

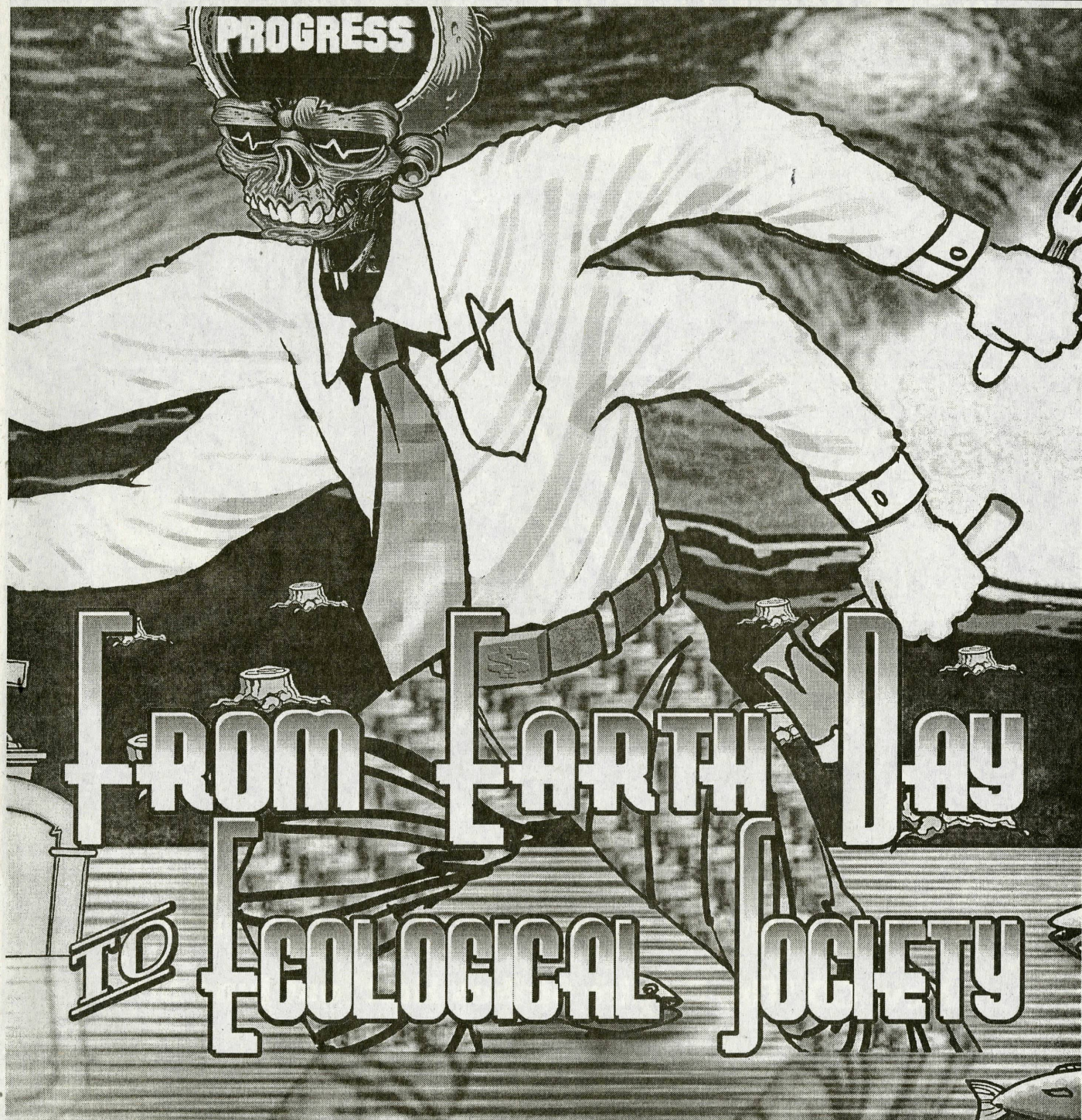
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IMPACT

April/May 2004

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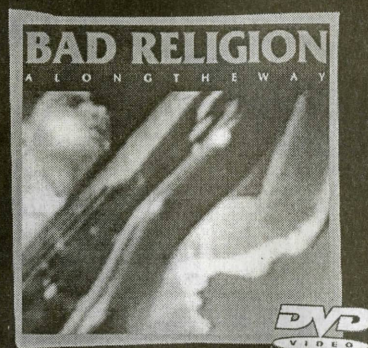
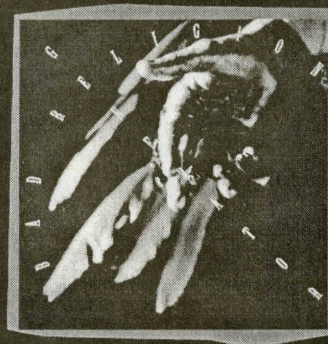
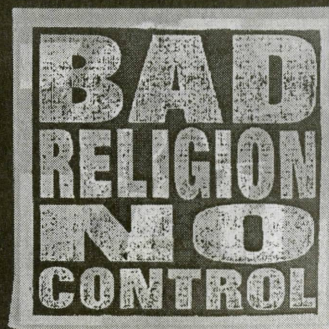
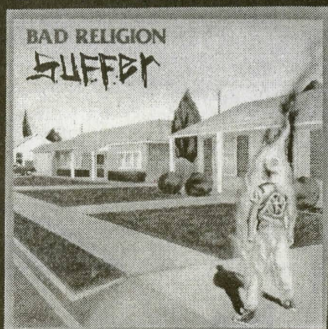
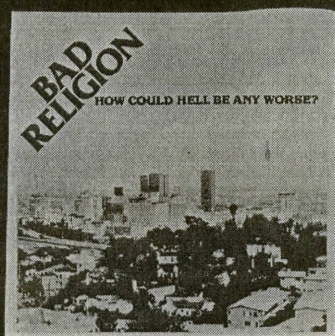
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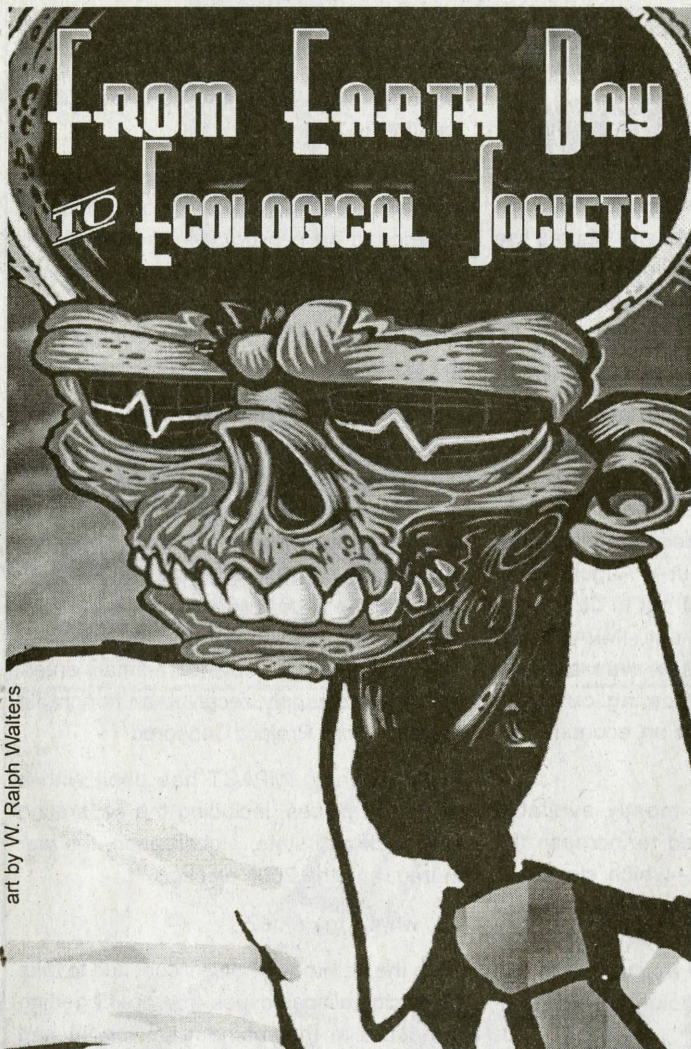
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things within

IMPACT PRESS • ISSUE 50 • APRIL/MAY 2004



art by W. Ralph Walters

by Dr. Steven Best

Thirty-four years have passed since the U.S. celebrated its first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. While citizens honor the earth one day a year, corporations and their state clients trash it every day, non-stop. As species vanish and ecosystems collapse before our eyes, it is clear that a new ethic and radical social change is required to forestall utter catastrophe. • PAGE 28

"Marriage has been undermined by divorce, so don't tell me about marriage. Don't blame the gay and lesbian, transgender and transsexual community."

-- Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, 2/19/04

"What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another."

-- Gandhi

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

-- Alice Walker

CONTENTS:

Notes From the Cultural Wasteland by Morris Sullivan Janet Jackson appears at the Superbowl, and Ecce Mamma! so does her right breast. Entire nations crumble in the aftermath, leaving Mel Gibson to fiddle while Jerusalem burns. • PAGE 8

Battle The Monsanto Milk Beast / A Corporation That Breaks The Greed Mold by Jim Hightower The evil that is Monsanto and the surprisingly compassionate company that is Costco. • PAGE 10

Spinning The Past, Threatening The Future by Norman Solomon Top Bush administration officials are going all out to airbrush yesterday's Iraq war deceptions on behalf of today's. And tomorrow's. • PAGE 11

Born To Die by Heather Moore Approximately three or four million cats and dogs are euthanized in animal shelters across the United States each year. Yet puppy mills and breeders continue to churn out animal after animal like tools on an assembly line. • PAGE 12

Round & Round We Go: Gearing Up For The Big Race by Morris Sullivan Barring miracle or catastrophe, the choice for most voters will be four more Bush years, or John Kerry. The war for the White House will be fought hard; here's a preview of the battle strategies. • PAGE 18

COMICS: The Muddlemarch by Neal Skorpen • PAGE 21

America: Home Of The Hateful by Jeff Nall No better proof of the U.S.'s sorrowful reality exists than the recent outcry of opposition to gay marriage, as expressed by politicians and, in particular, the American people. • PAGE 22

Bolivia Despierta-Bolivia Awake by Kari Lydersen Today, things are relatively calm in Bolivia. But the stark divisions between rich and poor, the debilitating effects of globalization, corruption and internal divisions still exist, and citizens say they expect more upheaval or drastic political change in the near future. • PAGE 34

The Little Mermaid: So Round, So Firm, So Fully Packed by Adam Finley Rather than feign concern for the public, the tobacco industry would probably do much better if it took over the movie industry completely. Essentially, every actor in a film would be smoking non-stop. • PAGE 42

COMICS: The K Chronicles by Keith Knight • PAGE 43

Corporate Crimes Against Animals by Patrice Jones With the daily crises that threaten ecosystems and animals, the esoteric details of accounting scandals and insider trading can seem both incomprehensible and beside the point. But most corporate crime is not abstract and much of it has a direct impact on animals and their habitats. • PAGE 44

Old Presidents and New Theocrats by Gary Sloan Whether the immediate provocation be placement of the Ten Commandments in courthouses or school prayer, the new theocrats seek to undermine the Establishment clause of the First Amendment. • PAGE 48

Quickies: A Little Bit On A Lot of Records • PAGE 50

Activist Event Listings: Join a protest, attend a rally. • PAGE 62

QUOTES:

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covering issues the way the media should

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A Fact from IMPACT: Today's U.S. forest land area amounts to about 70% of the area that was forested in 1630. Since 1630, about 297 million acres of forest land have been converted to other uses—mainly agricultural.

