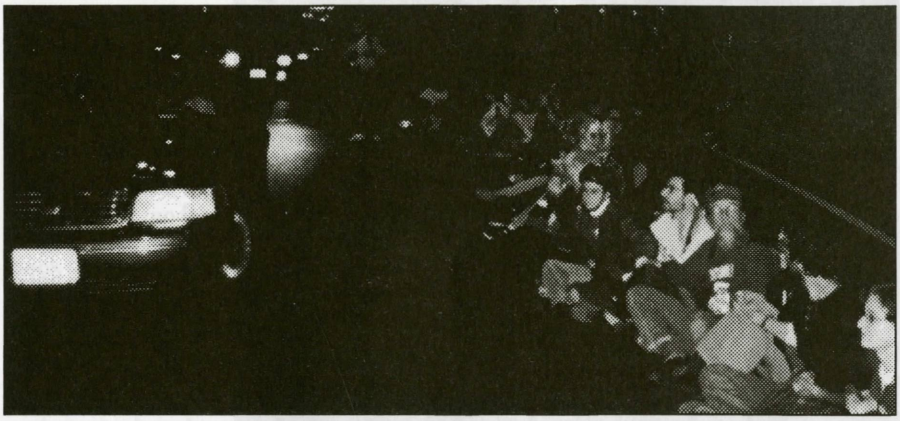
OK For example: in my student organizing, we had eight different small affinity groups of college students that had all come together and wanted to do an action as a student block. Each of those smaller affinity groups would have picked one or two spokespersons that would have met with other spokespersons from other affinity groups in a cluster meeting. Then that cluster would have tried to create a vision of what the student bloc wanted to do and then would have one or two representatives go to the spokescouncil meeting. ¶ The reason that happens is it gives you the ability to not have to have 120 people from every affinity group at the cluster meeting, but rather have eight or 10 of your representatives that those smaller groups have empowered. The idea is to streamline the process that makes decisions so that you can take the larger groups' major discussions and come up with what you want to have happen and then send one or two people out to talk with five or six people instead of sending 200 or 300 people to do it.

That process doesn't sound easy by any means, but it's much simpler when it's just Direct Action Network. What happens when—like in DC or Seattle for example—where you've got a lot of groups that aren't Direct Action Network and have varying degrees of commitment to direct action or different agendas. Do they factor into that? Or is the spokescouncil model exclusively a DAN thing. How does it work with building coalitions with larger groups?

The spokescouncil model is not something that is just limited to DAN. There are a lot of people that have little or no involvement in DAN but have been using the spokescouncil model, whether they be national groups or local student groups, because they like the idea of how the process works and incorporates everyone's input. I think it sometimes does cause tensions though. That was one of the primary reasons that DAN wasn't the name behind the DC organizing, it was the Mobilization for Global Justice. The unions and some of the less radical groups weren't comfortable with the name Direct Action Network but still agreed with a lot of the ideas. It was partly a PR concern, but it was also a very supportive tactic to incorporate other groups. A lot of labor and other workers—for obvious reasons—can't get arrested from taking direct action. They were trying to make sure that diversity is represented. I think that's one of the benefits of the spokescouncil model is because it can function in any context—it doesn't have to be direct action.

When we're talking about a time like the present moment, we've got really radical leftist groups combining with traditional leftist organizations such as labor linked with progressive religious groups and—at least for the last eight months or so—everyone has agreed to disagree on the smaller points in order to get a bigger point across. Do you think that's going to be able to hold up?

I think that's actually a wonderful question that a lot of us in the progressive and radical world are dealing with right now. This is something that one of the national groups I work with especially is dealing with. We're asking, "How far are our politics going? Wre we happy with reforming the way the current system works? Or are we calling for a pretty radical change or just scrapping something completely?" ¶ In the next year and a half, there's got to start being a national and international dialogue on what it is that people really want to see economically, politically and socially. We can only work so far together until labor goes one way, the radical anarchists go another, progressive religious groups go their own route. It becomes a question of how to affect the most social change with our shared resources before we disagree on fundamental principles. That's a question that a lot of the groups are starting to look at now and address.



Early morning on a16, activists stop a fleet of police vehicles from driving to the World Bank.

DIRECT ACTION NETWORK

"Direct action seems to be the next step that needs to be taken in order to get things moving again." —Chris Crews interviewed by Daniel Sinker

DIRECT ACTION NETWORK
continued...

So how are you going about starting to address those issues?

The biggest way is trying to get people to talk about what they want their world to look like in the future, and then to dissect that vision and start looking at it practically and ask "How do we get some of those things accomplished?" For example with international economics, do we want the World Trade Organization and that kind of a trade regime in place? If we do, what needs to be changed so it works? If we don't, what are we going to put in place of it—or are we going to put *anything* in place of it? If we don't, how do we want trade and other things to be regulated—or do we even want them to be regulated? We're trying to flesh out a lot of these questions. It's hard to draw up a coherent and functioning replacement model for the IMF or World Bank overnight.

How many Armored Personel Carriers do you have? DC cops had dozens.

"Of course we weren't able to shut down the meeting because there was a mobilization of a small police state!"
—Chris Crews

That's the interesting thing to me about looking at mainstream media coverage of the groups that were closely involved in organizing a16. The mainstream media won't accept "We're thinking" as an answer. They want the entire system articulated or else it's bullshit. Which is ridiculous to expect at this point! I think it is important to know that those issues aren't just being ignored. You're halfway there if you can just articulate the fact that there does have to be something there to replace an institution you want to tear down.

I think a prime example of that was looking at a lot of the press articles from DC. The headlines were "Protesters fail to shut down meeting." Well, of course we weren't able to shut down the meeting because there was a mobilization of a small police state! Had we been effective in shutting it down, you would have been reading about people being shot and tons of people in the hospital and I don't think *anyone* wanted that. It's almost like the media was setting us up to fall without even giving us a chance.

When I got back from a16, I was explaining to people who couldn't understand why it wasn't in the newspapers, "Well, the mainstream media isn't going to cover it unless there's tear gas in the streets and store windows being broken." As exciting as it was to see the footage from Seattle, ultimately that's not what you want. It was a *good* thing that tear gas didn't fill the streets of DC. I was amazed at how effective a16 was in the face of the insane adversity of the police, the National Guard, the federal police, and that it didn't turn into Seattle—and it wasn't for lack of trying on the police's part!

It wasn't at all! [laughs] Tactically, we learned a lot from Seattle and now we've learned a lot more from DC about how to deal with the police and what is the best way to minimize "casualties" so to speak and not have tear gas filling block after block. I think part of the difference between the two was that DC is the capital and they're a lot more prepared to deal with this. Also, we didn't have the numbers that we had in Seattle. Had we had 50,000 in DC, it might have been a different story.

Why weren't the numbers there in DC?

Probably one of the biggest reasons is that in Seattle you had 20-25,000 people from labor and the unions. There was a direct connection there between the WTO and labor. There's a lot less of a *direct* connection between the IMF and the World Bank and labor here in the United States. It's not as easy to mobilize your labor constituents around an issue that they had trouble seeing how it effected them. It tended to be the more progressive organizations— the IWW, Longshoremen and others—in DC that were the ones out there because they see the bigger connection.

Obviously, something that really needs to happen then is that it needs to be articulated to big labor how these issues *are* affecting them. How do you think that can happen?

Probably the most important way—and I think we've been doing a decent job of it so far—is that we're initiating that dialogue with labor. We're doing organizing and we're doing support actions, either labor supporting the left or the left supporting labor actions like walkouts and strikes, so that you've got a strong relationship built between those two. I think once you've got that built, it's a lot easier to expand the politics out and have labor see how the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies are effecting them. Or to see how the interests of multinational corporations are hurting jobs in America and decreasing the rights of workers everywhere.

What you're basically saying is there needs to be trust built up between the two camps. Typically you don't see 18 or 20 year olds supporting union stuff—it needs to be demonstrated to old-school unions that these people will stick around.

Sure. I think there are two other problems we're running into. One is that a lot of people have been turned off by unions by past experience with upper management and a lot of bullshit that has happened with the union. The other problem we're running into is that people are too stuck on their differences—non-class differences to be precise. We need to start thinking more in terms of how society is affecting classes of people. Once we reach that threshold, we're going to see major social change.

On the topic of differences, I wanted to address how overwhelmingly white the movement is. How do you break through the color boundaries?

Something we've been trying to do within the groups I'm involved with is realizing that a lot of the issues that we've been working on have been located outside the US. We're not really focusing on issues that are affecting minorities and people of color in the US. We worry about how an oil line affects the U'wan in Colombia, but we're not addressing enough issues that affect people of color here in America. I think that once the movement starts to focus on that, then you're really going to start seeing that connection happening. ¶ I think the issue we're going to start with first is the prison industry because of the ridiculous number of African-American men and women that are being targeted and put in prison. We need to show the African-American and Latino communities that yes, us middle class white kids are concerned about what's happening in *their* communities. But we're not going to come in and tell you what needs to happen. We're going to come and offer our services and say, "We'd like to help, what would you like us to do?"

The interesting thing is that again it comes back to the fact that the last eight months have been easy, even though it doesn't seem like it. Mobilizing people that come from the same background and have the same basic outlook on the same basic principles is fairly easy in comparison to being able to articulate and reach out to minority communities and old labor organizations. Reaching out to them, speaking to them without condesension, treating everyone as equals, that's the real challenge.

I kind of think of it as "We'll really be effective when we can get my mom and dad out there." Once we mobilize the middle-aged working class to take an interest in what's happening, we'll have really accomplished something

Do you think that's going to be possible?

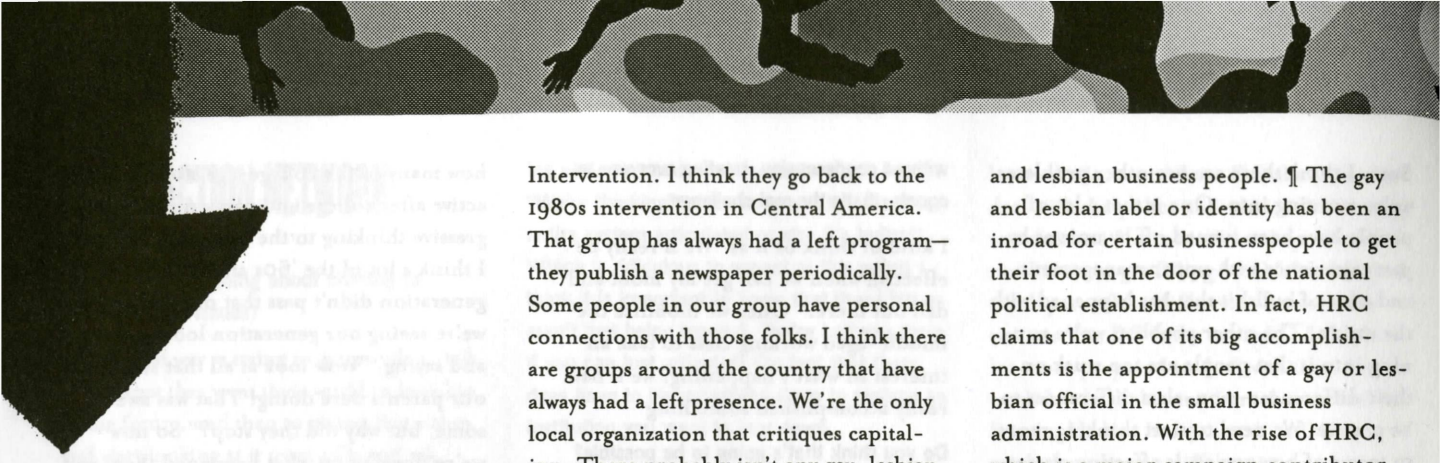
Yes. It's happening slowly. I know my parents have taken more of an interest in my activities and maybe paid more attention to politics in general because of my involvement. I remember one conversation I had with my mom about the BioDevastation conference in Boston about genetic engineering; her parting words were "Make sure you protect those seeds!" [laughs] So there's definitely the concern, it's just finding the issue that they can kind of understand and relate with.

Why do you think this is all happening now?

Well, it's actually interesting. I'm writing a book about this. One of the arguments that I'm trying to research and validate is that if you look at the history of radical activism in the US and other countries, there tends to be a roughly 20 to 30 year cycle from when things tend to go up and come down. We had a lot of stuff in the '20s and '30s as far as labor unions and activism, then it kind of died down for a while. There's a kind of a gap between the '40s and '50s until the '70s. But from 1962-63 up until about '72 you had a resurgence of activism on the national level. Then things kind of died out until about two or three years ago, when stuff started to pick up again. ¶ I think a lot of it has to do with the generation cycle. My parents, who are in their early '50s were the children who grew up in the '60s and early '70s during the Vietnam War. That was their generation. Between the war and where I am now, there's a gap of about 20 years. They got out of school and started working and had kids that were college age again. I think that lull period between one generation of college-age activists and their children that are college-age activists, what happens is determined by how many of the college-age students stay active after college and pass on that progressive thinking to the next generation. ¶ I think a lot of the '60s and early '70s generation didn't pass that on as much, so we're seeing our generation looking back and saying, "Wow look at all that stuff that our parents were doing! That was awesome, but why did they stop?" So now we're drawing on what happened them and saying, "Here's what SDS did" or "Here's what the Panthers did. This worked and this really didn't work," and we're taking all of that knowledge and starting to build it up again. And all of that is thrown on top of tremendous growth in global trade and business in the last seven years, which has really blatantly highlighted the huge growing wage gap, the effects of the very small financial and business planners of the world that are running things.

So on both a practical level and more of a theoretical level, what's next?

I think we're at a point now where the movement has a choice: Either it has to step up its efforts and really dedicate itself to organizing and really putting its roots down in the people or else it's going to start falling apart again. It's not possible to sustain a Seattle, DC, the Republican Convention or the Democratic Convention month after month without growing and getting larger. We need support not only from the communities here in the US but in the larger international community. What we need to do to sustain that is start making those global connections. That's one thing I always think about: We have amazing student networks in the United States that are organizing, but how come we're not in touch with practically any other students in the rest of the world? There's not that international student solidarity. I think once the movement starts laying the foundation here in the US and making the connection here, then it can start branching out, but it needs to lay those roots first. That means a lot of connecting with communities of color and minorities here in the US so we can start expanding that base. ◎



Why don't we start out by outlining what Queer to the Left is.

That's a hard thing to put into a soundbite... Basically, we founded our group in order to have a leftist, feminist, anti-racist, pro-sex, direct action presence in queer politics, and to also have queer visibility in larger struggles for economic and racial justice. The impetus comes from a sense that the larger gay and lesbian movement is being absorbed into the greater political and economic mainstream in a way in which most gays and lesbians get left behind. ¶ Queer to the Left started a year and a half ago when the Human Rights Campaign called for the March on Washington that happened this April. It was initially called "A March for Faith and Family." They dropped that. [laughs] There was no democratic process behind it. We felt that the mainstream movement had taken over and there was no room for most queer people. Many of us have longtime activism histories in a number of different areas and came together under this banner.

What's really interesting to me about Queer to the Left are two things: One is that it really seems like one of the first post-Act Up/Queer Nation organizations to really pick back up the banner of direct action and confrontation. It also seems like the first queer organization that I know of that really articulates a critique of capitalism, which is a really different approach than what has come before.

I think that's true. In terms of critiquing capitalism as some sort of a gay/lesbian/queer organization, I think there probably are local formations elsewhere. There's a group in San Francisco called LEGAI [pronounced LeGay] which stands for Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention. I think they go back to the 1980s intervention in Central America. That group has always had a left program—they publish a newspaper periodically. Some people in our group have personal connections with those folks. I think there are groups around the country that have always had a left presence. We're the only local organization that critiques capitalism. There probably isn't any gay, lesbian and queer group since the early days of gay liberation that has done that.

What was the impetus for that? I can see the reasoning behind wanting an organization that gets back to direct action, but at what point was it decided that a critique of capitalism should be included? Your group incorporates a number of issues that most people wouldn't really see as queer politics—gentrification, police brutality and things like that.

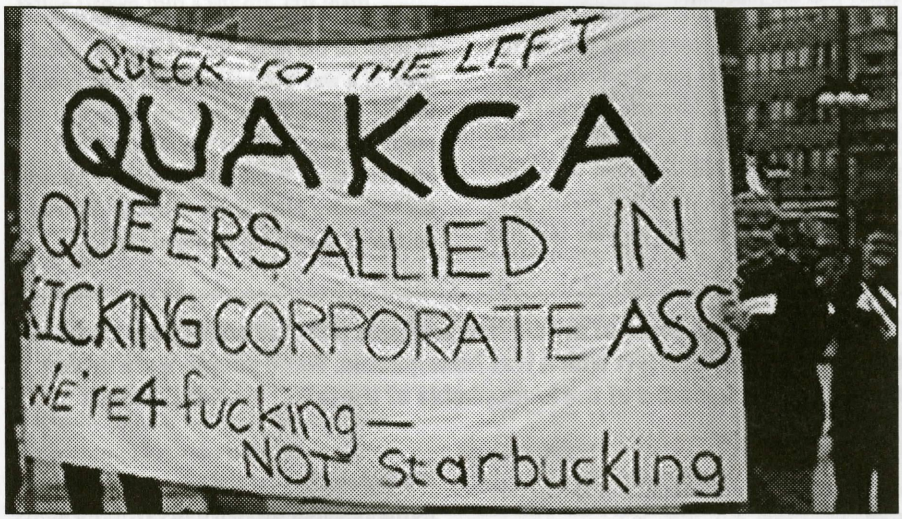
There are several things I want to say about that. We see the increasing importance of class within gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered politics. A number of years ago before our organization was formed, a group of the lesbians and bisexual women that are now in Queer to the Left put out a broadside called "It's Time to End the Gay Rights Movement as We Know It." They came out with that back in 1996. Right around when that was printed, the people that put it out invited people to go to the Human Rights Campaign's "first national gay and lesbian political convention"—their words. It happened a week or two before the Democratic National Convention here in Chicago. ¶ Prior to the convention, the Human Rights Campaign sent out a list of their top 10 demands. We didn't particularly care for them, so we came up with our own. We went to the event with their 10 demands xeroxed on one side of a flyer with a zero and a slash through them and our demands on the other side to distribute. We were just going to hand them out—we weren't disrupting anything—but we weren't there more than 30 seconds before we were thrown out. It seemed to us that HRC was just a big networking event for gay and lesbian business people. ¶ The gay and lesbian label or identity has been an inroad for certain businesspeople to get their foot in the door of the national political establishment. In fact, HRC claims that one of its big accomplishments is the appointment of a gay or lesbian official in the small business administration. With the rise of HRC, which is a major campaign contributor, and the rise of big-money politics within the gay and lesbian movement, the HRC has taken center stage in terms of national debates involving gays and lesbians. The problem is that it's basically a business class that's driving the HRC. Just as in the larger society, there is increasing bifurcation income-wise, there is a small group of people making a lot of money these days in the gays and lesbian community as well. HRC has become a vehicle for that particular class. ¶ But then also there's the whole other issue of the way in which capitalism has turned to the gay and lesbian community and made it into a market niche. Increasingly there is all this targeting of advertising to the "gay market." We think that this accomplishes a couple of things. One is it gives some people a sense that gays and lesbians have "made it" simply because advertisers are selling things to us. But also a lot of this advertising has helped promote the myth that gays and lesbians are white and affluent. In fact, a lot of gay publications try to play up the idea that the gay and lesbian market is an affluent market. They do surveys of their readers that indicate that gay men take more Caribbean cruises than anyone else and have more this and that. In fact, the only reliable social science evidence suggests that actually, gay men make substantially *less* at each education level than straight men. ¶ In a lot of the states that have had right-wing initiatives that have taken away certain basic civil rights protections, the main claim made by the religious conservatives leading these campaigns is that gays and lesbians are a "privileged group." Thus, giving us civil rights constitute "special rights." In fact,

those campaigns have been most successful in areas where there's been a great deal of economic disruption and change, so the right has been able to play on the notion of gays as a privileged class to people who are in a precarious economic situation. ¶ Locally we've seen a class of gay homeowners in Chicago who've organized themselves as gays and lesbians and are playing a very prominent role in the gentrification processes. This is contributing to tensions between gays and lesbians and low income, working class and people of color communities. This is a case where we feel there needs to be a left, queer presence in a larger political sphere. We want to project the fact that not all queers are gentrifiers who are interested in using the police department to harass young people, which is essentially what they're doing.

So how have all of these ideas manifested themselves? What has Queer to the Left been doing to make what their ideas and goals are into a concrete organization?

I would say on that level, we're still quite embryonic. One of the things we've tried to do is beginning last year, we've had a significant presence in the Pride parade in late June. We'll do the same thing this year. We hooked up with members of the Lesbian Avengers and Homocore to present an anti-commercialization, anti-assimilationist presence in that annual event, which is the height of commercialization and transformation of our movement into a market niche. We deployed agit-prop. I think for some of us, our politics have an agit-prop orientation that comes out of Act Up and Queer Nation. We're trying to get the larger queer community talking about some of our ideas. ¶ One of the things we did was distribute fake coupons along the parade route that ridiculed the concept of the gay community as being a market niche. They called attention to the fact that they gay consumer dollar hasn't overcome discrimination in employment or child custody or law enforcement. Our consumer power hasn't produced a cure for AIDS.

One concern that we've had is that AIDS has completely disappeared as a political issue—the larger movement is focusing on marriage and the military. AIDS brings up our sexuality, which the mainstream movement doesn't want to talk about. This hasn't been a central thing that Queer to the Left has been doing, but we are concerned about keeping AIDS as an important political issue, so that was part of our coupon campaign. ¶ Another thing we did centered around these multicolored pylons on the city had built on Halstead Street. The city had invested all this money in helping to shore up Halstead as a tourist destination. It's really successful as a nighttime entertainment center, but they wanted to invest in basic infrastructure to improve the street as a daytime commercial center that would draw people to a sort of "gay town." We thought that these pylons, that had a rainbow motif, were apolitical. They were calling people together as members of a market niche rather than a political community. There was nothing about this project that talked about past or present political struggles. In order to ridicule the pylons, we hung giant pink dollar signs on each of the pylons as we walked down the parade route. Although some people took that to mean we were celebrating our consumer power! [laughs] ¶ We also carried a banner in the parade that said simply, "Stop Police Brutality." We've had that same banner, with our Queer to the Left logo on it at anti-police brutality rallies around the city. And a number of our chants dealt with police brutality issues and the death penalty. We got a lot of positive feedback from the crowd—particularly among African-Americans along the parade route—in response to that banner. ¶ Another thing we did was we had a sticker that said "Stonewall: Absolut Rebellion" and on it was a photo of a bottle of Absolut vodka and somebody was holding a lighter to a rag that was going down into the bottle of vodka. It was to draw atten-



photo/Mary Zerkel

Queers take to the streets of Chicago in celebration of Mayday.

QUEER TO THE LEFT

"Capitalism has turned to the gay and lesbian community and made it into a market niche." —Jeff Edwards interviewed by Daniel Sinker

QUEER TO THE LEFT
continued...

tion to the fact that on this Pride day, we're supposedly supposed to be marking Stonewall, but instead we're marketing Absolut vodka. It was again a way of raising the issue of political versus commercialization approaches to that day.

What was the reaction?

It's hard to read it because on that particular day, you can do just about anything and people seem to love you. [laughs] People would applaud as we put up these pink dollar signs and once they were up, they'd ask, "So what does that mean, anyway?" It seems as though we were met with a great deal of enthusiasm, but then everybody is on that day.

Back in the late-'80s/early-'90s there were national radical queer organizations such as Act Up and Queer Nation. Why was the timing right for larger radical queer organizations back then? Do you think that time is approaching again?

I think that as the AIDS crisis unfolded, it affected a broad section of the gay and lesbian community: men directly in terms of being infected with HIV; and men and women who were HIV negative who were also affected by the homophobic backlash in the wake of the unfolding AIDS crisis. So many people across the income and racial spectrum saw that this was a fight we had to carry out in the streets because all of the major institutions were ignoring us. ¶ Now we're in a situation where I don't think we're going to see that kind of broad coalition within the community because there isn't that kind of galvanizing issue that cuts across these differences. Right now, I think there are many people who if we went back 10 or 15 years would have been prone to supporting Act Up who are now writing checks to HRC. The thing is, most people are being left out of that process and there isn't a political home for them right now.

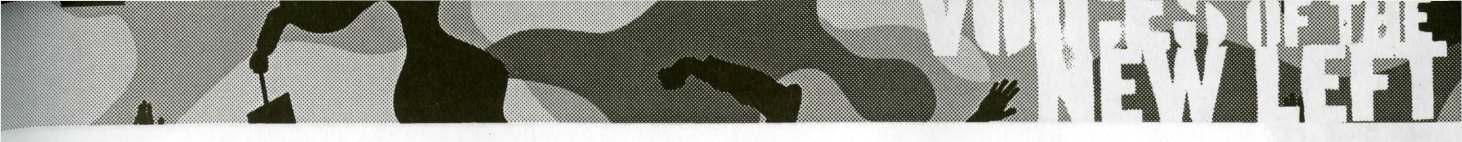
Certainly AIDS hasn't gone away in any way, shape or form, yet in the media it pretty much has disappeared. Unfortunately, that informs so many people. For so many people, if they don't see what's happening next door to them on the news, it's not going to effect them in a way that makes them think about the big picture. As far as I can figure out, the reason for that, besides the media's short attention span, is the advent of these incredibly expensive AIDS drugs delaying HIV-related deaths among the moneyed class.

"I'm in my 40s and some of my current and past political colleagues came of age within a political left which was homophobic. Some people were driven out of politics because of the homophobia of the left." —Jeff Edwards

When Act-Up first started, nobody was doing research on AIDS drugs. One of the reasons for taking to the streets was to force pharmaceutical companies, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institute for Health to do the research. And now they're doing it. However, a lot of people felt like that wasn't an avenue for them to participate in anymore because it required very sophisticated levels of scientific expertise. It became an issue that became hard for political struggle. At one point there did seem to be promising AIDS treatments, but the FDA was saying that it takes eight to 10 years to approve them. It's easy to rally around government red tape, which is what the early movement did, but the FDA then reformed and you can get drugs to people relatively quickly once they've developed. So now the issue is what drugs should they be doing research on and that's a much more complicated issue. It's hard to rally a mass movement around a particular type of drug research. AIDS is still an issue, but *how* it is an issue is different. A lot of people don't see the need for direct action around AIDS anymore because they figure they've got the attention of the buracracy and the congress and certain religious bodies and our representatives are sitting at the table now.

Let's get back to your work on gentrification. I think it's really interesting, especially when juxtaposed against a traditionally "queer" issue, like AIDS. What led Queer to the Left to start working in that area?

Some of us were living in Uptown and we heard through the grapevine that there were these ways in which gentrifiers were using the political process to increase their property values. They were using city inspectors to come and condemn buildings where people that they wanted out of the neighborhood lived. They were using the Community Policing Board to harass particular individuals and to investigate specific households and to try and shut down certain businesses. ¶ We heard through the grapevine that many of the people leading this were gay men. Subsequently, we also learned that these gay men had formed an organization called the 46th Ward Gay and Lesbian Organization. Their stated purpose is to improve the "quality of life of the ward for all people." They're not interested in anything that was traditionally defined as gay and lesbian. Their line is that all the politicians from this area are going to favor gay and lesbian rights, so we want to focus on "quality of life", which to them is about improving their property values. ¶ They were dead set on eliminating Helen Schiller who is the alderman in that ward. She has the strongest record on gay and lesbian issues and on AIDS but also happens to be a supporter of homeless people and of social service agencies in that ward and they hate her for that. They despise Schiller. They have a real sense that they're really oppressed—oppressed by homeless people. ¶ We met with Helen Schiller and she told us of the importance of the Community Policing Boards as an instrument of gentrification. We got involved—many of us for the first time—in a mainstream political campaign, which



turned out to be her successful reelection campaign. Afterwards, we thought about how we could have a larger queer presence to let people know that the 42nd Ward Gay and Lesbian Organization wasn't the face of all the gay and lesbians in the ward.

And Queer to the Left has answered that question by building bridges with other organizations around the housing issue?

The Metropolitan Tenants Organization has been trying to put together for the last six or seven months something called "Campaign for Community Stability and Livability." It's an interesting coalition of public housing tenants, community groups committed to stabilizing their neighborhoods in terms of trying to keep prices from soaring so high that people are driven out, and disability groups working to expand housing options for people with disabilities. There are about 40 to 50 such groups participating in this campaign. We're the only queer organization participating in it. ¶ At this point, what the campaign is working on is the crisis facing people being evicted from CHA housing. Right now, there's a general crisis in rental housing in the Chicago metropolitan area. In the last decade, the metro area lost over 50,000 rental units and the population grew by half a million people. Consequently, 40 percent of all renters are paying more than a third of their income on rent.

Something that we've covered a lot in the magazine is gentrification on a national scale. This isn't something that's just happening in Chicago, it's something that's happening everywhere and it's affecting everyone. It's big business and it's being buoyed by this artificial Internet economy that keeps the stock market racing higher and higher, allowing people to buy real estate for the specific purpose of making money off of it. This is an issue that crosses all kinds of different boundaries and effects all kinds of different people nationwide.

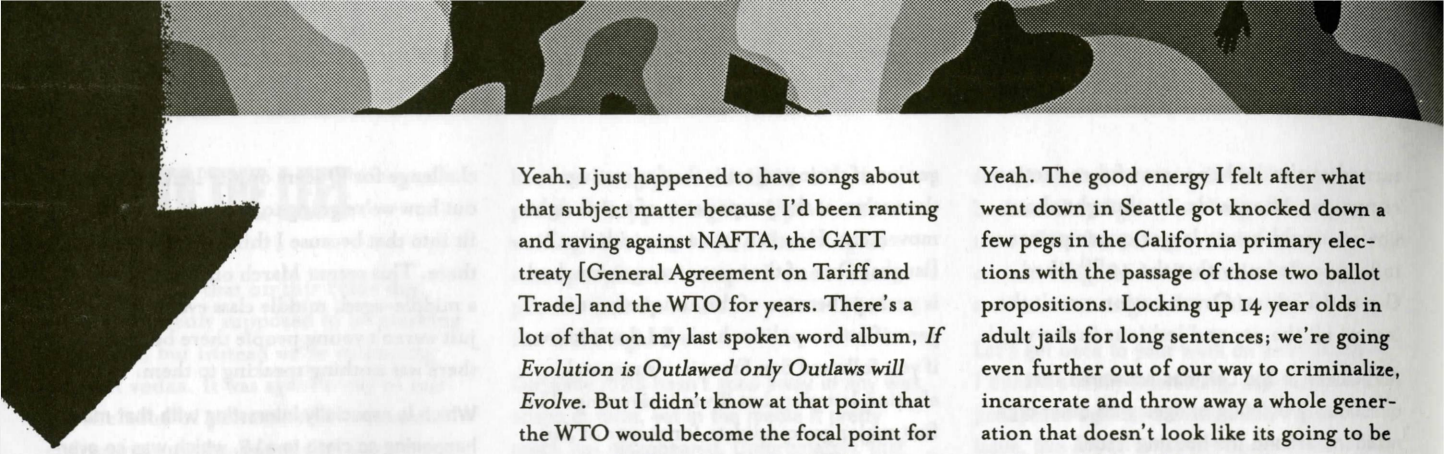
I think what's novel about Chicago though is that there is this gay group is calling itself a gay and lesbian organization, and its only purpose is to promote gentrification. The genius of their project is they're casting themselves as the proponents of a civil rights movement. How can you argue with that? [laughs] One of the reasons we got involved is perhaps because of this unique twist in gentrification politics here. ¶ I don't know if you followed San Francisco's mayoral election last year, but it was interesting. The first major gay candidate for mayor of San Francisco, Tom Ammiano, forced Mayor Willie Brown into a runoff. His main promise was that if elected, he would declare immediate and total war against gentrification. Contrast that with our own 46th Ward Gay and Lesbian Organization. ¶ I talked with an old Act-Up friend that lives in SF now. There was an attempt to open a youth drop-in center in the Castro neighborhood, which is now totally gentrified. All these comfortable gay men showed up in community meetings saying they didn't want "that element" in the neighborhood, because it would lower their property values. I actually think it was built despite their objections. That's the only other place I know that there's been stuff like this overcome within the gay and lesbian community.

How do you think what Queer to the Left is doing fits into the larger picture of the "new left" in America?

There was an article in *The Nation* two or three weeks ago called "The New Student Movement." There was an interesting comment in there that said in terms of campus politics, back in the late '80s and the 1990s, identity-based movements like gay and lesbians, women, African-American groups were the predominant forms of political activity on campus. Now they're giving way to the anti-sweatshop movement and other stuff oriented towards global capitalism. It singled out the gay and lesbian movement and said it had abandoned any idealism and broad claims for justice. It has exchanged those for these demands to get married and join the military. People aren't going to get worked up about stuff like that. Obviously it matters to some people but it doesn't have the same sort of moral or idealistic dimension that the new campaign against global capitalism has. I think it's an interesting challenge for Queers on the Left to figure out how we're going to relate to all that and fit into that because I think we need to be there. This recent March on Washington was a middle-aged, middle class event. There just weren't young people there because there was nothing speaking to them.

Which is especially interesting with that march happening so close to a16, which was so overwhelmingly young. How do you see something like Queer to the Left or queer politics fitting in with this exploding new movement?

To go back to the origins of gay liberation, we're a movement that tried to make sexual pleasure a political issue. Raising the issue of "How can we build a world where we can find happiness," sexual pleasure has to be part of that overall picture. ¶ It was interesting, on Mayday we had a contingent that marched and got a lot of attention. We carried a banner that read "Queers Allied to Kick Corporate Ass" and below it said, "We're for fucking, not Starbucking." A lot of people came up to us really interested in what we were doing. One guy came up to me who was a high school student who was really into the Mayday stuff. He was a young gay man and he had gone to a couple of the meetings of the gay and lesbian club in his high school and it just didn't interest him. I think it mattered to him that there was a queer presence at this event. ¶ I think we can provide a space for activists who are drawn to politics around the issue of globalization but who don't see a way to participate as an openly gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgendered person. I think there are a lot of queer people who would feel more comfortable functioning within a queer organization. I'm in my 40s and some of my current and past political colleagues came of age within a political left which was homophobic. Some people were driven out of politics because of the homophobia of the left. Those of us who went on to participate in Act Up or Queer Nation finally felt like we'd found a political home for ourselves. One lesson we learned was that it's great to do coalition work, but it's also good to be doing that from within an explicitly queer organization. ◎



How did the No-WTO Combo album come about?

We were just doing a show for the hell of it to be part of the anti-WTO festivities. Chris [Novoselic] told me that it was being recorded, so I said "Why the hell not." And then later he called me up and said, "This is really good. We ought to consider releasing this." At first I was a little skeptical, but it grew on me. When Chris brought in Jack Endino and he came up with those kick-ass mixes, I was definitely all for it.

You've known Chris Novoselic for a while now, haven't you? I remember that No On Proposition # 9 show you did with Nirvana in Portland eight years ago.

That was the first time we met. Ironically, I didn't know what he looked like even though I was emceeing the event. Someone came up to me and started asking me all these political questions to break the ice. I guess I got in a rock star-ish mood and said "What are you talking to me about?" Then I realized, "Oh shit, it's Chris from Nirvana." Thankfully our relationship recovered from that within minutes.

When did you and Novoselic first think about collaborating on No-WTO?

Chris and I first talked about collaborating at the Spitfire spoken word tour show in Seattle with Dan Merkle from the Independent Media Coalition. We talked about how we needed to bring more music to this event. We bounced around a lot of big names. Phone calls were made, but people proved "unavailable." What a surprise! So Chris said, "Let's just do a band ourselves. We'll get Kim and Gina, and you come up a little bit early and we'll try and make some noise."

You had songs prewritten?

Yeah. I just happened to have songs about that subject matter because I'd been ranting and raving against NAFTA, the GATT treaty [General Agreement on Tariff and Trade] and the WTO for years. There's a lot of that on my last spoken word album, *If Evolution is Outlawed only Outlaws will Evolve*. But I didn't know at that point that the WTO would become the focal point for corporate bullying to reach critical mass.

Not that many people did. Part of the success of the Seattle action was that it made the WTO a household word for the first time. A lot of the event's organizers had an inkling that it would be as successful as it turned out to be, but I think even they were surprised by what a great turnout they got.

I think a lot of that is owed to the unions. Many people came up for the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters rallies. That was especially important because they were hardly our allies during the anti-Vietnam protests. Hardhats beating the hippies is an image forever branded in the psyches of Americans who remember that. This time we were on the very same side. I think that's a very important bridge to have crossed.

Especially given how hard the government has worked to separate, for example, the environmental and the labor movements.

Right. I think that's one of the reasons you've seen such an emphasis on right-wing talk show hosts on the corporate side of things. As people get more and more disgusted that they're not allowed to share in this alleged economic boom, and the rich practically mow the poor down in brand new SUVs and bully them out of their neighborhoods, they're given outlets for venting that never accomplish anything positive. "Rush is Right," hate the environmental activists, hate the immigrants, hate the feminists, hate people who are poor and need welfare—we're still in a situation where too many people fall for that.

I find it ironic that right after the WTO rebellion in Seattle, the California primaries seemed to remind America that we still live in the darkest of ages.

Yeah. The good energy I felt after what went down in Seattle got knocked down a few pegs in the California primary elections with the passage of those two ballot propositions. Locking up 14 year olds in adult jails for long sentences; we're going even further out of our way to criminalize, incarcerate and throw away a whole generation that doesn't look like its going to be useful to AOL and Microsoft.

The California election results were also a return to the kind of populist, conservative politics that characterized the 1994 congressional elections.

I don't see anything populist in that at all. It was more of a corporate instigated reaction. I would hardly call Newt Gingrich or Trent Lott "populist." I don't think populism had anything to do with the other really horrible initiative which was to basically encourage people to go out and queer bash by voting to ban gay marriage. Maybe society at large isn't quite ready to accept that, although they should. This ballot initiative was specifically designed to promote homophobia.