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education." - Thomas Jefferson



From the Editor

It's hard to believe that this is the 50th issue of IMPACT press. When I started the magazine in 1996, I never would have imagined it would still be alive and kicking after eight years—and now, 50 issues.

The first issue came out in March 1996, followed by one in April and one in May. I foolishly believed that I could publish an issue each month while working a full time job at the same time. Because of time constraints, IMPACT then became bi-monthly, with issue #4 coming out in August 1996. Going bi-monthly turned out to be a good thing, because, to this day, IMPACT just barely manages to break even as a bi-monthly publication. Coming out each month would have been an economic disaster.

Initially, IMPACT was mostly available around Florida. I wanted to increase the magazine's circulation—which started at 8,000—to expose more people to it. I reached out to IMPACT's then-small email list and asked if anyone would want to distribute the magazine, voluntarily, in their town.

The response was huge. As a result, there are now 12,000 copies of each issue of IMPACT spread over 50 cities around the U.S., facilitated by a group of very cool, very supportive individuals who volunteer to get IMPACT out to the masses. Without them, most of you might never have found this copy of the magazine!

But before the magazine even gets into those distributors' hands, it is put together at my house. No, it's not run out of some fancy office—just in an extra bedroom in the house I share with my girlfriend (who is also the magazine's copy editor). That's where the pages are laid out, the advertising calls are made and the boxes are taped up to be shipped to those distributors.

Without anything to publish, though, IMPACT wouldn't be but blank pieces of newsprint. It's a privilege to have so many great writers and artists who are willing to volunteer their creative abilities to IMPACT.

So, after eight years and 50 issues, what has IMPACT done?

Well, we've covered everything from the injustice in Chiapas, Mexico to homophobia in America to art censorship. Michael Moore was interviewed in issue #18 and same-sex marriage was first discussed in issue #25, while the cover story of issue #30 questioned the existence and relevance of Jesus Christ.

It was in April 2000 that IMPACT first started covering animal rights and vegan issues. I had gone vegan in May of 1998 but it took me a while before featuring animal rights content in the magazine. Now it's a very important issue for me and one that IMPACT will continue to deal with in each issue. The first animal rights cover story (issue #32, April/May 2001) on downed animals entering our food supply, received an honorable mention from Project Censored.

More recently, IMPACT has dealt with a myriad of issues, including the separation of church and state, globalization, the war in Iraq, and the 2004 election.

So, what's to come?

Who the hell knows?! We'll continue to take on socio/political issues that aren't getting exposure in the mainstream media and we'll try to present topics that other alternative publications aren't messing with. We'll fight to get Bush out of the White House. We'll continue to educate on animal rights and veganism with the hope of getting readers to consider lifestyle changes. And, of course, IMPACT will continue to be free wherever you can find it (including on our web site: www.impactpress.com, where we post a portion of every issue and have archives dating back to December 1996).

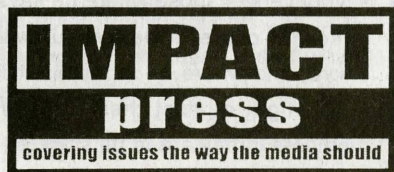
So, as I say goodbye to issue #50 and start to think about #51 (the process never stops), I want to thank everyone who has ever helped with the magazine in any way and anyone who has ever bothered to pick up a copy.

• craig mazer •

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Speak Your Mind. . .

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IMPACT:

Thanks to Heather Moore for her excellent expose "Is Their Blood on Your Back" (Issue #49) regarding the world of wool, down and leather! It is shocking to learn the depth and breadth of animal abuse in these industries. Since there are so many cruelty-free and stylish clothing alternatives, everyone should make compassion the fashion and avoid clothing that is inherently inhumane to animals.

Sincerely,
Elaine Sloan
NYC, NY

IMPACT:

The article by Morris Sullivan about third party options misses the point. Third parties of all sorts will be able to better represent their constituents if voters are not consumed with concerns over their candidate becoming a "spoiler," taking their votes away from a candidate who does not represent their interests, but is a lesser-of-two-evils defense. Citizens must strive to be alert for ways to improve the structure of democracy, instead of taking the current system for granted.

For instance, Lani Gunier, an African-American legal scholar, has proposed several alternative systems of proportional representation that provides a voice to minorities (be they race, ethnic or political), rather than the standard winner-take-all of most elections.

Also, instant run-off voting (IRV) allows voters on ballots to list any number of alternatives to their preferred candidate of choice, in order of choice, so that voters may both vote FOR whomever they find best represents them, and defend their interests AGAINST those who don't.

When the votes are counted, the votes of the candidate with the least votes are re-assigned to their next choices, until the election results in a majority winner. This system is working today in Australia and for the mayoral election in London, with new governments adopting the system day to day (e.g., San Francisco).

Finally, many states in the US allow cross-endorsement by political parties, so that parties may maintain separate identities while cooperating, if they choose to do so, on the election of a common candidate.

And Sullivan suggests that it would be irresponsible for US citizens to put anyone other than a battle-hardened political insider into the White House. Were Brazilians irresponsible for electing a President from among their own working class ranks? I don't think so. If we can get a normal, citizen-president into the White House, I think it would be a victory of the people.

There is enough expertise at the nation's disposal to assist our "Commander-in-Chief" with the delicate issues of foreign policy.

Sincerely,
Chris Holme
Amherst, MA

IMPACT:

It always boggles my mind when Christians insist they have no doubts what happened 2,000 years ago when there were no eyewitnesses. There were no cameras or tape recorders back then nor were any interviews conducted. We don't know what happens behind closed doors in the White House and cameras are always present, but the NT testimony is bullet proof to these weak-minded zealots.

Although Aramaic was spoken by these people, the gospels are written in Greek, which presents problems. It was a mis-translation of the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 into Greek that resulted in the false virgin birth prophecy in the first place.

How a comprehensive scenario of these events can be ascertained from the flimsy evidence we have, and the contradictory nature of this so-called evidence is still another problem. It always seems like Christians just quote the exemplary Jesus and omit the unsavory verses, those where he says he does not come in peace but with a sword, and where he urges his followers to fight against their own family members if they are to be sincere.

The gospel accounts of the events from Good Friday to Easter are a morass of contradictions from start to finish. The only thing they agree on is there was a crucifixion and a resurrection. Who actually witnessed this, no one can agree on. And we have unbelievable accounts of worldwide darkness and the resurrection of saints that no one else in history noticed. How ridiculous is that?

So what are honest people to believe?

Another serious issue that is never mentioned can be found in Luke 6:30 where Christians are urged by Jesus to give up ALL their earthly possessions and ask for none of them back. I work with a guy who owns five homes, 3 in NJ and 2 in NC, including 172 acres of land in the latter, and still insists that he has no money. He is also a deacon in a local Baptist church that includes bible study, so you would think he would be aware of the admonishments against earthly possessions. He is OBSESSED with money. Although he could have retired years ago, he is hanging on be-

Speak Your Mind. . .

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cause he will get a smaller social security check once he leaves. Imagine that. He lives in a house here in NJ, rents out another, and has a third unoccupied that he can sell outright for a quarter of a million, in addition to a new house he just bought down south and a childhood house willed to him, but that is not enough. And he works overtime. He also has physical problems. He is diabetic, has had a heart attack, and broke his back in a car accident. He is 68 and is planning on adding an addition to the new house. He thinks he's going to live forever and laughs when we tell him this. I wish I was his son.

I am also appalled at the lifestyles of some preachers and televangelists.

They are already living much better than their listeners, yet urge those who can't afford it to give them their last ten dollars. They have no morals whatsoever.

And what do they offer in return? They provide nothing tangible to hold onto while trying to convince us that we need them to interpret what we can read for ourselves. For that we should support their lavish lifestyles. And people fall for it.

I agree completely with Gary Sloan ("Did Jesus Exist And Does It Matter?" Issue #30). I do not believe Jesus Christ was a real person who either walked the earth or heaven for that matter. His essay is a breath of fresh air.

Regards,
Joe Frimmer

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Notes from the Cultural Wasteland

morris sullivan
morris sullivan



I'm naked.

You'll have to take my word for that—you can't see me, of course—but I assure you I'm in front of my computer naked as a jay bird except for a pair of house slippers (the floor is cold).

This is not a wardrobe malfunction. I didn't forget to put my clothes on, my pants did not fall off when I got up to get a cup of coffee, and no one playfully yanked off my bathrobe expecting me to have underwear on. Those things have happened in the past, but not today. My nudity is no accident.

I won't apologize for being naked, or even claim there's a good reason for it. I simply decided there wasn't enough gratuitous nudity in my column.

Nudity, gratuitous or otherwise, has shown up in the news a lot lately, accompanied by its wicked henchmen, indecency and obscenity. The focus started around the first of the year, when Congress decided there was too much of that naughty stuff on television and radio. While the legislators were still considering this sticky problem, Janet Jackson's right breast made a surprise appearance during the Super Bowl half-time show.

Justin Timberlake—perhaps the best evidence yet that western culture is dead—revealed the evil nipple when he ripped Jackson's bodice at the end of a duet with her on his song, "Rock Your Body." Almost everyone involved with the production immediately distanced themselves from the offending boob: The good ol' boys who hired MTV to arrange the half-time show were appalled; MTV was both appalled and bewildered; and Timberlake pretended to be altogether baffled by the breasticle, attributing the revelation to a flaw in Jackson's wardrobe.

The owner of the right breast was herself mute on the topic for several days while her PR firm tried to figure out how to capitalize on it. I hoped she would eventually say something meaningful about the incident, like, "The song was so lame, I had to do something to wake everyone up," or even, "I just thought everyone would like to see my right breast." I'd have even respected her if she said, "I have an album coming out, and if I show you my right hooter, maybe more of you will buy it."

Instead, she apologized. Nevertheless, when Jackson's tit flopped out during half-time, it toppled the first domino in a series that concluded with a bill to raise broadcaster's fines for airing "indecent" and the near-simultaneous expulsion of both Bubba the Love Sponge and Howard Stern from programming carried by ClearChannel Communications, one of the world's largest media conglomerates.

I don't think this is any big loss. Stern used to be kind of interesting. However, the more popular he became—and the more money syndicators like ClearChannel made—the more his show focused on his masturbatory fantasies. I stopped listening to Stern one morning after a lengthy sequence in which he watched a porno movie and described the action, blow by blow. I just didn't care what he had to say any longer.

I heard Bubba the Love Sponge once while he talked to a female caller while she masturbated with a dildo his producers had mailed her. Once was enough.