Of course, but I tend to see populism as being inherently conservative.

A lot of the core issues for the people who fall for Buchanan or Limbaugh, Perot or Jesse Ventura are pissed at the same stuff we are. That's the bottom line wedge issue: "Why can't I put food on the table?" Michael Moore emphasizes that we need to be more communicative to people about that, even if it's on their terms. That's why even at the big steelworkers rally at the basketball arena in Seattle, I finally broke it down after I went on and all the people in union shirts began applauding me. It reminded me of that part in the *Rivethead* book about listening to "Forward to Death," while grumbling on the assembly line. A lot more of that seems to be going on, and so much the better. ¶ But what I emphasized then, as well as what I've been saying for years is "Don't hate the media—become the media." The way to counter the Rush Limbaughs of the world from affecting the people you know is to become

an anti-Limbaugh. Communicate to people at work, in your family, at school, and tell them why that shit is wrong. I know how tough that is, but that's why I emphasize going after people you know one on one because you know how to reach them and what concerns them. That's how you really start to effectively turn stuff around. ¶ Stewart, the engineer on the *Prairie Home Invasion* record that I did with Mojo Nixon, came from a very different side of the fence, having worked with Mojo, Tom Jones, and even Donny Osmond believe it or not. He finally told me after working together for a while, "When you first came in here, I figured that maybe a lot of what you'd be saying would be totally off the scale and full of shit. But a lot of these lyrics make perfect sense to me." ¶ Maybe what helped break me down was the labor connection with Earth First! through Judy Bari and Darryl Cherney, and Mojo himself leading me into older labor union type folk songs. It made me realize that there might be a whole area that I could communicate with better if I was willing to at least put aside for a while the temptation to categorize and make fun of certain kinds of people.

You want to be a little more specific?

It's what I was saying earlier about bridging the gaps between people—by becoming certain kinds of media.

It's interesting that you're discussing a change in your lyrical emphasis.

Widening it to be precise.

Let me elaborate. What's different about the *No WTO* record is how much you focus on labor exploitation. Granted, the political proceedings you were responding to set an excellent context, but as you said earlier, you wrote those new songs before the show. As someone who's listened to your work for almost 20 years, I can't help but detect a healthy shift in focus. While you always cried out against injustice, in the past you almost always concentrated on attacking ideology. Now you're talking almost exclusively about class. I'm heartened by that. Instead of attacking the symptoms, you're going after the source.

Maybe that just has to do with the lyrics that were chosen for the *No WTO* songs. I had more, but we ran out of time to learn them. Chris said he only wanted to do four songs, and I argued with him. But in the end we managed to get four songs down more or less.

There's a certain kind of darkness articulated on the Dead Kennedys' *Frankenchrist*—particularly in terms of atmosphere—that I never heard alluded to on any of your post-DKs collaborations to until now.

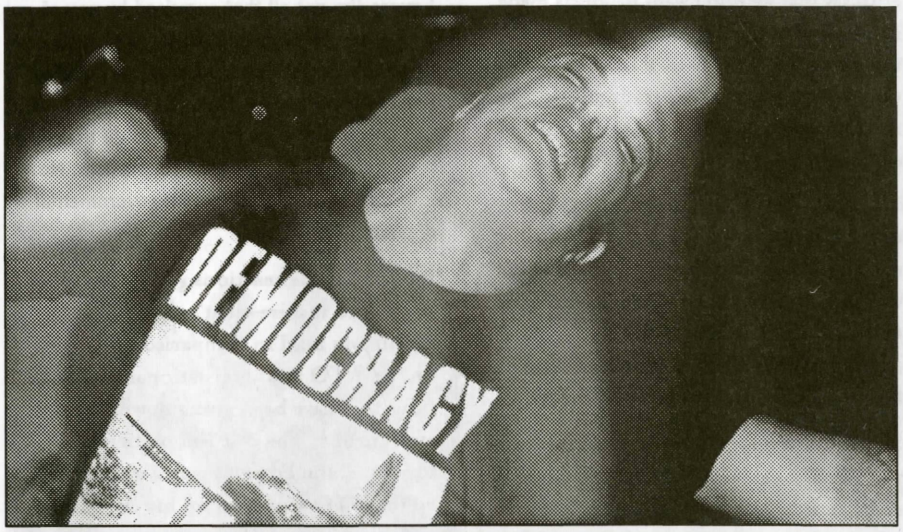
There was darkness in Dead Kennedys from day one. The rest of the band wasn't real happy about that, but it just happens to be the way I do things.

So this new record must feel like a real victory for you.

Well, hopefully. I kind of felt alive again. Because of what was going down in Seattle, I can't remember a time when I wanted to get on stage and rock so badly. As Michael Franti [Spearhead] put it when it looked like we were going to have to cancel the show the second night because of the curfew, "Of all times, now is when people need music."

That leads me back to the new album, in particular, how much it addresses concerns about the impact of globalization. You're not the first person to raise such issues. For example, in recent American history, conservatives have been the people identified as its most strident critics, but they're protectionists a la Buchanan. How do you distinguish your fears from that of someone on the right?

I don't think anti-globalism been monopolized by the right at all. It's just that the corporate media makes it seem that way. A good example is the pitting of Ross Perot against Al Gore over NAFTA on Larry King instead of having Ralph Nader, a labor leader, or



JELLO BIAFRA

"Doing *something* is better than doing nothing. It's going to take a long, long time to turn the tide." —Jello Biafra interviewed by Joel Schalit

I don't think that sentiment has ever been more forcefully pronounced as it is on new pieces on this record, let alone the renditions of the two older songs. At the same time, it's also a departure, which is important. You really know how to express fear.

[Bitterly] If people stop suing me and wasting my time, maybe the other fifty songs I've written will finally get recorded.

BIAFRA
continued...

Jesse Jackson on as a guest instead.

Yes, I agree with you, there are progressive views on the subject that don't get airtime, but the debate is not framed in such a way for most people.

I think the key difference is that the Buchananites are coming from an "America first" point of view, whereas we are coming from a "Human beings and the planet first" point of view. It's one thing to say that we don't want foreign products because they're taking away American jobs. It's quite another to say that we don't want products made in sweatshops coming from anywhere, including the USA. Even though the AFL-CIO resisted this for generations, it's now reaching across borders and oceans to build alliances with labor in other countries.

That's true. The left has always been a lot more international in its focus. But globalization has not been on the American left's agenda for a very long time. Since the war in Central America, leftists have tended to celebrate regionalism and identity politics over internationalism, which is why I find it so alienating.

Some of this may be a healthy change in younger people, where they're starting to see corporations as authority figures to hate and rebel against instead of just the manufacturers of the products they obediently buy.

So you really think they're pissed off about that?

Yeah. There's far more people than there were five years ago who are concerned about how the foods that they're eating have toxic chemicals in it, or that the clothes they're wearing are made by virtual slave labor.

There's also a very clear fear on the record about the diminishment of American sovereignty. Why do you think we have to worry about losing that? What's worse about an abstract international corporation controlling the state than an American firm using the government as its agent for the same ends? Is that really any different?

Although our government acts as its own agent most of the time, a democratically elected government does have to bow to public pressure from time to time. For example, consider the 10-year battle to get the dolphin-safe tuna law passed. The reason I bring that one up is because it was one of the first democratically enacted laws nuked through an action by the WTO. ¶ You can pressure your government for years to get a good law passed only to see three technocrats in Geneva you don't even see or know wipe out all your years of work with the stroke of a pen. That's what makes it worse. It's the market becoming the state.

I guess I'm not all that surprised by any of this. Many political thinkers have seen these kinds of changes coming for over a hundred years. It's part of the logic of capitalist development. Imperial powers used to do that in the past under the guise of colonialism. Now they've been replaced by non-governmental organizations instead.

But look at the reactions globalization is starting to inspire—that's what's new. Seattle was mild in comparison to attacks on the WTO and international corporations that have been going down in Brazil and Europe. The one I'm particularly fond of is the French farmer who protested the WTO sanctions on his products by smashing up a McDonalds.

You mean José Bové.

Right. It turns out that he's not some simple farmer. Bove was active in Paris during 1968, and has been involved in radical politics ever since. Now he's figured out how to seize the media's attention and gain fans over the world, accomplishing in a matter of hours what MDC tried to do for 15 years! [laughs]

The reason I'm asking you these questions is that if globalization is such a threat, and is also inevitable, what do you think progressives can do to take advantage of it? There has to be a silver lining in this.

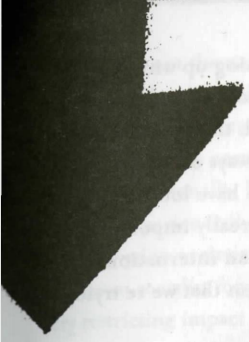
I can't think of a single advantage because I'm not ready to accept globalization as being inevitable. I have too much fun sabotaging it in my own small way. What I told the big rally in Seattle, and I think I say this on the record too, is that the battle against corporate feudalism is not going to be won overnight. After all, we have two or three generations of people now who get frustrated if they can't change their situation as quickly as changing the channel on TV. This makes things a bit more difficult.

It's important to not forget that the state has gotten smarter too. It's learned how to control dissent better and it handles the media in a far more sophisticated way.

Yes. Right now the corporate state has the advantage. They've got the money, they've got the power, they've got the guns and they've got the media. But that's the same situation that the lonely voices in the wilderness faced in the early '60s when they said, "Wait a minute, we should not be in the Vietnam War." Slowly but surely, through a lot of hard work, and lets face it, through a lot of revelry and fun, we stopped the war.

Sure, I agree. The problem is that after every victory that progressives win, the state learns from its mistakes, and grows stronger and wiser. For every generation, the bar continues to get raised higher. The fact that we haven't had an effective left in this country for over 30 years is a testimony to how difficult things have gotten, which is why Seattle surprised me.

What I stress to people is that this situation is not going to change overnight. We all have got to do what we can. Don't let the "harder-core-thanthou" tell you that just because you're not doing exactly what they're doing or as much as they're doing, that it means that you're the enemy. Doing *something* is better than doing nothing. It's going to take a long, long time to turn the tide. But because I saw what went down in Vietnam as a kid, I bear personal witness to the fact that it can be done. If we keep at it and are as tenacious as people were in stopping the Vietnam War, we've got a fighting chance. After all, the anger is there. ◎



What is Global Exchange?

We define ourselves as a human rights organization. But we define human rights in very broad terms by stressing both traditional human rights as well as economic rights. We have a lot of different programs at Global Exchange but they all do one of a couple of things. Either they're designed to educate people about global issues by taking them abroad through our Reality Tours or by publishing books about the subjects, or by bringing speakers from all around the world to speak, in the US. Then we have the corporate accountability campaign that focuses on individual corporations or industries like the garment, shoe and oil industries and agribusiness, where we push for better labor and environmental practices. We also look at global economic rule-maker institutions, like the WTO and the World Bank. And finally, we have a fair trade program that puts forth alternatives on how trade can be positive.

How did Global Exchange first start out? I can't imagine that it started with that many different things on your plate.

In our case, we almost did! Kevin Danaher, my husband as well as co-partner here had worked in lots of different organizations. There were three of us and we all came from such different backgrounds. Kevin was an academic teaching at American University, I was a global activist, and the third person was working in the labor movement. So we came with all these different perspectives. We started Global Exchange in 1989. One of the first things we did was have reality tours. We also opened up this tiny little store and we immediately published a book called *Bridging the Global Gap*. From the very beginning, we said we wanted to educate people, we wanted to give them direct experience, we wanted to get them involved and we wanted to make sure that we were doing something for the immediate benefit of people who were really poor and suffering.

So how has it ramped up over the last 12 years?

There are different ways to measure it. One is that we certainly have a hell of a lot more staff—we have 40 staff people now. Each of the programs is much bigger and we have a membership of about 15,000 as well as many thousands that are on our different e-mail lists. But more important than those indicators is that we're really part of a movement now. We're plugged in and coordinated with so many different organizations and part of lots of different coalitions. Through those coalitions, I feel like we're building the kind of multi-layered social movement that we've dreamt of for so many years.

Why do you think it's finally starting to come together?

I think it's a convergence of many issues. One is just that we're living in the "boom time" where this nation as well as the world is so awash in money and awash in technical possibilities for solving the world's problems. But there's a tremendous disconnect—bigger than has ever been there before—between the ability to solve problems and the growing inequities both in terms of wealth as well as growing environmental devastation. We're at a point where it's becoming increasingly clear to people that there are some tremendous barriers which prevent us from building a world where there aren't hungry kids and we aren't depleting the ozone layer and cutting down the forest. What is stopping us from solving those problems? The answer is the political situation. More and more people are starting to recognize the really grotesque nature of where we're at as a

Giant puppets led the victory parade on the afternoon of a16.

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

"What we feel we can actually do today to make people's lives better and our vision of 20, 30, 40 or 50 years from now are very different. But we want to be doing both." —Medea Benjamin interviewed by Daniel Sinker

GLOBAL EXCHANGE
continued...

global society versus where we could be, and where we should be. ¶ It really does take better economic times for people to be able to reflect. Most revolutions throughout the world have been made by people in relatively privileged classes. It's no surprise that many of the individuals who are leaders in the movement, or even the troops in the movement, are people who come from more privileged backgrounds. They have the ability to not only put their time into activism but also have the education to be able to understand how morally corrupt our system is.

This activist is bringing liberty and democracy back to the people.

"The best thing about this movement is that it has no leader, it has no head—it is multi-headed. It is so decentralized and I think that is what will keep it going." —Medea Benjamin

In this larger movement, where do you see Global Exchange fitting in?

We fit in on many levels. Certainly we're an organization that believes in getting people out on the streets. In terms of building mass mobilizations, we're involved in lots and lots of coalitions that are doing that on different issues. Whether it's building for the Democratic and Republican national conventions or for marches against police brutality or the framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal, now is the time of mass mobilizations and so we'll see lots of them and we'll be involved in lots of them. ¶ On the level of educating people, we have been very instrumental in getting ourselves both as staff and key leaders from other countries around the US, mostly on college campuses and helping to build the campus movement, whether it's the United Students against Sweatshops or Student Alliance to Reform Corporations. On the level of massive education, both getting out on campuses but publishing materials, we publish everything from books to one-page sheets that are downloaded from our website by the thousands every day. We provide the educational ammo. ¶ We also provide visions of the positives. So much of what the movement has been built on so far is the anger about what we're against, not what we're for. Through something like the fair trade movement, we have experience about what we can actually be for. It's not just pie in the sky. We've been working in this area since we started. ¶ The other thing we can provide is that we have lots and lots of contacts overseas. I've been working on this stuff for 25 years. I used to work for the UN and was hooking up with grassroots groups all of those years. As an organization, through things like our reality tours, we're always on the ground in other places, so we have lots and lots of connections that are really important to make this movement an international, grassroots mobilization that we're trying to build.

One thing that really sets Global Exchange apart, and you touched on it a little bit, is the "fair trade" aspect of what you guys do. This movement has been classified at least in part as an "anti-capitalist" movement. But certainly the stuff you guys are doing with fair trade isn't anti-capitalist at all, it's just talking about the way that capitalism has been corrupted by multinationals. Is that right?

There are people at Global Exchange that have different ideologies. Everyone would define themselves in different ways. What we feel we can actually do today to make people's lives better and our vision of 20, 30, 40 or 50 years from now are very different. But we want to be doing both. We want to be practical and we know that there are people out there who are starving and don't have jobs. We want to create good, decent jobs for them. The fair trade movement, like our recent victory to get Starbucks to carry fair trade coffee, means that in the *short-term*, not 20 years down the road, farmers will be getting three times for their coffee than what they were getting before Starbucks agreed to purchase fair trade certified coffee. Some people could criticize us and say that's reformist and within the system. We would turn around and say, "Whose lives have you made better?" [laughs] And if you have, great, then we're all working on the same page. ¶ Personally, I've lived in many socialist countries. I lived in Cuba for four years; I lived in the African countries that were trying to build socialist countries such Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau; I've also lived in Nicaragua. I've always thought that socialist ideology was one that I felt inclined towards. But having lived in many socialist countries, I've recognized that the state is not the right vehicle for *all* of the economic activities that go on in a society.

You might want the state to run the water system and the electricity system and the key aspects of the economy, but you don't want them running the corner candy store. [laughs] ¶ Personally, I feel I have a lot more practical experience than a lot of people do, having lived in societies where I saw how the top-down socialist form of government has a very restricting impact on people's innate sense of entrepreneurship. People love to build things themselves. Whether it's your own punk paper [laughs] or your own human rights organization or your own restaurant, there's a real sense of challenge by doing something yourself. And god knows that people prefer to work for themselves than to work for someone else. I think that a lot of socialist countries have made terrible mistakes in not giving people the ability to be enterprising. ¶ I think we need to be able to build hybrid systems. Building towards that hybrid system is recognizing that trade is naturally inherent in human societies. There are ways to make trade mutually beneficial if we can do things like the model of trade that we have in our stores, by working with communities that are producing things which are reflective of their cultural values, which gives a validity and economic incentive to those cultural traditions.

In this new coalition, I can imagine that your outlook, while definitely pragmatic, has created some strain and disagreement among some of the organized parties. As this burgeoning 'new left' rolls along under its own snowball effect, I think those sorts of differences will be even further strained. How do you see it all holding together?

I think it's a great question. I think you're totally right that those differences will get more and more strained. It's been really interesting that we've actually been able to hold together through the WTO/IMF/World Bank protests with groups that were taking very different positions, from abolitionists to fix-it reformist positions. In such instances, I think we're capable of recognizing that those two positions actually compliment each other and could play an inside-outside strategy. The abolitionists were not going to be successful in the short term, but they were going to strengthen the hands of the reformers. In the short term, that was a positive thing. I think it's held together through some amazing strains and with lots of problems. Those problems will grow larger as we get bigger and more successful. ¶ For organizations like ours, it's a delicate dance. Take for example our fight with Starbucks. We've been trying to put out the message that there are many reasons for people not to like Starbucks, the biggest one being that it's a chain store that destroys other local coffee shops. That's a valid reason not to like Starbucks and we agree with that rationale. Any time there is a campaign to stop Starbucks from coming into your community, we're right there with you. But the fact of the matter is that Starbucks has 2,000 stores, with two new ones opening up every single day. They buy a lot of coffee from farmers, so let's push them to pay farmers a better wage. Nonetheless, whatever group is going to take up an anti-Starbucks campaign on the chain issue, I think it's important for Global Exchange to support it to show that we're not just about nipping around the edges, that we do want to make radical changes in the long term and that we will support those coalitions that will do that.

The interesting thing about the new left movement that's been built up is how diverse it is, from black-masked anarchists all the way to hundred year-old labor organizations. It's hard not to recognize how tenuous such coalitions are. They have to be treated with a lot of care, otherwise they'll blow up and splinter into quarrelsome factions, just as they always have. From your vantagepoint with Global Exchange, what does it take to keep such movements together?

Well, what does "together" mean? I think there can be lots of different coalitions, some of them overlapping in convenient times and some of them going back to their original groupings at other times. The best thing about this movement is that it has no leader, it has no head—it is multi-headed. It is so decentralized and I think that is what will keep it going. There will be times when the labor-green alliance really does come together like with WTO. There will be times when it's not so evident, like at the IMF and World Bank demonstrations. There will be times like the national conventions this summer where labor's position is going to be very complex and there will be some things they will do with us and some things they won't do with us. I think the only way to keep it together is to keep it apart and let it ebb and flow depending on what the different people and groups are willing to take up. Also, the labor movement is a totally divided, complex movement, the environmental movement is a totally divided, complex movement, so is the religious movement. These are not easily defined even when you divide it into those kinds of groupings because there's still tremendous differences within them. But I think we can come together around certain issues. ¶ To me, the answer is that the movement will always be in flux. There will always be groups coming into it and going out of it. There will be parts of the movement that some groups will feel very uncomfortable with. Right now, the China debate is a perfect example. The unions are taking this as a big issue, some of the environmental groups are involved in it, and some of the human rights groups are too. But some of the other groups on the left have been saying, "This is red baiting, this is anti-Communist," and have decided to either stay out of it or to be extremely critical of the whole push to stop China from getting into the WTO.

So then how do you grow this? Right now we're talking about how to keep what's already together together. But that's just the first step. Getting 50,000 people together in Seattle is amazing, but real change doesn't happen in tens of thousands. How do you grow it? How do you attract communities that aren't already involved?

I think the conventions are a good example of what we have to do and a good example of how hard it is. Here we have the Democratic and Republican conventions coming up. This is a chance to show that

GLOBAL EXCHANGE
continued...

those of us involved in global issues are as concerned about domestic inequities. We're going to put a lot of time and energy into building alliances of local groups that are working around prison and immigrant rights issues, homelessness, living wage campaigns, environmental issues, and racism. This is a great time for us to show our support for those problems. ¶ But I think it's really tough though when you're coming in as a mostly white coalition group and saying, "Oh, we want to show our support for your work." It's very hard to do. It's a big test of our ability to downplay "our" concerns and throw our support into issues other communities are already dealing with and embrace them as our issues without taking them over. That's going to be a big test of our ability this summer and in the coming years. The movement *has* to be multi-racial and *has* to be as focused on what's happening in communities here as what's happening in sub-Saharan Africa or anywhere else around the world.

That was one thing that was really apparent to me in DC. We were in a town the majority of whose population is made up of minorities. Organizing places like the Convergence and the IMC were in minority areas. It was like these spaceships of whiteness had landed. I felt that talking with people in the community. They had no idea what was going on and more than anyone else, they were annoyed.

There *were* some really good things happening. People were going and supporting anti-eviction rallies. Activists were going into schools and getting tremendous reactions, and doing gardening with local groups. There were a number of positive signs of people wanting to educate people why this was happening and what it was about as well as showing support for local organizing.

But it was fairly small.

It wasn't enough. There were smatterings of it.

One of the more poignant moments for me was standing at the corner when Convergence had been shut down. There was a crowd of activists there chanting for the return of the puppets they had been building. In the pauses between their chants, a group of really young African-American kids on bikes would yell "Go Home!" It painted the picture for me perfectly: We were literally a block away from the heart of the a16 protests and there were little kids there that just wanted to ride their bikes through the street.

That's a good example of the contradictions and how difficult it will be to overcome them. But certainly a lot of us are working on overcoming them.

"You don't know how lucky you are that you are living in these times that you have a movement that you are the center of and it is just beginning to flower. You don't know what kind of responsibility you have on your hands."
—Medea Benjamin

I don't think they're insurmountable, but certainly there is a lot of work that has to go down. Do you think that this tenuous coalition is going to be able to sit down and do the work?

It's totally a challenge. I've been in LA talking about the convention stuff and even the local groups there were all divided. The homeless groups say the only issue is homelessness and we want you all to drop this other stuff and deal with homelessness. And the next group will say the issue is immigrant rights—people are being picked up off the streets and with no due process thrown back home, leaving their kids here. Even locally, every group has their issues. It's very hard for local groups to be as passionate as other issues as the ones they're working on.

Which is understandable. Local organizing has virtually no budget or manpower. Taking into account the problematic, but also the really positive stuff that has been going on, can you imagine this holding together and growing for five years from now?

It will have its ebbs and flows. It will have its horrible moments when a lot of us will throw up our hands and say, "Oh my god, I can't believe it's come to this." And then we'll turn around and it will be better than it was before. And we're going to be infiltrated more than we have been now. Groups are going to be co-opted and divided. As we grow, the shit will hit the fan. [laughs] I think we have to be prepared and recognize that. ¶ I was speaking with a group of students in Santa Cruz and I said, "You don't know how lucky you are that you are living in these times that you have a movement that you are the center of and it is just beginning to flower. You don't know what kind of responsibility you have on your hands. But you have got to seize this historic moment and recognize that it is going to be hard and that we are going to be so infiltrated and so divided and so attacked internally and externally and you've got to just remember that that is the price of success." ¶ As you effect the real powers that be, they fight back with a vengeance. Look what they did with the Black Panthers. Look what they did with every major movement that has come up. But we have to be able to get beyond that and keep our unity and keep our vision and acknowledge that the issues we are working on are really majority issues. Nobody wants kids to starve and nobody wants people with AIDS to not have access to medicine and nobody wants our ancient forests torn down. ¶ The issues we're working on do resonate with people. We just have to build a movement that they can identify with. The other really positive thing about this movement is that it's recognized now as fun. We have to keep the fun in it. As soon as it doesn't become fun, we'll lose people. The more fun it is, the more people will come into it. I think the way to make it grow is to have successes along the way that we can point to and get people energized that they are making a difference, but also have something that is so profoundly exciting and inspiring that you just want to get on board. ◎

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As the nation's biggest chain store and largest private retail employer, Wal-Mart has managed to make enemies wherever it goes. It is hated by its workers, who make $2 to $3 less per hour than the industry average, get next to no benefits and are blocked from collective bargaining at every turn. It is hated by unions, who label it one of the world's biggest union busters. It is hated by thousands of sweatshop workers in Saipan, Bangladesh and other developing countries, where young women and children toil for 70-plus hour weeks in unsafe conditions for just cents an hour. It is hated by neighborhood anti-sprawl activists and town councils around the country, who have well-documented reports of the superstores' negative effects on local economies and quality of life.

It is hated by owners and workers at other businesses, since Wal-Mart has a record of driving other grocery and variety stores out of business wherever it goes; even Winn-Dixie, one of the biggest grocery chains in the south, couldn't compete with Wal-Mart and has closed stores and laid off 11,000 workers in part because of Wal-Mart's business practices. And Wal-Mart is even hated by customers, who complain of proven over-pricing, false "Made in the USA" labels and general deceptiveness and lack of quality.

The store's attitude toward its customers can be summed up by its treatment of Antionette Walker, an 80-year-old woman with lymphatic cancer. In 1997, a Wal-Mart pharmacist gave Walker the wrong prescription, which caused her to have an allergic reaction and be rushed to the hospital for a blood transfusion. She sued Wal-Mart and won a $550,000 judgment, which the multi-billion dollar company challenged on the grounds it was "excessive." The appeals had gone on for three years until April 14, when all seven of the Maine Supreme Court justices ruled once and for all against Wal-Mart. "Not only was she fighting cancer, she was fighting the world's largest retailer at the same time," says anti-Wal-Mart crusader Al Norman, who runs the sprawl-busters.com website.

Yet another example of the way Wal-Mart continues to steamroll across the American landscape, crushing all in its way, is the case of Richard Blowers. Blowers owns a dairy farm in Montgomery County, NY, which has been in the family for years. Last September, contractors hired by Wal-Mart were clearing land near his farm for a sprawling 868,000 square foot distribution center, aided by a $2 million state subsidy. The contractors accidentally cut into Blowers's aquifer, draining the water for his farm. Since then, Blowers has been forced to lay off his farmworkers and sell most of his heifers, filing for bankruptcy and effectively ending his family business. While Wal-Mart has attempted to pipe water from its property to the farm, Blowers reported it doesn't work.

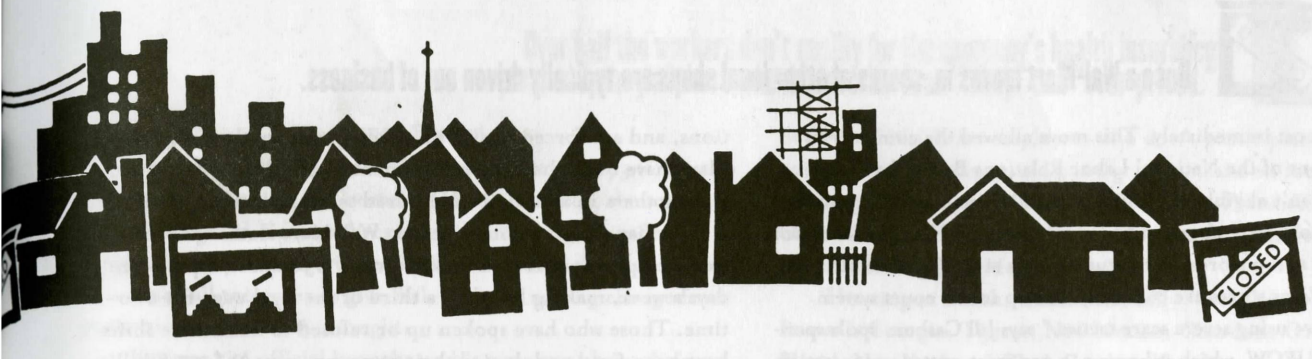
"They have a formula for making sales and everything else be damned," explains sprawl-busters.com's Norman. "They've grown so bloated that they can't see their feet anymore."

Abusing its "Associates"

Wal-Mart is certainly a corporate success, with yearly sales of over $130 billion with $4.3 billion in profits from its Neighborhood Markets, Sam's Clubs and Supercenters. And all contrary evidence aside, the company actually claims to care about its workers, neighbors and customers. Employees are referred to

WAL-MART
Super-Evil Super-Centers

By Kari Lydersen



as "associates," implying they have some stake in the company (they don't). Wal-Mart uses its no-union "Open Door" policy as a selling point, claiming workers have an open door to communicate with management and work for mutually good conditions.

"We're not saying unions aren't right for some companies, but we don't feel our workers need a union," says Wal-Mart spokesperson Jessica Moser. "Our workers have been telling us for years they don't need a third party to represent them. Union organizers are coming in from the outside and making promises they can't keep."

Yet half of the company's 900,000 workers qualify for public assistance or food stamps on their meager wages—they start as low as $5.75 an hour and stay that way for years. Over half the workers don't qualify for the company's health insurance plan, and many of those who do describe it as "lousy" and "overpriced." CEO David Glass makes $4.5 million per year, according to Norman, meaning a bagger making $6.50 an hour would have to work 332 years of 40-hour weeks to equal his yearly pay.

Workers also have no way to resolve grievances or protect their rights. The daily postings on wal-martyrs.com—a website for Wal-Mart employees to talk about their jobs—portray an atmosphere full of bickering, abuse and misconduct between workers and low-level managers, with no intervention or supervision from higher-ups.

According to one post, an assistant manager refused to let an "associate" take any breaks until all freight was cleared off the floor at one store. When the worker protested, the manager "Grabbed me around the neck with his hand and choked me so hard it left bruises, and he told me, 'Shut the fuck up!' in front of all the associates."

Another worker reported being continually propositioned by a manager, who promised raises if she brought nude pictures. "This type of harassment continued for months. I was afraid of losing my job. I was afraid to use the open door policy because it has failed me in the past with other smaller problems which were never resolved."

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union's "Wall of Shame" includes incidents such as a woman being fired for interracial dating at a Texas store in 1998. Also on the Wall of Shame, Nebraska and Texas Wal-Marts were fined $120,000 by federal courts for destroying evidence in cases where Wal-Mart shoppers were injured or crime victims at stores. And a Texas judge fined Wal-Mart $18 million for providing false evidence in a case where a woman was abducted in a Wal-Mart parking lot and later raped.

Contrary to Moser's claims, many workers have tried to unionize at Wal-Mart, but David Glass and the company's other management is obsessive and vicious about its anti-union sentiment.

"Wal-Mart has committed thousands of abuses over the years against workers who expressed interest in forming a union," reads a statement from the UFCW, which has long been trying to organize at various Wal-Mart stores.

After meat-cutters at several stores in Texas and Florida tried to vote on organizing with the UFCW this spring, Wal-Mart abruptly announced it was switching from meat-cutting to case-ready, pre-packaged meat at 700 of its Superstores, 179 of those

Once a Wal-Mart moves in, scores of other local shops are typically driven out of business.

effective almost immediately. This move allowed the company to argue in front of the National Labor Relations Board that the workers weren't eligible to bargain as a collective bargaining unit, since their jobs were about to be cut. Despite the NLRB's ruling for the workers at two stores, the status of votes at the Jacksonville and Palestine, Texas stores are currently tied up in the court system.

"They're using severe scare tactics," says Jill Cashen, spokesperson for the UFCW, which is hoping to use meat-cutter unionization as a first step in organizing all Wal-Mart workers. "That's typical of them. We've been fighting them for a long time on all different issues. They'll basically do anything to stop a union."

She noted that when Wal-Mart heard workers at a Normal, Illinois store were talking about unionizing in March, within hours several top executives were flown in from Arkansas headquarters to meet one on one with the workers. After the meetings, the workers withdrew their union vote cards. And when Jacksonville, Florida. meat-cutters recently attended a training at an Ocala, Florida. store, they were suddenly sent home when management learned the Ocala workers were talking about unionizing.

"They heard the Ocala workers were organizing, so they didn't want the Jacksonville workers to be contaminated with union fever," Cashen explains.

She notes that Wal-Mart even prohibits charities from soliciting inside Wal-Mart during the holidays, since people with these charities could conceivably be spreading union information to the workers.

Sweatshop Central

As bad as Wal-Mart workers in the US feel they are treated, Wal-Mart's overseas labor has it far worse. Wal-Mart is one of several companies named in the lawsuit filed by the UNITE! union, Global Exchange and other groups concerning sweatshop conditions in the US commonwealth of Saipan. There, reports have shown, young women from China, Bangladesh and the Philippines work 12-hour days seven days a week in unsafe conditions, and are forced to sign contracts giving up their civil rights. Many have been charged "recruitment fees" of up to $10,000, leaving them in a kind of indentured servitude on the island.

In Bangladesh, women sewing Wal-Mart clothing at the Beximco plant are forced to work from 7:30 am to 8 pm seven days a week, making less than a third of the legal wage for overtime. Those who have spoken up or refused to work these shifts have been fired and denied their severance pay. At $137.6 billion, Wal-Mart's annual sales are 36 times greater than the whole revenue of the Bangladeshi government, yet Wal-Mart doesn't pay anything in taxes or tariffs.

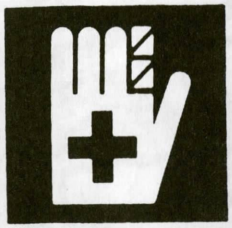
"Bangladesh, one of the poorest nations in the world, is being forced to subsidize Wal-Mart," notes the Web site of the National Labor Committee.

And who could forget the Kathie Lee Gifford spectacle of 1996, when it was proven that the TV personality's line of clothing sold at Wal-Mart was made by five-year-old girls in Honduras, who were often locked in factories overnight and forced to work 75-hour weeks for 31 cents an hour.

"As the US's largest importer, and one of the largest importers in the world, Wal-Mart's practices have an enormous effect on international labor standards," says Sam Bain, an organizer with the National Labor Committee. "If they decided to uphold some basic labor rights, it would affect not only the hundreds of thousands of workers making products for Wal-Mart but others as well. Yet they're so arrogant—even in the face of evidence that their factories are using sweatshop labor, they're completely unapologetic."

Bain notes that while Wal-Mart "tries to spin this image of your hometown friendly neighbor, with products made in the USA," the store actually imports 80 to 90 percent of its goods.

"Their PR crews are working overtime to spin this wholesome middle America image, but their actions belie their words," says Bain.



Over half the workers don't qualify for the company's health insurance plan, and many of those who do describe it as "lousy" and "over-priced."

Super Sprawl

When Wal-Mart announced its intentions in 1993 to locate a store on the outskirts of Greenfield, Massachusetts., the town of 18,000 where Al Norman lives, he said most of the city brass "acted like they'd been touched by Elvis." At first the town council seemed all too eager to give Wal-Mart the zoning change from industrial to retail that it sought.

But one city official brought up his concerns about the store to Norman, an insurance representative and journalist. At first Norman didn't think it was "that big a deal," but upon doing some research he discovered the devastating effect Wal-Marts had had on towns around the country. Once a Wal-Mart moves in, scores of other local shops are typically driven out of business. That means the better-paid jobs and better-priced goods at these stores are lost to the community, leaving residents captive to Wal-Mart's sub-standard employment options and prices. Most cities also end up giving thousands of dollars worth of tax breaks and subsidies to Wal-Mart to boot, and in many cases bus lines are extended or altered solely at Wal-Mart's behest. Norman successfully lobbied his town council to nix the plan, and since then he has become a national activist advising people on keeping Wal-Mart out of their lives.

"I get so many e-mails I can't keep up with them," said Norman. "There's more and more everyday. This isn't like bumper sticker environmentalism where you don't feel like you can really do anything. This directly affects people's lives. It's not saving the whales, it's saving the hometown."

Cities and towns around the country have blocked Wal-Mart's plans by refusing to give it the desired zoning or even by passing anti-Wal-Mart "big box store" square footage ordinance limits. In San Francisco a study about a proposed Wal-Mart showed other downtown merchants would lose $11 to $24 million in yearly sales and up to 30 business would be shut down if the giant was allowed to settle in. The study also noted that Wal-Mart pays $2 an hour less than the local competition, and that the 62 percent of Wal-Mart employees who don't participate in the company health plan would put a greater strain on local health services. The study persuaded the South San Francisco City Council to place a moratorium on big box development, temporarily foiling Wal-Mart's plans.

Huntingon Beach, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Roswell, Georgia; Tijeres, New Mexico; Chardon, Ohio; Lake Placid, New York and Clark County, Nevada are just a few other areas that have passed anti-Wal-Mart zoning ordinances in order to bar the superstore from locating there.

"The pressure against them is mounting," says Bain. "Because of Wal-Mart, you're seeing demonstrations in small towns that never had a demonstration before."

When citizens of Taos, New Mexico successfully persuaded their town council to block a proposed Wal-Mart recently, the company launched a telemarketing campaign to try to make the council change their minds.

"We don't know how many times Taos will have to kill Wal-Mart's plan before it dies," resident Lawrence Vargas is quoted as saying in the UFCW's publication.

In Rhode Island, people who opposed a planned Wal-Mart were the victims of intense harassment and intimidation. "Stop Wal-Mart" signs were taken from people's yards, and those displaying them reported threatening and abusive phone calls. Jim Murphy, the leader of a community group opposed to the store, said he found "human fecal matter" in his hot tub and eggs thrown at his house.

"They have so much money," says Vargas. "They have that smily face. But that doesn't mean they're nice. I hate that smiling face. I see it as Wal-Mart making fun of us. It's smiling because Wal-mart is going to get all of our money."

"Wal-Mart is becoming one of the most reviled companies in America," says Norman, "As soon as people hear that name, they get angry." ◎

By Aaron Shuman

In a time devoid of heros, young people from the hiphop generation are becoming their own. Whether in the fight against California's lock-em-up initiative Prop 21, the battle against police brutality in New York, or the movement to reclaim hiphop from "the Industry" and the city from developers in Chicago, the story is the same: communities are mobilizing to free themselves, and their leaders are often the youngest among them.

In the past year, publications from *Time* to *The Nation* have attempted to address the rise of political consciousness in hiphop, with the *Village Voice* proclaiming, "It's Nation Time. Again." Given the number of topical comps released recently, the story seems hard to miss. But what has been missed, in these articles' desire to phrase today's reality in the decade-old terms of Public Enemy, KRS-One, X-Clan, and "Ladies First," is the difference hiphop's coming-of-age makes.

If the first Nation of hiphop was a weak house, undermined by its conflicts over race, gender, and sexuality, then the new Nation don't intend to go out like that. With an emphasis on knowing one's roots and studying others', on human rights that transcend the concept of civil rights, and a commitment to collective—and consensus—based organizing, the groups being built promise a strong house indeed. This time, the revolution could be sustainable. That is, if the people making it aren't disappeared first.

Goin' Back to Cali: Prisons Sizin' Us Up

Hiphop activism is unifying around the concept of the prison-industrial complex, a nexus of corporate, carceral, and conservative interests that combine to divest government of its responsibility to the people, while investing in locking more up. California, which has built 21 prisons and only one university since 1984, leads the nation both in spending on prisons and the movement against them. It's no surprise that the hiphop generation ran its first campaign against the complex here.

Proposition 21, titled the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, is the latest in a series of proxy wars over race in the Golden State, with each successive initiative shaving the rights of a particular demographic. Whether by curtailing access to education and health care (Prop 187), eliminating affirmative action (Prop 209), or ending bilingual education (Prop 227), the effect has been the same: to deny the state's emerging majority—people of color—the ability to participate fully in public life.

Proposition 21 was no exception, passing in March by a 62-38 margin, as voters chose to commit $5 billion over the next 10 years to build more prisons for more juveniles to do more time. What makes Prop 21 unique among recent initiatives is that Democrats, led by Governor Gray Davis, joined Republicans in establishing a bipartisan consensus that the state's future lies in prisons.

Young organizers saw an opportunity in fighting against the proposition. "This was a first for a lot of young people getting politically active," says Anita De Asis, a Youth Force organizer in her early 20s. "Some went to their first protests, organized their first protest, wrote their first press release, spoke to their first reporter. This was a first step towards building a youth movement,"

Jessica Bibbs, 19, was one of those whose first taste of political organizing came with Prop 21. "My home community didn't understand [Prop 21] at all," she says. "They were like, 'They bad asses need to go to jail.' Teens know what's going on, but adults didn't because they didn't do the research."

In observing how the media covered Prop 21, Jo Su of We Interrupt This Message (WITM), a four year-old media watchdog group based in San Francisco, says adults misunderstanding of the law came as a result of bad reporting. This fall, We Interrupt will release a report analyzing media coverage of Prop 21, youth crime and violence, because inflammatory coverage of the latter built public support for the former. "We're finding that when papers mentioned Prop 21, they would start off talking about Columbine or a recent shooting. That was the frame for the story," says Su. Despite the fact that the youth crime rate is at a ten-year low, Su says, "There's this assumption that kids are more violent, and we need to adjust to that."

As truth disappeared into the generation gap, youth used hiphop to speak to each other and create their own news. Black Folks Against Prop 21, an intergenerational coalition organized by Oakland's Black Dot Artists Collective, organized "guerilla hiphop" events that took artists out on the back of a flatbed truck to perform at schools, parks, and other places where young people meet. These events simultaneously thrust artists into communities to drop knowledge and register people to vote; dramatized the lack of hiphop events in the city, where rising rents and police are forcing them out; and asserted the right of youth, especially youth of color, to use public space.

Young artists spread the word in print in newsletters such as the Black Dot's *Daily Struggle* or Concord group C-BEYOND's *Voice of Youth*, and in pamphlets produced by Third Eye's high school hiphop clubs. Artists spread the word in public, as a collaborative of spoken word MCs and divas known as "Peoples' Artists" performed on buses and at transit stops. Artists spread the word on disk, in "talking books" such as a No on 21 comp put together by Boots Reilly from the Coup. Graffiti emerged in the form of "banner drops," actions coordinated statewide to hang murals with the "No on 21" messages from freeway overpasses at specific times. This was the low-rent advertising the campaign could afford.

These strategies culminated in a statewide week of events, billed as a "Week of Rage." Organizers hoped to draw the statewide media coverage without which they were doomed. The Week began on Presidents' Day with a concert headlined by Dead Prez. Proclaiming "HipHop Will Prevail" on the dais outside Oakland City Hall, No on 21 organizers drew busloads of students for an afternoon of art and protest for which the revolutionary exhortations of DP's full-length platter, *Let's Get Free*, set the tone.

Over the course of the week, activists made powerful use of history. On the morning of the Presidents' Day event, the leaders of over 30 civil rights organizations entered Oakland police headquarters and refused to leave, insisting that they be arrested before Prop 21 could criminalize youth. After the concert, several hundred people, mostly under the age of 30, marched seven rain-slicked blocks to police HQ and blocked the intersection outside until the first group of the morning's arrestees were released at 6 pm.

Standing in the intersection, Gina Pyles, a community college administrator, marveled at the sight, saying, "I didn't know this was going on. I was going to the movies, came up from [the subway], and heard that boom, you know?" she laughs, nodding to a bass line. "So I decided to check it out, and I saw, "Oh my God, there's kids here. Kids of every ethnicity, standing their

ground, rallying together...This is Martin Luther King's dream. And I'm still here. I can go to the movies any time."

The week culminated in Friday's "Final Showdown." Where youth took over the Phoenix School, a school for students who have been expelled from other parts of the San Francisco school system. It requires neither imagination nor hyperbole to see the school, enclosed by fifteen foot-high fences, with a perimeter of windowless bunkers for classrooms as a prison. Students turned it into their "Freedom School," invoking the self-education of the Student Non-Violence Coordinating Committee and other '60s civil rights groups. Sandwiched among open-mike speeches, poetry slams, freestyling, and b-boy competitions, were forums on "youth oppression," political organizing, the prison-industrial complex, and how-to workshops on "knowing your rights" and creating and defending an ethnic studies program in schools. As a few people lit votive candles, fusing family photos, personal items, and revolutionary text or iconography, to focus and draw strength to the maker, the klieg lights of TV crews fired. Jasmin Smith, a 20-something organizer from Third Eye, stepped on stage to hype up the crowd for those watching the 11 o'clock news at home, and cheers erupted when the beams of news helicopters crossed the schoolyard. However, there was scant mention of the event in newspapers the next day.

What mattered more to those in attendance than press mentions were visions of freedom, of power, and the possibility of working with adults as partners. This vision quickly bore fruit, as the ACLU's Racial Justice Coalition asked youth groups to join them in planning an April 27th event in the state's capital of Sacramento. Initially, the event was conceived to protest governor Gray Davis' veto of what advocates call the "driving while black" bill, to stop discriminatory traffic stops.

"Their vision was that there would be a press conference on the steps of the Capitol with civil rights groups," explains Raquel Lavina, a former No on 21 organizer, now working at the ACLU. But, she explains, with youth involved, "we've established the importance of using culture and not just using the energy of youth but letting it lead and set direction. We're larger, certainly louder." Consequently, the event became a "Showdown in Sactown," a broader coalition expressing discontent with Davis' run to the right.

Youth organizing in the hiphop community seems to be picking up steam. Several of the largest Bay Area youth organizations are consolidating to insure an independent base of power. The cultural programming of Underground Railroad, the political education of SOUL (School of Unity and Liberation), and the organizing experience of C-BEYOND and Youth Force are fusing into the Youth Empowerment Center. The point is to serve as a conduit connecting disparate youth organizations spread over the huge state services, training, and resources they need to establish themselves and to grow. Youth Force convened a statewide conference May 6th to create an organization capable of establishing its own political will.

But Stefan Goldstone wouldn't call this a youth movement yet. "Right now there are proto-organizations throughout the state. At some point, we'll need to be much bigger than 50 to 100 member organizations. For now, it's good to be networked in a mosaic, but as the movement builds, we have to build bigger, more powerful youth organizations—and youth have to remain in control."

One thing is certain: the terms of political success in California have changed. Lavina explains that it's not about winning elections anymore. "What's really significant is we had one of our biggest protests the day after the [Prop 21] vote. 175 people got arrested; 40 were under the age of 18, which is unprecedented. People enjoyed coming together, and that's not going to fade."

As De Asis notes, "We're developing organizers, fundraisers and cultural workers every day."

New York: Wills of Steel in the Hour of Chaos

At April's "Hiphop as a Movement" conference in Madison, Wisconsin, political organizers with more protests than birthdays under their belts mingle with teenagers organizing their first event. More than one speaker in the student union finds irony in the pop rap wafting in through the windows that sells millions, while the "true school" of hiphop—Afrika Bambaataa and Chuck D among them—address crowds peaking in the high hundreds. But true both to underground hiphop's style of hand-to-hand distribution, and the recurringly popular refrain "each one teach one," organizers appreciate that every person can be a gateway unto hundreds.

Throughout the conference, Brother Righteous of the Universal Zulu Nation is meeting people, making friends and passing out Zulu medallions. By the end of the conference, it seems, most attendees will have one. Zulu is hiphop's foundational organization, just as Bambaataa, its founder, is the originator of much of hiphop's sound. Credited with uniting gangs against violence in his native South Bronx, and forging four then-distinct crowds—b-boys (breakdancers), graffiti writers, DJs, and MCs—into the "four elements" of hiphop, Bambaataa is also known as hiphop's first ambassador, both for the wide-ranging tastes in his turntable compositions, and for taking hiphop worldwide as early as 1982. Organized around core principles or virtues, then into decentralized local chapters, Zulu Nation is open to those who claim it, and the multiracial, international crowd that converges on its Anniversaries of Hiphop suggests a broad reach.

Zulu Nation is also a gang, at least in the eyes of the NYPD, who took in 34 Zulu members last December, for violating a public assembly law requiring a permit for public meetings of 20 or more—one of the "quality of life" ordinances Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has used to clear public space in New York. "Aw, they always saying that [about gangs]," says Afrika Bambaataa, with a dismissive wave of a mighty hand. "We left from gangs. Now they say an international group wants to turn back into a gang."

Given the current climate in New York, this is small potatoes. Following the February 25th release of not guilty verdicts in the trial of four officers who killed Amadou Diallo, New York City has been rocked by a series of incidents of police brutality. The shooting death of Malcolm Ferguson chilled activists who spent the night in jail with him after Diallo demonstrations. This was followed by the

"We've established the importance of using culture and not just using the

March 16th death of Patrick Dorismond, an off-duty security guard angered by an undercover cop asking him for pot. In the fight that ensued, Dorismond was shot and killed. Listeners tuning in to New York Pacifica radio's coverage of his funeral heard the on-air beating of reporter Errol Maitland, broadcasting over his cell phone. He did not back away from police lines quickly enough.

Tensions are high as mayor Rudy Giuliani, running as the Republican candidate for Senate, puts more cops on the streets. While aggressive enforcement of "quality of life" ordinances reduced crime and made him a first-term darling to some New Yorkers, his popularity is boomeranging with Operation CONDOR, a $24 million program launched in January to attack street crime (or produce gaudy arrest totals, critics say) with increased undercover police activity. The *Village Voice*'s Nat Hentoff asks, "Are We in a Police State?" and the *Daily News* notes that white Giuliani liberals are jumping off the bandwagon. Having alienated the black community by consistently refusing to meet with it, Giuliani finds the chickens coming home to roost on his political career. Perhaps this has something to do with the fences recently added around City Hall.

Keeping the political pressure on Giuliani is a new student movement, rising from New York high schools. Protests did not stop with the initial march following the Diallo verdicts. Rather, student walkouts, starting on March 3rd and an April 5th youth march of 700—with 18 arrested for civil disobedience—have kept the issue alive.

Una Osato, 17, coordinated one of the March 3rd walkouts, at LaGuardia High. She is unlike many young organizers in that her parents encourage her activism. Her first arrest came on her birthday, at last June's Reclaim the Streets! demonstration. "All I wanted for my birthday was a bullhorn," she says. "The police arrested me for violating a sound ordinance, operating it without a permit. They let me go, but they didn't give my bullhorn back."

Last fall, Osato organized a Social Action Club at her school. A pressing issue, she says, is the need for students to have a place of their own to congregate. "After school, security guards blow whistles, to get us out of school, off our corner, across the street. We go up the street to Lincoln Center, and they have their own security telling us we have to leave. And they make more noise than we do!"

Sandra Barros, 23, directs the High School Organizing Project for SLAM!, City College's Student Liberation Action Movement. "We had to organize high school students," Barros says. "A year and a half ago, they kept coming to us with questions, asking what their rights were, how can they get involved, what can they do." SLAM! found alliances with youth a natural development in their fight to preserve open admissions. "High school students are the ones who will be shut out. They understand what's going on; all they need are contacts for media and legal resources."

After the Diallo verdicts came out, Osato says, students grew frustrated as teachers refused to discuss the case in class, and the administration equivocated on the possibility of a teach-in. Two high schools, including LaGuardia, walked out on March 3rd. A month later, social action clubs from 11 New York high schools walked out. Osato now participates in a coordinating council— two-thirds of whom are girls—of SACs from 15 schools to make future plans.

LaGuardia High's administrative ignoring of the Diallo verdict—and the walkout that resulted—is in deep contrast with approach of El Puente Academy for Human Rights and Social Justice, an alternative high school where Jennifer Calderon works as a counselor. "We knew it was an issue that had to be addressed after facilitators talked about it in classes," Calderon says. "A couple of weeks later, we put out tagboards with pictures of people clipped from the *Stolen Lives Project* [a book documenting the lives of victims of police brutality]. There was a demographic breakdown and there were all these different questions for kids to post their answers to, like 'could this be you?' 'What would your verdict be?'"

On April 5th, El Puente held a teach-in, with forums to discuss subjects such as the criminal justice system and workshops to develop skills, such as "Art as Activism" and "Rebel Music." In Rebel Music, Calderon explains, youth wrote their own chants to popular songs. She hums a song both of us recognize but Calderon knows only as "the Thong Song," then sings, "41 shots...shots...shots... Four white cops...cops...cops," before the gracefully arching bridge, "What they did was wrong." We bust up laughing. "So they went down and joined the rally. Kids in our video production class videotaped it and will analyze it; we'll do different writing exercises to follow up and publish something."

Calderon is also known as J-Love, a freelance writer and volunteer for hiphop's start-up foundation, Active Element. In 1999, Active Element's first year, the foundation launched with $100,000 raised through individual donations. "All of us have been with organizations that couldn't get funded, whether it was a matter of not having the right tax status, not having a long, proven history, not having a traditional, hierarchical structure, [of] being a collective," Calderon explains. "And all of us know people who organize but might not see themselves as organizers. Someone living in the projects working to keep kids out of gangs is an organizer. Someone who takes kids into their home and teaches them is an organizer. We want to break down the barriers that separate people from funding and support individuals and groups with whatever they need to keep doing what they do."

Active Element has a laundry list of ideas and has just hired its first staff person to help prioritize and implement them."Those of us who are older need to start forming organizations. We need hiphop unions, hiphop schools, hiphop universities. Power is organized money, and we need to start using ours to build a platform, an agenda, a five-year plan. But we don't need to tell youth what to do. We need to give youth the space, the resources, the audience to develop their ideas. And we need to accept them as partners. Because these walkouts really were youth-led," says Caulderon.

Chitown Lowdown: Youth Against the Machine

"No More Prisons" is scrawled everywhere around Wicker Park: on the sidewalk opposite one of the Thrill Jockey cognoscenti's favorite bars, the Rainbo; on the freshly boutiqued stretch of Milwaukee Avenue; and down the street from Roby's bar, whose monstrous, neon-red frontage signals a blight far greater than that of the affordable, working-class neighborhood city leaders would

like to transform. Incubator of radical projects such as the A-Zone anarchist infoshop and Quimby's indie newsstand, as well as radical innovations in Chicago's sounds, Wicker Park is now a destination district for those who seek to buy low and sell high. There are no prisons in Wicker Park, but there are ghettos of gentrification where venture capitalists throw up the darndest things, and rising rents have long-time residents concerned. But throughout the city, there are signs that hiphop may be the connective tissue capable of uniting neighborhoods in a movement to retake City Hall.

One thing is for certain: mayor Richard Daley's administration has not been good to hiphop. Headz speak rosily of predecessor Harold Washington, Chicago's first Black mayor, whose election signaled a blow against the machine that had long dominated city politics. One aspect of Washington's cultural plan was to encourage people with garages throughout the city to allow graffiti artists to transform them. This has been replaced by Daley's GraffitiBusters and a ban on the sale of spray paint in the city.

Jeremy Lahoud, 27, works with Southwest Youth Collaborative (SYC), a non-profit serving Chicago youth. Recently, he had to intervene when undercover narcotics officers confronted two nationally known graffiti artists, painting a mural on the side of SYC's building. "[The police] had them up against the wall," Lahoud marvels. "They were very clearly painting a mural—we asked them to do it!"

As graffiti goes on lockdown, funding for school arts programs is drying up, as is much of the infrastructure of education and employment for youth in Chicago. Evelyn is an alternative high school teacher in her early 20s, raised in Chicago public schools. "There was never a real possibility to express myself through the arts," she says. "You'd have to go outside to find teachers or support. I was lucky: my teacher hooked me up with a creative writing circle, and that's where I developed my ability to write. But in school, there was nothing. In high school, I learned trades: how to fix things, handle machine parts, weld. I didn't know there was an arts class."

While city leaders abdicate their responsibility to provide an equal educational opportunity for all, some describe a new paradigm of Chicago schools as preparing some for college, others for prison. Whether through an increasingly militarized campus, complete with guards, metal detectors, and security checks; zero tolerance policies, initially implemented to curb drug or weapon possession, that now suspend or expel kids for offenses such as talking out, tardiness, or cursing; or simply the substandard education many now receive, some teachers say public schools are telling their students, "No future for you," and the kids who hear this are disproportionately black.

Rishi Nath, 24, is an alternative high school teacher on Chicago's South Side and co-runs Raptivism Records. Raptivism dropped its first full-length release, *No More Prisons*, this spring to benefit New York's Prison Moratorium Project.

"With Raptivism," he laughs, "the idea is: let's give our friends social service projects. I mean, I love my friends; they're great, but they're really dry." More seriously, Naith adds, "What they're not is reactive. They're digging in the libraries, finding information, linking up scholars, drafting ten-point programs, agendas. It's not just, "'We need to free this person.' Everyone has their one or two martyr type cats, but that's minor. Two million in prison [as of February, 2000]. Dude, that's crazy.

"To that, I said, let me lend my understanding. My kids are getting arrested in school. I'm seeing my kids prohibited from being educated by problems with the law, and I'm unclear where it's helping them or society. I'm gonna bring these hiphop guys to you [for your learning]; you'll get in touch with the lifeblood which is hiphop.

"We started two years ago with numerous shows [and] singles releases. It wasn't just an event but an ongoing process. As our musical following grew, the Moratorium's name grew; the artists grew, artistically and professionally, and are getting signed. It's been a great symbiotic thing. It's a new way of looking at activism and hiphop."

Just as labels such as Raptivism are growing audiences, organizers, and businesses that promote social change, so non-profits are growing into institutions that address the full range of people's needs. Southwest Youth Collaborative is one of a number of Chicago non-profits, complementing the services they traditionally deliver with a cultural component (the afterschool arts program the University of Hiphop), and a youth empowerment project, Generation Y, which develops young organizers.

This fusion proved vital in challenging proposed cuts in the city's Jobs for Youth program. To Jeremy Lahoud, the juxtaposition of the cuts, with an "anti-gang loitering" ordinance empowering police to disperse groups of three or more youth, was galling. "The city was talking about cutting 15,000 jobs down to 2,000, putting more kids on the street. Then they're criminalizing youth for being there." Generation Y's lobbying campaign helped save 7,000 jobs, though neither it nor a protest 300 youth strong at February's City Council meeting stopped the loitering ordinance.

It did, however, give youth a sense of their own power, as breakdancers waxed the floor outside council chambers, spinning on their heads. The growing sense that City Hall belongs to them has fueled organizing to push a "Kids First" bill through City Council, requiring the city to commit a portion of its budget to youth services (currently, advocates say, these receive less than one percent.)

Anton Miglietta, 27, has seen the movement building, both as a teacher and as a member of the editorial staff of *Chitown Lowdown*, a quarterly bilingual newspaper founded in 1997 and run entirely by volunteer labor. 20,000 issues are distributed through high schools, community colleges, and select merchants. The range in ages of the over 150 volunteers who produce the paper is 17 to 27; their average age is 23. There is nothing amateurish about the paper, from its writing on the city's emerging hiphop and poetry scenes, through the quality of its layout and design, to its comprehensive coverage of youth issues and City Hall. Miglietta says, "We're challenging the presumption that kids don't wanna learn by giving them the power to create and direct their learning. Most importantly, kids gain the knowledge that they can't gain real knowledge unless they do something."

While a communication network grows, others focus on developing economic clout. Xavier Nogueras, X-Man of the hiphop duo La Junta, jumped from a short childhood stint in gangs to organiz-

Just as a DJ rearranges sonic material and lays down the beat, so organizers are chopping up personal, social, and political histories to purify the elements, to purge the aspects that are foul and to rebuild a culture that can sustain them.

ing for Harold Washington. After growing frustrated with politics as a youth commissioner for Washington and a community organizer, he began to see the potential of hiphop to unify the city and establish a base for political power. He notes, "The real politics was trying to organize young people, and I realized I was reaching more of them through my music."

To Nogueras, the key is overcoming the internal segregation of the city and schisms within its scene. "Chicago does have a real sound, marked by its diversity and its politics. But there's a perception that there's not a scene here, because people have never really gotten together to represent. Every year or two there's one group that breaks big, and then all the pressure's on them to give back to Chicago. Twista broke tonguetwisting nationally. Everyone's doing a song with that now, but no one's willing to sign a Chicago group."

To change this, Nogueras organized seven emerging hiphop groups into the Chicago Seven, whose ASCAP-sponsored single, "The Whole World Is Watching," dropped this winter. "It's easy for groups that are struggling to get together. What's hard is to bring together seven groups that are making it. We want seven superstars, not just one. Otherwise, people will just keep getting ripped off."

After the city's premiere venue for hiphop bookings, the House of Blues, refused to book a Chicago Seven showcase, the artists called a boycott in April. "For them to acknowledge there's a hiphop industry here, they need to start booking locals. One day out of the 365 in the year, they need to have a Chicago hiphop showcase," Nogueras explained. The boycott has spawned the first all-city hiphop meetings in recent memory with 100-plus people attending, and the creation of a Website, chicagohiphop.com.

Movement Time: Yo Punk, R U Still Down?

If "organize" is one word on raptivists' lips, "tour" is another. Prison Moratorium Project opened its tour with April events in Los Angeles and Boston, celebrated May Day with Angela Davis and the Coup in San Francisco, and is scouting locations for another 40 stops. "Whoever wants to host us has to come up with the resources to pay the artists. We want to get them paid after all this free work they've done," Kate Rhee laughs. "And we also need to be flown out for the workshops, which are free. But we're not dictating a manual. Our hope is that as you organize an event like this, creating a space where people can come together, see each other, you get more and more invested in doing something."

Bay Area raptivists plan to take out one of No on 21's more successful tactics—the guerilla hiphop concert—in a series of events they call the Long Hot Summer. The idea is to reconnect artists with their neighborhoods and to start building a grassroots movement door to door, capable of passing its own initiatives. Stefan Goldstone explains, "A few weeks before the show, artists in the community will canvass it to let folks know what's going on. The issues we discuss will come from the community—its artists, its activists, and whatever's on people's tongues. Then there's hiphop to pull people out, to educate, to support people already organizing in these communities. At the end of the summer, we'll have done five or six shows, and we'll see how people feel about forming a formal institution."

As activists speak the word in neighborhoods or in regions of the country where it has yet to be seriously discussed, those on the more entrepreneurial tip are hitting all points on the map in their desire to spread the gospel. Rachel Raimist, 25, is one. She fused her background in street club promotion ("I was the girl passing out flyers on Venice Beach") with her interest in cinema to provide a valued service to LA's hiphop community: shooting concerts for rappers to use as promos or videos, to evaluate their performances, or simply to be validated in what they do. When Raimist realized she was one of only two women on stage at a major hiphop showcase, she began to consciously document and interview lady performers, which three years later, has produced the feature-length documentary *Nobody Knows My Name.*

In explaining the title, she notes, "Everyone wanted a star to sell the movie. I have footage of Lauryn Hill; I have footage of everybody; and no one with the money to put behind this movie would kick down without it. But there's more to hiphop than stars and the people who come through." Through the mysterious workings of the Internet, an initial promotional e-mail to 20 people eventually reached Chuck D's manager. As Raimist works out the details with Chuck D's Rapstation.com on sponsorship of a *Know My Name* tour, she has already presented the film in five cities herself and is one of the organizers for this August's Sisterphyre 2000, billed as a first ever conference of women in hiphop. "Travel, lodging, food; an honorarium I'm flexible on if I know you and you're righteous," Raimist laughs, when asked what it takes to book the film. "Though I shouldn't be saying that with my credit card debt."

There are many others like Raimist, such as Milwaukee's Professor Pitt, 26, who I met as he flyered a bus for the debut of his *Birth of a Holy Dynasty*, billed as "the first Afrikan American kung fu movie," wedding martial arts with African dance. When I buy a videotape, Pitt insists on signing it for its historical value. He's not being arrogant; it's a confidence, growing within the people I've met that there is a future, and we may make a righteous one yet. Whether by invoking the synaesthesia of third eye vision, the ability of the mind to transcend or slay, or the power of the cipher and hiphop's other forms of coded communication, young organizers are taking cues from and working in the language of hiphop, a culture sunk like the subterranean cables that wire our own.

Just as a DJ rearranges sonic material and lays down the beat, so organizers are chopping up personal, social, and political histories to purify the elements, to purge the aspects that are foul and to rebuild a culture that can sustain them. As youth discover an increasingly common tongue, the networking and level of organization grows. And if the time has not yet arrived whenm as the Chicago 7's title track proclaims, "The Whole World Is Watching," we soon will be. The question is whether sight will activate that part of the cerebral cortex that makes you move. ◎

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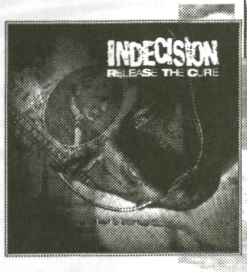

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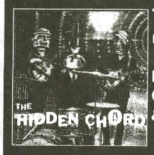

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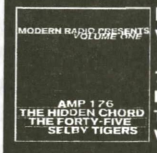

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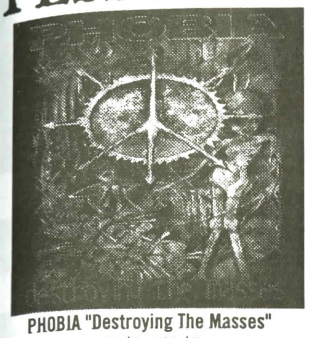

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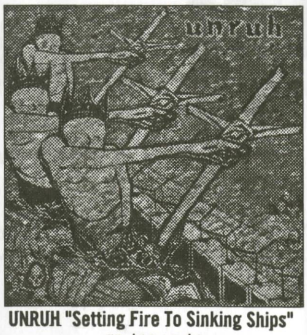

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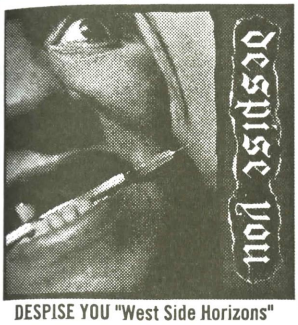

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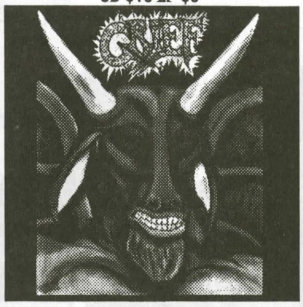

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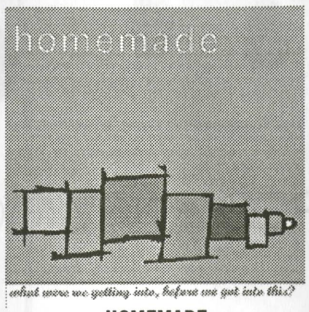

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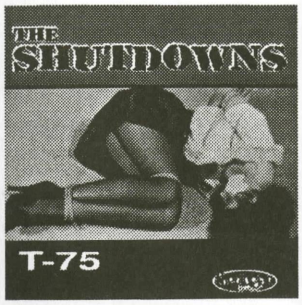

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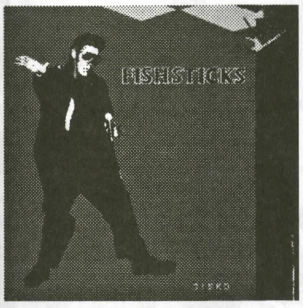

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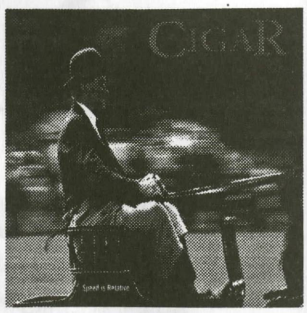

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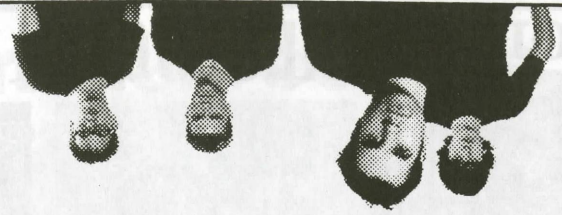

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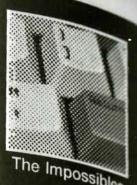
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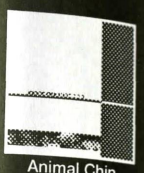
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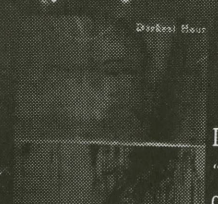

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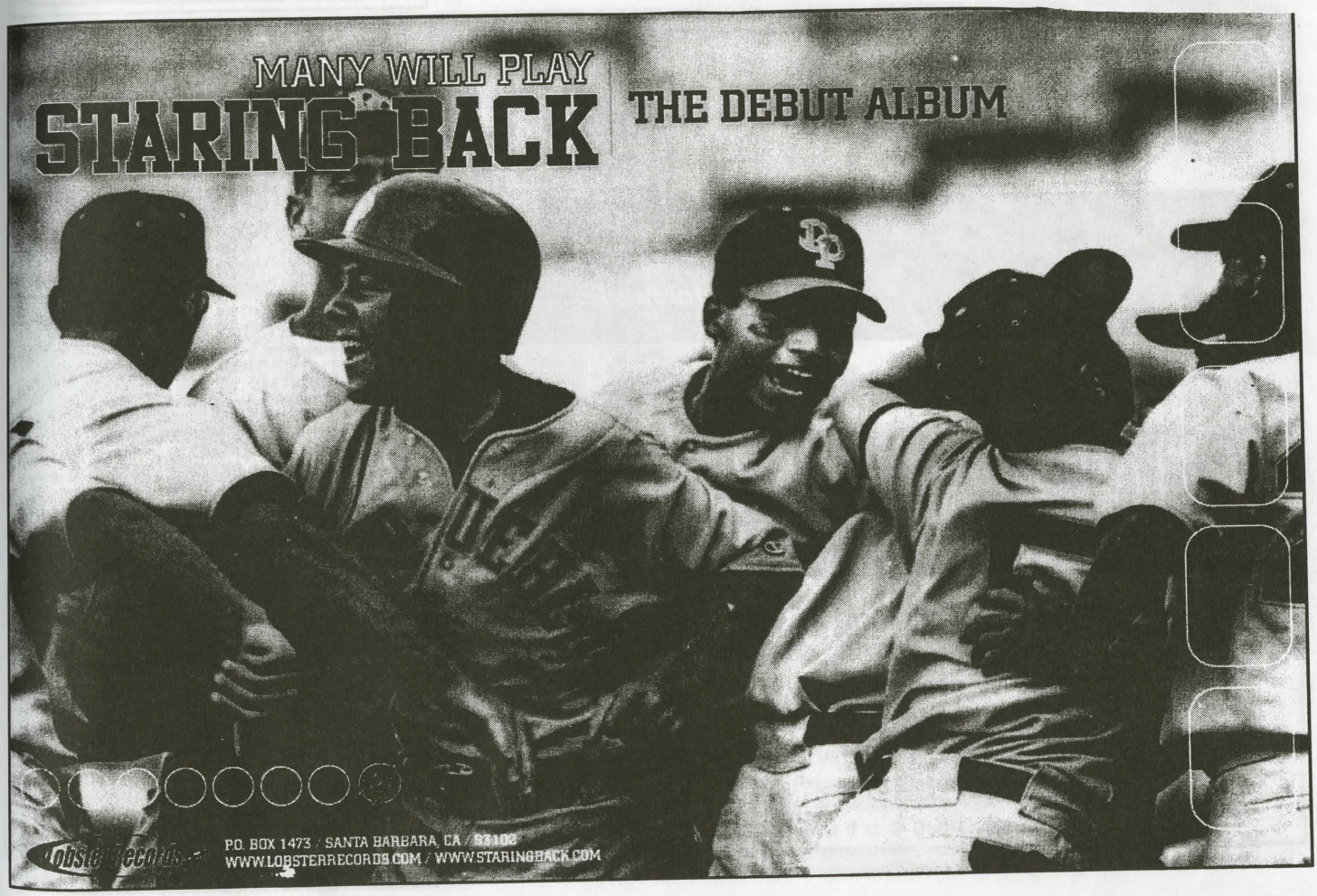

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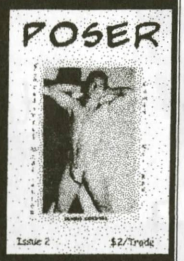

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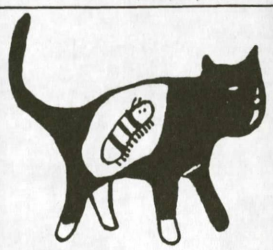

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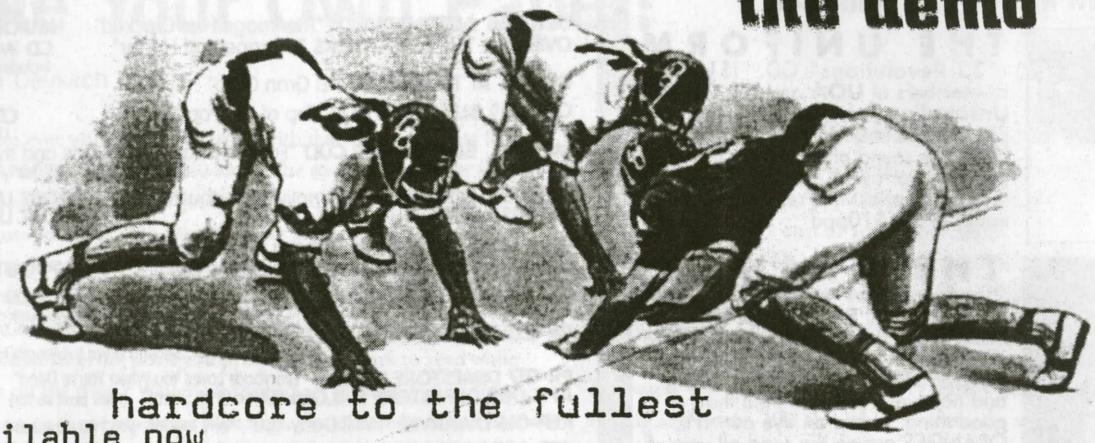

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things that go bump in

SEX

When people find out I write a sex advice column, the one thing they're most curious about isn't the slickest lube, or the 13 and a half most popular positions, or the best place to attach restraints to a bed. It's pain. Not the sting of a paddle or the ache of nipple clamps, or next day ride-'em-cowgirl bowlegs, or even rough handling by an inconsiderate partner, but the I-thought-this-was-supposed-to-feel-good-but-hurts-like-hell variety of pain. The fact that this is the hottest topic on most people's dirty little minds is enough to make me cranky, but the realization that many people think pain is an unwelcome yet entirely inevitable accompaniment to sex is enough to make an amateur sexpert cry.

Sex does not, I repeat, DOES NOT have to hurt unless you want it to (and that's a different column entirely). Ever. Not the 1st time or 50th time. Even though most of us won't put up with the annoyance of a headache, too many of us willingly endure unwanted sexual pain because we think it will please our partner, or because some particular act is "supposed" to be uncomfortable, or because we're too embarrassed to speak up. But pain is a sign that something is wrong—it warns us to stop whatever it is we're doing in order to avoid injuring ourselves either physically or psychologically. Please respect what your body is telling you.

Anal Penetration

I'm starting here because out of all the many unpleasant (and usually false) images that way too many people conjure up when they think of anal sex, the most common of them is pain. This isn't necessarily the result of people's inexperience; I've read sex manuals that claim that some initial discomfort is to be expected from anal intercourse. But I'm here to tell you that anal sex doesn't have to hurt, not the first time, not even for the first minute.

While it's true that the anus is an extremely sensitive area and that the potential for pain certainly exists, that enormous sensitivity is exactly what can make anal sex so much fun if it's approached with patience and, more importantly, a refusal to let it hurt. One of the beautiful things about our assholes is that they never lie to us: if you're feeling pressured, hurried, or just plain ambivalent, even unconsciously so, your anus will let you know loud and clear. This makes real desire, relaxation, trust in your partner and a snail's pace all absolute requirements for any enjoyable anal encounter. Work on these things, and work up to penetration with soft touching, licking (safe sexers and the squeamish can use a dental dam or cellophane wrap for this), and slow penetration with fingers. A thick water or silicone-based lubricant (without nonoxynol-9, which can irritate sensitive tissue) is also absolutely indispensable; unlike other orifices commonly used for sexual gratification, the anus is not self-lubricating (and even if it were, lube makes everything that much better).