Both the Stern and Bubba segments, by the way, aired during morning drive-time. The big surprise is not that these guys aren't on the air any more, it's that they remained on the air for so long. Performers should consider their audience and the venue. When you're in the mainstream, you have to take that into consideration. If you want to say "fuck" a lot, write for the alternative press, where no one gives a shit.

Besides yanking Bubba and Howard, ClearChannel issued a lengthy piece of public relations horseshit they called a "Decency Initiative." I wrote their PR people for clarification. I explained that I used to listen to the local talk station, which ClearChannel now owns. Back then, the station had some talk jocks who thoughtfully dealt with controversial topics. The station's content has since pandered to the lowest common denominator; its hosts now focus on toilet functions and crude sexual scenarios, and its humor depends on racist, sexist, homophobic points of view.

I thought the deterioration began about the time ClearChannel purchased the station, I said, but I wasn't sure. I hoped they would help me get the timeline straight. "I also wonder how upper management can reconcile your recent 'decency initiative' with the organization's past programming and marketing policies," I wrote. "Perhaps you can explain that to me."

They didn't reply, so I decided to see what kind of decent stuff the local ClearChannel stations now air. I tuned in one morning to WHTQ, the former central Florida home of Bubba the Love Sponge. The "John Boy and Billy Show" featured a discussion of Rosie O'Donnell's wedding to her lesbian partner. The segment was laced with predictably sophomoric jokes about lesbians, included references to "San Fran-sissy-co" and observations like, "If you want to get a queer to do something, tell him not to do it. Snap-Snap."

Meanwhile, WTKS, the station that used to carry Howard Stern, was filling the gap left by his show with repeats of their Monsters of the Midday show, which features a variety of loud mush-mouthed

crackers. On that particular morning, they replayed their Martin Luther King Day show, including a monologue by Bubba "Whoop-Ass" Wilson.

In his monologue, Wilson justifiably criticized the FCAT exams. He also droned on about his "success," ending with the comment that he gets plenty of ass, despite his lack of education. "If you want to get some ass," he concluded, "get on the bus with the people of colored (sic)" and sing with them, "We don't need no FCAT/We make more money sellin' crack." Apparently, while toilet functions and on-air masturbation are now taboo, ClearChannel considers racism, sexism and gay-bashing "decent."

That's perhaps the biggest problem I have with "decency" and "obscenity" regulations—they come down hard on nipples and dookey jokes but ignore truly obscene stuff like intolerance.

Besides Janet Jackson's right one, other breasts have made the news in the last couple of months, including two notable knockers belonging to Elizabeth Book. The 42-year-old mother of two from Ormond Beach flashed her girls during a political protest against police harassment during Bike Week in Daytona Beach.

At various times, Book also said her bare-breasted protest would confront several key issues, including the arrests of women flashers during Bike Week, the discriminatory nature of anti-nudity ordinances, and the arbitrariness of our society's view that the female breast is somehow obscene.

For the record, I agree with some of her points and disagree with others. She seems to think biker-chicks should be allowed to ride topless down Main Street during Bike Week. I disagree; I don't think people who live in Daytona Beach should have to choose between staying indoors for a week or seeing some strange motorcycle mama's breasteses waving in the breeze.

On the other hand, I tried to get to the protest and see the scene for myself, and didn't make it. I did get harassed by the cops, however, when I got in the way of a pumped-up motorcycling deputy on his way to make the big bust. Here I was, a middle-aged guy in a minivan, and from the way the cop was yelling, you'd have thought I was the awfulest tattooed biker terrorist he'd ever seen. Perhaps her "harassment" charge has some merit.

I agree that the ordinances and our society's view of the female breast are sexist, however. Think about it: If Timberlake had bared his own breast instead of Jackson's, the reaction would have been much different—coast-to-coast giggling, probably.

Book got arrested. She's going to fight it, and it will be interesting to see how that goes; the Supreme Court has ruled that nudity is permissible as part of a political protest.

It would be expecting way too much, but I'd love to see Jackson

bare her left breast in political protest. If she said, "I flashed my nipple to protest the FCC's interference in free expression," I might disagree. However, as Voltaire said, "I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it."

There are many indecencies and obscenities Janet could protest with her bare left breast. There's the obscene and indecent war in Iraq, for example. And I think it was pretty indecent of Bush's Secretary of Education to call the teachers union "a terrorist organization." Certainly, the National Park Service's decision to avoid offending religious nutcases by selling books on Creationism at the Grand Canyon gift shop could be considered at least morally reprehensible.

If she were Jewish, perhaps Jackson might bare a nipple to protest Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ*.

The *New York Times* critic Frank Rich started a controversy around this film by pointing out its anti-Semitism. Gibson responded in an interview with Diane Sawyer, "I want (Rich) dead. I want his intestines on a stick." The film's PR people then claimed the Pope had seen *The Passion* and endorsed it, saying, "It is as it was."

I decided I had to see this movie.

I won't comment on *The Passion's* anti-Semitism, except to add this: I was prepared to discount the anti-Semitic charge and write it off to over-sensitivity or even anti-Christian sentiment. However, the damn movie's about as anti-Jewish as it could get.

The Passion is an approximately 12-minute movie with about an hour and 58 minutes of whipping. About halfway through the first seemingly endless beating-up-Jesus scene, I started wanting Mel Gibson dead. I wanted to see him fed to lions.

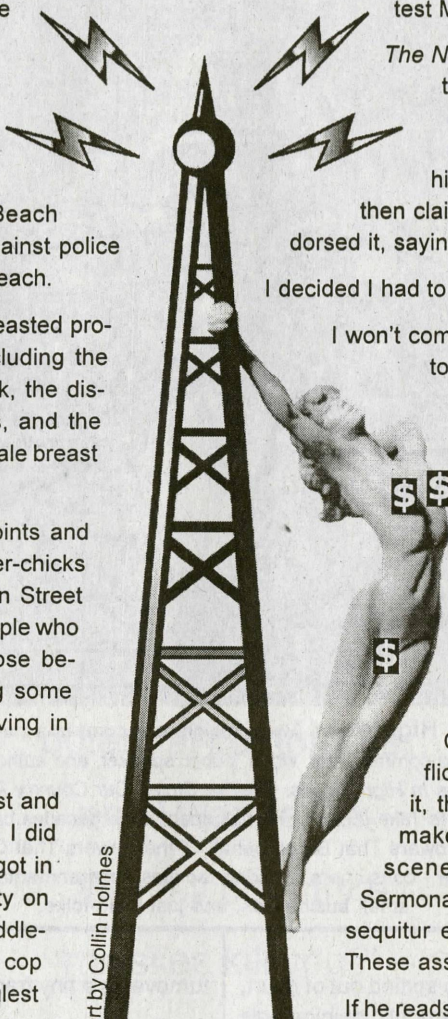
Can you imagine the Pope sitting through this flick? Even worse, can you imagine him seeing it, then saying, "It is as it was?" More likely he'd make it about 20 lashes into the first whipping scene and storm out, proclaiming, "Ieminius Sermona Christi! Dic in Latina? Rectumi numeris non sequitur erat!" (roughly translated: "Jiminy Christmas! These assholes can't even count in Latin!")

If he reads this, Gibson will no doubt call for my evisceration—*The Passion* looks and sounds a lot like *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Gibson probably knew that, because

his PR machine went to great lengths to avoid the sort of controversy *Last Temptation* drew, banning critics and kissing religious ass, inviting church groups to advance screenings and keeping that Pope thing in the news.

Christian proponents of the film (and so far, all proponents seem to be Christian) claim that *The Passion* moved them to tears—that it revealed to them the degree of Christ's suffering in a way no

(NUDITY, continued on page 40)



Battle The Monsanto Milk Beast

If you think CorporateWorld can't get any more conniving, you haven't figured on Monsanto.

This is the biotech outfit that's trying to profit by putting its artificial growth hormones into our milk supply. Since consumers overwhelmingly reject this adulteration, Monsanto lobbyists got our government to let this milk be marketed with no labeling of the adulteration, so we milk-buyers won't know what we're getting.

The good news is that several dairies have responded by declaring on their milk cartons: "No Artificial Growth Hormones Used." The bad news is that Monsanto greedheads have unleashed packs of their attack-dog lawyers to sue several of these dairies, claiming that these "No Artificial Hormones" labels are—get this—false and misleading, because they might cause you and me to think that natural milk is better for us than milk with Monsanto's additive.

In the first place, I do think that. But, secondly, the dairies are not making any such health claim—they're merely informing us that the corporate additive is NOT in their milk. What's false or misleading about that?

Nothing, but by simply filing these frivolous lawsuits, Monsanto can intimidate the dairies into changing their labels. It recently succeeded with this bullying tactic against Oakhurst Dairy in Maine. Monsanto was prepared to spend a quarter of a million dollars or more just on lawyers to squeeze Oakhurst. How's a small dairy going to match that?

After fighting for several months, Oakhurst has settled out of court, agreeing to alter its label—even though Maine public opinion was solidly behind Oakhurst and even though legal analysts say Monsanto's legal case was silly putty.

Oakhurst is the third small dairy that this biotech goliath's money has beaten down, and others are targeted. For the purity of our milk, marketplace and judicial system, we consumers need to stand up against the bully. Call the Organic Consumers Association: 218-226-4164. ❧

REFERENCES

"Oakhurst to alter its label," *Portland Press-Herald*, December 25, 2003.
www.oakhurstdairy.com

A Corporation That Breaks The Greed Mold

Do big time CEOs—no matter how compassionate and cuddly they might be personally—have to be SOBs on the job?

Yes, says the conventional wisdom of greater CorporateWorld. The bottom-line dictates that wages and benefits be slashed and that offshoring be pursued with a vengeance. It's not personal, just business. "Look Ye to Wal-mart," boom the Market Gods, directing CEOs to follow the anti-labor, low-wage, no benefit, move-it-all-to-China ethic of this giant. The gods decree that no one can out-compete Wal-Mart, so best to imitate the beast.

Apparently, Jim Sinegal has been going to the wrong church. He's CEO of Costco, the profitable warehouse club retailer that's fast growing across the country. He takes a shockingly heretical view of his job, boasting of his company's fair treatment of employees: "We pay much better than Wal-Mart," Sinegal says. "That's not altruism. It's good business."

Indeed, Costco's pay is much, much, much better—a full-time Costco clerk or warehouse worker earns more than \$41,000 a year, plus getting terrific health-care coverage. Wal-Mart workers get barely a third of that pay, plus a lousy health-care plan. Costco even has unions!

Yet, Costco's labor costs are only about half of Wal-Mart's. How's that possible? One reason is that Costco workers feel valued, which adds enormously to their productivity, and they don't leave—employee

turnover is a tiny fraction of Wal-Mart's rapidly revolving door.

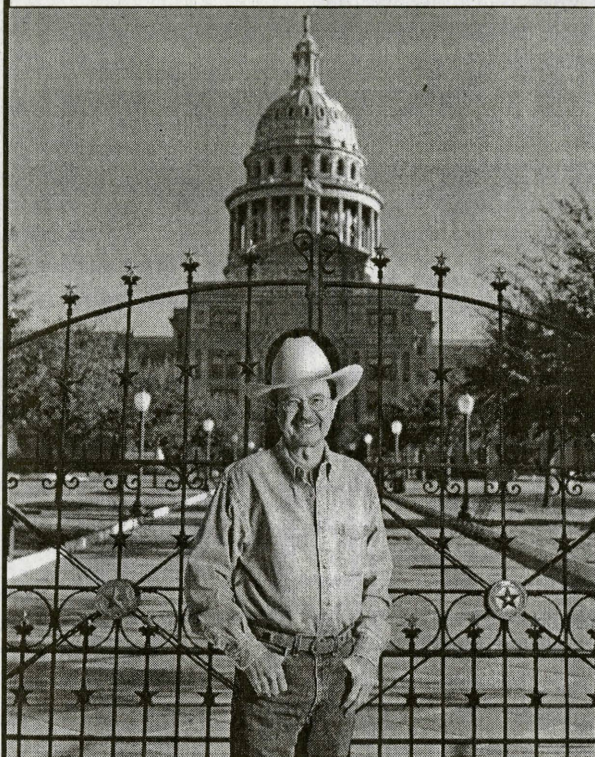
Another thing Sinegal rejects is offshoring: "We could move [some operations] to Bangladesh or somewhere. But what kind of message would that send to our employees? Not a good one, I think."

While Wal-Mart makes twice as much profit as Costco, Sinegal believes its better business to make a nice profit, but not a killing, and to invest more in Costco's 92,000 workers. "I don't see what's wrong with an employee earning enough to be able to buy a house or having a health plan for the family," he says. ❧

REFERENCE

"Costco Sees Value in Higher Pay," *LA Times*, February 15, 2004.

By Jim Hightower



Jim Hightower (www.jimhightower.com) is a national radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and author of *Thieves In High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time To Take It Back*. He has spent three decades battling the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be - consumers, working families, environmentalists, small businesses, and just-plain-folks.

Spinning the Past, Threatening the Future

By Norman Solomon

Norman Solomon is executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, a nationwide consortium of public-policy. His latest book, "Target Iraq: What The News Media Didn't Tell You," will be out in February. His syndicated column focuses on media and politics.

Political aphorisms don't get any more cogent: "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."

George Orwell's famous observation goes a long way toward explaining why—a full year after the invasion of Iraq—the media battles over prewar lies are so ferocious in the United States. Top administration officials are going all out to airbrush yesterday's deceptions on behalf of today's. And tomorrow's.

The future they want most to control starts on Election Day. And with scarcely seven months to go in the presidential campaign, the past that Bush officials are most eager to obscure is their own record. In late 2002 and early last year, whenever the drive to war hit a bump, they maneuvered carefully to keep the war caravan moving steadily forward.

There was no doubt, they were a hard-driving bunch. The most powerful squad of the Bush foreign-policy team ran on the fuel of certitude at such a prodigious rate that even their momentum had momentum—maybe, in part, because their lives' trajectories seemed to demand it. War had been declared first within themselves.

Perhaps such steeliness has been almost boilerplate in history; excuses for aggressive war have never been hard to come by. In this case, no amount of geopolitical analysis—from media pundits, academics and other commentators—could really do more to shed light than the lightbulb comprehension that these people in charge had, from the outset, made the determination that war it would be.

So, every attempt at civic engagement and demonstrations against the war scenario was, in effect, trying to impede "leaders" who had already gone around the bend. A very big bend. One of the American mass media taboos was to seriously suggest the possibility that the lot of them—Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice and, yes, Powell—were, in their pursuit of war on Iraq, significantly deranged.

Working back from their conclusion of war's necessity, top Bush administration officials—with assistance from many reporters and pundits—were reading the calendar backwards, hell-bent on getting the invasion underway well before the extreme heat of summer.

There was also political weather to be navigated. Though much more susceptible to manipulation than the four seasons, the elec-

toral storms would be starting for the 2004 presidential contest, and a secured victory over Iraq well in advance seemed advisable.

The peace-seeking pretense was dripping with charade in the months before the invasion. Journalists kept writing and talking

about the chances of war as though President Bush hadn't already made up his mind to order it. Yet what Bush said in public was exactly opposite to reality—a "one-eighty." When he talked about preferring to find an acceptable alternative to war, he was determined to bypass and destroy every alternative to war.

Rational arguments would not work to forestall the presidential order to unleash the Pentagon. Despite the obstacles, which included vital activism and protests for peace, the chief executive easily got to have his war—the best kind, to be fought and endured only by others.

Eighteen months ago, looking out at Baghdad from an upper story of a hotel, I thought of something Albert Camus once wrote: "And henceforth, the only honorable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble: that words are more powerful than munitions." Later, any and all words were to be vastly outmatched by the big guns trained on Iraq.

One afternoon, 14 months ago, inside a little shop in Baghdad's crowded souk, a young boy sat behind an old desk, brown eyes wide, quietly watching his father unfurl carpets for potential customers, and I wondered: "Will my country's missiles kill you?"

Key questions of the past are also crucial for the future. For instance, can the United States credibly wage a "war on terrorism" by engag-

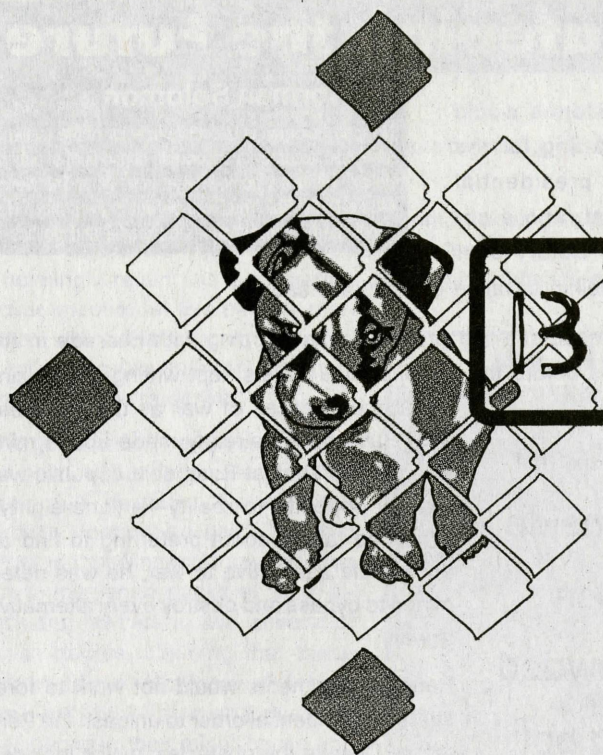
ing in warfare that terrorizes civilians?

Close to 10,000 Iraqi civilians have died because of the war during the past year.

Does the mix of mendacity and deadly violence from the Oval Office really strike against terrorism, or does it fuel terrorist cycles?

And, in the realm of news media, how many journalists are willing and able to go beyond reliance on official sources enough to bring us truth about lies that result in death? ◀

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BORN TO DIE

by HEATHER MOORE
art by CHARLEY DEPPNER

More than 50,000 kittens and puppies are born each day in the United States alone. The only kind word or gentle touch many of them ever receive is from the technician who must end their lives because there simply aren't enough homes—or even cages—for them all.

Between six and eight million dogs and cats enter animal shelters across the United States each year. Of these, approximately three or four million are euthanized. Most are young, healthy, and friendly. Many—about 25 percent of dogs who enter shelters—are purebred. Yet puppy mills and breeders continue to churn out animal after animal like tools on an assembly line.

The Woe Behind That Doggie in the Window

Nearly nine out of every 10 puppies sold in pet stores come from puppy mills—breeding kennels that raise dogs in cramped, crude, filthy conditions. According to Dr. Donald Allen, a veterinarian who worked on Dateline NBC's "Puppies For Sale" segment about puppy mills in April 2000, "dogs in puppy mills are typically kept in inhumane conditions, tethered to trees or confined to feces-filled wire cages."

Female dogs are bred twice a year and are usually destroyed when they are no longer able to produce puppies. The puppies are taken from their mothers and sold to brokers who transport them to pet stores for resale to oblivious customers. The puppies sometimes travel hundreds of miles in pickup trucks, tractor-trailers, and/or airplanes, often without adequate food, water, ventilation, or shelter.

Both the puppies and their mothers routinely suffer from malnutrition, exposure, and a lack of adequate veterinary care. Dr. Allen reports that some puppy mills do not vaccinate the dogs against diseases. Many are sold before they are six weeks old, the federal age limit for interstate puppy sales. Premature weaning may make the puppies more susceptible to diseases, and because the puppies are often inbred, they may possess bad genetic traits or have extremely aggressive personalities.

In 2000, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) conducted an undercover investigation at Neilsen Farms, a Kansas puppy mill. The dogs at Nielsen Farms had no comforts whatsoever—no bedding, little to no protection during the searing hot summers or frigid winters and no veterinary care, even when they were ill. Many had crusted, oozing eyes, raging ear infections, mange that turned their skin into a mass of red scabs, and/or abscessed feet from the wire floors.

An Australian cattle dog with a palm-sized sore on her back was never seen by a veterinarian and the wound did not heal properly. PETA's investigator discovered that the collar on a Labrador retriever had not been adjusted as the dog grew and had become embedded in his flesh. Even though the gangrenous skin fell away as the collar was removed, it was treated with nothing but a worm-repellant spray.

Several pups escaped from their poorly built kennel, and one was killed by other dogs in an adjoining run. Timid dogs were regularly terrorized by their more aggressive cage-mates, who often prevented them from eating and drinking.

Perhaps saddest of all were the old mother

dogs who had gone mad from confinement and loneliness. They circled frantically in their small cages and paced ceaselessly back and forth, their only way of coping with despair. PETA's investigation led to the closure of the Kansas facility, but Neilsen Farms has since moved to Montana where it continues to be involved in the selling of puppies.

Puppy Mill Prisons

There are thousands of breeders and dealers across the country. In Missouri alone there are an estimated 3,000 dog-breeding operations that generate \$2 billion a year. The nation's largest puppy broker is the Hunte Corporation in Missouri, which has been linked to numerous negligent pet stores and breeders and has sponsored American Kennel Club meetings. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has loaned Hunte more than \$4 million in taxpayer money for expansion and upgrades in the last three years.