If somehow anal sex hurts even though you really want it, you're all lubed up and your partner is doing everything right, it could be due to a few different causes. The first, and in some ways easiest to remedy, is size discrepancy: your partner's penis or dildo may be too wide or too long for your body to comfortably accommodate it. You might try adding lots of extra lube and experimenting with positions (recipient-on-top allows a greater measure of depth control than missionary or rear-entry positions), or trying out a small or graduated dildo (yes, gentlemen can hold dildos in hand, or even strap 'em on...look for thigh harnesses, or those with two leg straps and position the base above the penis) and working up to whatever size feels best.

More difficult to remedy is pain caused by hemorrhoids (swollen varicose veins of the anal canal and rectum) and anal fissures (splits in surface tissue of the anus). These are usually caused by constipation, and/or straining to make a bowel movement, but the unlubed, painful variety of anal intercourse can also injure anal tissue. Try plenty of hot baths, over-the-counter hemorrhoid preparations, and increasing the fruits, veggies and fiber in your diet while avoiding spicy foods and anal play until symptoms subside.

If any pain or symptoms become chronic, you really must run right out and buy the excellent *Anal Pleasure and Health* by Jack Morin before also consulting a doctor. The "Butt Bible" has suggestions and exercises for making peace with a painful anus, as well as tips for everyone the least bit curious about anal eroticism.

Vaginal Penetration

Much of what is necessary to make anal penetration pleasurable is also true of vaginal penetration, especially for virgins or women without much experience with intercourse. Again, please allow me to remind you that there is no time when vaginal penetration has to hurt, not even the first time. The stretching or "breaking" of the hymen (the thin membrane surrounding the vaginal opening) can happen before a woman has intercourse; horseback riding, bicycling, even masturbating or "fingering" can stretch the opening. Even if it hasn't already been stretched, real desire, lube, and patience can allow the hymen to give slowly and comfortably. Unfortunately, what many women interpret as the pain of their hymen breaking is actually pain from tightness of the muscles surrounding the vagina, either due to nervousness or lack of enough arousal. This can even happen to those of us who've been

the night The Agony and the Ecstacy: When Sex Hurts

by Sheri Gumption

around the block more than a few times. In either case, pain is a giant flashing signal that you should consider if you actually want intercourse or you're just doing it for the sake of your partner. If you decide that you oh-yes-indeedy do, then your lover needs to slow down and spend more time making you comfortable and horny.

If relaxation or desire isn't the problem, lack of lube might be. While your body can and does produce its own lube, each woman is different, and all sorts of medications (like anti-histamines and anti-depressants) and conditions (such as hormone deficiencies or even dehydration) can reduce the amount of natural lube your body produces. Happily, this is easily and inexpensively remedied with any one of a variety of slippery products. While any non-oil-based lube like KY will do, I give the special Sheri Gumption Stamp of Approval to silicone-based ID Millennium and water-based Maximus and Liquid Silk (all of which can be found next to my bed), available by mail from Good Vibrations or Toys in Babeland.

A variety of evil beasties can also cause pain with intercourse. Yeast infections, bacterial vaginosis, STI's and even allergies can make your cooch feel more like a war zone than a den of pleasure. Pain from these conditions will almost always be felt on the surface (more like a sunburn than a bruise, say) and may feel like mild irritation, burning, tenderness or a "raw" feeling. When this is the case, please, please run right out and have your cooch checked by a professional (look for Planned Parenthood in the yellow pages) to be sure nothing serious is causing it to screech at you; while yeast and other critters commonly put our stuff temporarily out of commission, other, more serious, infections can mimic the symptoms they cause. If someone in a white coat has a good look around and can't find any miniature invaders, you may have a latex or nonoxynol-9 sensitivity, or you may be allergic to the lube you are (of course) using. You can try switching to unlubricated or polyurethane condoms (Avanti or the "female condom"), and look for lubes made with fewer artificial ingredients and those preserved with grapefruit seed extract.

Pain felt deeper in the pelvis may also have several causes. Size discrepancies and anatomical idiosyncrasies, particularly those that cause bumping or rubbing of the cervix or ovaries, can again be the source of the problem (I once had a partner whose slight curve to the left was just enough to jab my right ovary every time...this relationship did not last long). Fortunately, using lots of lube and switching from positions that encourage deep penetration ("missionary" or rear-entry) to those which allow for more shallow penetration (recipient on top or side-by-side) can often help. If it doesn't, or if the pain is accompanied by bleeding, heavy, painful periods, or a general feeling of tenderness in the pelvic region, you should again consult a professional. Endometriosis (a condition in which the uterus lining migrates and grows outside the womb), fibroid tumors (benign tumors on the uterine wall) and pelvic inflammatory disease (caused by untreated STI's) can all cause chronic pain and infertility if left untreated.

Pain in the Penis or Testicles

Pain in the penis or testicles can be the result of inexperience or just plain old bad technique on the part of you or your partner. For all three of you out there who don't already know this, teeth are never on the oral sex menu unless specifically requested from the chef; please make sure to cover your fangs with your lips and tongue when traveling south of the equator. Rushing penetration when either partner is not quite ready can also cause ouchies, as the delicate skin of the (uncircumcised) foreskin may be pulled back too fast or roughly, or the penis may bump into the pubic bone or perineum instead of the vaginal or anal opening. Once again, use lots of lube, be sure you and your partner are ready, and aim carefully. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to use your (or your partner's) hand to guide the penis into the correct orifice.

Surface irritation of your sword and sack can be caused by many of the same cooties which affect the ladies. If you rule out abrasion due to overindulgence or lack of lube, allergies to latex and spermicide, or irritation from tight-fitting or rough clothes, it's time to seek a doctor's opinion. Skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis can affect the penis, and infections as minor as jock itch and yeast, and as serious as herpes and syphilis, can all cause similar symptoms. Please don't delay getting a thorough checkup.

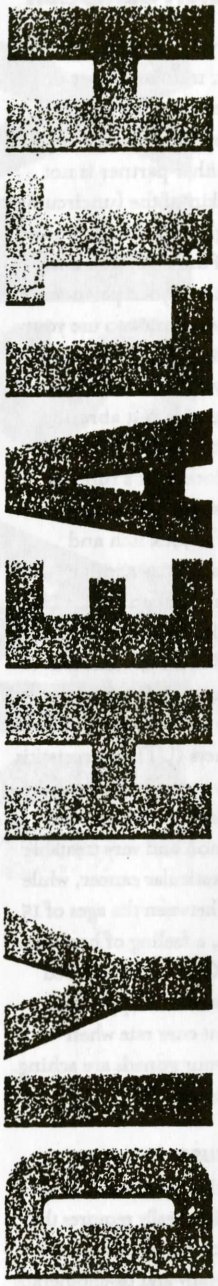
While soreness deeper within the penis, testicles, groin or abdomen may merely be the result of strain on ligaments and muscles when two anatomies aren't exactly made for one another, this type of pain more often signals a condition that should be checked by a health care practitioner. Infections of the urethra, bladder and kidneys (UTI's), prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate gland), epididymitis (inflammation of the epididymis, the area of the testicles where sperm mature), hernias and various kinds of benign testicular cysts are all common and very treatable conditions which can cause pain. More seriously, testicular cancer, while rare, is the most common cancer to occur in men between the ages of 15 and 35; symptoms include a dull ache in the groin, a feeling of heaviness in a testicle, and a lump or nodule on *one* testicle (not to be confused with the epididymis, which is a comma-shaped area on the upper back side of *both* balls). Testicular cancer has an excellent cure rate when found early, so please don't wait to see a doctor if your gonads are aching. [For more about your balls, see DIY healthcare this issue.]

Survivors of Assault or Abuse

Pain during sex can be both a physical and psychological result of sexual assault or abuse. Such an intense, complex situation really requires the services of someone properly trained to deal with such things, not a mere paragraph in a punk rock zine. Happily, physical therapy and psychotherapy are very successful treatment options; for the name of a therapist near you, you can call your local Planned Parenthood, or the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists at 312.644.0828. The book *A Survivor's Guide to Sex*, by Staci Haines, is also an excellent start to working toward healthy sexuality for both survivors and their partners. ◎

Hey, I'll send a copy of The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex *or* Anal Pleasure and Health *(my two favorite sex books!) to the next person whose question I use! Send 'em in, kids! sheri gumption, pob 7564 ann arbor, mi 48107 or (better) diysex@punkplanet.com*

in sickness and no weal



Yeah, Yeah I know what you're thinking, "What does a girl know about MY BALLS?" Save it, I already heard it last Friday night from my male friends. But I wanted to tackle a health issue that involved men's health, so bear with me.

In this column, I will cover the testicular exam, distinction between testicular lumps, when and what to expect from your family doctor and/or urologist, torsion, epididymitis, bacterial infections, orchitis, and how to get relief from testicular inflammation.

First and foremost I will talk about the testicular exam that *every* one of you should be doing *every* month! Approximately 6,000 men per year between the ages of 20-35 will get testicular cancer. There are two risk factors that increase your chances of getting testicular cancer: (1) an undescended testicle during your childhood and/or (2) you're a white male. So, if you fall into either of these categories, take special care to do your monthly exam.

1. You should exam your balls when you're warm and the scrotal sac is relaxed—the best time is after a hot shower or bath. Roll each testicle between your thumbs and fingers of both your hands, (this should not be painful). Your testes should feel similar to a boiled egg, (round and smooth). There is a tube that feels similar to a string of spaghetti, that is your epididymis—don't mistake that for a lump!

2. Examine the outside sac for any noticeable changes. Your testes should be approximately the same size.

3. If you find a lump, your next step is to go into a dark room and put a flashlight behind your scrotum. You *should* be able to see through it *and* the lump, which is most likely filled with fluid. If you can't see through the lump, and you just suffered an injury to your groin, it could be a hematocele, which is similar to a blood blister. This lump should go away on its own, but please check it daily. If its size increases, or it becomes painful, then see an urologist as soon as possible. You'll also want to see an urologist if the lump was not caused by an injury and it just appeared one day out of the blue.

Now, some of you may not have health insurance, so here,s some advice. First, go to your local health department or clinic and ask to pay on a "sliding scale." They may ask for your last pay stub and then from there they will decide a reasonable price for your visit, without robbing you of your grocery money. If you're lucky, they may have a study on testicular cancer and you may qualify. If so, you will sign papers releasing your medical findings/status, yet still respecting your rights to confidentiality, in return for free services.

If you have insurance, always see your family doctor first, then s/he will refer you to an urologist if needed. Otherwise, if you decide to see an urologist first, most of the time your insurance will not pay for it. Insurance will pay at the discretion of your family doctor (or primary care physician).

Now, if you are without insurance and don't/can't go to a health clinic in your town, I do mention what doctor to visit in this column for each ailment. An urologist will be more expensive, but why see your family doctor and pay $60-100 for him/her to say, "I'm going to refer you to a urologist." I try to tell you which doctor you should go to for each symptom, that way you can go to whoever you need to right off and cut out the cost of the middleman or the cost of paying for an urologist when all you needed was some antibiotics from your family doctor.

Not all lumps are created equal.

Lumps can be many things. Such as:

Testicular cancer You will need to see an urologist and s/he will do a testicular exam, CAT scan, a chest x-ray, and a blood test to determine if it is cancer.

Hematocele I mentioned this earlier. It's a lump filled with blood, similar to a blood blister, caused by injury. This condition should resolve itself, but do check it daily and if the size increases or pain develops, see your family doctor.

Varicocele A clump of varicose veins above the testis, (usually the left testicle). If you lie down, the lump should go away. If not, see your family doctor.

Hydrocele This is when fluid collects in one testicle, called a cystic mass. You will experience a feeling of heaviness—and I,m not talking about "blue balls." You will need to see an urologist, and get the fluid removed. The doctor will do a fine needle aspirate, (FNA), which entails draining the fluid with a needle. S/he may also do an ultrasound to get a better idea of the size—luckily, this test does not hurt.

Spermatocele This lump is similar to a hydrocele, but it is smaller and located on the epididymis (the spaghetti string). An ultrasound and FNA will be done. See an Urologist.

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

Everything you wanted to know about your balls... and then some.

by Angel Page

Hernias are the "protrusion of tissue through an abnormal opening." Hernias usually occur after heavy lifting, abdominal pressure such as exercise, vomiting, and/or straining for a bowel movement. Your family doctor should check this out.

Torsion

For those of you who wear tighty-whities and/or are involved in sports, listen up! Torsion is extremely painful and can result in you losing a testicle. Torsion happens when the two spermatic cords twist and cut off the blood supply, thus killing off the tissue. This will not go away or fix itself. **You need to get immediate medical attention.** You only have 4-8 hours before any permanent damage happens.

Symptoms of Torsion:

1. One testicle will "swell to a size of a grapefruit, then shrink to the size of a pea."
2. Elevation of your testicles will cause pain.
3. Ice will increase the pain.

Epididymitis

Epididymtis is an inflammation of the epididymis (the spaghetti string). Now, there are two things that can cause this painful swelling of the epididymis.

1. If you are young, sexually active and you don't use protection, some sexually transmitted diseases can cause this inflammation. You will have to see your family doctor to determine what kind of STD you have and what course of treatment to follow.

2. If you are a weight lifter, the pressure on your back can cause fluid from the prostate and epididymis to back up when you strain. If this is the case, stop lifting, and let it heal up. If the inflammation does not go away on it's own, see your family doctor for an anti-inflammatory medication and to be checked for a possible STD.

Bacterial infection of the testes

This secondary infection is caused by a urinary tract, kidney or prostate infection. You'll have pain in your testes and possibly the whole groin, sometimes accompanied by painful urination, lower back pain and/or fever. Your only course of action is antibiotics. See your family doctor.

Orchitis

Orchitis is an inflammation of the testes, which will cause a feeling of heaviness, pain and swelling. You can get orchitis from an STD, and if this is the case, get medical attention to clear up both first and secondary infections immediately. However, if you know for sure that you don't have an STD, read on for tips on how to ease the pain.

Relief for inflamed balls

If you have a bacterial infection, the following tips will not cure it, but may just ease the pain until you can see your family doctor. However, if you know that you have orchitis or just an injury to your balls, then the following tips will do you plenty of good.

1. Elevate your sac on a pillow while lying down. (Note: elevation will increase the pain if you're suffering from torsion—GET HELP IMMEDIATELY!)

2. Put a bag of ice or frozen peas, whatever your preference, on the balls for 5-10 minutes at a time. Do not put ice directly on your skin! Wrap it up in a towel. Use as often as you like. (Note: Ice will increase the pain of torsion. Again, get help!)

3. If ice is not working for you, try a heating pad, (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off). If you don't have a heating pad, you can use a hot water bottle. If you don't have a hot water bottle, you may make your own heated beanbag: take a clean sock and fill it with a dried bean (I recommend lentils); heat in the microwave until it is the desired temperature, wrap it up and place it on your balls.

4. Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen to decrease the inflammation.

5. Vitamin C is great in reducing inflammation, increasing immunity and healing inflamed tissue. Take 3,000-6,000 mg in divided doses for the duration of the inflammation.

6. Zinc is also good in reducing inflammation and healing inflamed tissue. Take a total of 50 mg of zinc per day. Make sure not to exceed 100 mg per day! Take into consideration all the supplements your already taking—look and see how many mg are in any of your herbal supplements and multivitamin and do the math.

7. Garlic has great anti-inflammatory properties. You can each garlic raw (you can never eat too much). You may also take it in capsule form, two capsules three times a day.

8. Bilberry contains flavonoids that reduce inflammation. Follow directions on the bottle.

9. Poultice of fenugreek, flaxseed and slippery elm bark applied to the scrotum. Take all three herbs and boil for about 5-10 minutes, dip a washcloth into the liquid, then apply it to the balls. **Be careful not to burn yourself!** Use some common sense: let it cool slightly first! Or you can strain the herbs from the liquid and apply the cooked herbs to your balls, (again, use extreme caution not to burn yourself), place a clean cloth over the herbs, then put some kind of heat source over the cloth, (heating pad, hot water bottle, or hot bean-bag). Do as often as you wish.

And, get plenty of rest!

Good Luck & Good Health! ◎

Sources:

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Total Health for Men, Edited by Neil Wertheimer.

Men's Health for Dummies, by Charles B. Inlander & The People's Medical Society

Healthwise Handbook, by Donald W. Kemper, The Healthwise Staff, Diana Stilwell, Editor.

Prescription for Nutritional Healing, by James F. Balch, M.D. & Phyllis A. Balch, C.N.C.

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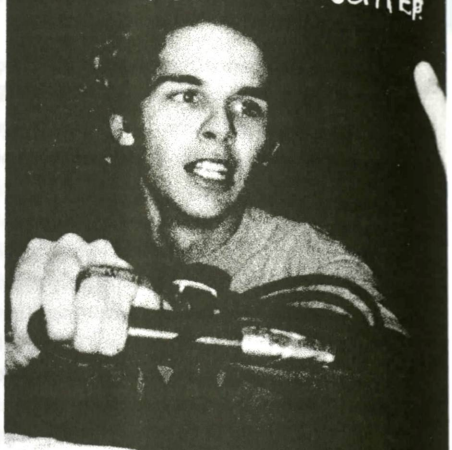

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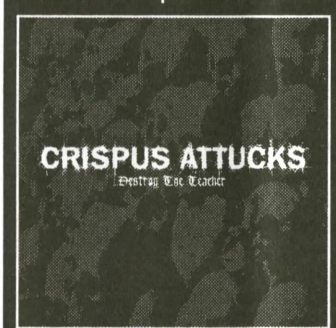

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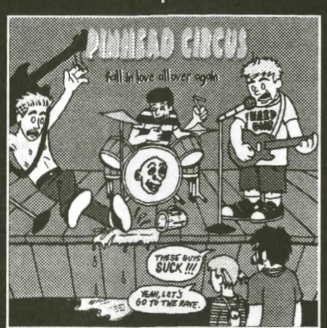

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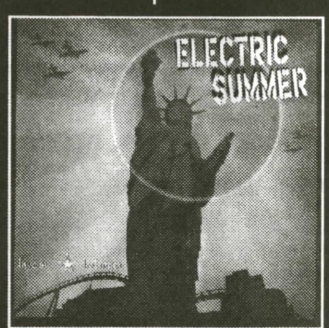

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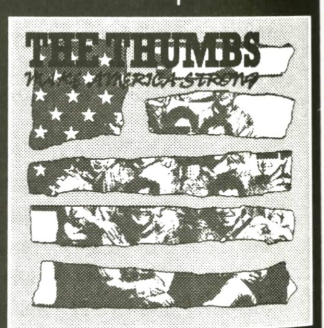

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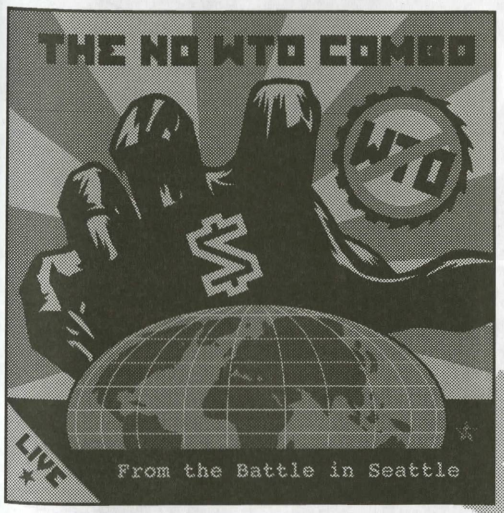

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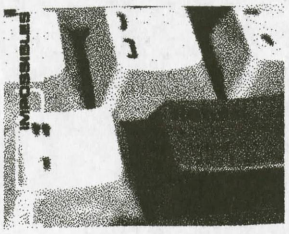

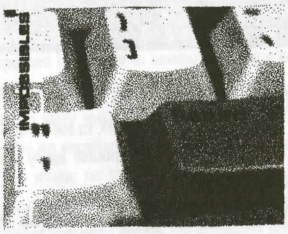

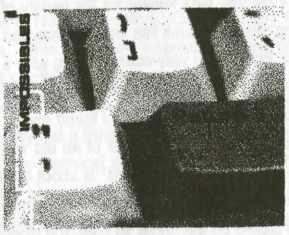

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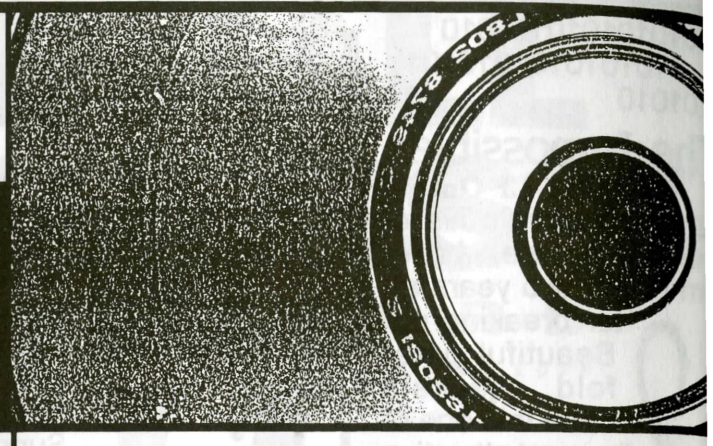

Acrid – Sea Of Shit LP

I have vague memories of what Acrid sounded like live. It was probably 4 years a go but I got treated to them live at a house show in Kalamazoo. I was blown away while kids with tight T-shirts and bad haircuts bounced around. That night I picked up the Acrid split 7" with Bombs Of Death. The sound was muddy and not what I remembered live. Where was all that great guitar high end? I was disappointed and put the record aside. The Acrid / Left For Dead Split restored my faith. A great record. It started quickly and the side ended before you knew it. Was it an accident that it was shaped like a buzz saw? Acrid's guitars cut through with the same abrasiveness as a circular saw to a piece of sheet metal. Kind of like being too close to an airplane engine. The vocals are up in front too with everything else providing the concrete. "Sea Of Shit" is a re-release of Acrid's demo that was released originally only on cassette. The recording has a bit more low end then the buzz saw split, but the wall of guitar noise is still there. The guitars are tuned way low to what your ears are accustomed to. It makes you wonder how the strings stayed on the guitar? No complaints, only joy for this release. Acrid has broken up and I was said for a bit. Members went on to form The Swarm and some band that ended up on Victory Records. It would be wise for you to check out the Swarm releases too! (SY)

The Action Time – Comedown Blues, 7"

Its hard for a single to make it into the highlighted section of these pages, but The Action Time did it this issue for me. This three song gem comes from across the sea and at first could be dismissed as a garagey-blues release that could be skipped. Upon spinning this disc a few times over, it hits me. The production of this 7", thanks to the fine folks at Toe Rag studio, is so damn warm! Take a great pop song (not pop-punk you idiot), add some good English accents and some handclaps, assorted music makers and you have one winner. The A-side "Comedown Blues" is the killer track that can make it onto any of my mix tapes. The B-side features a great punker ala Headcoatees with some male/female vocals that are best summed up by the title, "Fucked up all the Time". Some Childish influence here for sure – but that would be the easy way out. Its more than that, the second song on the B-side is a nice little quieter tune that easily fits into a good 60's block of European pop on the radio. I am so glad to find a new band that can write great songs and record them in a way that maximizes them to their potential. (EA)

Bald Rapunzel - Diazepam, CD

It's been rare that Dischord Records has teamed up with another label, Resin Records in this case, to release an album, but this is one of them. Granted, I have shied away from anything on Dischord, except Fugazi, since a friend of mine gave a Jawbox tape years ago. Bald Rapunzel, while definitely suffering from bad band name disease, play what I like to call moody, nineties style, alt rock, emocore lite. Reminds me of The Cure minus the distortion, over instrumentation, and the whiny vocals. The thing that sets it apart is the fact that the singer, Bonnie, can actually vocalize as most bands in this field sound dead flat as a roofing nail in a shingle. Now that I got another beer, this has become quite soothing over several listening. I'll probably put it on when my parents come over tomorrow so that they think their boy is finally starting to turn out all right. Jimi Hendrix actually scares my parents, so my options are pretty slim! I can stomach this kind of stuff on some the few lighter moments in my life, but they don't seem to come so often. I guess that I'm getting old as I still like my punk to rock me a little. Don't leave everything to the Alanis' on our radios, my god, kids, please apply your interesting rhythms to something a little more biting. (AS)

This Bike is a Pipe Bomb - Dance Party With..., CD

Plan-It X records isn't known for it's variety of music, so when I received this CD I was expecting more pop punk like The Bananas and Operation Cliff Clavin. I was mistaken. This Bike is a Pipe Bomb play county music with a punk influence. At times reminding me of Uncle Tupelo, but with a bunch of punk kids playing. I didn't think I would like it very much, but after repeated listens I found myself enjoying it a lot. The lyrics range from personal to political with one cover of an old miner's song called "Sixteen Tons". The band tells the story how "Sixteen Tons" is about the injustices that coal miner's faced when the only store they could buy good for their family was owned by the company they worked for, who jacked up the prices so high, the workers couldn't afford anything at all. The band says, "It was written at a time when Doctors told the miners that the reason coal miners were dying an getting nose bleeds was because they were nervous about going into the mines, and that the coal dust was actually good for you by filtering your lungs and warding off colds." Pretty fucked up, eh? (RE)

Breach – Venom, CD

Holy shit this is good. I'm not a huge Relapse fan but they have a winner with this Burning Heart Records import release. Venom has a real hardcore metal kind of feel but mix it up a tad. Some parts are quite clean and tight while it gets very thick and completely in your face. On some tracks like "Path of Conscience", underneath the full blasting sound, there is some melody and a real catchy tune. This CD is quite a controlled and very chaotic release. Breach seemed to have mastered the whole anger core sound musically and added just the right lyrics for this release. Dark music with words that sum up pain and suffering but still a feel of an unconquerable will are apparent. None of the twelve songs here drag in the slightest. This is rage in its purest form. The energy flows from beginning to end. This is probably an incredible live show that would be just completely draining to see. When and if you hear this release (which this reviewer recommends), it will be pointless to say that Sweden's Breach is a force that cannot be ignored even after the first listen to this release. On this CD you get twelve pieces of controlled chaos magnified by 100%. And these twelve musical beatings just aren't enough. You will eagerly be anticipating any Breach release you can get your hands on. (DM)

Broken Cedars - Forever, CD

If you're into punk rock and only support bands whose politics you agree with, then you must either have really bad politics or a really small record collection. As much as it pains me to do this, I have to give these Christian fuckheads a good review. Broken Cedars is a very impressive pop-punk band that writes fun, unimposing songs that stick in your head for days. Annoyingly, all of the songs are about loving "Him." But if you have a sense of humor the lyrics are actually funny as hell. Each song has a corresponding citation to a bible verse printed on the lyric sheet! Yet if you didn't look at the lyric sheet you could

About our new review section: We still review all the records we recieve, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to. Finally, If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congradulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

swear these guys were singing about girls and not God. My big hope is that some repressed religious kid watching videos on TBN will catch this band's video and discover punk. And there just isn't much Christian punk to go around! Soon that G-Rock-viewing kid will discover NOFX, then MRR or Punk Planet. Before you know it, that kid will cut Sunday School 'cuz they'll be too exhausted from staying out all night drinking with the local punk hooligans! Seriously though, this is catchy stuff for those who are willing to endure the holiness. You've gotta love a group of kids who manage to get their music put out by Jesus freaks. The last song is a hilarious sped up joke song. Up with punk, down with God! (AE)

Calexico – Hot Rail, CD

This is the release that I would not have expected to receive to review. This is a two man project with the assistance of eight other players on this CD. A good part of this release are instrumentals that seem to be able to tell a story regardless of the fact that there are no words. It almost appears that this would be an excellent collection of music that could easily make up a soundtrack for a film. The music on this collection goes all over the place. The spectrum being covered contains mariachi music, lounge, rock and some jazzy overtones are present. The tracks on this collection with vocals are generally whispered to the listener and you can't help but listen to him tell his story. Calexico doesn't just set a mood on this release, they create them. This is a really interesting fusion of sounds brought together. I wouldn't go as far and say this is a somewhat avant-garde collection, but to say nothing would be wrong. However the randomness of Hot Rail is somewhat tongue in cheek without being cheesy or hokey like a Russ Meyer collection. Take more of a Folk Implosion approach but add more of a technical and varied direction. There is a variety of instruments played including horns, and keys along with the standard guitars and percussion band. This is a quality and moving release that hopefully will get the attention that it deserves. (DM)

Carburetor Dung - Sheep Farming in Malaysia, 7"

This Malaysian punk supergroup has been around since 1991, which apparently was when a punk scene was just forming in Malaysia. While the four great songs included here are apparently not new songs, this 7" is probably the easiest way to check these guys out. Malaysia's one fucked-up place (not that other places are better, but Malaysia sure has its problems), and there's a cool informative essay included with this 7" about the disastrous effects of Malaysia's speech codes. Each song has an anthematic tone, with screamed melodic vocals shouting intelligent lyrics about organizing, thinking, and fighting national and global corruption. The last song, "Oppression," mocks those who think they're free in a decidedly un-free world. The singer has an impassioned voice that sucked me right in. Are you doing YOUR part to fuck with the public order? Each of these songs will give both your turntable and your punk ego a workout. Your appliances and clothes might be made in Malaysia, but this 7" sure wasn't due to the aforementioned speech codes. Don't miss this unique and powerful record. (AE)

Cash Audio-Green Bullet, CD

Well, what can I say about this album. For the most part, Cash Audio sound like Jon Spencer Blues Explosion on a bad day, which lucky for Cash Audio is still good enough to get you signed. Despite being rather unoriginal and basically just playing overglorified jam music, Cash Audio are slightly charming in a dumb kind of way. I'm kind of weary of giving this band much more credit than that. The music they play is obviously a shtick, and while Jon Spencer fuses many different styles, from hip hop to funk into his music, these guys just play a bunch of songs that sound exactly the same. I don't know, maybe I'm jaded, but I'm just not that impressed by this band. They would probably be fun to see live, but other than that, I don't know. Not a terrible album, but if you like straight forward bluesy rock and roll, go buy some of the real deal music made by actual blues men and leave this lame rehash on the shelf. (JK)

Damad – Burning Cold, CD

Dude, man. This fucking rips! Imagine root canal surgery, set to music! That's what this sounds like. 8 balls-to-the-wall tracks of ferocious hardcore with metal overtones. Most of the songs start out with some kind of sample and shit. But the only sample I need is a blood sample after these guys tear out my kidneys with their brutal brutalitarian brutality! The drums pound, the guitars soar, the bass plods, the vocals roar. Dude, I just fucking rhymed that shit. Killer! Sometimes these guys almost pull off that black metal sound. You probably don't even know what black metal because you're not as metallicly versed as me! What I mean is, sometimes they have these like quiet type intros with intricate guitar and the singer is just kind of chanting. But then all hell breaks loose when the distortion kicks in and the singer starts screaming in that blood-curdling scream. Hey wait a second. It says the singer's name is Victoria. Do you mean to tell me that those unruly vocals are coming from a woman? Now that's my kind of woman! And if you need another reason to buy this, Pushead drew the cover art! Fuck yeah! He's that guy that draws

Abe Froman – Baltimore is Scum, 7"

This is a really good record that is in the Discount / Pinhead Gunpowder vein. Female vocals that are a little buried in the mix, but are excellent all the same. Any fan of Cometbus will want to get this, don't let the artwork fool ya' its not really a Cometbus release. (EA)

PO Box 6393, East Lansing, MI 48826

■ Acrid – Sea Of Shit, LP

See review above.

No Idea PO Box 14636, Gainesville FL 32604

■ The Action Time – Comedown Blues, 7"

See review above.

Southern PO Box 577375 Chicago, IL 60657

Active Ingredients – Balls Out Way of Life, CD

These fellas, ya know, put their *balls* on the cover of the CD. In case you didn't encounter enough sexism and retarded jock mentality in your life so far, I recommend this if you want to catch up. (RB)

Firmament PO Box 420484, San Francisco, CA 94142

Agna Moraine's Autobiography/ Rentamerica, split 7"

Three songs apiece. Agna Moraine's is sparse, minimalistic, jangly emo pop, while Rentamerica produce a loose, crazed, screamfest. A diverse split, definitely. (AS)

556 UNCG Station, Greensboro, NC 27413

Alkaline Trio - Maybe I'll Catch Fire, CD

Mostly mid-tempo alternative rock songs with meandering lyrics. (RP)

Asian Man Records PO Box 35585 Monte Soreno, CA 95030

All Transistor – Parts, CD

Quirky, folksy, twangy, indie-ish stuff. A lot of "experimenting" with different instruments. If you like the Counting Crows or Cracker, then you probably shouldn't be reading this magazine. (NS)

Ojet 2055 Westheimer, #165, Houston, TX 77098

Alltro – S/T, 7"

This is a completely Italian release with no English translation. However, musically it is an awesome, no distortion but very aggressive 7" similar to early At The Drive In. Great book-like 7" packaging and art work. (DM)

Love Boat, Via Lumumba 2. 46029 Suzzara. Mantova

Amp 176/Angels in the Architecture - Split, CD

Above-average emo rock split. Amp 176 is more aggressive than Angels and features ex-members of Dillinger 4. (AE)

One Percent PO Box 141048, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Angel Falls - Music On Vinyl, 7"

Two songs of slow to mid-tempo emo music. Nice die cut packaging rounds out this foray into somberness. (AS)

Firefly 3038 W. Charleston Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85083

Atombombpocketknife - Alpha Sounds, CD

Very mellow indie rock with a slight Olympia / new wave feel. It kind of reminds me of Matt Steinke's (Satisfact, Mocket) projects. (RE)

Southern PO Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657

■ Bald Rapunzel - Diazepam, CD

See review above.

Resin Records, PO Box 5601, Washington, DC 20016-1201

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)

X's "Aspirations" album leapt out of my CD collection when I first perused it after reading the description of this assignment which seems akin to writing high school book reports. Although I hate to tread the reissue water, but this is the kind of music that I kick people out of my house for not liking. Hey, it's my house, so get out. Bye! "Aspirations", released in 1979 in Australia, blasts forth with simplistic, bass driven punk rock accentuated with sharp, stinging jabs of guitar that bring to mind a back alley, punk rock version of the classic Gang of Four (Entertainment era that is). The vocalist/guitarist seems to have to pause his chaotic playing just to spit out his lines. The lyrics while not necessarily mentally stimulating are poignant enough for these ears without any stupid, preachy overtones. Here's a sample from a song called "Police" - "Say I'm causing trouble, when I offer them suggestions" or from "Revolution" "Stick it up your revolution, so you think the time is near, rock and roll may be no solution, but that's what I wanna hear". X does it all, mixing up tempo with near attempts at pop, like the track, "Lipstick". I can't recommend this enough, especially for those who want to be inspired and only know a few chords, because to me this is beautiful hatred. Don't be afraid to pick up this re-release on Amphetamine Noise, as it's better than anything from that label. Not be confused with that country band from Los Angeles – X.

Newer releases that I've enjoyed having up my ass recently include: Fu Manchu's "King Of the Road", The Jesus and Mary Chain's " The Complete John Peel Sessions", The Bellrays' "Let It Blast" and BrainKillers - Lost Punk Hits From the Americas 1977-1982.

fucked up shit, and he was in that band a long time ago. Putrid Breath or something. (Due to size constraints, I wasn't able to fit these adjective into my review enough: explosive, pummeling, gloomy, brutal, harsh, pissed off, brutal, fierce, vicious and of course, cantankerous.) (NS)

THE DAMN PERSONALS - DRIVER/DRIVER, CD

This immediately brings The Figgs to mind and that's a huge point in their favor. Good classic hard pop/rocknroll style that we've come to expect from Boston over the last 25 years. My only complaint is the rather "big" production-I think the songs would be much better served by something simpler, rawer and dryer but it's not a real hindrance as the songs shine through. It's really refreshing to hear a band doing this type of stuff, but if they cut loose a bit more, I think they'd really have something here-thumbs-up, nonetheless. (RP)

DEMON SYSTEM – 13 – VAD VET VI OM KRIGET? , LP

This is one superb hardcore record. A great recording full of energy that keeps you wired from start to finish. These days, I get let down quite often by hardcore bands. There is too much hype going on. You mail order, or if you are lucky, you find at your local record shop, a record that everyone has been talking about. You go home, put it on your player, turn on your stereo and what happens? It is total junk. Shit. The guitars sound like AM radio static, the bass sounds like a fart, and the drums, what drums? All I hear are cymbals. The record is un-listenable. This happens way too much to me and especially with bands that are held with high regard in the hardcore scene. Am I the only one? This is not the case on this record. I drop the needle down and my ass gets kicked. DS- 13 rage through 27(!) songs, fast and furious. The sound quality is excellent. Every instrument is placed well and there is nothing to make the recording sound polished. Added bonuses are the covers of Ready To Fight (Negative Approach) and A Refused song (I don't care if they are on MTV, I like this band and give them credit). This record excites me at the though of seeing DS-13 live! Sure they are from Sweden, yet I know for a fact that they will be playing Cleveland Fest this summer and I shall be there. (SY)

THE EXPLODER - WEST END KIDS, CD

Nice minimalistic packaging underrates the goodness to be found within. Most of the music on this is slow to mid-tempo with a winding. evolving, almost floaty feel. The music changes fairly often, which keeps it interesting. Very cool Econochrist (Trained to Serve era) like portions pop up repeatedly throughout. Some of the guitar riffs on this are unusual for this style of music. 1 or 2 of these riffs appear to have been lifted off of an unknown classic rock record. Don't worry, when the drums, bass and screaming kick in it work nicely. The singer often reminds me of Sam Mcpheeters of Born Against. There is a restrained power in this music that provides tension. This sense of tension is rarely released into a blast or fast portion. The balls out nature of the singing really clashes with the music. This type of clash and tension is seen most often in Emo Hardcore. The poetic lyrics were either rover my head or below my knees. A satisfying 6 song release. (MY)

THE BEAUTYS – A#1 SEX SHOP EMPLOYEE, 7"

Hard driven female vocals that knocks you down. Not a typical Mutant Pop release, this easily could be on Estrus. Just one of their many releases that will appeal to almost any genre of punkers out there. (EA)

Mutant Pop Records

BEEZEWAX - SOUTH OF BOREDOM, CD

Well produced, very pop oriented rock with a slightly emoish feel. (JK)

Popkid Records,16 Raleigh Ln. Wayne NJ 07470 USA

BETARORIC – S/T, CD

The music never meanders far from the theme and keeps gnawing on your brain. There's a picture inside of, presumably them, rocking out; but did they do that playing the music on this CD? It's doubtful. (RB)

Passacaglia PO Box 57, Athens, GA, 45701-0057

BIG GUN PROJECT – IN CAPSULES, CD

A mix of San Diego post hardcore (Jehu, Aminiature) and Seattle grunge (Mudhoney). There's a slower, bluesy element in there too. (NS)

PO Box 61148, Seattle, WA 98121

■THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB - DANCE PARTY WITH..., CD

See review above.

Plan-It X 5810 W. Willis Rd. Georgetown, IN 47122

BLACK CAT MUSIC - THIS IS THE NEW ROMANCE, CD

This is tough to classify. I'd describe it as post-punk, intense rock, with brooding vocals. Reminds me at points of a toned-down Murder City Devils—these guys aren't as rock and roll. Maybe there are hints of the Descendents here as well. It's a pretty good six song record. (BJM)

Cheetah's PO Box 4472, Berkeley CA 94710

BLEB! – S/T, CD

Computer-Electro noise, these dudes got to unplug the machines and get some soul first. Get some Otis Redding in ya', then sit down to make this rinky-dinky music. The band does sound like their name though.bleb...bleb..bleb=BAD. (BC)

Wagenhalt PO Box 3182 Bellingham, WA 98227

BLOODY SODS - HATE OF MIND, 7"

Drunk punk from Georgia released by a label in Holland. Bloody Sods explore deep punk issues such as anger, the punk vs. them ethics, and The Exploited. This isn't very good. (RE)

Mad Skull Records PO Box 57159 1040 BB Amsterdam, Holland

THE BOMB JACKS – HUNG UP..., CD

Their band logo is a painful interpretation of that ever-so-annoying Limp Bizkit style lettering. As if to say "Yo, we're from the streets." Of course, the music reveals much to the contrary. (RB)

Hectic Records, 68 Valley Rd., Brackley Northants, NN13 7DQ, UK

BONECRUSHER – WORLD OF PAIN, CD

This seems to be a re-issue from this OC band, who play early 80's sounding, rock influenced punk. You know, punk played by older guys with beer bellies. (NS)

Devil Doll, PO Box 30727, Long Beach, CA 90853

BORN UNDER SATURN / SHORA - SPLIT 7"

Faster-than-light insanity hardcore. Those left in the cold by Cave In's departure into the land of cosmic Pink Floydness will have to turn to versions like these. Don't worry, though; you're in capable hands. (RB)

Snuff Records, PO Box 5117, CH-1211 Geneve 11

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

I first heard The Crucifucks' S/T LP ten years ago and it's still my absolute favorite record of all time! Released on Alternative Tentacles in 1984, this one's still in print on vinyl and on a CD compilation with the band's second album, "Wisconsin." What sets The Crucifucks apart from other bands is Doc Corbin Dart, their ingenious maniac of a front-man. Idolatry isn't punk, but Doc Dart is one of the only heroes I've ever had. Sounding like a total nut job, Dart screams and screams vicious lyrics about socially important subjects like killing cops ("Cops for Fertilizer"), burning Christians ("Hinckley Had a Vision"), and trying to find an essential piece of paper ("Oh Where, Oh Where?"). Political without engaging in mindless sloganeering, The Crucifucks prove that political punk doesn't have to be trite and that mid-tempo, straight-forward songs can be at least as intense as faster material. I've listened to this fucking record so many times that the skip it once had doesn't exist anymore 'cuz the vinyl around the skip wore down such that the record once again plays perfectly. If any record can change your life, it's this one! Also recommended are The Crucifucks' second and third albums as well as Doc Dart's brilliant solo album (Dart has a second solo album as well, but A.T.'s been too lazy to release it). A new incarnation of The Crucifucks has been playing shows on and off since 1996. Don't miss them if they play your town!

The best recent releases are: The live Anti-Heros album, the amazing third full-length from The Wretched Ones, and a hilarious German non-racist Oi record called "Oi-Rock 'n' Roll" by a band called Bombecks. Another band I've been obsessed with lately is H.C.A. from Florida.

THE EXPLOSION – S/T, CDEP

This band plays music that is part punk and part rock. Apparently it was originally recorded as a demo and it ended up being released on CD. I hear sounds similar to the Murder City Devils and the Pink Lincolns, which should be a formula for success, but this record is mediocre at best. The songs kind of rock, but they could probably rock a lot harder. The production on the guitars could have been better; they sound like they are played through Marshall amps with a good amount of generic distortion. The lyrics are standard punk stuff about being on the streets, boozing, and being an outcast in general. The vocals are sung with standard punk gusto and anger. The music is not bad; it's just not particularly good. I feel like this formula has been done better before by enough other bands. Perhaps if this is only a demo there will be time and room enough for these guys to improve, because they sound like they have potential to really rock. (BJM)

THE EYELINERS – HERE COMES TROUBLE, CD

The title track to this CD, "Here Comes Trouble!" was enough for me to highly recommend this disc. I had some singles by these ladies and they fell just short of being tops of the year. So what makes the Eyeliners so special. First off, they know the Runaways, Joan Jett and how to rock and roll. They know all about hooks, pop sense and that three chords are enough – done correctly. The production on this is a good/bad thing. Its good in that unlike their singles, you can hear everything real well and the guitar and drums sound full and warm. The bad or ugly is the Sonic Iguana bass sound. I personally hate the Green Day (listen to Screeching Weasel LP "How to Make Enemies...") that Mass Giorgini puts out of his studio. Its that bright sound that takes the thud out of the low-end. Even with that painful bass sound, I can still listen to this CD over and over and suggest you to listen to hit tracks: Johnny Lockheart, Rock-n-Roll Baby, Punk Rock Planet and Do the Zombie. Lookout is doing something right again, and I am real glad that the Eyeliners have a chance to tour with support, go see them live!

THE FRAMPTON BROTHERS, FILE UNDER F (FOR FAILURE), CD

I have never heard of this band before, but I was in a fairly mainstream record store the other day and saw this CD there, so they must be developing some kind of large fan base, which isn't surprising, because this is pretty good. The Frampton Brothers play pretty straight forward pop rock with honest, darkly funny lyrics about such classic rock topics as being drunk, getting dumped, and trying to be a rock star. The liner notes on this disk thank The Kinks and Young Fresh Fellows for inspiration, and the influence is definitely noticeable. I've never really been a big fan of Kinks influenced pop rock type stuff, but in this day of pretentious, overly dramatic emo bands and lame preachy hardcore, it's nice to hear a band play honest, unpretentious pop music without all the other crap that goes along with most bands these days. Nothing that will change your life, but it might brighten your day. Fun. (JK)

BRAID – MOVIE MUSIC VOL. ONE AND TWO, 4XLP (OR 2 CD'S)

You already own this or will never own it. The Braid should get a big review, but this a collection of singles, comps and rarities that is essential to any fan of said genre or band. I am not a Braid fan, but I really enjoyed the music and wonderful layout of both of these two CD's. (EA)

■BREACH – VENOM, CD

See review above.
Relapse Records, PO Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551

■ BROKEN CEDARS - FOREVER, CD

See review above.
Screaming Giant PO Box 101, Dana Point, CA 92629

■ CALEXICO – HOT RAIL, CD

See review above.
Quarterstick PO Box 25342 Chicago, IL 60625

■ CARBURETOR DUNG - SHEEP FARMING IN MALAYSIA, 7"

See review above.
Hideous Records, PO Box 22016, Brixton D/O, London SW2 2WE, U.K.

■ CASH AUDIO- GREEN BULLET, CD

See review above.
Touch and Go Records, PO Box 25520 Chicago IL, 60625

THE CASKET LOTTERY - MOVING MOUNTAINS, CD

Emo style vocals and guitar sound. Sounds like most bands of this nature, which depending on your tastes, could be good or bad. (JK)
Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138

THE CATASTROPHE - MEET THE COBB BOYS, CD

Foo Fighter-like guitar rock with good production contains a catchy number entitled, "Blue Sky Dreamer", and a stab at psychedelic for the last track. (AS)
A Catastrophic Production, 2322 Plymouth St., Oshkosh, WI 54901

THE CHARGERS STREET GANG - FUNHOUSING, 7"

Straight ahead punk rock and roll by a five piece band from Cleveland. Kind of like the Pink Lincolns. Three songs, all raw and rocking. (BJM)
Donut Friends, PO Box 3192, Kent OH 44240

COCKNEY REJECTS - GREATEST HITS VOL. 4, CD

Even more music from this old band. This time they are re-hashing their old songs for a new generation. Street punk with a heavy rock and roll feel and poor singing. (RE)
Rhythm Vicar Records, Unit 15 Bushell Business Estate, Hithercroft, Wallingford, Oxon, Ox10 9DD

THE CONDORS - TALES OF DRUNKENNESS & CRUELTY, CD

Intentionally silly 6-song CD EP with a major 70's influence and a classic punk feel. This is the sort of band rockers in their 30's form. (AE)
Vital Gesture Records, PO Box 46100, Los Angeles, CA 90046

CROSSED OUT – S/T, CD

As JFK would say...this is some Hardcore, or I guess he would say "herd-kur Jackie, herd-kur!" The bio sheet says this is some classic power violence but Bio sheets are stupid anyway, So I say that this is angry but kind of bland muffled vocals-metal guitar stuff. (BC)
Slap A Ham Records PO Box 420843 San Fran, CA 94142-0843

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC)

When the editor Gods at Punk Planet told me that they wanted us scum reviewing low lives to pick a favorite obscure record that we can tell people about I thought of the Shamrock Shakes 7 inch "House of Jep." but then I remembered a full length that is so much more vital to our existence. Let me say right off the bat that Yes, you should own this, and after reading this great review take your ass to the used c.d. store (because it is a major label record on Warner Bros., and they DO NOT need any more of our money!) and get this. "This" being of course the 1979 (before most of you were born) release by DEVO called "Duty Now For The Future." It was the Ohio freak band's second record and is easily their greatest piece of de-evolution. Devo is so much more than "Whip-It." To think you know this band buy hearing that song on some bland 80's comp isn't doing the world justice. Their second record combines early electronic rock sounds with punk fury and it comes out rock perfect. The bashing beat and crazy keyboard riffs of "Pink Pussycat" and "Wiggly World." will have you hooked. And their cover of "Secret Agent Man" is the best one ever. You might have to search a lot to find this gem on vinyl, but it appears on c.d. Check out the Warhol like bar code record graphics. And I almost forgot to tell you about the un-sung pop hit of the record "The Day My Baby Gave Me A Surprize." I am going to blast this one right now...damn it's good!

Current favorites: Gaza Stripers, Supersuckers, Apocalypse Hoboken and the debut disc from the Irish-Cal rockers, Flogging Molly.

FROM BUBBLEGUM TO SKY - ME AND AMY AND THE TWO FRENCH BOYS, CD

This was something I thought I wasn't going to like because of the fact that it mentioned French people in the title. But after putting it on highlight scan, I noticed some good things coming out of my old stereo. The band uses handclaps like the best of them. The female vocals are very cool (girls sound so neat-o) and help bring a soothing feel over the rocking sounds played by the band. But lets not dwell on the female, as the brainchild of the band is this lad named Mario Hernandez. And there are some decent male vocals on here as well. There really is nothing more cool, than a band that can take the easy to play but so hard to do it well pop style and make it interesting to hear. We are bombarded with poppy forms of music all day, and for a band to make it all a pleasure to hear is really a task. These 11 songs cover the realm of the pop world from the Beatles to sounding a little like Liz Phair. But the band has its own definite texture to it for sure. Must be all that California sun that makes them so happy. If you like your music as sweet as candy, then you should give this a definite listen. (BC)

GAZZARA - EIGHT SUPER INDIE ROCK HITS!, CD

This is very melodic, catchy material that veers from indie rock to Brit pop to psychedelic classic rock. It's pretty standard stuff, and a little cloyingly radio-friendly at times. The third track really conjures up images of a Gatorade commercial. But you have to give them the benefit of the doubt because they're so up front about their pop aspirations, just look at the title. I'm willing to forgive the smooth edged accessibility, though, because the songs are pretty good, and the production has just enough of a rough edge to make it fun, especially the first track, "out over the stars." The drums have a really nifty, unique sound throughout the record, perhaps there was a special recording technique used there. (DAL)

GOOD CLEAN FUN - ON THE STREETS SAVING THE SCENE FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL, CD

I made the mistake of giving some good reviews to sxe bands and now I have three edge bands to review this issue! Well, here I go again. Good Clean Fun are from DC and sound like DC hardcore sounded in the early 80's. Each song is fast and makes the listener thrash about like a dummy. The lyrics are about trying to seize one's time in punk, being sxe without being a hardliner, keeping positive, and having fun. Nothing new here, but the songs are fun and uncommonly well-executed. The funniest song describes a nightmare about being hardline: "Breakfast with the family get the grub on see what's up, then I saw my sister had milk in her cup. I jumped out of my chair and sprayed her with my mace, I yelled 'vegan power,' and I kicked her in the face." Now THAT's funny! For a band whose mission is "to kill an old tradition, make a meat-eater like a black and white television," the lyrics are surprisingly light-hearted and likable. And you don't see that much in today's sxe bands. Good Clean Fun provides fun for all. First-rate and FAST, this is a damn fine release. Good luck not getting your asses kicked for the song "Victory Records Sucks," though. (AE)

THE HALIFAX PIER – S/T, CD

I don't usually listen to bands like this, so I don't know valuable my review will be, but I can say that I like this record. The songs are all pretty slow, but since there is a lot going

■ DAMAD – BURNING COLD, CD

See review above.

Prank, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141

■ THE DAMN PERSONALS - DRIVER/DRIVER, CD

See review above.

Big Wheel Recreation 325 Huntington Avenue #24 Boston, MA 02115

DEAD TO THE WORLD/ KID GORGEOUS-SPLIT, CD

Even though this is one of those short reviews, it doesn't mean that I didn't like it. It just means that I am tired and tomorrow I have to clean some a lot of bobcat and tiger cages. So in short, these are some fine hard core bands that flirt with being full-blown melodic metal. Some fine production and some really fine playing make this disc a good one. (BC)

Red Star Records 762 Upper James St. Suite 335, Hamilton, ON. Canada

DEATH THREAT - PEACE & SECURITY, CD

Throwbacks to eighties youth crew, NY hardcore. With songs about being hardcore for life and making it through a world gone bad. (AS)

Triple Crown 331 West 57th Street, PMB 472, NYC NY 10019

■ DEMON SYSTEM – 13 - VAD VET VI OM KRIGET? ,LP

See review above.

Deranged Records (No address given, but you can order it from No Idea Distribution)

THE DISTRACTORS - SHAKE IT UP, 7"

Very low-fi punk rock to drink to. Sound quality like the Mummies. Six songs, fast, furious, and snotty, with male and female vocals. These guys know how to rock. Alas, side B is not as good as side A, but it's worth the three bucks anyway. (BJM)

Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston VA 20195

DOOMSDAY DEVICE - FAMILY PRIDE, CD

Doomsday does use some decent rhythms and you can actually understand the powerful vocals. But is this band something that is so good it separates itself from the pack, not really. (BC)

Industrial Strength Records 2824 Regatta Blvd. Richmond, CA 94804

THE DRAGONS - LIVE AT THE CASBAH, CD

Straight up rock CD recorded live. Full of beer and Hairgrease. (DC)

Junk 7071 Warner Ave. F-736 Huntington Beach, CA 92647

THE DROPOUTS - PUKE, EP

A solid four song EP from this Texas pop punk outfit. Pretty standard songs, but livened up with humorous devices like rapid-fire singing and funny background noises. (DAL)

Mutant Pop 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330

ELEVEN2GO - MORNING GUT TREE, CD

This CD contains eleven tracks of light college rock complete with acoustic guitars, violins, etc. (AS)

www.cagefreerecords.com

ESTEL - ONE DEEP BREATH, 7"

Two rock instrumentals prominently featuring keyboards which sound like the soundtrack music for opening and closing credits in a movie. (RP)

LPT 64 Derry Drive Cruhlin, Dublin 2 Ireland

EVERY TIME I DIE - THE BURIAL PLOT BIDDING WAR, CD

These 5 metallic hardcore songs from Buffalo are highlighted by mean as hell distorted vocals with an almost industrial feel. (AE)

Goodfellow Records, 762 Upper James St. Suite 275, Hamilton, ON L9C 3A2, Canada

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian J. Manning (BJM)

I was in a local Salvation Army one time a few years ago looking through the record bins, mostly finding records by such punk luminaries as Gordon Lightfoot and Perry Como. There was also the occasional Simon and Garfunkel record, which I passed up because I think I have their greatest hits on CD somewhere. And then I struck gold: for $1.25 I got a flawless vinyl copy of *Built for Speed* by the Stray Cats. I will never find a better deal. Released in 1982, this record is the Stray Cats first full length and easily their best record. They play 50s style rockabilly with a bit of an 80s twist, probably because they were playing in the 80s. Every single song on this record is good, and there are 12 of them. It makes you realize just how good a three piece can be, especially when they take as unique an approach to their instruments as the Stray Cats. From "Rock This Town" to "Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie," front man Brian Setzer's guitar playing is nothing short of amazing, especially considering that he sings as well. His bluesy solos and the tone of his old Fender amps will make you want to get up and dance. Lee Rocker plays a twangy upright bass. Drummer Slim Jim Phantom uses a minimal set consisting of snare, bass drum, and one cymbal, but you'd never know it since he knows how to make the most of them. These guys have more energy, soul, and fun than any other group from their era. Go back to school and get this one.

The only new records I have been listening to lately are: The Swingin' Utters and Youth Brigade split on BYO Records. I can't decide which band I like more.

on, the music remains interesting. It might be good if you are in a depressive mood. The cello and violin add a lot to the songs. Often times bands will have good songs and ruin them with poor or pretentious vocals, but thankfully that is not the case here. I don't know how to talk about it in terms of punk rock, since it lacks the usual punk characteristics of distorted guitars and fast beats, and I also don't know who I can compare it to. The music on this record, though, is good. The songs are long and complex, but they are each cohesive. A word about the sheet they sent along with the CD that attempts to explain the music and how it was recorded: to me, this is the last thing a reviewer might need to write a record review, and all it can do is detract from his or her objectivism. To quote from this publication, "The Halifax Pier's beautifully haunting songs demand more of the listener. A studied, intelligent approach should be allowed for their songs to completely sink in." It also compares the group to other bands and describes the sound of each song. Reviewers shouldn't need someone to write the review for them. A bio would be a much more appropriate thing to send instead. (BJM)

HOT ROD CIRCUIT – IF I KNEW NOW WHAT I KNEW THEN, CD

Mike and I were coming home from the burrito place yesterday and our friendly neighborhood hobo started walking with us towards our home, and his sidewalk clearing. I wouldn't say that he's always friendly. Sometimes he swears and spits venomous words at passerbys or animals or small shrubs, but yesterday he seemed to be in good spirits. He started telling us about a cat scratching at his face. At first I thought this was just code for "I'm crazy," but we then pieced it together that he had tried to catch a missing cat that the owner is offering a reward for. Then he started talking about watching the movie "Re-Animator" in a movie theatre while getting high. And then the conversation jumped (with no segway mind you) to fat women with red hair. At this point I couldn't understand what he was talking about. But I do understand that Hot Rod Circuit is a pretty good band. How's that for a segway? I just saw these guys a little while ago with the Anniversary and Piebald. I thought they were pretty good live. They were much more energetic than this CD would have you believe. Not that it's a bad CD. Just not exactly what I was expecting. But isn't that the job of the artist, to challenge the listener? Word. Hot Rod Circuit could be lumped in with poppy Midwest emo bands, but they're less sappy and more interesting than a lot of them. They almost remind me more of Kill Creek or the Treepeople because of the indie type guitar melodies. And there you have it. (NS)

HUSKING BEE – THE SUN AND THE MOON, CD

These four songs are heavily populated with quality songwriting that doesn't intrude upon your psyche, but rather comforts it and lets you relax for once. It's got that kind of Elvis Costello quality that way. The warm guitars are obvious enough to draw you in, and intricate enough to keep you there. Not exactly punk rock, but it certainly deserves a thumbs-up and a recommendation for those willing to step outside the confines. The EP is balanced well in terms of tempo. A well-rounded four-song rock'n'roll experience, this CD is. Traditional structures with their own personal stamp, keeping it fresh and good for repeat listens. You know that Pedro the Lion thing? This is better. The vocal melodies on the first song in particular are rather infectious – tossing a female voice in at the climax for

EVOLOTTO -1776, CD

Droning, guitar driven rock, with vocal styling reminiscent of Limp Biskit or Korn. Interesting. (JK)

Sin Klub Entertainment, Inc. PO Box 2507, Toledo OH, 43606 USA

EX-MODELS – ST, CD

Lets say that Really Red was an upbeat new wave band and enlisted the singer of Devo, would they be any good? Probably not. (MY)

No address listed-www.mp3.com/ex-models

EXERCISES IN BREATHING - ...AN ENTRANCE INTO FILM NOIR, 7"

Six lulling, ambient tracks recorded by a duo playing guitar, trombone, and keyboards, and with sparse vocals. Restrained and melodic. (DAL)

No KARMA recordings, PO Box 71203, Milwaukee, WI 53211-7303

■ THE EXPLORER - WEST END KIDS, CD

See review above.

Dim Nak-POB 14041-Santa Barbara, CA-93107

■ THE EXPLOSION – S/T, CDEP

See review above.

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd, Wilmington DE 19810

■ THE EYELINERS – HERE COMES TROUBLE, CD

See review above.

Panic Button / Lookout Records

EYESCREAMS - S/T, CD

Japanese band ripping off every style prominently featured in current American college rock. Interesting if only for the accents and loud, raw production. (RP)

Under Flower Records Musashino-Bldg 4F 1-11-11 Minamicho Kichijoji Musashino City, Tokyo 180-0003 Japan

FACTOR 8/JOSTA BABY – SPLIT 7"

Factor 8's side starts out with some jangly garage/surf guitar, but then heads into early 80's hardcore sounding stuff. They remind me of Life Sentence. Josta Baby play 3 songs of weird "music" that sounds like older Ween, but not funny (except for the fart). Their 3rd song is a pretty good punk song about "club kids" and it still sounds like Ween doing punk. (NS)

Factor 8, c/o Mike Siciliano, 119 Homewood Ave., Steubenville, OH 43952

FAIR FIGHT - THE NEVER-ENDING ROAD, 7"

Youth crew hardcore from the Netherlands that sounds like youth crew hardcore from America. Nothing new here, and not very good either. (RE)

Commitment Record Klein Muiden 38 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

FIGURE FOUR - EXERCISE YOUR DEMONS, CD

This starts out with a sound bite that states Punk sucks and metal rules. Just when you think it's a joke. The music kicks in with a total Ratt/Dokken sound Figure four are no joke, they're a heavy metal scourge on our scene. (MY)

No address-Self released

FRAMMENTI - CORRONO GINOCCHIA SBUCCIATE, 7"

Four songs of emo hardcore with lyrics in Italian, but lyric sheet contains English translations. Sounds pretty personal. (AS)

Love Boat, Andrea Pomini, Casella Postale 215.,10064 Pinerolo. Torino, Italia

■ THE FRAMPTON BROTHERS, FILE UNDER F (FOR FAILURE), CD

See review above.

Cacophone PO Box 6058, Albany NY 12206

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Dan Laidman (DAL)

Driving through Los Angeles I don't even need to listen to the radio or bring along a tape. The streets blare their own soundtrack, and it's in my head, indelible and melancholy and beautiful all the same. I know that there are other people out there, a couple hundred maybe, who hear it, too. People who can't pass through the heart of Hollywood without hearing John Doe and Exene harmonizing, "She bought a clock on Hollywood Boulevard the day she left/It felt sad, it felt sad, it felt SAD"; or passing by every sleazy Hollywood porno shack, it's the chorus to "Adult Books," - "we're all in a line, we're all in a liiiiine." For the first classic review, I had to go with something essential, and when I think about where I would be without X, I get the shivers. Start with the CD that combines the records "Los Angeles" (1980) and "Wild Gift" (1981), and you get all their classic songs, and a thousand other brilliant moments, like John Doe's sublimely tough and wounded virtuoso belting of "In This House That I Call Home," or the comfort you feel when Exene sings "we can draw the line some other time."

In the last few months, the soundtrack to my dilemmas, diversions, and dastardly deeds has been made up of the new records from: the Get Up Kids, the Dismemberment Plan, and the Burning Airlines. I also heartily recommend "One Crisis Short of Chaos" by the Fixtures, and wish them luck with the summer tour in Europe.

strength and yet another layer. The singer has a quality in his voice that is unique, and has a way of singing the lyrics so you can't tell what he's saying, but you want to. That's when you're hooked – when you sing along with a song but it's only like "yee yeah yong you way." (RB)

INDEX FOR POTENTIAL SUICIDE - THE NEWEST YOUTH REBELLION, CD

Nobody ever thought that bands would keep the art form of harsh, abrasive music alive, but it just keeps kicking the corpse in the grave that it dug for itself mutating into another one of its nine lives. Index For Potential Suicide do their part keeping the vocals screeching, screaming along to guitars that are tortured in pain. The thing that sets them apart is the addition of synthesizer without veering into the latest trend that I call symphonic, black metal. No need to sound pretty, just pound the listener into dust. The only problem that I have, like with most bands like this, is their lack of pop sensibilities. Index falls into the trap of writing songs with no existent choruses. I like to sing (or is that vocalize) along without having to learn all the over the top, woeful, doomful existence type lyrics that are so prevalent. They do have a knack though for great song titles, which sadly don't appear in the lyrics, like "Eat Lightening, Crap Thunder" and "Escape From Uncle Bill's Lap". Although my favorite track is tritely called "2 1 2 Fuck You". Snarl on! (AS)

JOHN Q. PUBLIC - THE NEVER-ENDING WHY, CD

Major surprise here-more hooks and song-writing ability than your average Youth Of Today-clone but more straight ahead power and drive than your average pop-punkers. These guys inhabit the crossroads of several overlapping styles but all of it is strong, immediately catchy and interesting-I hesitate to throw out comparisons here but think Avail, Dillenger Four, Leatherface, etc. at twice the speed (although not all the time)-good stuff that stands out from the pack. (RP)

JUNIOR VARSITY – BAM BAM BAM!, CD

Okay, I loved their singles and have been waited for the Junior Varsity LP to come out. Its here, its here, and we are not disappointed. Fourteen tracks, with two well chosen covers, that have got me dancing all night. The first time I popped this in the car, my two year-old son in the backseat sang along to the very first songs' chorus. Now that's catchy! He said it is ten times better than "Elmo's Greatest Hits". It would be really easy to say, "another Supercharger rip-off", but you can't. They have the great female/male vocals that make any record 5 times better (its scientific, I am not making this up). Big hits include favs: Poppa Burger, Mark Lochridge Twist, Pop Socks, My Boyfriend and a cover of Can't Take it No More. Side one even ends with a cheesy little tune, Switch Sides, telling you that it is time to flip the record (lost its charm on the CD) Don't let this one get by, you will make your friends dance. You will get your letter jacket. You will ask Franny to the Junior Prom. You will get to second base with this record. Score with Junior Varsity on Peek-A-Boo Industries. (EA)

KELETON DMD - BODY DOUBLE, CD

I am missing the "Body Double" Record release show as I write this in my 80 degree attic, but I feel it is more important right now to be able to spread my praise for these three men from Kalamazoo. The power trio is an important invention not only in Jazz and Rock, but also especially in Punk. The Stooges and the Ramones defined the Punk Rock powerhouse as a four piece. Yet, do you really think that the Minutemen, the

■ **FROM BUBBLEGUM TO SKY - ME AND AMY AND THE TWO FRENCH BOYS, CD**

See review above.

Eenie Meenie PO Box 691397 Los Angeles, CA 90069

FURNACE - LADY KILLER, CD

Very light singing over cliched techno/dance music. Very self indulgent, utterly limp pabulum. (MY)

Steadfast POB 53-Avon Lake, OH-44012-0053

THE FUX - MADE IN THE U.S. FUCKIN' A!, CD

Obnoxious punk with flavors of Oi!, hardcore, and rock and roll thrown in. Lyrics sound like the Angry Samoans with song titles such as "Morrissey (Hurry Up and Fucking Die)" and "Puppies on Fire." (BJM)

705 Tilghman, #3, Coopersburg PA 18036

■ **GAZZARA - EIGHT SUPER POP ROCK HITS, CD**

See review above.

haul records, 16 Main St., Suite 2, Bethel, CT 06801

■ **GOOD CLEAN FUN - ON THE STREETS SAVING THE SCENE FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL, CD**

See review above.

Phyte, PO Box 90368, Washington, DC 20090

GRAYLING – S/T, 7"

Tough single to nail down. Its allover the place form Husker Du to modern emo. This is a real gem and the artwork totally makes it seem like you are getting a HXC record, so don't be fooled. (EA)

Bald Bruce 43420 Bockley, Sterling Hts. MI, 48313

GUTRENCH - NEVER FORGIVE NEVER FORGET, CD

Chugga-chugga, mosh-mosh, pride, crew, strength, blood. (RP)

Gutrench 334 Bascom Ave Apt 302 Pittsburgh, PA 15214

■ **THE HALIFAX PIER – S/T, CD**

See review above.

The Temporary Residence Limited, PO Box 22910, Baltimore MD 21203

HARKONEN - S/T, CD

If His hero Is Gone performed a duet with Neurosis it would hold the same omnipotence as Harkonen-My Highest recommendations! I would of made this a highlight but I have no info on this great band-no lyrics, basic packaging, etc. (MY)

Wreck-age-POB 263-NY, NY-10012

HELDBACK/PRINCESS DOROTHY - SPLIT VISION HARDCORE, 7"

This is sick in the best possible of ways, 2 exceptional Swedish bands. They both play blistering hardcore. Princess Dorothy have a chaotic style all their own; very new and refreshing. Heldback sound like very pissed off early 80's US (mid-western) Hardcore. (MY)

Buchannon Production- No address listed

HITCH – OUT OF THE LIGHT, INTO THE FIRE, CD

A standard sound in the design of the power trio. A tight rhythm section of drum and bass, with the guitar playing dissonant notes. I believe Unsane wrote the book on this style. (SY)

Delboy PO BOX 75, 9000 Ghent 12, BELGIUM

■ **HOT ROD CIRCUIT – IF I KNEW NOW... CD**

See review above.

Triple Crown Records

HUGE - STEPBROTHER CREW, CD

Grunty hardcore with a danceable edge from Poland. The lyrics tell the story of a hardcore scene in transition, and the importance of solidarity. (DAL)

Nikt Nic Nie Wie, PO Box 53, 34-400 Nowy Targ, Poland

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA)

I was about to review one of my favorite records of all time and I am watching television and I look up when I hear none other than the Monks on television, and it's a damn Powerade commercial. I had to change my mind about this review after swearing about how no one knows who the Monks are, especially those who will be drinking Powerade anytime soon. My wife reminds me that people like myself who are at the age to get a Monks, Stooges, Buzzcocks or recently Real Kids commercial on the television. In 1966 five ex-GI's, wearing monk robes and with the centers of their heads shaved, released a record on Polydor that should have changed the world. "Black Monk Time" is a mess, twelve tracks filled with primitive, energy-filled, distorted rage. The lyrics are incredibly simple in songs like "I Hate You" and the Monks' anthem "Monk Time". Political in many ways, the songs dealing so much with the Vietnam war that it isn't surprising that it was only released in Germany. This record is punk rock - taken in its time frame and it transcends punk rock. The feedback and distorted banjo should be enough for you to pick this up immediately. Released on CD form in two different versions, the easy to find CD was on the defunct American Label (with extra tracks). There is also a 400 page book on the whole Monks story that is easy to find and worth the read.

Currently on my turntable you will also find great new releases including: the newest Teenage Shutdown records, the new Fastbacks LP, Estrella 20/20 and the lovely new Holly Golightly.

Melvins, Hammerhead, or Husker Du would have been a louder and tighter band with a fourth member? I think not. The members trust each other's playing to do their part, knowing that one wrong hit could sink the whole ship. It is one whole unit working together with each member equally doing their part. Alone, they are nothing. Keleton DMD exists as a power trio very much in this fashion. They are each excellent musicians on their own but combined together they are a machine. Each one is in sync with the other two. The end result is a record dynamic with rhythms and some great melodic hooks. 8 songs and not one better then the others. To me, "Body Double" is a very necessary record to have come out. It is a kick-in-the-ass to all the hardcore-emo-math rock bands that have over saturated the scene in the last four years. Joel Wick is a lucky man to have this band on his label. (SY)

KID DYNAMITE – SHORTER, FASTER, LOUDER, CD

This one's more solid than their first full-length. Totally classic melodic hardcore done well. If you're still in love with Life Sentence's positive proclamation of hardcore intensity, you would do well to procure this record. It moves along at a quick pace, which I like. Music of this nature is best when it just keeps plugging away and doesn't let you catch your breath - like Hüsker Dü shows from days of yore. If you're a Lifetime fan and happened to somehow miss Kid Dynamite's first album, then you should be warned that this in no way replaces that band. You'd better get over it. First of all, and most pertinent, it's not the same vocalist. The musical movements are completely and 100% traditional in their nature, not an especially *Hello Bastards* trait. Barre chords and shouts abound; but a closer look at the art and lyrical content reveal a sensitivity within to complement the anger. It's nothing new and they don't want it to be. So if you do, stay away. If you're up for that old-time sing-along chorus feeling, hop on the Kid Dynamite wagon. Oh yeah, but don't get your hopes up, this is their last record. (RB)

MATT POND PA - MEASURE, CD

On this release I was a bit taken back by my first listen. After getting a couple of spins I found myself ready to review this CD. This is really beautifully written and produced. Some of the songs are really good on their own merit but after hearing the string arrangements or the small French horn or flute parts, you can't help but realize the time and effort put into these songs. When listening to this I can't help myself and compare Matt Pond PA to Joan of Arc if Joan had started using standard song structures and recording techniques. Matt Pond PA doesn't sound anything like Joan of Arc vocally either. So I'm comparing them to band that sounds nothing like them. I could say that I wouldn't have been surprised if these guys could have come out during the 80's new wave scene and somehow couldn't manage to fit in there either. Matt Pond PA kind of have their own thing going on that they may have a hard time being put into any particle group or genre. This group borrows elements of post rock and (post) folk without being at all weak or lacking integrity. I guess it's the same elements used by Elliot Smith when backed by a band. However, in my humble opinion these cats have stumbled onto something great with this refreshing release. I'm glad this one came my way. This is worth checking out if you're looking for something on the mellow side. (DM)

HUNG UP - RUNNIN' OUT, CD

Fast tight pop with plenty of jumping up and down. Heavy Fat Wreck Chords influence. (DC)
Crack Records PO Box 29048, Eaton Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CAN, R3C 4LI

■ HUSKING BEE – THE SUN AND THE MOON, CD

See review above.
Doghouse PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH, 43623

■ INDEX FOR POTENTIAL SUICIDE - THE NEWEST YOUTH REBELLION, CD

See review above.
OHEV, PO Box 772121, Coral Springs, FL 33077

INFEST/PHC – SPLIT 7"

This infamous live flexi repressed with some extra songs. Infest play a mix of late 80's straight edge and grind, and PHC is slower hardcore with bong rattling bass. (NS)
Slap A Ham, PO Box 420843, San Francisco, CA 94142

INHUMAN – REBELLION, CD

Harsh blasts of NYHC without fitting into the popular Agnostic Front mold. Great straight through! (MY)
Exit/Wreck-age-POB 262-NY, NY-10012

INTREPID A.A.F. – SONGS OF BATTLE, 7"

Intrepid A.A.F. (Against All Fascists) is a good vs. evil Ol! band that has catchy, anthem filled sing-a-long songs. Action packed, energy filled songs for the kids. They cover Special Forces "Make The Leaders Fight" on this 7". (DM)
Cheetah's PO Box 4442 Berkeley, CA 94704

JAPANIC – RED BOOK, CD

These kids win the DEVO year 2000 award. An out there rock band with two sets of keyboards and male and female vocals. This is almost like Gary Numan stuff but not all that danceable. Somewhat intriguing. (DM)
Southwest Wholesale 6775 Bingle Rd Houstan, TX 77092

JETTISON - SEARCH FOR THE GUN GIRL, CD

Perfect for your modern rock/ alternative radio stations. If you crossed Rick Springfield with MXPX you would be close to the nature of Jettison. (MY)
Pop Kid Records-16 Raleigh lane- Wayne, NJ-07470

THE JIMMIES - LET THE FAT MEN PLUNDER CD

When The Jimmies are good they rock, regretfully they rock on only 4 of the 14 songs. This is very Queers/Screeching Weasel inspired. (MY)
Panic Button-POB 148010-Chicago, IL-60619

JOHN BROWN BATTERY - IS JINXED, CD

Melody-core with raw throat vocals not unlike a slower version of avail.(DC)
He Who Corrupts 196 Fairfield Elmhurst, IL 60126

JOHN Q. PUBLIC - THE NEVER-ENDING WHY, CD

The speed and fury of '88 hardcore collides with 90's pop-punk melodic sensibilities. Two-guitars, fast and well-constructed songs. (RP)
Middle-Man PO Box 4606 Lafayette, IN 47903

■ JUNIOR VARSITY – BAM BAM BAM!, CD

See review above.
Peek-A-Boo PO Box 49542 Austin, TX 78765

KAPSIZE - THE GIFT, CD

One guy's 4-track acoustic songs. Some slower, some faster-he's plays better than he sings but there's a certain desperate energy here in places that's appealing. (RP)
Post-Parlo 2206 Nueces Street #108 Austin, TX 78705

■ KELETON DMD – BODY DOUBLE, CD

See review above.