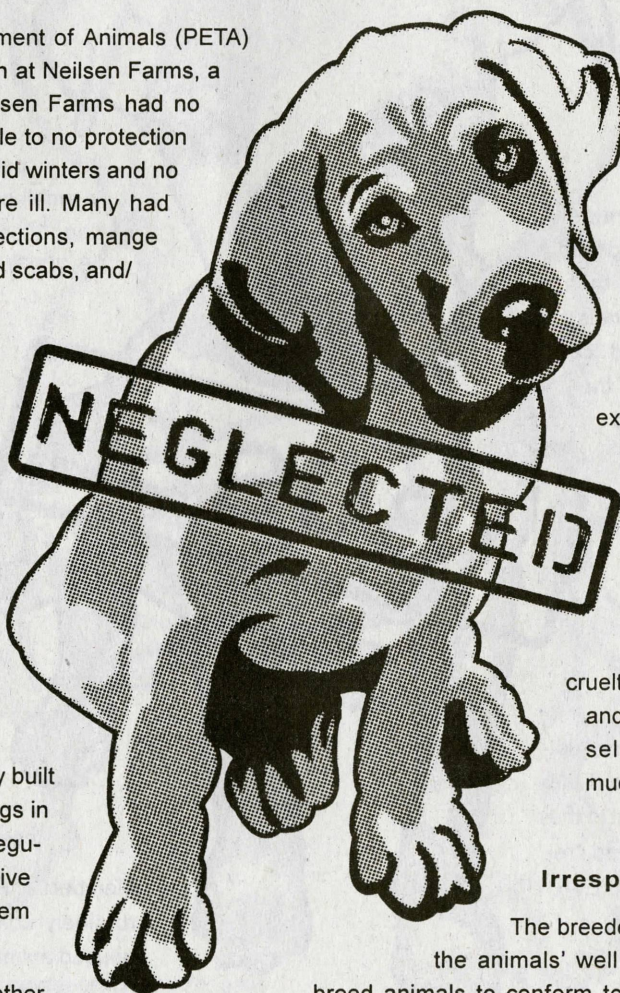
The USDA is supposed to monitor and inspect kennels to ensure that they are not violating the housing standards of the Animal Welfare Act, but kennel inspections are a low priority. Puppy mills are rarely monitored by state governments and existing regulations vary from state to state. In Missouri, for example, 2,100 of the

facilities are required to be inspected once a year, but there are only 12 inspectors employed to handle the task. There are an estimated 1,300 puppy mills in Wisconsin and voluntary inspections are expected of any breeder who sells a minimum of 50 dogs and cats, but there is no funding for enforcement of these regulations.

Dealers who want to avoid the few existing U.S. laws often do business overseas. According to one Canadian lawyer, "[P]uppy mill operators in the States buy from us. And crossing the border isn't a problem either. They cross them all the time." A New Hampshire breeder, who was arrested for cruelty to animals when dozens of dogs and cats were found living in filth, was selling puppies from Russia for as much as \$1,900 each on the Internet.

Irresponsible Breeders

The breeders concern is their bottom line—not the animals' well being. Like puppy mills, breeders breed animals to conform to "breed standards" which promote



"desirable" physical traits that often cause a variety of health problems. Many breeders support tail docking, ear cropping, debarking and other painful, unnecessary procedures.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) states that "ear cropping and tail docking are not medically indicated nor of benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss, and infection."

These procedures are so cruel that they are banned in many European countries. Many veterinarians also condemn debarking because it is superfluous, causes dogs a great deal of post-operative pain and strips them of their natural means to communicate.

Every March, the Westminster Kennel Club parades dogs around like trophies and judges them based on appearance and appearance alone. Many of the poor dogs look like freaks of nature, but there is really nothing natural about them. Breeders have manipulated them to have an overabundance of wrinkles; an overly prominent bone structure; fur that drags on the floor; tight, set ears; a short, amputated tail; and other preferred characteristics.

In response to the tail-docking requirements for certain breeds in the annual dog show, PETA filed a complaint against the club with New York officials, alleging criminal violations of the state's anti-cruelty law, which prohibits unjustified mutilations of animals.

One former breeder of "champion" retrievers, John G. Boudiette, was charged with cruelty to animals for keeping more than 100 dogs in squalid, rundown kennels, pens, and doghouses on a wooded lot in Suffolk, Virginia. Rain pounded the property, and the dogs were forced to spend their days in dirty, standing water without adequate shelter. When rescue workers from PETA and other groups waded through the grime and the muck to reach the cold, wet dogs, they found many of them were sick, malnourished and infested with fleas and worms.

Sadly, there are many other breeders, just like Boudiette, who raise animals as if they were raising turnips, with little thought to their wants and needs. But even so-called "responsible" breeders don't fit the bill. Every animal they breed takes away a home from an animal in a shelter who must therefore be destroyed.

The Breeder in the Mirror

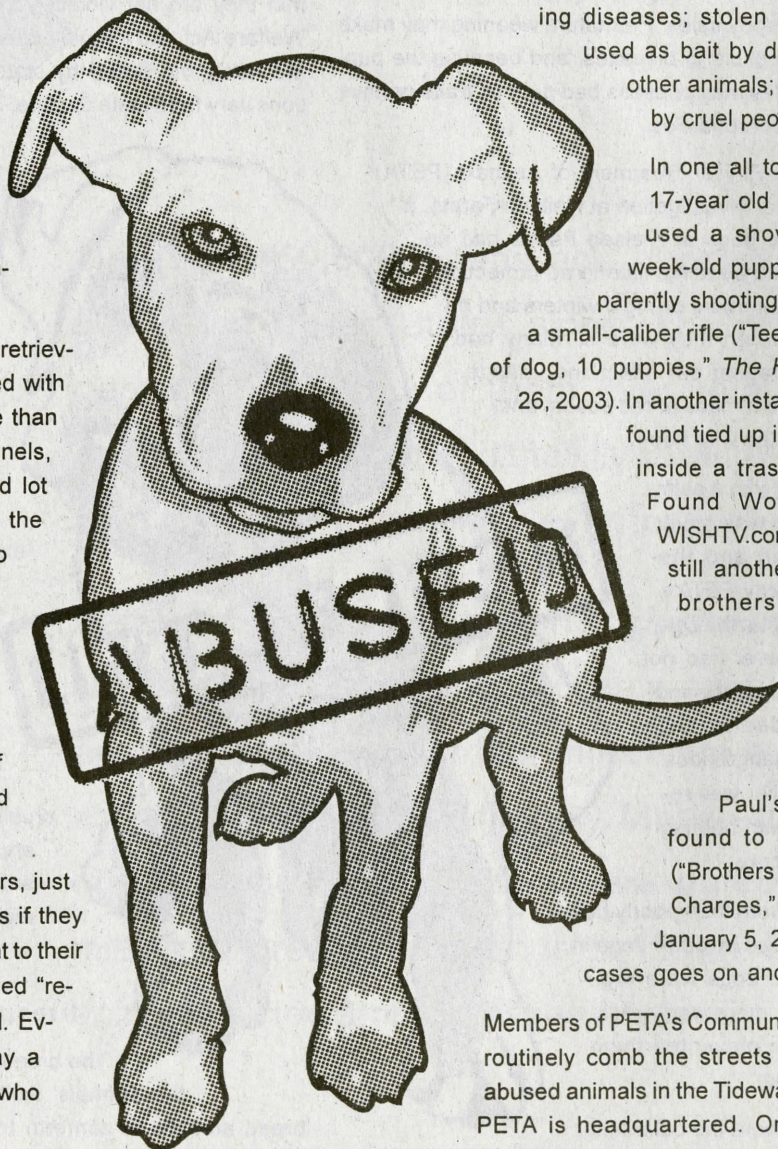
While puppy mills and breeders inflict immense pain and suffering on animals, anyone who allows their companion cat or dog to breed must also share in the blame. Every single stray cat and every neglected dog left to die on the streets came from an animal who wasn't spayed or neutered.

Allowing animals to have "just one litter" or letting unaltered animals roam the streets unsupervised is not only dangerous for them, it can have tragic consequences for other animals. A fertile cat can produce three litters in one year. Each litter can consist of four to six kittens. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that in just seven years, it is possible for one female cat and her offspring to produce 420,000 cats. Likewise, a fertile dog can produce two litters in one year, each containing six to 10 puppies. In six years, a female dog and her offspring can theoretically produce 67,000 dogs.

The "lucky" ones will be euthanized in reputable animal shelters. Others will be stuck outside and will likely die of starvation or temperature extremes; be hit by cars; infected with lingering, debilitating diseases; stolen by laboratory dealers; used as bait by dogfighters; attacked by other animals; or tortured and/or killed by cruel people.

In one all too common example, a 17-year old Maryland boy allegedly used a shovel to bludgeon 10 5-week-old puppies to death before apparently shooting the dogs' parents with a small-caliber rifle ("Teenager charged in death of dog, 10 puppies," *The Herald-Mail*, September 26, 2003). In another instance, three puppies were found tied up in a plastic garbage bag inside a trash dumpster ("Puppies Found Wounded in Garbage," *WISHTV.com*, February 17, 2004). In still another case, two California brothers, Paul and Adam Curtright, pled guilty to charges stemming from the June 24, 2003 killing of eight puppies birthed by Paul's dog, Stout, who was found to have been neglected ("Brothers Plead On Animal Abuse Charges," *The Eureka Reporter*, January 5, 2004). The list of cruelty cases goes on and on.

Members of PETA's Community Animal Project (CAP) routinely comb the streets to help neglected and abused animals in the Tidewater, Virginia area where PETA is headquartered. On a daily—and usually



nightly—basis, the CAP team sees feral cats, descended from abandoned, unaltered house cats, who are now wild and infected with deadly, ravaging diseases like feline AIDS and leukemia; stray dogs so disfigured by mange that they are hardly recognizable as canines; litters of puppies, wracked with diarrhea and vomiting—literally dehydrating to death; and backyard dogs who have known only chains, beatings, and neglect, and who have gone mad because of it.

One such animal, Sophie, was found chained to the bumper of a car without food or water. She crouched in fear when a PETA staffer approached her. PETA persuaded her “owner” to give her up and a PETA employee adopted her. Sophie was so exhausted from living in constant fear on the end of a short chain that she slept a full 24 hours when brought to her new home. Now, still cautious, but sweet, energetic, and loving, Sophie goes for long walks and plays on the beach with her new guardian.

Another animal, Itty Bitty, lived outdoors in all weather extremes with other unaltered cats and dogs. PETA’s CAP team trapped the cats and had them spayed or neutered. Itty Bitty now lives indoors with a former PETA staff member and her two other cherished cats.

But happy ending stories are few and far between. There are millions of stray and unwanted animals. Animal rescuers certainly cannot adopt them all. No one can.

Too Much of a Good Thing

All too often, well-intentioned individuals try to “rescue” animals from a miserable life on the streets, but quickly become overwhelmed and wind up only making the problem far worse. Hoarders—also known as animal collectors—may truly think they are helping by keeping large numbers of animals in their homes, but the animals they “save” languish in filth and suffer from malnourishment, illness, inactivity, poor ventilation, and lack of human companionship.

PETA has found dogs and cats crowded in cages, crates, hutches and even kitchen cabinets. Because hoarders usually can’t afford to pay to spay and neuter all the animals they keep, their collection grows and grows until the filth, stench and noise attract the attention of neighbors or health, sani-

tation or humane officials.