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Josh Kermiet (JK)

The Pixies have received a good amount of attention in the last year or so, mainly due to the release of their Live at the BBC album, the Death to the Pixies compilation, and the presence of the song, "Where is my Mind" on the Fight Club soundtrack. Unlike most bands who get 'best of' compilations, the Pixies actually deserve it. Trompe le Monde was the first Pixies album I ever bought, and while some people consider it to be their weakest album, I think it's fucking amazing. Actually, every Pixies album is fucking amazing, and I could easily feature any one of them here, but since we're supposed to pick one album I had to make a choice. Trompe le Monde is a prime example of the talent and vision of that defined this band's career. The sheer power and urgency of Black Francis's (Frank Black) lyrics and vocals still send chills down my spine. It's amazing how well this album holds up after almost ten years. When Black Francis sings, "I had me a vision/there wasn't any television" it is a simple message that holds as true then as it does now. Another thing that strikes me when listening to this and other Pixies albums just is how completely weird and completely out of this world this band really was. How many other bands can you name that have songs about Alec Eiffel and surrealist films about cutting up eyeballs? I can't imagine how the Pixies must have sounded to people in the context of the time their first album was released, because there was really no context for this kind of stuff. The Pixies had a vision, and this album is like the last page in a fuckin rockin message from outer space. Check it out.

MICHAEL KNIGHT - SLIP AND FALL, 7"

Screaming grind meets catchy mid-tempo punk in a fun-filled duel to-the-death and a good time is had by all. These guys seem to exist in their own universe making unique, diverse music and inventing their own rules and cults to follow and I'm totally down with all of it. This shit is what Spazz WISHES they could pull off but WHERE'S THE FUCKING LYRIC SHEET?! (RP)

MILEMARKER - FRIGID FORMS SELL, CD

Maybe it's because the majority of music coming out of the punk scene has been so stale lately that it makes any band that tries something new sound like the new savior of punk. This is sort of how I feel about Milemarker. Milemarker have a sound slightly reminiscent of Frodus or Kil Kare, with lots of synth and computerized sounds mixed in for good measure. Milemarker has a definite sense of brooding and urgency to their music, sort of a futuristic sense of postmodern alienation and confusion. The songs alternate between the more rock oriented stuff and more computerized weird stuff, and feature both male and female vocals, which adds a lot to the variety of this band's sound. Al Burian of Burn Collector fame is listed as playing bass, synthesizer and singing, but I'm not really sure if this band is his brain child or what, but either way, he writes a really good zine, and this band is pretty cool too. This is not a perfect release by any means, but it's nice to hear a band trying to experiment a little and break out of the "punk" mold. (JK)

MISCONDUCT/THE ALMIGHTY TRIGGER HAPPY – SPLIT, CD

The Almighty Trigger Happy is the perfect music to throw into the CD player at a big party/blowout. The framework here is fast Punk rock that has very cool appropriate leads and inventive guitar parts. I sense that the guitar player has a leash on him since the leads are very flashy but cut short and to the point. This CD is really catchy in a metal punk-RKL (Rock And Roll Nightmare era) Day Glow Abortions (Feed us a Fetus era) manner. The singer is noteworthy for his combination of snottiness and gruffness. The covers of Venom and Day Glow Abortions fit in nicely. Misconduct has energizer bunny drumming, shouted/strained finger in the air vocals, tight stop/start guitars and cool bass intros. These guys are most effective with their fast portions. They also have slow mosh parts but it is tough to not sound dated in that department with so many death metal straightedge bands today. It is clear that Misconduct could care less. This kind of Hardcore is related to late 80's straightedge. Their speedy portions are similar to 59 Times the Pain (Blind Anger and Hate era). 1 happy song in the middle (empty words) sticks out and is actually really good. This CD was too short for me (13 songs) I want more. (MY)

MOLEHILL - COMFORT MEASURED IN RAZOR LINES, CD

Molehill is the soundtrack to Godzilla attacking Tokyo except that Raymond Burr's fat ass can't save the city this time-huge, ponderous, crushing, evil, monstrous power with plenty of inhuman primal screaming over the top. Destructo-sludge riffs make me wish I was a fucking dinosaur on a goddamn rampage-perfect summertime tunes for going to the beach to stomp on sand castles. The last track is over 13 minutes long. My copy didn't have a booklet-why don't you fine, upstanding Molehill motherfuckers send me one? Uh, please? (RP)

■ KID DYNAMITE - SHORTER, FASTER, LOUDER, CD

See review above.

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE, 19810

KIDS LIKE US – TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS, 7"

High quality Straight-Edge hardcore from Norway. Very much in the tradition of Seven Seconds and Youth Of Today without sounding stale. (SY)

Commitment Records: Klein Muiden 38, 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

KILL SADIE - HALF-COCKED CONCEPTS, CD

Aggressive hardcore emo full-length with ballsy vocals that sound fantastic once they kick in after the tepid song intros. (AE)

One Percent Records, PO Box 141048, Minneapolis, MN 55414-1048

KILOWATTHOURS - LESSONS IN TIME MANAGEMENT, 7"

This is a two song seven inch delivering lo-fi, scrappy rock tunes that make innovative use of a piano and a string section. Interweaving guitars and complex melodies abound. (DAL)

Temporary Residence, PO Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

KITCHEN KNIFE CONSPIRACY – SIN-PATHETIC, CD

KKC deliver twelve well-produced tracks of raged engulfed metal ala Sepultura and Fear Factory but a little slower. Angry and includes movie snipettes. (DM)

Sin Klub Entertainment, PO Box 2507 Toledo, Ohio 43606

THE KLOPECS - BORN TO LOSE AGAIN, CDEP

Four pop-punk songs. (RP)

Mutant Pop Records 5010 NW Shasta Corvallis, OR 97330

LAND OF THE EL CAMINOS – DOLL FACE, CD

This is a totally boring alternative rock band. Heavy at times, but not heavy enough. Gruff vocals, but yet...mild. Just the kind of middle of the road thing college beer-guzzlers love. (RB)

PO Box 10203, Chicago, IL, 60610

THE LETTER E - EP, CD

Easy listening instrumental tunes that never seemed to capture me in a way that I want music to capture me. (I just wanted to use the word "capture" twice in a review) Not my cup of tea or cup of "e" for that matter- Gee how silly of me to say e-I rhyme all the time. (BC)

TigerStyle 149 Wooster St. 4th Floor New York, NY 10012

LIVE FREE OR DIE – S/T, CD

First off no track listing on the packaging. Nine songs that sound like a couple of guys practicing with a drum machine and sampling their own voices over the top of the music. (AS)

Catchpenny, 2434 Adeline St., Oakland, CA 94607

LOS INFERNOS – ROCK AND ROLL NIGHTMARE, CD

I could picture their songs in some old low budget 80's movie. Early 80's sounding punk with a country sound in the guitar at times. Good punk rock to drink too. (NS)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94192-9092

LOS VILLAINS - PUNK ROCK POW WOW, CD

Old school Mexican punk meets new school Mexican punk with warbling hair-metal vocals. (DC)

www.losvillains.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Mike Yurchisin (MY)

Crucifix-Dehumanization: everything about this record rocks! The first things you are bound to notice are the graphics. We get pictures of the Vietnam War, starving orphans, and total leather, bristles, studs and acne Punks. When you drop the needle on this disc, you hear a short spoken word piece by a pissed, accented voice followed by sheer fast Hardcore doom. There is no let up and every song seems better than the last. These guys were tight as a drum and deathly serious which is quite different than the sloppy, silly style of many anarcho-punk bands today. A truly special thing about this is the singer Sothira. It appears that he actually lived (or at least had direct knowledge of) what he wrote. The politics on this directly deal with war torn countries, living as a refuge, seeking asylum in the US and acclimating to a new culture (that despises you) I would bet money that the Vietnamese born Sothria experienced every word on Dehumanization. His lyrics have a lot of depth and will raise the consciousness of anyone who reads them. This is very heavy stuff, both musically and philosophically. A precursor to the crust genre.

My favorites this month include: His Hero Is Gone-the plot sickens, The Rip-Offs-got a record, Acid-grey earth, Better Than A 1000-self worth, the free Very Mail-order Comp CD, Bonecrusher-singles, Uphill Battle-Demo, and everything by Catharsis, Blood For Blood and Driller Killer.

PARASITES – COMPOST, CD

If you'd open your eyes jaded by the junior high knucklehead onslaught brought on by various Lookout! bands' popularity long enough, you'd figure out you've been missing out on one of the best pop bands to ever exist. These crafty tunes are tremendous. Exquisite pop sensibility of serious Descendents/All proportions. Hmmm, there's a "Pep Talk" cover here, what a coincidence. Anyone would be hard pressed to assume this is an odds 'n' sods type collection, since it's so great on its own. Without the lengthy recounting of Parasites history from Dave P. inside, I wouldn't have known. This is the stuff not good enough to be on an album!? That's amazing. They can't seem to make a wrong move. After picking up their Ramones cover album at their show a few years ago, I easily decided theirs was the best example of that phenomenon. They pulled of *It's Alive*, for christ's sake. While everyone was hung up on the Queers and Screeching Weasel, this band was trucking right along, silently compiling one of the most solid bodies of punk rock work of the last ten years. It's got indelible and perfect melodies that lift you to that special place. If only this were on the radio, I wouldn't get oldies radio-repetition depression. (RB)

PARIS@2AM - IT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT BUT IT SHOULD'VE BEEN, CD

From the heartfelt wail that opens up the record, this is a solidly energetic, emotional, and well constructed album. The instrumentation is complex and aggressive ("extr-emo," as their record company's website dubs them), and there are lots of nice vocal flourishes that sometimes recall some of the more gleeful aural gymnastics of Ian Mackaye. The band is an impressive three-piece from Green Bay. Frankly, I think Green Bay@2am is just peachy as a band name, so I'm not sure why they have to get pretentious and bring Paris into the equation. In the second half of the record, though, they wise up and start talking about America-namely, Roanoke and Florida. Their Wisconsin brethren in the Promise Ring would be proud. (DAL)

THE PHANTOM SURFERS – XXX PARTY, CD

Surf is only allowed in 2000 if its form the Phantom Surfers. Why? Well, they are the only band that can play it with a sense of humor. This release is all about humor, where else can you here "Let's Twist Again" turned into "Let's Fist Again?". Its bad, its real bad. Its so bad that you have to listen to it – that is its brilliance, you can get anyone to listen to a surf record about dirty sex. Hahahaha! Q:"So why are all the women in Texas bull-legged?" This record comes with a scratch off cover to reveal the cover models breasts as well – this is all out. I could keep going, but this review is almost as pointless as a record like this. It's a party record that you should have in your next collection, if nothing else but to piss off either religious friends or uptight women (or men). A: "Because the men eat with their hats on!" Hahahaha. Totally tasteless. (EA)

THE SECESSION MOVEMENT – S/T, 7"

So now I'm supposed to write 4 to 8 longer reviews of the "highlights" from this month's selections. I don't know if I've even received 4 records that would get my Neal of Approval (pretty fucking clever, eh?). I mean, I can pick out 4 records that were better than the rest, but that's hardly an endorsement. I mean getting pee smeared on your face is probably better than getting poo smeared on your face, but come on. Do you really want pee or poo

LOVESICK - WE WILL BE AVENGED, 7"

Two songs of good rocking emo punk ruined by the ridiculous Barney Fife-ish vocals and one slow quiet song with female vocals. (RP)

$4/6 to Twenty-Twelve Music PO Box 8144 Ann Arbor, MI 48107

THE LYNNWOODS – WANNA GO TO THE MOVIES, 7"

Three pop-punk anthems that don't rock the boat of cheese. A quality single if you forget the cover of "Great Balls of Fire", that is just one bad idea to try to touch the great Killer. (EA)

Teenage Dollhouse

MAN IN THE SHADOW – PAX AMERICANA, 7"

From Slovenija, reminds me of mid 90's Ebullition Hardcore. 4 songs with translated lyric sheet included! (SY)

Miran Rusjan , Pot Na Breg 8,5250 Solkan, Slovenija

■ MATT POND PA – MEASURE, CD

See review above.

File 13 PO Box 2302 Philadelphia, PA 19103

MEANWHILE – SAME SHIT NEW MILLENNIUM, CD

Fast, Discharge sounding punk with the occasional solo. People like to throw the word "thrash" around these days, but this seems a little too polished to warrant that description. Imagine a fast pop punk band with a hardcore singer. (NS)

Sound Pollution, PO Box 17742, Covington, KY 41017

THE MERCURY PROGRAM - FROM THE VAPOR OF GASOLINE, CD

Laid back jazz stylings with minimum to no vocals. Relaxed and ready for play in any of those upscale coffeehouses that currently litter America. (AS)

Tigerstyle, 149 Wooster St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10012

■ MICHAEL KNIGHT - SLIP AND FALL, 7"

See review above.

The 4TG Music Terrorism Conspiracy And Blood Cult 49222 Fairchild Road Macomb, MI 48042-4810

■ MILEMARKER- FRIGID FORMS SELL, CD

See review above.

Lovitt Records, PO Box 248 Arlington, VA 22210

■ MISCONDUCT/THE ALMIGHTY TRIGGER HAPPY – SPLIT, CD

See review above.

Bad Taste Records-SI, Sodergatan 38, 222 23 Lund, Sweden

THE MIXELPRICKS - LIVESTOCK AT LARGE, CD

Seven tracks of typically "la la" Mutant Pop-styled pop. High quality release with funny lyrics and great song titles like "Oi to Joy." (AE)

Mutant Pop Records, 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330

■ MOLEHILL - COMFORT MEASURED IN RAZOR LINES, CD

See review above.

Rage Of Achilles PO Box 20508 London NW8 8WT England

MOLES – UNTUNE THE SKY, CD

A re-issue that sounds like something from the early 70's. Most of these songs could be on that AM Gold compilation on TV. Mellow Pink Floyd sound at times. (NS)

Flydaddy, PO Box 545, Newport, RI 02840

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: MrDana Morse (DM)

A lot of people seem to disagree with me on this particular band because of what they have become. Regardless of what the general populous' view on this band is, I still have to say that Cheap Trick's first self titled 1977 album on CBS is punk as fuck. The original direction of this Chicago four piece is not that of the progressive, technical side of rock or the stage show rock n' roll direction of Kiss. To say the least, Cheap Trick was about having fun and trying to do something different then what was going on. It was more then obvious in the recording of this record. Never mind the fact how punk rock bands from Chicago like Big Black, Naked Raygun and Pegboy had been influenced by Cheap Trick by playing such covers as "Surrender" and "He's A Whore" (which is featured on this album). Other bands like White Flag and Ann Beretta, among others outside of Chicago have also paid homage to these guys. Sure the band looks like two rockers, a nerd and a banker but punk rock should have taught us not to judge a book by it's cover. There are some real rockers on this record that get your toes a tappin'. Some of the strongest tracks showing nothing but raw energy vocally and musically include "He's A Whore", "Elo Kiddies" and "Oh, Candy". Sure, it may be a little cheesy at times, but overall, Cheap Trick s/t is fucking brilliant and chances are you can find it used for about $2 on vinyl.

The recent selections of MrDana this issue include: the new Snapcase, The Bomb's ...Arming EP on Modern Records, the new Reggie/ Full Effect album and the Bell Rays' Let it Blast LP on Vital Gesture.

smeared on your face? I didn't think so. And I'm not comparing any of these bands to bodily fluids (is poo considered a bodily fluid or a bodily solid?). I'm just saying that saying something is better that something else isn't exactly praise. It's just a comparison. Look at the old "apples to oranges" debate. It's been going on for years. Families have been torn apart, lives have been lost. Scientists have worked around the clock trying to find a solution. And there still is no answer in sight! Yeah, so anyway, this Secession Movement 7" is pretty good. It's kind of hectic and jerky on the first 2 songs and the last song is a good mellow indie type song. The instruments compliment each other well and the singer cries out in a weird style that makes this pretty unique. It sounds a little like new wave, which has been done, but now it's fresh for 2000! Sucka! (NS)

SICKO - A BRIEF HISTORY OF SICKO, CD

I'm fucking pissed at Sicko! HOW DARE YOU BREAK UP THIS SOON, GUYS??? Sicko, quite simple, is one of the best if not THE best pop-punk bands of the 90's. YOU JERKS DIDN'T EVEN TOUR YOUR FANTASTIC LAST ALBUM!!! This is a collection ranging from their first demo to their last show. You'll cry as you hear the innocence on the early recordings juxtaposed to the innocence of that tragic final show. Sicko understood what pop-punk was all about: unadulterated, macho-free fun. They were genius live. I managed to sneak my band onto a gig with them on their only big tour in 1996. It struck me as unusual how much damn FUN they seemed to be having. It was a really shitty night in some ways due to a giant blizzard, but they were in great spirits nonetheless and played with a passion rarely seen at a punk rock show. So how does this CD compare with their four amazing prior full-lengths and with the live show I saw? It's simply essential! The early demos and single tracks sound great here, and the live show captures the band's live sound perfectly. Cheers to Mutant Pop for putting this out in celebration of the label's 5 year anniversary. And damn the band for breaking up! Do you need this CD? Sure you do. It just sucks that the band had to break up for this to be released. (AE)

SKEEZICKS - DISCOGRAPHY, CD

This is, as the title states, the discography by a short-lived hardcore band. Skeezicks was active in Germany in 1985 through roughly 1987. They released a 7" and an LP on X-Mist, the singer Armin's record label. His label is still active, recently releasing the vinyl version of Atom and his Package's full-length. According to the liner notes that accompanied a long-forgotten (and terribly recorded) live LP, Skeezicks really kick started the hardcore scene in Germany. Drawing heavily on the hardcore coming from the east coast of the US at that time, like Negative Approach and Minor Threat (who were basically broken up by then), Skeezicks started up a band that approached hardcore with a sense of humor. The same humor that was, at the same time in the US, beginning to be fazed out of a lot of hardcore with the onslaught of a lot of the middle to late 80's straight edge bands. Relying on their good live show, a great group of friends, bandanas and lumber jack shirts, Skeezicks belted out fast, funny, and furious songs about whatever they wanted to sing about. They just wanted to have fun and thrash. This

THE MONKEYWRENCH – ELECTRIC CHILDREN, CD

If the names Tim Kerr, Mark Arm, Steve Turner, Martin Bland and Tom Price mean anything to you than you will like this. If you don't know who the first three people are on that list (than go home!) than you won't like this I am sure. Think bluesy-gargey with the punk attitude. (EA)

Estrus Records

MT. TAI - S/T, CD

Poorly recorded punk from Detroit. However, it fits with this bands lo-fi old school punk sound. Heavy early 80's influences, similar to Black Flag. (RE)

1131 W. Warren Suite 314, Detroit, MI 48201

NOAM CHOMSKY – CASE STUDIES IN HYPOCRISY, U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, 2xCD

Is this poetry? It's nothing like SLAM. Okay, this is 2 CDs of Chomsky's socio-political speeches concerning human rights and U.S. foreign policy in Iraq. Dude, they should put some DJ Shadow in the background or something. Edu-tainment! (NS)

AK Press, PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140-0682

NOGGIN TOBOGGAN - YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED, CD

Generic, bland pop punk with flat vocals, bad lyrics, and bad graphics. I'm nominating them for the worse band name this issue. (RE)

Bettie Rocket Records, 3912 Portola Dr. #207 Santa Cruz, CA 95062

■ PARASITES - COMPOST, CD

See review above.

Go Kart, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, NYC NY, 10012

■ PARIS@2AM - IT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT BUT IT SHOULD'VE BEEN, CD

See review above.

No Karma recordings, PO Box 71203, Milwaukee, WI 53211-7303

PC PHOBIA - S/T, 7"

This is an interesting sounding record that has an uncanny resemblance to Joy Division. Mid- tempo to slow melancholy Goth dirge; limited to 212! (MY)

promenadefanzine@hotmail.com

PEDRO THE LION - WINNERS NEVER QUIT, CD

Indie rock music with somber vocals. Some songs are a mere acoustic guitar and vocals, others have a full band. Some are up tempo, some are dirges. (BJM)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd, Wilmington DE 19810

■ THE PHANTOM SURFERS – XXX PARTY, CD

See review above.

Lookout Records

THE PIN UPS - MADE IN TIELHURST, CD

Snotty English vocals, rather old school in influence, with poppy melodies and catchy hooks. fun. (JK)

The Pin Ups, PO Box 2168, Reading, Berkshire, England, RG1 7FN

PLAN A PROJECT – SPIRIT OF A SOLDIER, CD

Chumps from Jersey trying to sound like U.S. Bombs and Rancid. Grab a beer, a Gibson guitar, throw in the necessary amount of politics that mean nothing to you, and you've got it made. (RB)

Go Kart Records, PO Box 20, Price Street Station, New York, NY, 10012

THE PROTEENS - PROFESSIONAL TEENAGERS, CDEP

Seven pop-punk songs on a short-run CD available by mail order only. Kind of like the Queers, but less

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Neal Shah (NS)

From the label that brought you Limbomaniacs and 24-7 Spyz (as well as Sick of It All and Agnostic Front, but where are they now?), this is In-Effect's crowning achievement, Scatterbrain. From the ashes of the crossover band Ludichrist, Scatterbrain forged ahead, blending metal, hardcore, rock and even Beethoven to create some of the most rockin' jams ever! The album unleashes with the title track "Here Comes Trouble." This is Scatterbrain's way of warning the listener that trouble is coming, and it's coming at you! The second song is a cover of "Earache My Eye," originally performed by Cheech & Chong. Cheech & Chong were a Latino comedy duo who often smoked odd looking cigarettes and got into crazy adventures! Scatterbrain redoes an old song called "Down With the Ship" from their Ludichrist days, where they use parts from other classic rock songs. It's almost like one of those new fangled rap songs with the sampling technique. Other highlights of the album are "I'm With Stupid," "Sonata #3" (yes, a Beethoven cover) and "Mr. Johnson and the Juice Crew." In case you didn't know, "Johnson" is a euphemism for "penis." How deliciously ribald! The second to last track is the classic "Don't Call Me Dude." This song showcases their musical prowess and their uproarious sense of humor. I consulted the thesaurus for that sentence. The album ends on the somber "Drunken Milkman" which I won't discuss because it always makes me sad. But not as sad as you'll be if you don't check out this album!

Also on my hi-fi: S.O.D. "Speak English or Die," Space Ghost's Musical Bar-B-Cue, Leatherface, Kill Creek, the new Snuff and Dead Nation "Dead End."

discography shines because it highlights a band that wasn't necessarily important in breaking new ground or changing the shape of punk, but instead focusing on things that count: having fun and playing your guts out night after night. They even pay tribute to one of the greatest Descendant's songs ever "Sour Grapes" but they changed the song to "Sauerkrauts". That's some funny shit. (RE)

SKIN OF TEARS – UP THE CUPS, CD

Last night I was stoked because we were watching David Lettermen and he had that comedian Mitch Hedberg on. I always forget that guy's name. I used to think it was Mitch Friedberg or Wayne Henderson or some variation. He said something like, "I like vending machines. I think candy tastes best when it's falling. Sometimes I buy a candy bar from the store and then I drop it, to achieve maximum flavor." You'd have to hear him say it probably because he's a weird guy. After Lettermen, we put on Conan and he had Triumph on for a while. If you haven't seen Triumph, he's a dog puppet comedian. But I guess Pets.com (who have those ads with the dog puppet) is suing Conan because Triumph humped the Pets.com dog on some skit. So Triumph held a press conference about the issue. By his side, he had his wife, his mistress, and the goat they have 3 ways with. Then Triumph sung a song to the tune of "Every Breath You Take" by The Police, and he changed the words to include his classic line, "I will poop on you." It was a good night of talk shows. So, this Skin of Tears CD is pretty good. It's fast and catchy and poppy and well played. It has that foreign pop punk sound, like Millencolin or Frenzal Rhomb. While most U.S. pop punk bands are trying to be emo or sound like Lifetime now, this is pretty much straight up pop punk. I could do without the ska songs though. (NS)

SLOW FORE - OIL, CD

This is a really eclectic record, each song is very distinct. The opening track is graceful and restrained, and then followed up with a noisy piece that sounds like heavy metal. A standout is "Walking Backwards," a mid-tempo number with a great head bobbing bass-line that stands in interesting contrast to the somber tone and vocals. The other songs make unique use of harmonics and arpeggios. Slow Fore does a great job of breaking with formula and bringing in a lot of impressive musical devices and techniques to broaden the format. Nice dynamic shifts, too, they'll start slow and then blow up, and it works great. My only complaint would probably be that the vocalist is good, but not aggressive enough, and that's not just in terms of volume, although he's a chronically soft singer. More oomph, please. Still, a good record full of musical surprises. (DAL)

SNUFF - NUMB NUTS, CD

This could be a comp in that the band sounds different at various stages through the CD. Most of this is poppy punk with sickly sweet vocals, fast drumming, and saxophones. There are also full on hardcore tracks (2) and some Oi/streetpunk tossed in. I feel very ambivalent about much of this. I usually can tell if I like something right off the bat-not so with Numb Nuts. This is quite a departure from their excellent Snuff Says LP. It has Ramones-esque and a little more clean sounding. (BJM)
Mutant Pop 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis OR 97330

RAW NOISE - THE TERROR CONTINUES, CD

Heavy, raging, repetitive hardcore punk from members of Extreme Noise Terror. Originally formed in 1982, they reformed and this is their baby. How cute. (RE)
Rhythm Vicar Records, Unit 15 Bushell Business Estate, Hithercroft, Wallingford, Oxon, Ox10 9DD

REFLECTOR - WHERE HAS ALL THE MELODY GONE?, CD

Melancholy emo type music with a touch more melody than is usually heard in this kind of stuff. Nothing to write home about, but not that bad. (JK)
Status Recordings, PO Box 1500, Thousand Oaks, CA 91358

ROCKET350 - JUNGLEBILLY, CD

13 Rockabilly tunes. Hoo-Fucking-Ray. (DC)
Beatville PO Box 42462 Washington, DC 20015

RUBY KEELER - SHIVER SHIVER, CD

Seven by-the-book, completely average emo tunes. (DC)
Route Fourteen Records, PO Box 501, Langhorne, PA 19047

RUMAH SAKIT – S/T,CD

This is an instrumental band with two guitars that plays music in that DC style, with varying time signatures and rhythms and clean guitars. Some slow parts, some rocking parts. (BJM)
The Temporary Residence Limited, PO Box 22910, Baltimore MD 21203

[SCATTERGUN REFLEX] - LAUGHING AT A DEAD MAN, CD

This is 10 instrumental tunes that hold your attention just enough to keep you from going bored. There is some fine melodies and phrasing going on in these songs. But then again, it's easier to notice it with out some singer putting words all over the pretty music. On the lighter side, but interesting. (BC)
Laser Trax Records 3200 S. Cooper Suite 105 Arlington, TX 76015

SCHLITZ - WONDAFUL WORLD, 7"

Seven inch single with three songs from a political French punk band. Comes with interesting, Pettibonesque artwork. (DAL)
Gestalt Prod., 49, rue Edouard-Vaillant, 93170 Bagnolet

■ THE SECESSION MOVEMENT – S/T, 7"

See review above.
Direct Hit Records, 470 Wildbriar, Garland, TX 75043

SHIFT D - ... FROM THE PAGES OF CHAD MUSKOKA, CD

Standard pop punk falling somewhere between Green Day and NOFX or maybe Horace Pinker. Speedy songs about relationships. (AS)
Crack Records, POB 29048, Eaton Place, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3C 4L1

SUGAR SHACK – GET OUT OF MY WORLD, CD

Typical Estrus release – layout: Art Chantry, producer: Tim Kerr and dual guitars that rock out. It's a great 14 song CD that isn't anything beyond the normal from Sugar Shack. (EA)
Estrus Records

■ SICKO - A BRIEF HISTORY OF SICKO, CD

See review above.
Mutant Pop 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Russell Etchen (RE)

Mike Kirsch, who plays guitar and sings, is my own personal hardcore hero and Fuel, one of his bands that lasted more than a short LP or 7", is his baby. Drawing on influences from earlier, harder Fugazi, Fuel blew up in the East Bay in the early 90's and played hard-edged punk that sounded a lot different from what was going on there at the time. With lyrics that you could understand and really feel like, "I want to challenge / Challenge myself to be more than words / To stick flesh to this vision." They challenged the listener to get up and do something, to change the world or at least change themselves for the better. They released a ten song LP on Rough Trade and a few singles. The CD is now available on Broken Rekkids. Mike Kirsch went on to play in a number of lesser known bands as well. Most recently being Bread & Circuits who play amazing political hardcore, and have a CD on Ebullition. Torches to Rome, the band before that who also play intense hardcore, released their demo as an LP on Ebullition as well. He was in a number of other bands (Navio Forge, John Henry West, and Sawhorse) who all are worth checking out as well. Kirsch seems to have the magic touch when it comes to playing fast and furious political hardcore that never lets up and is always exciting. Go out and pick up the Fuel discography and then work your way forward. You won't regret it at all, there is a lot of important punk history here.

Current Faves: Yo La Tengo, The Lapse, Charles Bronson, Good Clean Fun, Sean Na Na, Le Shok, Vue, Handsome Boy Modeling School, This Robot Kills / Lovesick split, Hot Snakes.

none of the catchiness of said record. I've listened to this like 10 times and it has not grown on me at all. It is altogether very average with 2 or 3 good tracks. It is the rare CD that I can't knock or recommend. My advice is to make sure that you listen to this one before you purchase. (MY)

SUBMACHINE - FRESH OUT OF GIVE-A-FUCKS, CD

Love the title. Pittsburgh, the city that once hosted the meanest football team of the 70-80's. (The Steelers, you jack-ass) The city that hard work and a ton of sweat built. The city that hosts one of the best bands doing hard core today, Submachine. I remember seeing these guys in Chicago at the Underdog loft in the early 90's. It was fun to see this messy, stinky, hard core band turn the party into frenzy. With pizza boxes and beer bottles all around, it was a time I will never forget. One of my introductions to some real punk rock. And here I am almost a decade later, getting the honor to review their newest disc. If you know the band then you know what to expect. And if you don" know anything, then get the disc and make yourself the better for it. The "I don't' give a Fuck" attitude is very important in punk rock. Deep down inside we all care a lot for a lot of political and social things, but you need to release the stress away with a good loud "I don't give a Fuck!" There, that feels better. The band has the kindness to put a disclaimer on the back of the disc telling you that you might get some explicit lyrics and some subversive graphics from the disc. Sweet guys those Submachine lads. The 19 songs on the disc will last you until these veterans of east coast hard core decide to get in the studio and do it all again. (BC)

SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY - STO CAZZO!, CD

The first time I saw this band, nearly three years ago now, I walked off during their set. There was no way I was going to watch this awful band play, and worst of all they had a fucking saxophone player! Well, gather round children, because times have changed and musical tastes have matured. No longer do I wince at the sound of this band's warped sense of music. Now, I find myself enjoying this new release a lot. Southern Records put this six song EP out along with an assault of new releases that have been just pouring out of their doors. Some quality, some not. I recommend the new Lapse very highly. Anyway, onto the music. SWTJ play music that fits their hometown of Chicago very much: clean guitars, heavy driving bass lines, horns, vibraphones, and various sound effects. This is Chicago music. The singer demands your attention with his mixture of shouted / sung vocals that are all over the place. Together the music resembles some of their Midwest emo influences but only very slightly, as they have matured towards a more rock sound. Overall, a little short but still a quality release. (RE)

TURING MACHINE- A NEW MACHINE FOR LIVING, CD

Jade Tree is such a cool record label, mostly because it seems like everything they release is almost completely different, not necessarily all good (Kid Dynamite), but at least different. Turing Machine is no exception. Following the path laid down by other such instrumental post-punk experimental bands like Tortoise, Mogwai and Euphone(also on Jade Tree), Turing Machine play rather atmospheric, tension filled music that walks a fine line between being very pretty cool and pretty boring. I'm not

■ SKEEZICKS - DISCOGRAPHY, CD

See review above.

625 PO Box 423413, San Francisco, CA 94142

■SKIN OF TEARS – UP THE CUPS, CD

See review above.

Hectic 68 Valley Rd., Brackley, Northants, NN13 7DQ, UK

■ SLOW FORE - OIL, CD

See review above.

Espo, PO Box 63, Allston, MA 02134

■SNUFF - NUMB NUTS, CD

See review above.

Fat Wreck Records-POB 193690-San Francisco, CA-94119-3690

THE SOUND OF RAILS – S/T, 7"

The A-side is a good jangly, snappy number that I believe to be about reading. The flip is an instrumental. Clean, interesting guitar lines and good drum work. Write some songs! (AS)

3 Bay Hopper, PO Box 241709, Omaha, NE 68124

SPITFIRES - IN TOO DEEP AGAIN, CD

Rip roarin' rock and roll that has Humpersesque punk elements but veers toward a glam sound. High energy vocals with lots of spirited "yeah!"s and yelps. (DAL)

Junk Records, 7071 Warner Ave., F-736 Huntington Beach, CA 92647

THE SPLASH FOUR – RULES OF LIFE, 7"

Lookout scores another winner with the French garage-punk-rock stars "The Splash Four". Everything they have done is as good or better then the three tracks on this single. (EA)

Lookout Records

SQUAT – BUGGED, 7"

Finally we see some ladies getting in on the meathead punk rock game. The smooth vocals of a woman can't hide the fact that this is dumbed-down drunk rock. (RB)

6510 San Pablo Ave, Emeryville, CA, 94608

THE STATUS - ITS REALLY QUITE MANIC, CD

Punk rock in the vein of early 80s American punk. Sounds like Social Distortion just enough that you have to wonder if it was intentional. (BJM)

Homemade Records, PO Box 1234, Coquitlam BC V3J 6Z9 Canada

STRUNKEN WHITE - LIGHTING A DARK NORTH, CD

Soft popish vocals with pretty guitars and slow to mid-tempo pick-ups. Ten songs. (DC)

Route fourteen records PO Box 501 Langhorne, PA 19047

■SUBMACHINE- FRESH OUT OF GIVE-A-FUCKS, CD

See review above.

Radical Records 77 Bleecker St. # C2-21/ New York, NY 10012

SUBMIT? – CONFORM OBEY COMPLY, 7"

Mildly crustified hardcore with the heart in the right place, but lacking on aggressiveness, honestly. Political and DIY. It could rip like Black Flag, et cetera if a little more effort were put in. I love the guitar sound especially. (RB)

Systemsuck, PO Box 950, Bowling Green, OH, 43402

SUNDAY'S BEST - SONS OF THE SECOND STRING, 7"

Some sort of fusion of emo and indie rock. Very melodic, not heavy at all, with half-time tempo changes and octave guitars. Three songs, one track is an instrumen-

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ryan Batkie (RB)

At the time Pinhead Gunpowder's "Goodbye Ellston Avenue" came out punk was confusing me. Hardcore and emo were strengthening their grip. I had been drawn in by the greats: Clash, Pistols, Buzzcocks. Stuff like Avail and the later Clash records were spinning me in all sorts of directions, though, and I didn't feel loyal to anything any more. I felt like a punk rock bastard. Then 'Ellston Avenue' came along. Thirty seconds into track one, things were different. I had direction; and I was possessed. This was completely what I'd been waiting for without knowing I was waiting for anything. It came along at a perfect time for me when everything fell into place. Now that I examine the circumstances, it makes total sense. My band was slowly falling apart, and I felt like I was the only one realizing it. I was leaving town and leaving a girl or two. It was a very Cometbus time; it wouldn't be until later that I'd realize just how much so. Every musical and lyrical movement felt part of a bigger, more dramatic sequence, but it wasn't sappy or lame. It was seamless and flowed perfectly. It had heartfelt moments and angry moments, but was always sincere. The songs were inspiring and angst ridden: the two essential ingredients of punk. And I didn't just listen to it, either; I sped down the road singing along at the top of my lungs. I still do. Too much of my community passes this band off as a "pretty good pop band". I'll never be confused knowing there's a new Pinhead Gunpowder record out there somewhere waiting to happen.

New stuff on my stereo lately is thus: Astrid Oto 7"; Dillinger 4/Pinhead Gunpowder split 7"; Lovesick 7" Canine Sugar CD, every single Hail Mary record.

sure which side of the line this band spends more on, but if I had to make a wager I would choose the latter. My main gripe with this album is that while much of the structure and arrangements of the songs are interesting, they fail to achieve anything new with the genre and come off sounding rather repetitive. I enjoyed Euphone album, which while also instrumental, avoided becoming boring by exploring many different styles of music and feelings, while still retaining a distinctive sound. I wouldn't say that Turing Machine is a bad band, as this is still 100 times more original than most releases nowadays, but overall this just didn't do it for me. (JK)

THE VILES - ANOTHER CASUALTY, 7"

This is the punkest record I've heard in some time. Where was this band when I lived in Ohio??? The Viles typify straight-forward, Exploited-influenced punk. Song like "Dirty Fuckin' Hippies," "Mickey's a Nazi," "Dishonorable Discharge," and the title track are packed with classic punk rock rhymes like "Huey, Louey, Douey, You're So Fuckin' Screwy" and "Waste Your Days Puffing On A Bong, Bunch of Wanna Be Cheech & Chongs." This is the perfect basement show band! You can sing along, jump around, get beer all over the place, and accidentally burn things with your cigarettes right in your home without making it to that basement show if you've got this EP! The lo-fi recording demonstrates a band that focuses more on songwriting and getting shit out than production and image. These guys must kick all ass live! And I wanna meet this "Crazy Hungarian" that gets mentioned all over the insert. This one's so punk you can almost SMELL the B.O. in the air that must accompany attending one of their live sets. If there was a Viles show going on tonight and I knew where it was, I'd be there. Since I'm not in that situation, I think I'll keep flipping this 7" and dancing alone. (AE)

VISITOR 42 - HEAVY HANDED HOSPITALITY, CD

Ignore the dumb band name and ugly CD cover-this is a real treat. Mostly upbeat tunes in an updated-take on the classic 79-81 OC-punk style that I can't get enough of. It's not 100% great, but at least three-quarters of the songs hearken back to punk-pop of The Crowd and their contemporaries and that's more than I've heard by anyone in this style in a long fucking time. (RP)

WALLS OF JERICHO - THE BOUND FEED THE GAGGED, CD

Look, I'm pretty surprised to find myself highlighting this, too. This type of music-thrashin' death metal-isn't exactly my type, but there's just something about this record. I think it has to do mainly with the vocals-it's the standard hoarse, demonic screaming, but the vocalist is female, and her voice is high. Somehow the effect is really chilling. Wow, listening to this and looking at the blood red hellscape of the cover art ... scary stuff. The band is also extremely tight and skillful, they remind me of Sepultura. They hit all the right notes to create a freakish, evil listening experience. They've won me over. Go for it. (DAL)

THE WORLD/INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, CD

First off, I don't know a damn thing about this band, but I assume that since this is a comp

tal. Label artwork is extremely similar to the artwork on a record that I released for a band called Magro Kuso two years ago. Strange. (BJM)

Market Participant Records, 11041 Santa Monica Blvd., pmb 302, Los Angeles CA 90025

■ SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY - STO CAZZO!, CD

See review above.

Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657

THE TANTRUMS - MOTELS, CDEP

Six tracks of danceable melodic rockabilly-style pop with female vocals. It is a good mix of 50s rock and country, with a strange sort of 80s feel to it at times, maybe like the Stray Cats. (BJM)

Cheetah's Records, PO Box 4472, Berkeley CA 94710

TEN IN THE SWEAR JAR - MY VERY PRIVATE MAP, CD

Moody emo that never really treads any punk or hardcore paths played on a wide variety of instruments including synth, mandolin, accordion, and more. (AS)

www.randomorder-records.com

TORN APART - TEN SONGS FOR THE BLEEDING HEARTS, CD

Ten tracks of very east coast, very new-school hardcore. The songs are mainly about relationships and emotional maturity. (AE)

Ferret Music, 341 Monmouth St. 101D, Jersey City, NY 07302

TREADWELL – BOMB DIFFUSION, 7"

A heavy Born Against influence here but they come off sounding more like Hail Mary. Hardcore. (SY)

Statue PO Box 1500, Thousand Oaks, CA 91358

■TURING MACHINE- A NEW MACHINE FOR LIVING, CD

See review above.

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn rd. Wilmington, de 19810

TURTURROS - SONGS FOR LOSERS, CD

Earnest, fun punk record from this Italian band. All of the songs have the same simplistic structure, maybe a few traces of early Screeching Weasel. (DAL)

Be Nice to Mommy, via F. Rosazza 52 00153, Rome, Italy

TWELVE HOUR TURN – THE VICTORY OF FLIGHT CD

Melodic hardcore with multiple vocal attacks. Pretty parts and then there are the dissonant ones. Blend them together and you got 25 minutes that you can listen to over and over again without burning out. (SY)

No Idea PO Box 14636, Gainesville FL 32604

THE VICTORIA PRINCIPLE – MIS EN SCENS, CD

Art-emo with dark, plodding rhythms and plenty o' weird lyrics. Something about "I lost my comb, damnit" comes to mind. Quiet rests to set up the loud rocks. (RB)

Ruido Union, PO Box 7141, Richmond, VA, 23221

THE VELOURIA BEAT – RADIO HEARTBEAT, CD

Four ladies from the Midwest pull off great love songs without sound wimpy. With songs hinting towards an influence of the Buzzcocks, they take the guitars a step heavier, which provide a great sound. (SY)

Silent Film PO BOX 10641, Peoria, IL 10641

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ryan Poortenga (RP)

The Times formed as part of the late 70's UK mod revival. They were true art school kids who picked up guitars in an effort to combine the worlds of modern art and pop music to the best of their ability with tongues firmly planted in cheek. Their first single, "Red With Purple Flashes", was taken from a well-known quote by Creation, which that band had used to describe their music 13 years previous. This classic is the lead song on The Times' first LP 'Go! With The Times' which was never released after it was recorded until the CD reissue of their second album, 'Pop Goes Art', which was recorded only six months after the first session. 'Go!' also includes a beautiful and wonderfully-clever song called "My Andy Warhol Poster" which suggests that the band would like to see him as president to "make the country eat lots of candy bars, increase the nation's intelligence and give them all a course in modern art". 'Pop Goes Art' shows the band expanding their range slightly and applying a slightly darker tone to some of the songs but allowing their lighter side to shine through on occasion such as with 'Biff Bang Pow' and 'I Helped Patrick McGoohan Escape'. These two excellent and unique records were released on a single CD in 1994 so check the import section at your favorite record store or have them order it and Let's Go! with The Times!

Current faves of mine include Paris@ 2am's incredible "It Wasn't An Accident But It Should've Been" CD which should be reviewed in these pages soon and is the best new album released this year by far. Also hot are some raging current Japanese HC bands like Judgment, Paintbox and Exclaim.

CD of singles that have had more than a couple singles released. Two, that means I don't have any idea if any of the eight songs are previously unreleased. Anyhow, it claims on the front cover that it is the "East Coast Super Sound Punk Of Today!" which it is not. World/Inferno F.S. are going in enough different directions that they should at least be put into a genre that doesn't demand such strict guidelines nowadays. Also, why scare off potential listeners that are downright sick and scared of the sounds of punk today! I know that I excepted something totally different than what I got after reading the cover. Many other bands came to mind while listening to this such as Devo and The Fall. Much of this is roots oriented but not in that overdone folksy way, as I kept thinking that some of these were taken from a Russian gypsy songbook. One of the tracks, "Pumpkin Time", is even a gospel number complete with soulful background vocals and Nick Cave type of appeal. The vocals are consistently clear and the musicianship above average. And since they were nice enough to include the lyrics, they too are interesting and insightful without being cliched or redundant and will still the test of repeated listening. It's just that some of the stuff lacks the energy and passion to really pull me in. I just keep getting the feeling that these guys are rejects from the high school jazz band and drama club spoofing to show tunes. (AS)

V/A - A Four Way Stop, CD

This is an interesting compilation of four bands because three of the four share the same singer and drummer. The bands, in alphabetical order are: Hero of a Hundred Fights, Insidious, Managra, and Tintoretto. They are also placed in order of availability as Managra and Tintoretto are, sadly, no longer with us. The singer and drummer mentioned earlier are William Zientara and Shane Hochstetler, respectively. They are both now in Hero of a Hundred Fights, which is where I will begin this break down. HOHF play a blend of mathy, spastic post punk similar to what Maximillian Colby was doing except not nearly as intense and screamy ... much more melodic and clean. Insidious doesn't share any members with any of the other three bands and play music that is not nearly as good, or accomplished as the other three bands. Musically, I hear a definite Braid influence in the guitar work and the way the vocals play off each other; the singer even sounds like Bob Nanna at times. Managra is much harder than the other four bands at times. The guitars are crunchy and rough with quieter parts thrown in here and there. Zientara's now very familiar voice screams/sings (mostly screams) over it, with an occasional second part by Chris Schafer thrown in. Managra has a much more emo feel to it than the other bands, in the way everything comes across as much more personal and immediate. Which leads this discussion to Tintoretto, the third part in the triptych of singer and drummer. The first two songs of their four are mostly instrumental with layers of guitar and don't really stick out as winners. As Zientara's vocals come in on "Sweet Release", it feels different. His strained singing chords don't fit nearly as well as they did on the other two bands. It isn't until Mike Batzler angry as hell vocals come in five minutes into the song does it really take form and take off. Tintoretto is saved by this man's angry screaming. All in all a pretty good compilation from 404. I'd definite-

■ **The Viles - Another Casualty, 7"**

See review above.

The Viles, 471 Wood St., Wadsworth, OH 44281

■ **Visitor 42 - Heavy Handed Hospitality, CD**

See review above.

Butt Flower Records PO Box 5134 Alameda, CA 94501-8434

Voice of Reason - New Beginnings, CD

Regular new school hardcore with a dash of quasi-melody. (DC)

Triple Crown Records 331 W. 57th St. PMB 472 New York, NY 10019

■ **Walls of Jericho - The Bound Feed the Gagged, CD**

See review above.

Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

The Warren Commission - Rendezvous With You, CDEP

Five songs of indie rock with male and female vocals. Innovative packaging, at least. (RP)

Doug Fresh 67 Robak Dr. Chicopee, MA 01020

The Wednesdays – Midnight Songs In Time Of War, CD

Southern California Pop Punk. A sound that has been around for the last decade and hasn't changed much. (SY)

Jackson / Rubio Recordings, PO BOX 8609, Long Beach, CA 90808

■ **The World/Inferno Friendship Society, CD**

See review above.

Gern Blandsten Records, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661

Y - Pseudo Youth...Human Cesspool, CD

A comprehensive selection of Y tunes. German noise punk all about fucking up the government, sung in English, written in German, and explained in English. Tough. (DC)

Sound Pollution PO Box 17742 Covington, KY 41017

Zunga – S/T, CD

Weird funk and jazz-rock with strangely catchy slurred vocal melodies. There is an acoustic ballad, a song that leans toward punk, and one that would sound kind of like Sabbath if it was Ozzy singing. If I'm not mistaken, I'd say that some of the vocals remind me of Dave Matthews. (BJM)

zungamusic@hotmail.com (no label address given)

V/A - Acoustic Revolution, CD

It's 12 bands doing acoustic "punk folk." Some bands put more emphasis on the folk, others on the punk. Interesting and well worth your $7. (AE)

Romeg 204 Miller St., Fayetteville, AR 72703

V/A - Bad Music for Bad People, CD

This is a compilation of heavy, fast, and brutal hardcore bands that exist or existed around the Rhode Island/Massachusetts area between 1997 and 1999. Mostly unreleased tracks from bands like: Men's Recovery Project, Black Dice, Converge, In My Eyes,

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Scott Yahtzee (SY)

A band that has been really important in the last 7 years of my life is Swiz. I can honestly say I have never gotten sick of listening to them at all. Before the Jade Tree CD was easily found, I remember Eric Action and I sitting in his dorm room listening to a copy someone had let us borrow for exactly one day. We were both into Dag Nasty and were curious about a man named Shawn Brown. Shawn had been the original singer of Dag Nasty but was replaced by Dave Smalley right before "Can I Say". Shawn Brown delivered lyrics in emotions of spite and emotions of pain and he had a great sense of wit. The whole sound together was awesome. The guitar riffs were more hard rock then metal and that separated them from the rest. I recently spent $35 on a copy of "Hell Yes I Cheated." It was money well spent. This album represents Swiz at their best. Fury, an alter ego of Swiz with Chris Thompson (Circus Lupus, Monorchid) on vocals, is present for one song on this record and that is a golden moment. Also included is a cover of the Damned's Machine Gun Etiquette, which is by far the best Damned cover I have ever heard. You can order the "No Punches Pulled" CD from Jade Tree which will give you everything Swiz ever recorded except the Fury 7". The Fury 7" is out of print but you can usually find it in the used bins for cheap.

In the last couple months my tastes have been all over the place. Can you find any similarities between the new Casket Lottery album and the Cattle Decapitation "Homovore" LP on 3.1.G ? That is what I have been listening to.

ly pick up the HOHF full length and the Managra 7" and full length which are still in print, I believe, on High Water records. (RE)

V/A - Howlin' for My Darlin!, LP

Crypt Records continues to dig out 60's punk tunes to release in volume fourteen of the Teenage Shutdown series. The newest, "Howlin' for My Darlin!" is a punk R & B stomp that may be almost as good as volume one "Jump, Jive and Harmonize." Without a doubt, any 60's punk fan will already own all 15 installments by the time this review is published. So how about you, the unconverted, the young pop-punk high school kid who doesn't own a Kinks record or thinks that punk rock started in the late 1970's. This stuff is more primitive and filled with more energy than 99% of "punk" rock these days. Total off the wall, short catchy dance tunes that are raw and loud. Most of these teenage bands (Tasmanians, Undertakers, Rogues, Dirty Shames, etc.) had cut only a few 45's from studio time won in local battle of the bands. They were doing it for the music, for the fun, for the girls and the parties. You would pay up to hundreds of dollars for many of the singles on any of the Teenage Shutdown releases if you could even find them. All 15 volumes are recorded using great equipment and unlike many other 60's punk compilations, each one has to pass by Tim Warren's approval and sounds a lot better than many of the Pebbles releases. Crypt Records have done so many great compilations of this genre it is almost unbelievable on how great this record is. (EA)

V/A – Quarters, Split 7"

This four-way split 7" from Salinger Press features some of the best music coming out of Michigan right now. Well-rounded and vibrant, this record showcases a lot of different styles. With Keleton DMD we have precise rhythms and crafty guitar work that will convince you it was cranked out by a finely tuned machine somewhere, only to use these three fellows as a sort of a limited slave race musician conduit. Excruciating and infectious, it makes me feel like I have math homework due and I haven't done it – and I don't even have a math class, either. Accompanying Keleton on one side is Quixote. Along the same lines, but they create much grander visions with their sound. Where Keleton displays a tendency for insanity, Quixote keeps things confined and sterile with guitar that roams, but is obviously on a leash. The rhythm section in this band is impeccable as well. Small Brown Bike, now known to nearly everyone interested in hardcore/punk/emo of a pop nature, are the state's and this record's resident rockers. This is a new song not found anywhere else, but promises of an even brighter future for their fans if it represents the direction these fine musicians are taking - definitely worth tracking down. This is the kind of song they could center an album around. Lovesick is my favorite band on the record. They represent a very bright spot in our community. Some of the most unique stuff you'll ever hear, but so right-on and in tune with what you're trying to say to yourself that you just *get it*. They rock intelligently without making you feel dumb. They're holding their hands out and helping you get to where they are artistically. Buy this record. (RB)

Agoraphobic Nosebleed, and Dropdead. (RE)

Trash Art PO Box 725, Providence, RI 02901

V/A - Exposed 3 Hot Doggin' Tha Great Midwest, CD

Jesus Christ, a CD compilation with 59 artists I have never heard of. Way too many terrible bands to talk about in one or two lines. (DC)

Sin Klub Entertainment PO Box 2507 Toledo, OH 43606

■ V/A - A Four Way Stop, CD

See review above.

404 Records, P.O Box 827, Normal, IL 61761

V/A – Go-Kart vs. The Corporate Giant 2, CD

Nice sampler of songs both released and unreleased from: Down By Law, Lunachicks, Anti-Flag, Buzzcocks, Boris the Sprinkler, The Candy Snatchers and more. (EA)

Go-Kart PO Box 20 Prince Street stn. NY, NY 10012

V/A – Hit the Line Hard, 7"

Four bands doing Old school straight edge. All these bands hail from the United States and have tough lyrics. (SY)

Commitment Records: Klein Muiden 38, 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

■ V/A - Howlin' for My Darling, LP

See review above.

Crypt USA, PO Box 1076 Inverness, CA 94937

V/A - I Love Metal, CD

A bunch of punk bands covering metal songs. (DC)

Triple Crown Records 331 W. 5th St. #472 New York NY 10019

V/A – Magnetic Curses, CD

Most bands are from Chicago and are par for today's punk rock course. Everything you would expect, plus...the Mekons? Quite a hodge podge of crap, actually. (RB)

Thick 409 N. Wolcott Ave, Chicago, IL, 60622

■ V/A – Quarters, 7"

See review above.

Salinger Press, 180 Rosetta, Auburn Hills, MI 48326

V/A - The Return of the X Men, 7"

You'll want to drink meat after this one, but the music is solid old school fast sxe hardcore from 7 bands from Holland, Belgium, and the U.S. (AE)

Commitment Records, Klein Muiden 38, 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

V/A - Straight From The Gutter And Into Your Panties, CD

17 of Junk Records hottest bands singing about, guess what...beer, girls, and cars and shit. Whoop-dee-doo. (DC)

Junk Records 7071 Warner Ave. F-736 Huntington Beach, CA 92647

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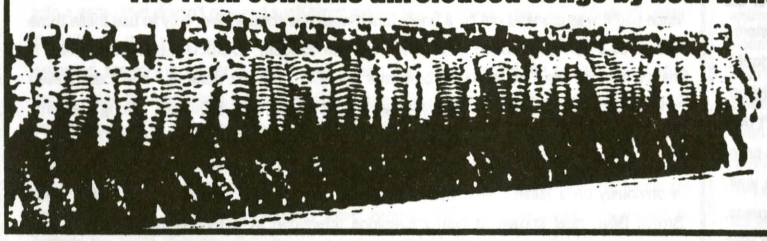

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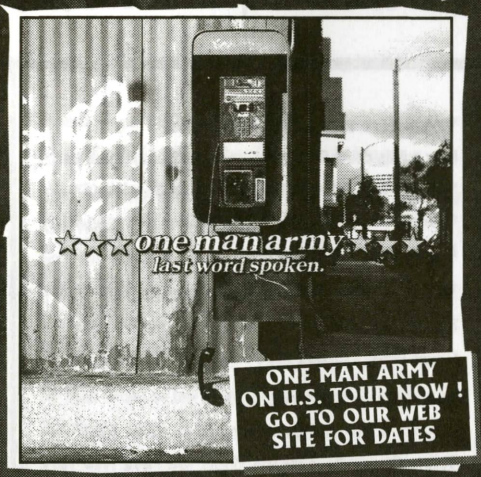

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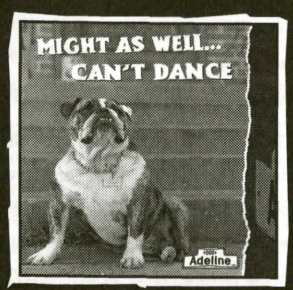

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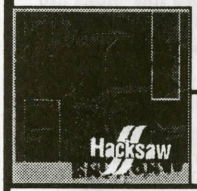

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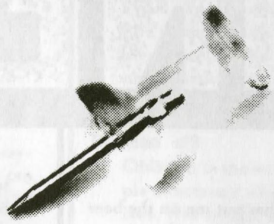

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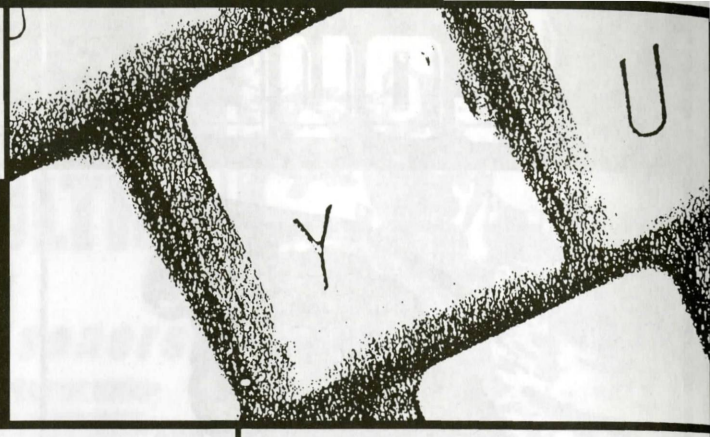

Beer Can Fanzine #4

Apparently Punk Planet has put me on the beer and Portland beat ... either that, or the new trends in punk rock zinedom are beer and Portland. In any case, I wonder if the editors of Beer Can Fanzine and Beer-Powered Bicycle know each other? They probably go to the same shows, and bars. Beer Can has all the typical fanzine elements, but with some interesting twists. Jesse, the editor, is into Italian punk, and he does an extensive series of interviews with Italian bands. It's pretty funny at times, but very repetitive-I would have liked to hear more about the trip. There's a good roundtable taste test of a number of different beers, and the best part is a historic tour, with photos, charting the history of the beer maker Henry Weinhard, who arrived in Portland in 1865 and set up a brewery. Nice local flavor. (DAL)

PO Box 14371, Portland, OR 97293

Beer-Powered Bicycle #7

This pretty great zine ends with a poignant, hand-scrawled post script: "P.S. I'm Zack." The reader has just been granted an intimate tour of the narrator's life-his friends, his fridge, his past, his city-and all this without a name, and when you learn it at the very end, well, this zine packs a punch. It's all about living in Portland, drinking beer, going to shows, goofing off, dealing with the past, and watching the world change around you. The writing is very, very strong, even when it's sloppy. The first half is endearingly fun and fast-moving, then the second half takes an unexpected turn and delves into more serious material, and it pulls it off really well. Zack brings in some of his own history and tells a story about an encounter with a border guard at a diner that ties a lot of the themes together really well. Highly recommended, this is a great read. (DAL)

PO Box 40001, Portland, OR 97240

Bigger Isn't Better #3

This is quite an ambitious zine, for Jen and her cohorts have assembled an issue devoted to America's three most mythologized metropolitan areas, Los Angeles, New York, and the San Francisco bay area. I think there's nothing better for a zine to be about than a sense of place. BIB runs into problems, though, by trying to tackle all three in the same issue, and so no one place gets treated with much depth. There are a couple of great pieces, particularly the one on Jen's roommates in San Francisco, and the cartoon interlude about the pains of turning 24. There's a lot of material that reads like filler, though. The poetry, interviews, and the many abstract pieces that lack the details that make for compelling writing could all be trimmed. (DAL)

$3, Jennifer Kao, 38-04 28 St., 2 Fl, L.I.C., NY 11101

Chokehold #5

Chokehold. Really small print. Personal ramblings. Stuff about punk and politics. Cut and paste graphics. neat. (JK)

Chokehold Zeeeen, PO Box 188602 Sacramento, CA 95818-8602 $1.00 or trade for "vegan goodies"

Comfort Creature #6

48 pages of hand-written personal experiences and observations a la that one zine done by that one guy who travels around and was in that one band once.. know what I'm saying? This doesn't interest me at all but I know a lot of people who feel differently so if this applies to you then go for it. (RP)

$2 Not Bad Records PO Box 2014 Arvada, CO 80001

Constellations #7

I wish I could take every whining, punk rock brat and hand them stuff like this and they would read it and get a clue as to what a real life is like. You should find this and read it and get exposed to the endearing qualities of a mother. She might not want me to peg this sappy label on her, but that's the idea I came away with after reading *Constellations*. I totally lost what I'm trying to say. Just check it out. (RB)

$2/trade, 4620 Elm Ave, Las Vegas, NV, 89110

Dead City #6

This is a self-published collection of short stories documenting the adventures of an alcoholic Punk rock drifter. This guy's writing reminds of Bukowski in the 60's before he was discovered. There are too many good stories in here to get into. I am going to hold on to this to sell it on EBAY when this guy becomes a literary figure. Now that last statement may be a stretch but this is damn good none the less. Quotable line: " I'm fairly dirty and degraded to begin with." 30 pages/digest (MY)

$1.00 or trade: Dead City-539 Washington NE-Warren, OH-44483

Elephant Mess #7

Random out-of-context sample of Daniel's writing: "And I imagined your soul and my soul connecting in the air somewhere-and if I were to just leave the confines of this shelter then maybe they would connect and our hearts would beat in sync-the same way that they did on that strange and beautiful night in our past." You'll either cum or puke, I'm sure-I can't believe this guy listened to the Adolescents while doing this zine-musta had the volume really low. (RP)

Daniel Murphy PO Box 1582 Eugene, OR 97440

Epi-logue

This zine was written by a guy who worked at Epicenter Zone record store in SF for five years-kind of a scrapbook memorial-type thing. Interesting (maybe) if you shopped there or were involved there but what the fuck? It was a goddamn record store for Christ sakes-oh, I forgot for a moment that San Francisco is the (epi)center of the punk rock universe-guh. (RP)

$1 U.S/$2 WORLD Gordon PO Box 207 740A 14th St San Francisco, CA 94114

Faggo #1

Wow. This is a pretty well done zine. Faggo is a zine dedicated to "punk & queer" culture. The zine features articles and stories by many different writers, as well as interviews with Limpwrist, Jim Yousling, and Seth Bogart from the band Panty Raid. You don't see too many zines focusing on the queer punk scene and it is good to see one like this with quality writing and a good layout. It is amazing how much homophobia still exists in punk rock and having more zines like this one is a great way to fight that. Really great article called "You're ripping off the Ramones" and the Limpwrist interview is good too. I like this zine because while it focuses on a specifically on gay punk culture, it embraces a wide enough variety of opinions and writers that it never becomes preachy or stupid. Recommended. (JK)

Faggo PO Box 1457 Bentall Centre, Vancouver, BC V6C 2P7 Canada

Filling The Frame #3

A photo fanzine with way above average Xerox picture reproduction quality. Bands included are At The Drive In, Franklin, Rainer Maria, Dillinger Four and more. Other zines/photographers should look at this to check out photos that actually catch the taste, smell, sweat and emotion of a rocking show. The photos may actually be better than being there! Obviously done by people who spent a lot of time looking through a camera lens waiting for some good subject matter as opposed to mindlessly taking shots...and it says "free" on the front. (AS)

3909 Central Ave., Western Springs, IL 60558

F.T.W. #4

F.T.W has what I wish more zines out there would have, namely, a sense of humor. It seems like the majority of people in the punk rock community take themselves way too seriously, and the pathetic whiny drivel that they put into their zines is a prime example of this. Who in their right mind wants to read about how many times some sweater wearing emo kid cried yesterday or read yet another rant about how people who aren't eating berries and tofu burgers are killing humanity? I'm not saying there's anything wrong with expressing your feelings or making political statements, but come on people, have a little fucking creativity! F.T.W is not a perfect zine, but at the very least they have created something which is fun and entertaining to read and that has stories about things other than which bands have sold out or the harsh realities of living in your parents basement and having nobody understand your free verse anarchist love poetry. The tapeworm story is especially funny. Good job dudes. (JK)

F.T.W c/o Joe Prichard 2700 Ellendale Pl. #208 LA CA, 90007

Go Guerrilla! Winter '00

Go Guerrilla tackles the great job of having an entertaining but incredibly busy, cut and paste zine. Interesting interviews with founder of Processed World/ Critical Mass founder Chris Carlsson, Fifteen's Jeff Ott, reasons why not to shop and why you shouldn't watch the tube. Not a bad collection of info and opinions here, even amusing. However, the layout is a bit messy and too busy. Pretty good otherwise. (DM)

$2 ppd. Marc Moscato 46 Mallory Rd #1 Tonawanda, NY 14150

Hellbender #12

A nice little music mag with short, quality interviews and a short review section. They have a purpose and they stick to it. No jock of all trades, master of none mentality here. They're in it for the rock. Samiam and Enkindels interviews in this one; as well as an All Out War tour diary. It's pretty expensive at a dollar for around 30 pages of newsprint, being full of advertisements and all. But hey, who am I to know anything about the financial workings of a fanzine? (RB)

$1, PO Box 547, Vails gate, NY, 12584

Inbred Picnic #5

This comic is nicely illustrated (the art actually reminds me of the comic No Life by Jeff Levine), clean, and it is obvious that the artist really put a lot of her time into it. However, just as her stories start to get interesting, she cuts them short and all the emotion is lost. "The Canal" is a story about three teenage metal heads who smoke a lot of weed and then encounter a bunch of skaters. "Dang Me" is the nicest to look at of all the strips (with all the repetitive images, and the cute story of first love) but it ends very bizarrely. "Good While it Lasted" deals with three close friends who have a very memorable summer together. She is on the right path, she just needs to work on her story and pace. (RE)

$1.00ppd. or trade JB Thomas PO Box 163463, Sacramento, CA 95816

Jaded in Chicago #8

A Punk Rock Music Mag. which is pretty light on columns (5), show, and music reviews. The interviews with Antiflag, Apocalypse Hoboken, Small Brown Bike and The Get Up Kids do not provide any interesting info. This has a professional lay out, lots of pictures and a cool punk rock look. 32 page /full size. (MY)

$1.00 to Bill Denker-4031 Forest Ave.-Western Springs, IL-60558

The Inner Swine Vol.6 #1

This guy instantly rubbed me the wrong way- He is selfish, arrogant, elitist but he sure can write. This is all about Jeff Somers. So if you want to know all about Jeff this is for you. "This zine has been and always will be about me." This zine is expertly laid out, the writer is good but all together this is totally uninteresting. Who wants to hear some random guy ramble on about getting his car stolen repeatedly. 32 pages/digest (MY)

$2.00 or trade: The Inner Swine-293 Griffith St. #9-Jersey City, NJ-97307

Impact Press #25

This is an exceptional magazine! "Voting For Equality: Same Sex Marriages" is the cover story. This is chock full of amazing political information that one rarely gets from the media. Impact tackles all subjects in a very clear, educated, impressive manner. Their motto is "covering issues the way the media should" This is 80% politics and 20% Punk rock (mostly reviews) I recommend that you pick this up- file under educational.48 pages/full size. (MY)

$2.00:Impact Press-PMB 361-10151 University Blvd.-Orlando, FL-32817

Jaded in Chicago #8

Pretty standard scene report type zine focusing on the Chicago area. Interviews with The Get Up Kids, Anti Flag, Apocalypse Hoboken, ands Small Brown Bike, as well as music reviews and a few stupid columns. Yawn. (JK)

Jaded in Chicago, c/o Bill Denker 4031 Forest Ave. Western Springs, IL 60558 $1.00

Lecture: Thoughts from a Dead Boy #1

A small personal fanzine with a great deal of comic filler. This is a very short read. It is my hope that the writer will delve a little deeper into personal issues next time. He needs to explain the gory details. Having said that, I really enjoyed "My Life as A Cutting Board" a piece where the writer tells about his affection for self-mutilation. I believe that the confrontations of one's demons can turn them into allies. Maybe the writer can investigate apprenticeship programs in scarification, branding and piercing. 44 pages /digest –No price info given (MY)

Treble-70 Eames Ave-Amherst, MA-01002

Multiball #19

The best zine out there! I promise. That is if you like pinball and rock and roll. Issue #19 is now glossy and full size. There are interviews with Sleepyhead, Loose Lips (a great interview), the Las Vegas Grind reviewed and a lot of pinball articles. The crossover of this zine makes it more interesting than another plan old music zine and the writers are excellent. You also get a great split 7" from two Detroit bands: Dirtbombs and the White Stripes. The interview with the White Stripes is also a pure winner. Where else can $4.50 get you a killer single and a nice glossy, well written zine – no where. They love what they are doing – and lets support a great zine like this. Ride the silver ball and order the last two or three issues. (EA)

$4.50 PO Box 40005, Portland, OR 97240

Oblivion #9

Oblivion is the work of a group of young people concerned with youth rights, i.e. "curfew laws, free speech issues, the juvenile justice system, etc." A noble cause, and they seem to be impressively organized and well informed. The pieces in here are earnest and have their moments, but reading Oblivion reminds me of a debate I had on the alt.zines newsgroup a few years ago. I was fifteen when I did my first zine, and I was defending young zinesters against those who pointed out that it's best to let your mind and your writing mature outside of the public eye. It's a complex question with no easy answer, but Oblivion, while serving an important purpose and being of decent quality, would give ammunition to the cynics. There's a frustrating strain in the writing, for example, you can't get to the climax of a story and then say "I won't even get into it - it's a whole convoluted series of events that don't make any sense..." This demonstrates a lack of nuance and ability to engage complexity and contradiction that comes with maturing a little bit. But I'm probably just being crotchety, and I would recommend Oblivion to any teenage punks looking for an extended community of active kids. (DAL)

PO Box 95227, Seattle, WA 98145-2227

The Plan #1

Wow. If this is the first magazine he's ever done, I feel a little inadequate. Really good writing about, you know, everyday stuff. But of course, the only way it's going to be good is if your everyday is way more cool than everyone else's everyday. And *The Plan* pulls it off, that much is certain. This may be weird, and it's probably just because I read the I-9 book last week, but this has definite *Burn Collector* qualities. *The Plan* is full of hilarity; and I noticed a tinge of friendship loyalty in there, too. You would definitely do well to procure this recounting of a southern gent's whacky hi-jinks. (RB)

$1, 1228 N. Milwaukee Apt. 4W, Chicago, IL, 60622

PTBH! #7

Apparently, if you're not spitting you're saying it wrong. Enough of the cover. Once inside we find good ol' classic punk loser lifestyle. It's a nice read, and with the typeset being small, yet big enough to read comfortably, we get lots of it. If you like voyeur zines – the kind where you can just glimpse into someone else's life for a while – *PTBH!* is per chance very much for you. Nice. Keep 'em comin'. (RB)

311 N. 6th Ave, Pensacola, FL 32501

Ramble #1

This is the first issue of this run of the mill zine. Most of the issue is filled with a semi-interesting story called "Bonsai Trees." It is about a kid visiting Chicago. He winds up at this Christian shelter where he stays for a few days. The story seems too scatterbrained with too much effort at establishing all the weird characters and not really going anywhere with them. The rest of the issue rambles on with some work stories, suggestions for poets, a punk top 10 list, and other random stuff that just. This zine definitely lives up to its name. (RE)

$2.00 Jeff Nelson 1-375 Des Meurons Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CAN R2H 2N6

Scarred, Skewed, and Retarded, #1

Rants, personal politics, and short band interviews where you can find out band members favorite things. Bands included are Radio Personality, Scooter, California Lightening, The Bobbyteens, and more. Has pretty band photos too! (AS)

PO Box 5218, Moraga, CA 94575

Spared, #1

Personal thoughts zine of a fairly decent length mostly about the disgust of slaughter houses, some travel diaries and more. (AS)

$2 or fair trade, 3548 Garfield Ave. S. #3, Mpls, MN 55408

Spongey Monkey #10

This issue of Spongey Monkey features interviews with Steve Albini, XBXRX, Thee Michelle Gun Elephant, Yind, T-Model Ford, as well as record reviews, zine reviews top 10 albums, and a Yo Yo a Go Go review. While this zine follows your basic reviews/interviews format, it succeeds because it actually interviews some interesting artists rather than just a bunch of lame asses that nobody has ever heard of. The T-Model Ford interview is worth the price of this issue. Neat-o! (JK)

Spongey Monkey, 416 Jeff Davis Ave. Waveland, MS 39576-3226

Stardumb, #4

A good music fanzine that focuses mostly on pop punk. It's written in English, so you Americans shouldn't be scared to check it out. Good layouts, reviews and interviews with The Groovie Ghoulies, The Muffs, Tilt, and more. Also included is a good biography on Link Wray. (AS)

Stardumb Enterprises, PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Start from Scratch #4

This is pretty cool. Start from Scratch is a skate zine from Hong Kong, and every page is written in both English and Cantonese (I think that's what language it is). The editor's note in the beginning of this says that the purpose of Start from Scratch is to "explain punk/ hardcore music to the majority of Hong Kong who have never been catered to." It is hard for those of us in America and other big punk rock countries to acknowledge that for most of the world, punk rock is a pretty unknown concept. Especially in America, most kids have no concept of how lucky we are to have the freedom and support to create a punk rock community and speak our minds. In this issue, a band called King Ly Chi talks about how they were unable to book any shows in Beijing because the Chinese government had banned "rock" music throughout the month of October. Apparently October 1st marked the anniversary of communist China and anyone caught booking or performing shows would be arrested and put in jail!! Can you believe that? It is really makes you see how safe we have it here, and shows how important it is that bands from America and other countries continue to try and play these countries and support their scene. As well as interesting articles this issue features an interview with Sick of it All, music and show reviews, and some really cool skate photography. If you can afford the $15 price tag, this is definitely worth checking out. (JK)

B3 15/FL. Hankow Ct./Ashley Rd./ Kowloon/ Hong Kong $15

Straight Force - the last issue

Nice surprise here as there's something for everyone. Interviews with Apocalypse Hoboken and Jimmy Eat World, but most of the zine actually has a hardcore slant to it. Good columns (Al Quint!) and articles, too. The zine is changing it's name to Alarm after this issue, but this one is well worth checking out-plenty to read. (RP)

$3.00 PO Box 200069 Boston, MA 02120

Tail Spins #33

Tail Spins has been around for a long time now, sort of a mellow, mid-western MRR spin-off. It's got the interviews, the reviews, the articles, and the ads in abundance. The pieces on Greyhound and on donating blood for a living were interesting reads. There are personal reflections on/histories of Iggy & the Stooges and Tom Waits which were informative but very long, and it's probably a little misleading to just put their names on the cover, which seems to imply interviews. The band interviews and tour diaries fall flat, as they tend to do in any publication. Also, the big problem with Tail Spins continues to be the gruesomely, painfully, appallingly small font size they use for everything, especially the reviews, which makes it nearly illegible. This doesn't seem justified when they often have the same record reviewed twice by different people. (DAL)

$4, PO Box 1860, Evanston, IL, 60204

Take Off Your Fucking Dress and Go Bowling, #1

Here's a hodge-podge collective zine with contributions from a bunch of different people in a bunch of different places. The intro says, "basically whatever is sent is printed." The randomness of the content means that the zine lacks cohesion, and lacks any distinctive voice. This issue has some vague personal reflections, some fiction, reprinted treatises on the death penalty and on the dangers of artificial sweetener, and some beer reviews. The writing tends to be pretty bland, but I thought one piece about one of the contributor's relationship with the enigmatic "Pub Boy" showed a lot of promise, and was fun to read. The layout is problematic because it obscures a lot of the text. (DAL)

7741 Ohio St., Mentor, OH 44060

We Dare Be Free #6

Artless had it right in their song "Crassdriver"-the far left can easily be as scary and narrow-minded as the far right. This is titled 'New England Anarchist Agitation For International Social Revolution'-translated: anarchy is great until we can become dictators and tell you, the uninformed masses, how to live. News from all over the globe on "the struggle", which mainly seems to consist of wrecking other people's property until the cops show up and kick all their asses, then bitching about that-gee, where do I sign up? (RP)

$1 We Dare Be Free PO Box 230685 Boston, MA 02123

The Whirligig #1

Oh please save me from this awful poetry zine. The subtitle "Indie Lit" had me vomiting before I could open to the first page. Where do I begin? The editor opens with a disclaimer threatening to sue anyone who plagiarizes the work. Do you really think anyone would steal from all this terrible writing? And if they did, it could only improve it. Whirligig is littered with terrible, pretentious, poetry, poor fiction, and terrible artwork. Why do people bother wasting their money printing awful zines like this? (RE)

$3 1873 Coleman Street, Brooklyn, NY 11234-4503

Yoda Magazine #12

Nice layout and the printing is beautiful, the way it should be done. Real thick mother from Belgium that has a great set of interviews with: Grade, The Lapse, The Judas Factor, The Swarm, By a Thread and more. Probably sticks out in its European point of view and its much better than a typical American counterpart. Nice set of reviews sections. This isn't anything real exciting, but I read it from front to back and wouldn't be disappointed in the least if I paid for it. (EA)

Kristof Mondy, Elfde Julilaan 114 8500 Kortrijk Belgium (yoda@pyrrhus.be)

Zero Degrees #2

Sort of a punk academic take on all (well, a lot of) that which is messed up in politics, et cetera. Well put together, easy to read, and eye-opening to a lot of issues we all think we know enough about. Rather than the typical punk rock "government sucks" mentality, this mag helps explain why that is actually true. Nice. Keeps it personal, too; because as we all know, the personal *is* the political. (RB)

$1/stamps, c/o Jessica, Box 6810 98 green St, Northampton, MA 01063-0100

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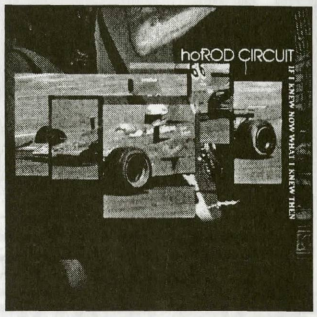

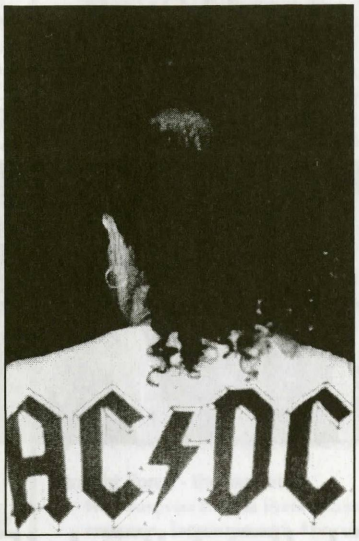

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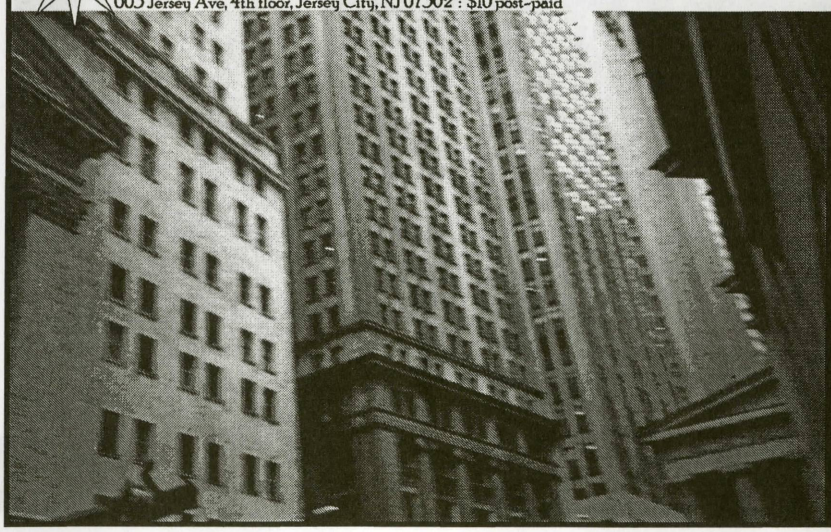

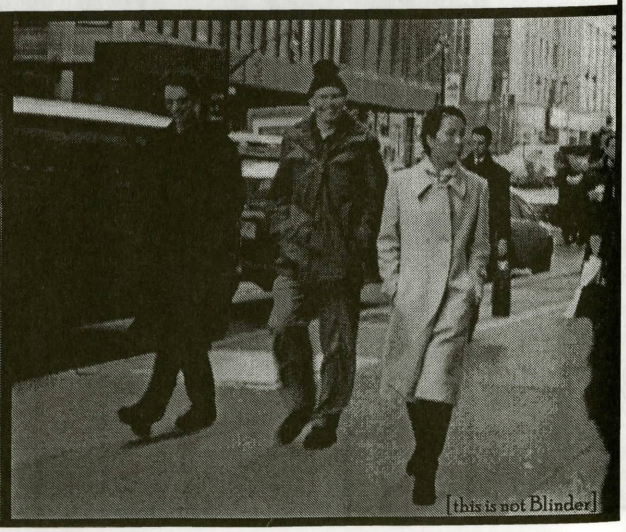

#3 - June 2000

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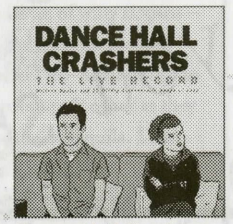

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Witless banter and 25 mildly antagonistic songs of love

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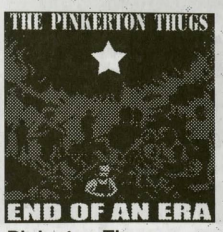

Pinkerton Thugs

End of an Era

Long overdue political punk, Angelic Upstarts meets Clash - great street punk!