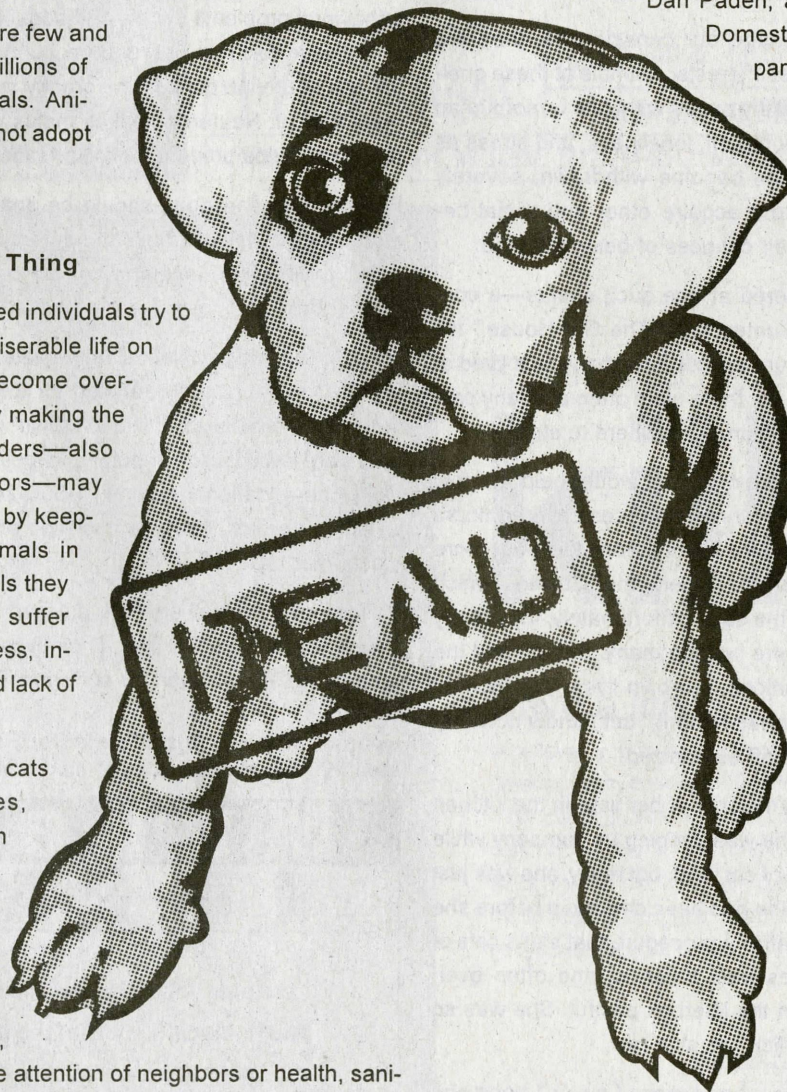
For example, on November 16, 2003, authorities allegedly discovered up to 40 neglected and “sickly” cats—as well as the remains of six others—in a Massachusetts apartment. Officials were called to the feces-ridden residence after a downstairs neighbor reported seeing cat urine seeping from the ceiling. The hoarder, Debra Flint, had apparently already vacated the apartment and failed to arrange care for the cats, leaving them so starved that they were eating carpet and cannibalizing the remains of their dead companions (“Cat Lady’s neglect may put her inside a cage,” *The Taunton Gazette*, December 18, 2003).

In another case, authorities reportedly discovered 10 live animals and the stacked, frozen carcasses of 120 others in hoarder William Davis’ feces-strewn residence in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Just two days later, officials evidently confiscated 31 neglected cats from similarly filthy conditions in Davis’ mobile home in Christina, Tennessee. Not surprisingly, Davis had apparently been the subject of similar investigations dating back at least five years (“Murfreesboro man tells why he froze 114 cats,” *The Tennessean*, December 30, 2003).

Dan Paden, a cruelty caseworker in PETA’s Domestic Animal Issues & Abuse Department, contacted the authorities in these and other similar cases and asked that the hoarders be required to undergo a psychological evaluation and mandatory counseling at their expense. Paden also requested that the hoarders be “prohibited from owning or harboring animals in the future.”

Paden is one of the compassionate individuals who volunteers to deliver free doghouses and check on dogs in North Carolina, where, as in other states, dogs are constantly left outside, often without adequate shelter, food, water and medical attention. Paden and PETA’s other volunteers replace the shoddy, dilapidated or, in many cases, nonexistent, doghouses with sturdy, warmer ones that provide some shelter for animals whose “owners” refuse to let them inside.

These dogs, much like those



kept by hoarders, are not viewed as members of the family. Some are used as guard dogs; many others are simply stuck outside and forgotten like old, discarded property. Paden believes that most, if not all of the dogs were passed on from family members whose unaltered animals gave birth. Says Paden, "One pup's predicament has stayed with me since I met him last fall. He was tiny, maybe 15 pounds, and I found him chained to a broken down car. Repeated pleas with his custodians to bring him and the other two dogs on the property inside went ignored. As the months grew colder, my visits became more urgent, until finally, in January 2004, he was brought in. But his comfort probably won't be permanent. He'll grow big and, before you know it, be tossed back outside, chained up like an old bike and given about the same amount of attention."

No Kill Shelters Are No Solution

Other well-meaning people try to help animals by setting up "no-kill" shelters. However, all too often, these people find themselves quickly overwhelmed with both work and expenses, and thus are unable to provide adequate care for the animals.

While no-kill shelters may assuage our consciences, they are rarely, if ever, in the animals' best interests. Animals at these shelters often spend years living in filthy cages with little or no human contact. They suffer the same boredom, loneliness, and stress as animals in puppy mills. They can become withdrawn, severely depressed, "unhousebroken," and acquire other anti-social behaviors that further decrease their chances of being adopted.

When I was younger, I volunteered at one such shelter—a converted old house, known by volunteers as "The Cat House." It's hard to say if anyone knew for sure exactly how many cats lived at the cat house at any given time, but there were often so many cats crowding the floor that there was hardly anywhere to step.

Every Sunday morning for several months I would help the few other volunteers clean the smelly, urine-and-feces-covered floors and cages, wash the dishes from the night before, dish out more food, give medicine to sick cats, and, when time allowed—which was seldom—play with and pet the cats. Unfortunately, they rarely got sufficient attention. There were just too many of them and the volunteers had our own companions, our own lives. We thought we were helping, that "someone has to do it," but I know now that the cats would have been better off euthanized.

One cat, Tequila, spent the vast majority of her time in the kitchen cabinet. We liked to think that she was keeping us company while we scooped out plate after plate of cat food, but really, she was just too fearful of all the other cats. She had been declawed before she ended up at the cattery, a traumatizing procedure that strips cats of their natural defenses, impedes their balance, and often even makes standing and scraping in the litterbox painful. She was so anxious she would sometimes lick her skin raw.

Tequila was still at the cat house when I moved away. I hope she was adopted—or finally euthanized—but I suspect that she spent

the rest of her days in the kitchen cabinet, nervous and lonely.

Few cats were adopted compared to the numbers who were dropped off. The women who ran the "shelter" had to turn animals away. "No-kill" shelters are often "filled to capacity," which means they can't take new animals in. If the animals are lucky, they are taken to another shelter that does euthanize. If they are unlucky, they may be dumped by the roadside, only to die deaths far more gruesome and horrible than a painless injection of sodium pentobarbital. While a no-kill shelter can honestly say it did not kill the animals, that doesn't mean the animals were saved.

Spaying & Neutering is the Only Solution

But there is an easy, effective, ethical, and inexpensive solution. People can prevent animal overpopulation—and thus decrease the number of animals killed—simply by adopting from shelters instead of buying from pet stores, puppy mills, or breeders, and always having animals spayed or neutered.

Spaying and neutering is not only the best way to reduce animal overpopulation, it is also a good way to prevent certain health and behavioral problems in cats and dogs. Spaying reduces the stress and discomfort females endure during heat periods, eliminates the risk of uterine cancer and greatly reduces the chance of mammary cancer. Neutering makes males much less likely to roam or fight, and helps prevent testicular cancer.

Female cats and dogs should be spayed soon after the age of eight weeks. Males should be neutered at eight weeks of age, but both spaying and neutering can be done safely through most of adulthood.

PETA's SNIP (Spay/Neuter Immediately Please) mobile provides low-cost spaying and neutering for low-income individuals in the Tidewater, Virginia area; in 2003, SNIP altered 6,115 animals alone. There are low cost spay/neuter services in nearly every area. SPAY-USA has a national hotline, 1-800-248-7729, listing numerous veterinary clinics, humane societies and other services that offer discounted rates.

Millions of innocent animals die every year because of human greed, vanity, and laziness. Their lives are in your hands. Please be a part of the solution for suffering. Please spay and neuter. ❧

Heather Moore is a staff writer for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and is a regular contributor to IMPACT press.

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—Ingrid Newkirk, President, PETA

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PETA

Round & Round We Go

Gearing
up for the
Big Race

by Morris Sullivan



Part 3 of Election Series

For hours, NASCAR fans sit in the open stands, watching cars go around and around in a circle. During the Daytona 500, the cars trek around the 2-1/2 mile oval 200 times. Most of the time, the race has all the excitement of watching traffic pass by on the Interstate. Now and then, a car collides with another, and those in the seats rise to their feet and roar in excitement.

This year, the Daytona 500 started a new race: President Bush showed up to tell the gentlemen to start their engines, and the Republican Party showed up in force to kick off its "Get Out the Vote" campaign.

That the President and the Party chose the Daytona 500 as its starting block should tell us something about their opinion of Americans: They think we're all mindless idiots.

In the 1996 election, political pundits started talking about "the soccer mom vote." Somehow, they even managed to keep straight faces when using the term. This year, Republicans are going hard after the "NASCAR dad" votes.

In other words, Republicans are counting on stupid rednecks to keep Bush in office.

Now that the primaries are nearly over, it's a pretty safe assumption that John Kerry will be the next Democratic candidate for President. The Republicans have just unveiled the strategy for their first 90-day ad blitz, giving us a pretty good idea how the campaign will proceed. Bush began his campaign in Florida, and there are several reasons for that.

First, his brother is governor, which helps him line up things like trips to the Daytona International Speedway. Second, if he loses in Florida, no one will know—the elections system here hasn't improved much since 2000; in fact, some counties have even decided to use computer touch-screen voting machines without a backup of paper ballots. Third, it's a good place to look for NASCAR dads.

The main thrusts of the Republican ad blitz will be to tarnish Kerry's

positive image by redefining him on Republican terms: to characterize him as a "tax and spend liberal", from "Taxachusetts" who is wishy-washy, indecisive, and soft on both national security and foreign policy, all of which will make great NASCAR dad conversation over Budweiser and chicken wings.

The first round of Bush ads has attacked Kerry for supporting tax hikes. In fact, Kerry *has* said that as president he would support repealing some of the Bush administration's tax cuts. What the Republicans don't say, however, is that Kerry calls for repealing the cuts aimed at the wealthiest Americans, those earning more than \$200,000 a year.

However, he says he plans to extend several tax reductions that are scheduled to expire at the end of this year, including an increase in the child tax credit, tax breaks for married couples, and the expansion of the lowest income tax brackets.

The Bush camp has also fired volleys at Kerry over his past support of tax increases. In 1993, Kerry voted for President Bill Clinton's deficit reduction package, which Republicans point to as one of the biggest tax increases in history. However, they fail to mention that the package succeeded in bringing down the deficit created under Reagan and Bush, Sr., thus bringing about the economic boom of the 1990's. That boom lasted until about the time George W. Bush came into office.

NASCAR dads will probably buy the Republican line about Kerry being weak on national security, which will play on their fear of Middle Easterners. Bush is already pointing to the Patriot Act as a shining achievement, which he claims Kerry will dismantle, thus leaving America vulnerable to more attacks from camel jockeys. The Patriot Act, he claims, has made America safer, and Kerry will put it at risk.

Kerry has indeed called for an end to the Era of Ashcroft. "John Ashcroft has launched an all-out assault on individual rights, allowing for a wholesale invasion" of privacy, says his web site. "Immediately after the election, Kerry will name a new Attorney General." It will be interesting to see, when it comes time to vote, whether NASCAR dads are more afraid of terrorists or their own government.

Unfortunately, many of the most important issues of the campaign will be buried beneath emotionally charged issues. The average NASCAR dad has neither the education nor patience to grasp a "boring" and complicated topic like international trade, but will quickly latch on to an emotion-charged one like gay marriage or abortion, for example.

Republicans will remind us in the coming months that America was founded on Christian values. They're partially right. They won't bother to remind us, however, that America was equally founded on secular Enlightenment values.

Religion is the *only* justification for refusing gay couples the same protections as heterosexual married couples. In America, a religious justification is not justification enough. But it's enough for the NASCAR set.

More important, however, is that gay marriage is one part of a much larger, very important issue: the government's definition of "family." Both Bush and Kerry have been too busy trying to avoid the gay marriage issue to consider one of the greatest social concerns our nation faces—the restructuring of the American family.

The model American family has one father, one mother, and 2.3 children living in a single household. Talk to any social services provider in any community in America and he or she will explain that the model has become increasingly rare over the last half-century.

As a nation, we are in denial about this. Our leaders, however, need to recognize and respect that family may now mean not only the traditional nuclear family, but many other things: one single woman with children; one grandparent raising his or her children's children; two single mothers and their children; and so on.

We should recognize this and provide adequate resources and relief for all families, not just those that fit the 1950s mold. As well, on a practical level, it would be to our advantage to encourage and recognize that monogamy, and thus marriage, is healthier for the individuals and for society, whether that marriage is between opposite sexes or the same sex.

Expanding the definition of "family" and "marriage" can accom-

plish many, many things, not only by encouraging monogamy and thus helping stem the spread of AIDS, but helping to relieve the financial and social burdens of those families that don't fit the mold, along with the financial and social burdens on society by encouraging individuals to share households and resources.

Kerry, of course, will attack Bush where he is weakest. For example, the President's record on the environment is abysmal and his No Child Left Behind program has so far been a dismal failure.

Kerry's plans for the environment range from predictable to visionary. Some build on plans that have already been proposed and are at least partially in place, expanding on State programs that have gained momentum in some parts of the country. For example, he proposes "a cleaner and greener America," to be accomplished in part by promoting "smart growth" and "livable communities" by coordinating federal transportation policies, housing incentives, employment opportunities, and the use of federal funds to acquire parks and open space.

Some states are already promoting smart growth and initiatives that will encourage pedestrian-scale communities, and having some success. Federal funds and initiatives could do much to counteract sprawl and to help transition sprawling suburban growth patterns to ones in which mass transit, for example, could become a viable alternative to putting more SUVs on the road.

However, NASCAR dads are quick to write off folks concerned with global warming as "tree-huggers" or irrational alarmists, especially if Bush raises an eyebrow and makes a mocking comment about it before offering false comfort in a soft Texas drawl.

At the moment, Bush is perhaps most vulnerable on the Iraq issue. However, NASCAR dads still listen to that Lee Greenwood song, and are not far removed from the patriotic fervor that gripped America after 9-11.

The first steps in winning a propaganda war include dehumanizing the enemy. It's much easier to bomb Japs or Krauts, for instance, than to bomb mothers and grandfathers. We can expect to see the Republicans dehumanize the opposition, and NASCAR dads will eat that up.

We can probably expect, in the coming months, to see antiwar demonstrations increase in frequency and intensity, and demonstrators dehumanized—portrayed as anti-patriotic, fringe-element fanatics.

In the past weeks, the Bush administration has demonstrated its cynical, 1984-ish, Big Brother attitude toward Americans with an astonishing demonstration of doublespeak, claiming neither the President nor spokespersons in the administration ever said Iraq under Saddam Hussein was an "imminent threat" to America. Having created an atmosphere of fear and impending doom in order to justify an invasion of Iraq, now they are disowning their own rhetoric from one year ago.

For some strange reason, they expect us to believe them. And incomprehensible as it may seem, some of us will. ◀◀

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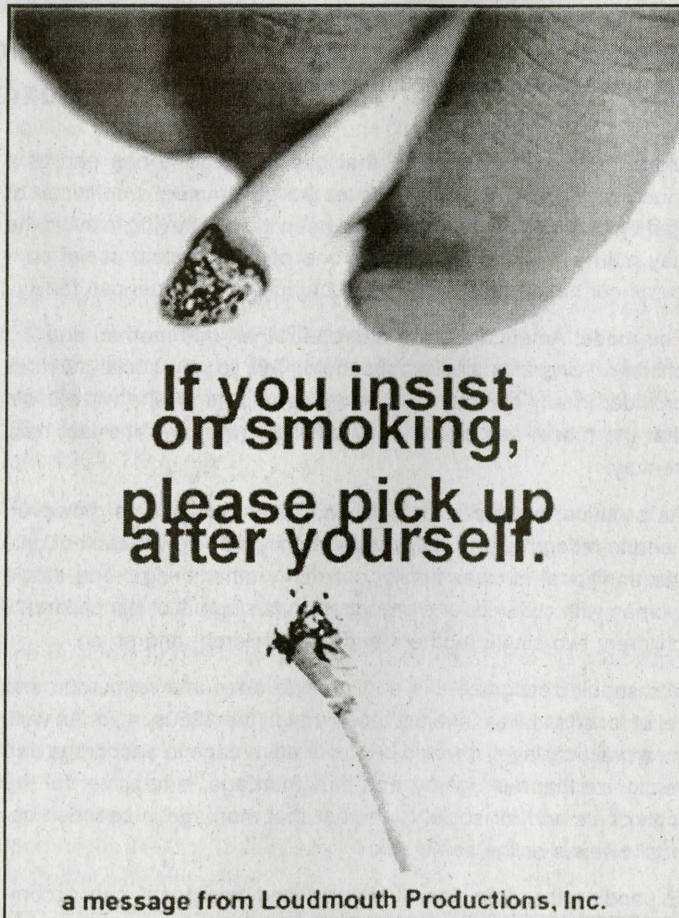
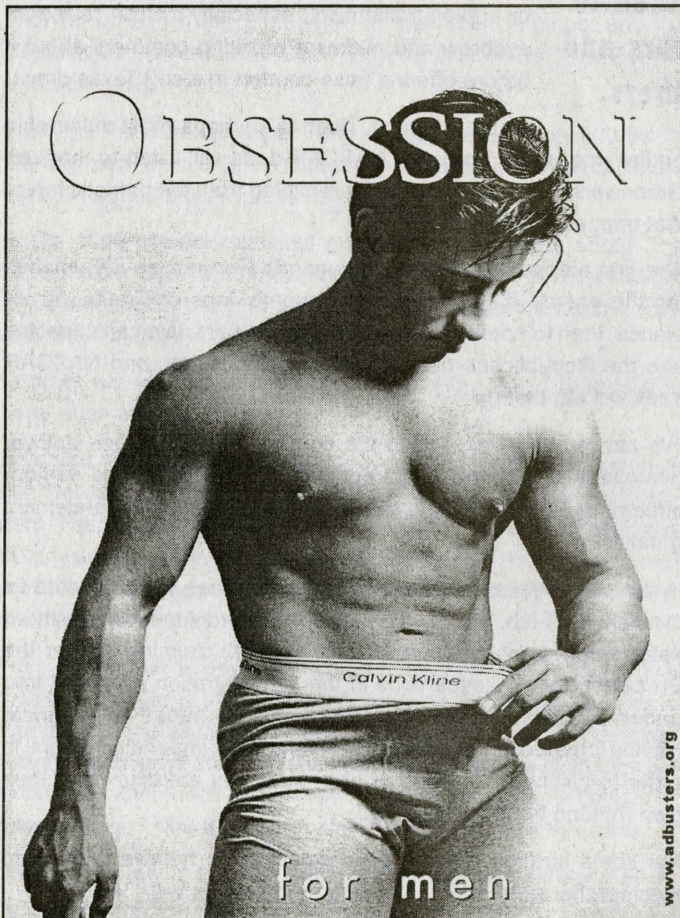
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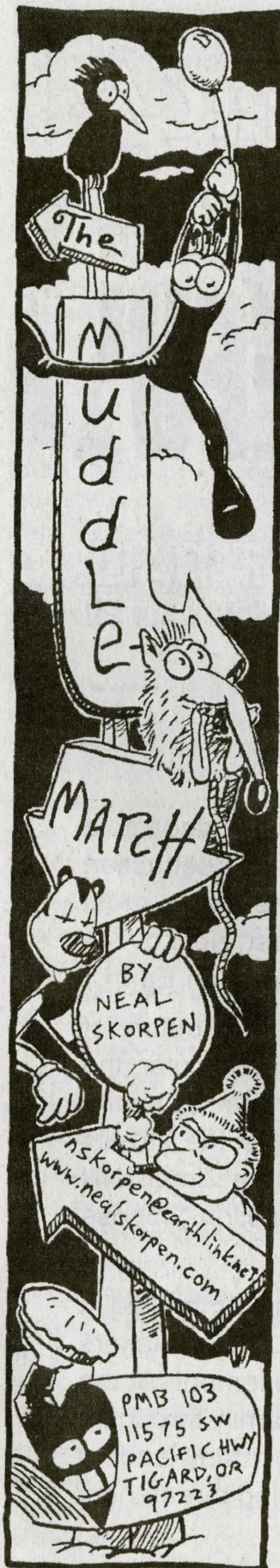
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...OR, WE COULD CUT EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE, INCREASE MILITARY SPENDING, AND TAX-CUT OUR WAY TO THE BIGGEST DEFICIT IN HISTORY!

HOW IS OUR ECONOMY SUPPOSED TO IMPROVE WITH A GIANT DEFICIT??



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... AND WE'D STILL BE SPENDING WAY MORE ON DEFENSE THAN RUSSIA, CHINA, IRAQ, IRAN, AND NORTH KOREA COMBINED!

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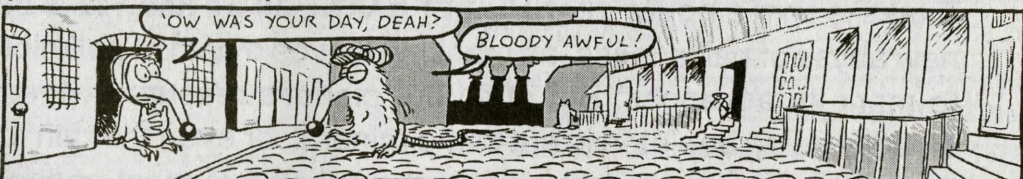
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OY WERK FROM DAWN TIL DUSK, SEVEN DOYS A WEEK, FOR LI'L MORE THAN SLAYVE WAYGES! THE FACTORY'S SO BLOOMIN' COLD OY CAHN'T FEEL ME FINGAHS! AN' THE COAL DUST AIN'T DOIN' ME LUNGS NO FAVORS NEITHAH!