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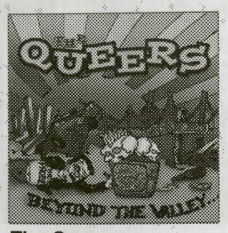

The Queers

Beyond the Valley

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Saves the Day

Through Being Cool

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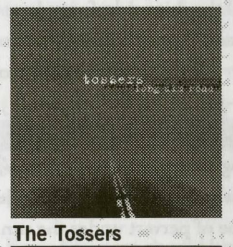

The Tossers

Long Dim Road

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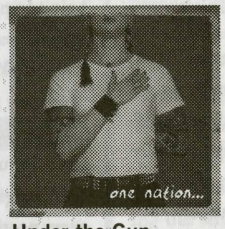
Thick / THK-069 **out: 5/16/00**



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One Nation....

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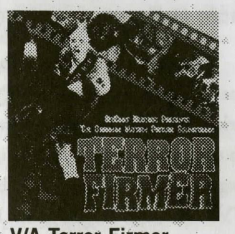

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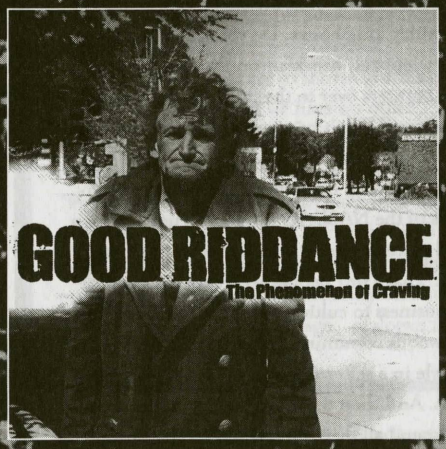

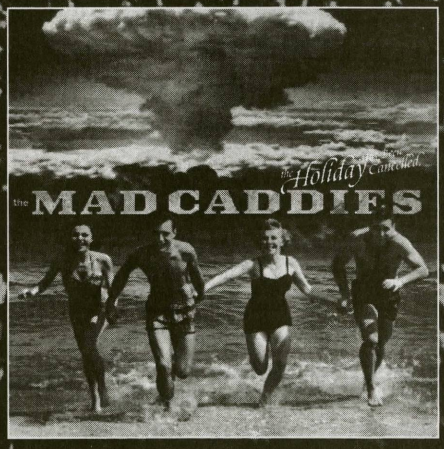

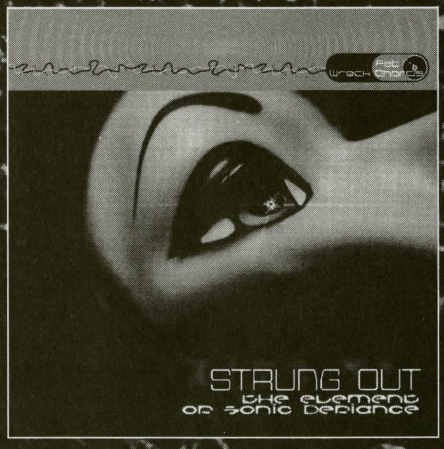

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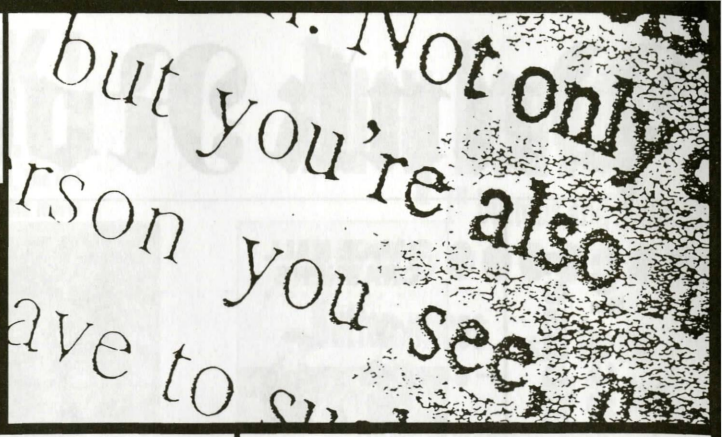

Dirty Money
Ayn Imperato
Manic D Press

Ayn Imperato's *Dirty Money*, a series of vignettes about life as a Goth/Punk sometimes Sex Worker, sometimes movie extra, sometimes musician and artist, twenty-something girl from Philly living in San Francisco, could be blown off as MTV's "Real World" in print. But somehow, even though it has all the ingredients of MTVism, it's better. Why? For one thing, the writing is pretty darn good. It's humourous, poetic, and real all at the same time. Just when you think it's on the verge of being annoying and trite, it delivers a punch of social realism or a wrench to the heart that makes you care about "Ayn" and the other characters that populate the book more than you ever would about the mannequins posing as real people on MTV. It's funny, but not too funny. Heartfelt, but not dripping with sentiment. Socially conscious, but not dogmatic.

What makes the book such a good read is that it blends a wide range of emotions and moods. You'll laugh along with Ayn as she heads to Vallejo, CA to cover herself in mud and play a Zombie from Hell as a movie extra. But before it can become too funny, you start feeling the cold that soaks into Ayn's body as she spends hour upon hour upon hour in the cold of night covered with wet muck. You sense the divisions of class as Robin Williams strolls out in his fur overcoat to exchange friendly words with the mud-clad frozen extras.

Sure MTV tries to pull off this kind of 20-something realism, but ultimately, as real as the people supposedly are on MTV, they always seem to be cut-outs. Maybe just by virtue of the fact that they're on MTV in the first place, they just seem a little too perfect and a little too privileged regardless of their so-called struggles. After all, they were selected as the few out of millions who wanted to be in the "Real World."

What really got to me in *Dirty Money* was the girl thing too. It is very much a book about being female and the shit we do for money, do for self-esteem, and do just because we think we have to. Whether it's giving some anonymous punk boy a blow-job under the boardwalk just because he asks for it and you're feeling devastated about seeing the boy you really want with another girl, or whether it's doing phone sex for every possible type of pervert under the sun, *Dirty Money* lets you see the quiet acceptance of non-consensual sex as the norm for most girls. But it doesn't go overboard either. There's enough humor and realism in the stories that you get the best of all worlds: you read some great pieces, you enjoy being a voyeur peering at the dirt of the sex industry and other unseemly sex acts, and at the same time you actually feel for Ayn without feeling sorry for her.

Then again, the girl/sex work thing is also just a work thing. Ayn reminds us that all work is prostitution as we see her whore herself out in the Goth-Voodoo-Kitsch shop, the movie business and the phone-sex trade. It's all the same. You do what you have to, not what you want to, in order to survive.

Being a San Francisco native who has lived a "salad bar" of lives in that city myself, I also enjoyed the very realistic cast of characters which populate Ayn's book: the queens with feather boas and tiaras on New Year's Eve; her Goth "Soul Mate" and feisty waitress friend; who do speed and talk all night; Mundo, "The Burrito of Death," and the carny whose career is operating the Tilt-O-Whirl.

The book has its share of hipsters, that's for sure: punks, goths, artists, and musicians. But it has enough scenes outside of "The Scene" to keep it from getting tedious and annoying. You travel with Ayn to the Jersey boardwalk as well as Tehachapi in California's Central Valley. Ayn doesn't cater to hipness as the ultimate only way of being. She sees everyone through very democratic eyes and all of the people are very REAL.

Being a new mom with a short attention span, one last thing I have to say in praise of the book is that it's quick. I am a great fan of the 90 minute film. I'd definitely rather see 90 minutes of good celluloid than two and a half hours of Hollywood bullshit. *Dirty Money* is definitely in the excellent, 90 minute school of book writing.

Kudos to Jennifer Joseph and Manic D Press for putting out such an accurate and well-written glimpse of the "Real World" of Ayn Imperato. I hope to read more by Ayn in the future. —*Kim Nicolini*

Life's Little Deconstruction Book
Andrew Boyd
W.W. Norton and Co.

"Time is money." We all know the saying. But it's taking on a new meaning in the age of internet commerce. If you have money these days, you probably don't have much time to spend it. And if you have time to spend money, you probably don't have much to spend. In the high-tech world, even the super rich work incredibly long hours. Do you think Bill Gates takes a lesiurely breakfast on the veranda and then saunters over to the polo club to inspect his ponies? Don't bet on it. Whatever else you want to say about the SUV-driving, Nine Inch Nails-listening, overpriced Tapas-eating technoids of the NASDAQ crowd – "Fuck off!" is a good place to start – at least they work all the time. That's why people keep dropping out of the business to cultivate exotic mushrooms in a backwoods commune or live the *Cometbus* lifestyle in a self-conscious quest for enlightenment. And then there are the unfortunate souls who spend all their time working, but don't have any capital to show for it. Like the people who write for *Punk Planet* together! I'm not sure

which of these groups Andrew Boyd has targeted *Life's Little Deconstruction Book* at.

Self-described as "self-help for the post-hip," The book presents a series of witty slogans – 365 in all – distilled from the cultural theory name-checked at parties where 20-somethings in black turtlenecks try to impress each other as they pass around a blunt or a bottle of tequila. Like those 20-somethings, *Life's Little Deconstruction Book* is never entirely sure whether it's making fun of other people or itself. The back of the book informs you that "this tiny manual provides an introduction to theoretical posturing, a commentary on post-modernism, a subversive satire, and a tribute to the love-hate relationship many of us have with fashionable ideas." That's a good description. And it explains the book's appeal to a wide range of people. Unfortunately, it also demonstrates a lack of commitment. Like those 20-somethings too busy enjoying life to maintain a long-term relationship, *Life's Little Deconstruction Book* is wary of getting in too deep. The problem is that its preference for the light and airy – I've seen few books with more white space – makes it seem like there's no other way to be. Or, in the words of slogan 352, that we should all "Be, like, whatever."

In other words, the book is a perfect example of the postmodern condition that its *bon mots* describe. I'm sure Andrew Boyd knows this. That's part of the joke. Yet as funny as I found the book, I can't shake the sense that the laughter it induces is the nervous kind that masks a dark, unspoken truth. For one thing, the book's brevity testifies to the fact that no one seems to have time to analyze our world thoroughly. We settle for the bumper-sticker, T-shirt, and three-minute punk song instead of thinking things over for ourselves.

Maybe our lives are so thoroughly colonized by capitalism that we have no other choice. At least this kind of "lite" critique is better than the alternative expressed in slogan 310: "Populate your wardrobe with corporate logos."

I don't want to make it seem that *Life's Little Deconstruction Book* endorses total surrender to the market. It doesn't really want you to "Numb you capacity for outrage," as slogan 180 advises. I suspect that Andrew Boyd would prefer that you "Redeploy the images that oppose you (151);" to "Come out (114);" to "Name what names you (147);" or even to "Continue to think and write even though reason is dead, history is over, the self is fractured, and knowledge is hopelessly enmeshed in oppressive relations of power (364)." Significantly, however, he doesn't close the book with that semi-hopeful statement – the longest in the book – but with the injunction to "Practice one-liners (365)." In the end, he *is* committed to something: humor. I am too. But I'm not so post-everything to believe that it's alright to laugh anywhere. I wouldn't laugh at a funeral, for example, even if its commemorating the death of reason. —*Charlie Bertsch*

American Ruins
By Camilo Jose Vergara
The Monacelli Press

Every American should have a coffeetable book about ghettos and vacant lots. In this glossy, hard-bound tome, Chilean photographer and writer Camilo Jose Vergara photographs an America that can perhaps be most clearly seen through the eyes of a non-native. The invisibility of abandoned landscapes is so deeply woven into our culture that even the most alienated American reader will find something dislocating and disturbing in these photographs. In the boom-time dream world that hip coffee table book buyers inhabit, "urban decay" is just another brand name, not the vivid acreage of forgotten lives and spaces which have been left behind.

Vergara's book is a compendium of landscape photography that can be read on many levels. It is primarily a documentation of the contemporary decay that haunts the regions of our country where industrialization and development once commanded miles of busy towns and suburbs. As a history of public and private spaces, *American Ruins* shows the endgames of histories that are rarely told, much less shown. These are the histories of communities evaporating, structures outliving their usefulness, and people who have been brutalized by economic forces that whipped through their homes like fire. As ethnography, *American Ruins* provides some important visual information about what artifacts remain in such environments, and also what they look like when they are still inhabited. But the book is most powerfully a document of combined architectural and social history. It is foremost a book about buildings, specifically what happens to buildings when they cross paths with contradictory socioeconomic forces. Once carefully planned and beautifully executed, factories, homes, and train stations may "live" to fulfill a human purpose that turned out to be transitory. They are then left over, like monuments to a passing inspiration, leaving a vast surplus value of space and structural intentionality. Sometimes they are re-used, and become homes for surplus human populations, or they simply rot away, their facades frozen in a pose of purposefulness.

The big question that this book leaves behind is about the human beings. By recording the landscape traces of social and economic forces that have wrought their will on American populations, Vergara opens a million questions about where the inspiration went, where the people went, or, more importantly, if the people are still there, where are they going? American Ruins invites further annotation about the social and political patterns that create such spaces, and the life cycles of those patterns. What can we expect of these spaces? Where do they fit in our lives?

Vergara's text is extremely historically and architecturally literate. Chapter titles like "Assorted Broken and Wasted Things," and "Dealing with Eyesores" reveal a sardonic relationship with both Americans' own disavowal of their decaying spaces, and the intrinsic value of such spaces. He has researched his subjects, and has anecdotal information about a large number of his inspiring photographs. From stories of goths finding spirituality in empty buildings to kids begging for copies of his photographs, Vergara supplements his photos with powerful, if anecdotal, accompanying textual snapshots. As he points out so clearly, "stories of abandonment are as unique as the stories of the people involved in them." Do not abandon this book to the ash-heap of art school reference libraries. —*Megan Shaw*

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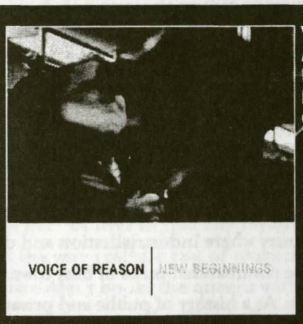

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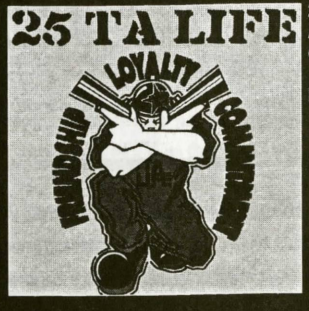

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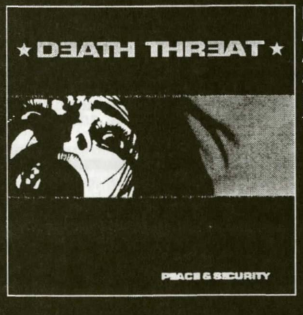

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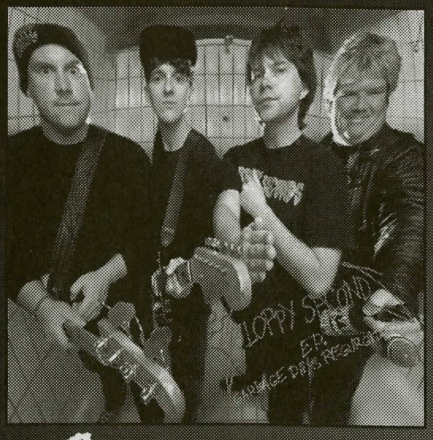

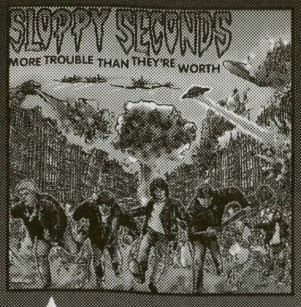

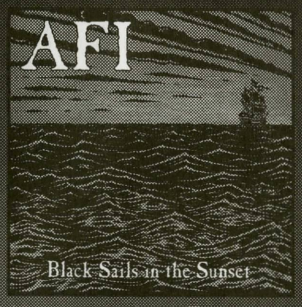

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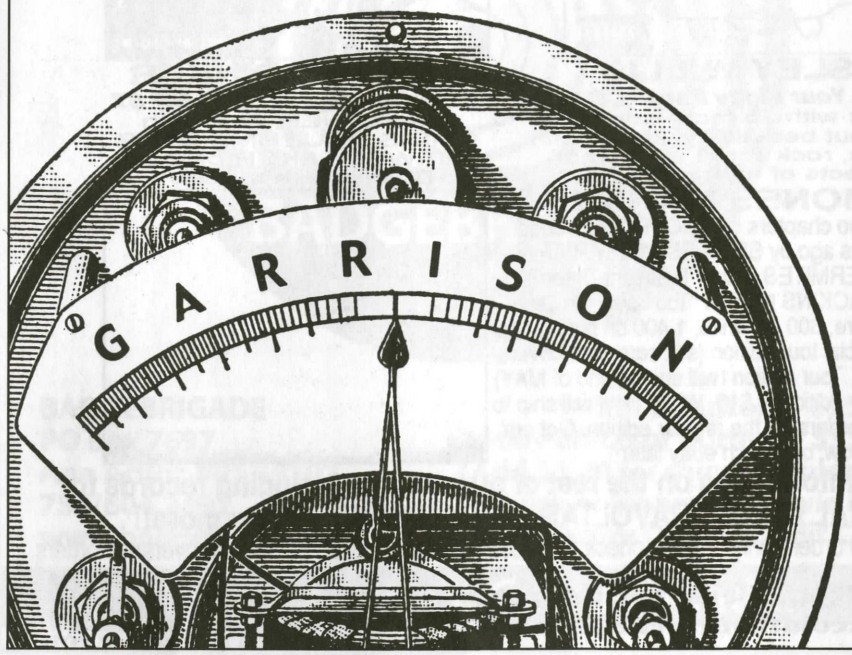

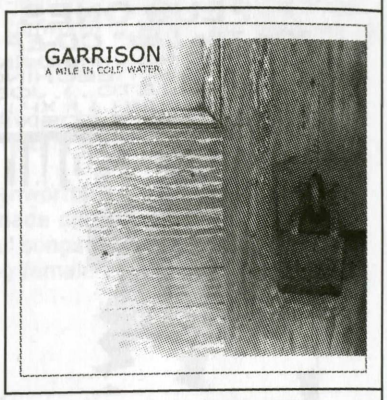

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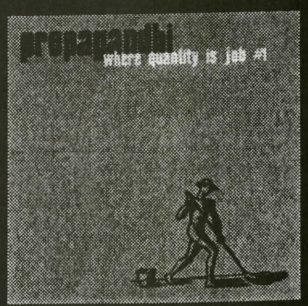

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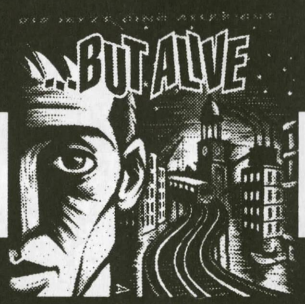

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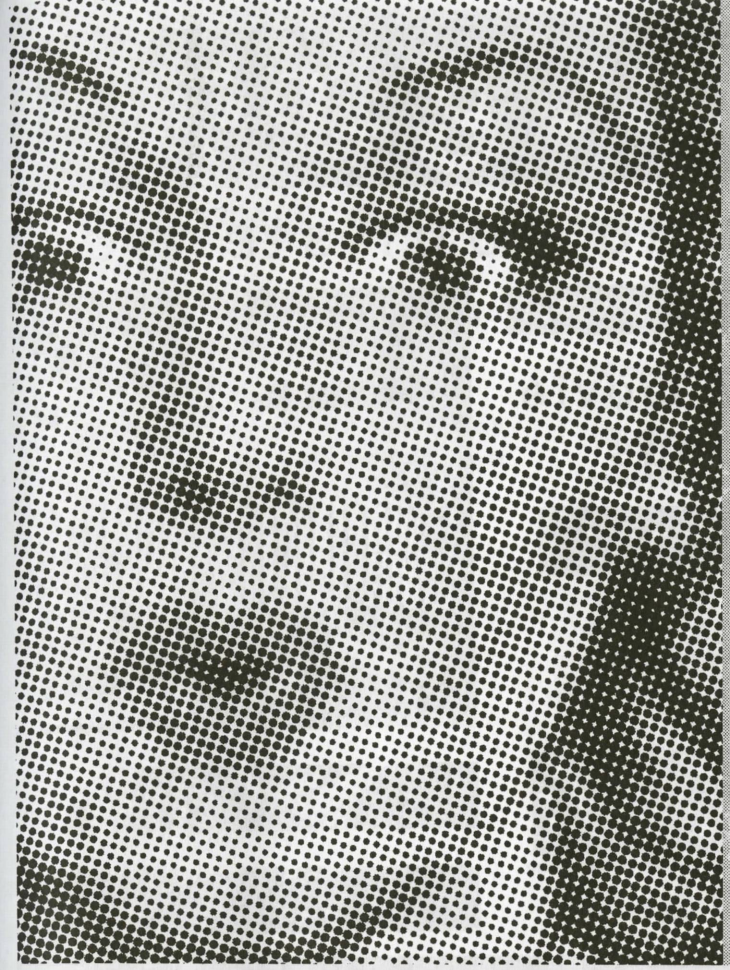

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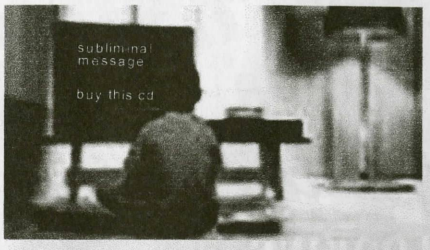

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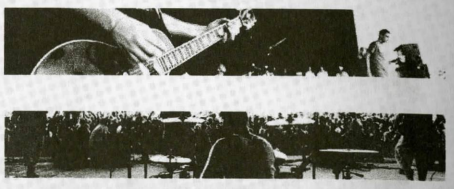

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Featuring live audio, video and news reports of protest actions worldwide, the IMC made its operational debut at the WTO protests in Seattle, where it served as a critical resource for activists and those seeking accounts of the demonstrations untainted by mainstream media biases.
www.indymedia.org

Corporate Watch
Provides news, analysis, research tools and action resources to respond to corporate activity around the globe.
http://www.corpwatch.org

Center for Campus Organizing
A national organization founded in 1995 to support progressive and social justice activism and investigative journalism on campuses nationwide.
www.cco.org

Rainforest Action Network
Works to protect the earth's rainforests and support the rights of their inhabitants through education, grassroots organizing and nonviolent direct action.
www.ran.org

Reclaim the Streets
Reclaim the Streets is a movement against the domination of automobiles and road culture.
www.gn.apc.org/rts/

Cross the Border
Advocates free movement across international boundaries, using the slogan "No one is illegal."
www.contrast.org/borders

No War on Youth Online Resources
A set of resources for organizers and activists fighting against the criminalization of American youth.
http://www.colorlines.com/waronyouth

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All issues before PP15 are all black & white. Covers of PP15-21 are 2-3 color. All issues after 21 have full color covers. All issues before PP29 are printed on newsprint. Confused yet?

PP4 EPITAPH records, ALLIED records and a PUNK LIVING WITH AIDS. Article on ABC NO RIO. 80 pgs.

PP8 RED AUNTS, AUS ROTTEN, FABRIC, and THE SMEARS. Article on PUNK PUBLISHING. 104 pgs.

PP13 ADRIAN TOMINE, LIFETIME, JON MORITSUGU, and SINKHOLE. Article about VOTING. 112 pgs

PP15 20 pages of COVERAGE FROM THE 1996 DEMOCRATIC & REPUBLICAN CONVENTIONS. Interviews with Sarah Dyer/ACTION GIRL COMICS, RHYTHM COLLISION, CHAMBERLAIN, and CHEESECAKE 120 pgs

PP17 "ALL PUNK CONS" a critique of modern punk. Interviews with THE DESCENDENTS, DAN O'MAHONEY, SNAPCASE, RYE COALITION, and PAIN. Article on LIVING WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF BREAST CANCER. 136 pgs.

PP17 "HEROIN AND PUNK": an in-depth look at the dark side of the punk scene. Also interviews with LOOKOUT RECORDS, DILLINGER 4, THE SOFTIES, TROUBLEMAN UNLIMITED and the HAL AL SHEDDAD. Articles on ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES RECORD'S FIGHT WITH THE PHILADELPHIA PD, the WHO'S EMMA COLLECTIVE, JUDI BARI and WORKING AT A TELEPSYCHIC LINE. Plus much more. 164 pgs.

PP23 CHUMBAWAMBA: Has mainstream success blunted their anarchist ideals? Also inside are interviews with GEARHEAD FANZINE, LOVEITT RECORDS, SUBTERRANEAN DISTRIBUTION, THE VAN PELT and THE YOUNG PIONEERS. Articles on the PIRATE RADIO movement, on being an OUTREACH WORKER FOR HOMELESS YOUTH, GURILLA POSTERING and the RECENT CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE TEAMSTERS. 154 pgs

PP24 THE ART & DESIGN ISSUE. The current state of art and punk. Interviewed in this issue are comic activist SETH TOBOKMAN, designers ART CHANTRY and HOUSE INDUSTRIES, photographers CYNTHIA CONNOLLY, CHRISSIE PIPER and PAUL DRAKE and tattoo artist KIM SAIGH. Articles about the poster art of FRANK KOZIK, STATE SUBSIDIZING OF THE ARTS, the CURRENT STATE OF RADICAL ART, and DESIGN IN THE UNDERGROUND. 164 pgs.

PP25 THE GROWING GIRL SKATE UNDERGROUND Also in this issue are interviews with SPAZZ, DESOTO RECORDS, The WORLD INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, BY THE GRACE OF GOD and OUTPUNK. Articles on SPOKEN WORD & 25 YEARS OF CHOICE. Plus, PP25 looks at the REAL REASONS THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GO BACK TO IRAQ. 144 pgs

PP26 STEVE ALBINI, talks and talks. Also interviewed in PP26: AVAIL, SMART WENT CRAZY, SERVOTRON, POLYVINYL RECORDS, COMPOUND RED and RED MONKEY. Aricles include a piece about TOUCH & GO RECORDS' RECENT LAWSUIT WITH THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS, NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, the POLITICS OF WHOLE FOODS and THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GRAFFITI ARTIST TIE. Jam-packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A rare talk with Bikini Kill's KATHLEEN HANNA. Also interviewed in PP27: DISCOUNT, CHROM-TECH, ASSÜCK, the PEECHEES, and PRANK RECORDS' Ken Sanderson. Articles include a look at the GROWING HYSTERIA SURROUNDING TEEN VIOLENCE; BRINGING HUMANITARIAN AID INTO IRAQ; A COLLEGE COURSE BASED ON PUNK and TWO ANTI-RACIST SKINHEADS WERE MURDERED IN LAS VEGAS THIS JULY—Punk Planet investigates. 156 pgs

PP29 checks in with SLEATER-KINNEY. In addition to S-K, PP29 features a talks with KID DYNAMITE, The Metro-shifter's K. SCOTT RICHTER, JESSICA HOPPER, publisher of HIT IT OR QUIT IT ZINE, RAINER MARIA. Articles: Kim Bae brings you aboard as LOS CRUDOS TOURS SOUTH AMERICA. Author Mimi Nguyen takes A PERSONAL LOOK AT VIETNAM—as a homeland, as a war and as a state of mind. Also featured in PP29 is a look at THE USE OF PEPPER SPRAY BY THE POLICE; a FREE BIKE PROGRAM and the GROWING UNREST IN THE KOSOVO REPUBLIC. Plus all the other goodies. 136 pgs.

PP30 THE MURDER OF IRAQ 18 pages to coverage of the horrible destruction reaped on the Iraqi people by the US and UN's economic sanctions. Also in this issue: BRATMOBILE, TODAY IS THE DAY, THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS, SEAWEED, WICKED FARLEYS, VINYL COMMUNICATIONS and BLUETIP. Articles on JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA'S VICTORY IN MINNESOTA; the MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT, a militant group bent on ending gentrification in San Francisco; THE GREEN PARTY IN ARCATA, CALIFORNIA; and a UNION VICOTORY IN A NICARAGUAN SWEATSHOP. Plus an expanded DIY section, columns, reviews and much much more. 136 pgs.

PP31 features a talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TED LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and DÄLEK. Punk Planet #31 also looks at the DEAD KENNEDYS LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former bandmates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BRIDES FROM RUSSIA and LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr, THE ETERNALZ, ASPHODEL RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and ecclectic art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept./Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING "INSTRUMENT", THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIJUN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tienanmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRAIGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR. From its rampant sexism to its exploitative commercialism to sponsor Vans Shoes use of sweatshop labor, PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REPLIKANTS, CADILLACA , OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—excel[t fpr reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER. The frontman of punk legends THE CLASH talks with Punk Planet about his recent solo career, helping create the London punk scene of the '70s, politics and much, much more. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE , the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE's DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. Brian Deneke was killed because he was a punk. Because he was a punk, his killer was set free. In this captivating story, Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interveiws with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMPWRIST and SARGE's ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, Punk Planet #37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; Q AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAD STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

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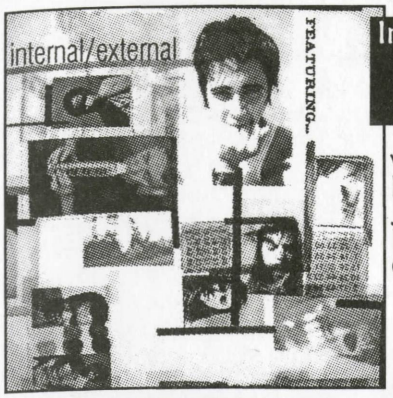

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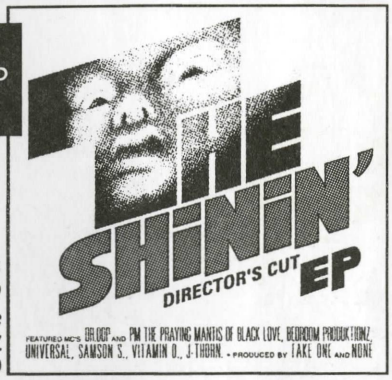

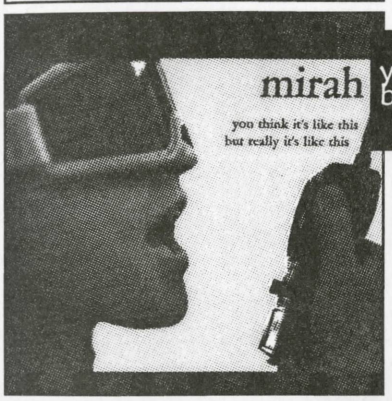

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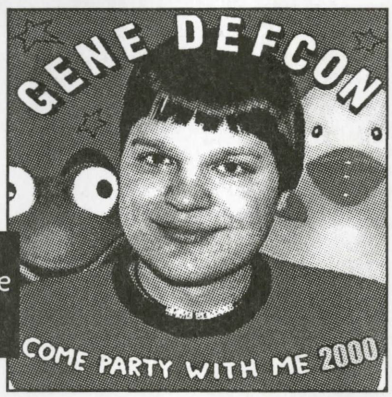

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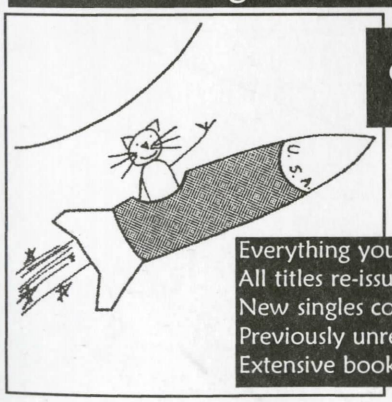

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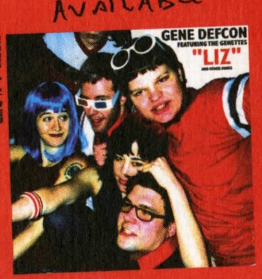

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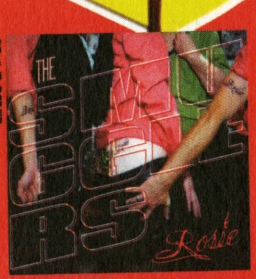

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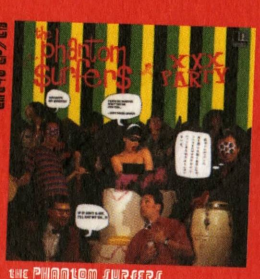

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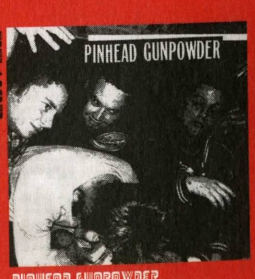

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