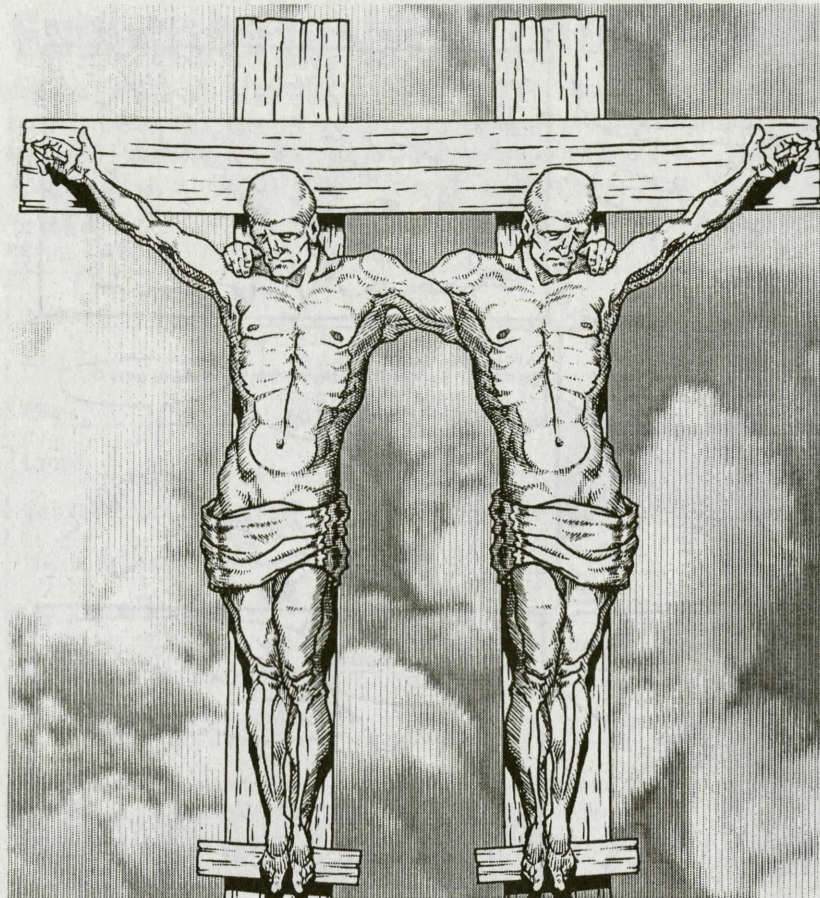


STIW, WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT? THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS WERKAH'S ROIGHTS, IS THERE? WE ARE LIVIN' IN 19TH CENTURY LONDON, AHTER OLL.



DAN'T BE SILLY, DEAH. THIS IS 21ST CENTURY AMERICA!





AMERICA: HOME OF THE HATEFUL

BY JEFF NALL
ART BY W. RALPH WALTERS

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT **PLANET EARTH**, as we know it, is being hurled into a new abyss of barrenness, as mankind leaves a path of pollution and destruction to mark its advances. But of all our planet's resources, the one that is most steadily being depleted is not some mineral, or even the rain forest. No. Love—humanity, patience, tolerance—is the substance most endangered on Earth.

No better proof of such a sorrowful reality exists than the recent outcry of opposition to gay marriage, as expressed by politicians and, in particular, the American people. Many, of whom a great number were never moved by the spirit of peace to protest the war or sexism, have teemed onto the streets across the U.S. to castigate homosexuals. In fact, according to a Time/CNN poll conducted in early February 2004, 62 percent of the population "oppose legalization of same-sex marriages; less than a third favor it."

And as history is fated to repeat itself, lawmakers and politicians, embroiled in the debate over gay and lesbian rights of today, sound a lot like the lawmakers and politicians who strongly resisted the 1960s Civil Rights movement. At the time, many leaders cited such fears as the deterioration of the family through a mixing (both socially and sexually) of the races. And now today, many leaders are once again stating concerns that the American family is being threatened, this time by homosexuality.

Actually, the plight of both movements share a similitude that can hardly be extracted from one another: today, gays and lesbians struggle to obtain a civil legitimacy and a sense of freedom that is superior to the condescending idea that "separate" is "equal." Yet where minorities like African Americans, as well as Spanish Americans and Native Americans, have at least partly been successful in defeating stigmas, overturning discriminatory laws, and quieting racist rhetoric from politicians, the new preoccupation of legal intolerance concerns sexual preferences. Proof of such is witnessed in the June 2003 Supreme Court ruling (*Grutter v. Bollinger*) in favor of permitting the use of race as a determining factor in the college admissions process. Though affirmative action remains controversial, political correctness censors the type of boastful opposition that gay and lesbian marriage has garnered.

For instance, while an African American has the freedom to become a Boy Scout troop leader and participate fully, such is often not the case for the stigmatized homosexual. In fact, three years ago the Supreme Court issued a 5-4 vote that "ruled it unconstitutional for a New Jersey judge to force the Boy Scouts to accept a gay rights activist as a scoutmaster." But it doesn't end there; gays and lesbians have had to endure a mounting prejudice that is not limited to hateful subcultures, but instead extends deep into the courts of law.

Although some might say the Supreme Court's latest ruling in the case of *Lawrence v. Texas*, in which the majority ruled in favor of the plaintiff that laws should not regulate the private sexual affairs of consenting adults, expresses sympathy equivalent to that of the recent affirmative action case, the disparity between the two is proven by the malevolent words of the court's three dissenters in the Texas case.

"The court has taken sides in the culture war," wrote Antonin Scalia, President George Bush's self-proclaimed favorite Supreme Court Justice, on behalf of the three. Scalia went on to complain, "This reasoning leaves on pretty shaky grounds state laws limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples." Scalia wrote, "The ruling also threatens laws banning bestiality, bigamy and incest." Encompassing the three justices' stringent disagreement with the courts majority ruling, Scalia also warned that the court "has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda."

Not in decades has a particular group of people been identified with such terse, sweeping language, which essentially implies that the behavior of gays and lesbians is equivalent to that of barbarism and immorality. And still, such potent, derogatory statements from conservatives like Scalia are far from uncommon. Many politicians, lawmakers and justices around the nation have based their discriminatory bent on the supposed proof that homosexuality is an extreme perversion against nature. But such a view totally ignores the consensus of the scientific community.

For instance, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders in 1973. So obvious is the conclusion that homosexual behavior is not fully contradictory to the accord of nature, Qazi Rahman, a lecturer in

the School of Psychology at the University of East London, recently authored a study that links sexual orientation with inborn characteristics. In response to what many believed was a startling discovery, Rahman was quick to remind, "We have several decades of research which suggests rather strongly that human sexual orientation is to some degree biologically determined" ("*Startling Study Says People May Be Born Gay*," *HealthDay Reporter*, October 6, 2003). So, while Scalia accuses his fellow judges of joining the "homosexual agenda," it appears, conversely, that conservatives like Scalia have simply signed onto a doctrinaire "anti-homosexual" agenda.

Furthermore, while Christian fundamentalists find gay and lesbian attempts at becoming adoptive parents contentious, organizations like The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have taken stances that do not oppose such parental relations. Actually, the AAP issued a policy statement in the February 2002 issue of *Pediatrics* affirming, "A growing body of scientific literature demonstrates that children who grow up with one or two gay and/or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual."

Nevertheless, countless leaders in the U.S. continue to rail against what they believe is a destructive agenda to promote acceptance of homosexuality, and instances of prejudiced, anti-homosexual rulings abound.

In *A People's History of the United States*, author Howard Zinn points out that Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer "voted with the most conservative judges on the Court to uphold the 'constitutional right' of Boston's St. Patrick's Day parade organizers to exclude gay marchers."

Another example of outright gay-bashing occurred in February 2002, when Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore cited a mother's lesbianism as grounds for denying the woman custody of her children, writing "...the homosexual conduct of a parent—conduct involving a sexual relationship between two persons of the same gender—creates a strong presumption of unfitness that alone is sufficient justification for denying that parent custody of his or her own children or prohibiting the adoption of the children of others... Homosexual conduct is, and has been, considered abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature and of nature's God upon which this Nation and our laws are predicated. Such conduct violates both the criminal and civil laws of this State and is destructive to a basic building block of society—the family... It is an inherent evil against which children must be protected."

Moreover, U.S. Senator Jesse Helms made his belief that gays are inferior crystal clear when he said, "These people are intellectually dishonest in just about everything they do or say... They start by pretending that it is just another form of love. It's sickening." ("*Dear' documentary takes less-than-loving look at Sen. Helms*," *Boston Herald* quoting *Congressional Quarterly*, July 9, 1998).

While today's politically correct environment makes it clear that

racial bigotry is unacceptable, it seems the advances of the African American civil rights movement has thrown open the valve of American animosity in the direction of the gay and lesbian movement. Yet, as freedom often provides many with complacency, instead of realizing the parallel between the African American struggle for equality and the current plight of homosexuals, Americans of today are taking up their once bemoaned heritage of prejudice—except, this time around, the discrimination is being perpetrated by all races.

In an example of the ubiquitous disdain for homosexuals, the Associated Press (AP) reported in 2002 that a coalition of several organizations used the legacy of Martin Luther King to encourage voters to repeal Miami-Dade County's gay rights ordinance. According to AP, the group made a reproachful pamphlet complete with the sponsoring effigy of King and the words: "Martin Luther King Jr. would be OUTRAGED! If he knew homosexual extremists were abusing the civil rights movement to get special rights based on their sexual behavior" ("Group's Usage of MLK's Image A Point of Debate," Associated Press, January 19, 2003).

Sadly, such an instance is not at all isolated, nor is the opinion held by those Miami-Dade County protesters who opposed the distribution of rights to homosexuals in the county. Groups everywhere, like the Washington, D.C.-based organization Family Research Counsel, work arduously not only to purport the idea that HIV is vastly a homosexual disease, but also to propagate the ill-founded notion that gays and lesbians are unfit for parenthood. In actuality, according to an ACLU fact sheet, "Not a single study has found the children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged because of their parents' sexual orientation." Nevertheless, on January 28, 2004, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against four gay foster parents who were attempting to adopt children in their care, upholding Florida's right to continue its absolute ban on gay and lesbian adoptions.

In spite of the wide-ranging disapproval and sometimes blatant intolerance of many Americans towards homosexuals, many have taken the less popular stand—of favoring gay and lesbian marriage rights. In an instance of bold defiance, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom ignored Proposition 22, whereby the state of California refused to acknowledge same-sex marriages, when he announced that the city would begin issuing marriage licenses. In just a few days after the proclamation, which occurred in February 2004, nearly 3,000 same-sex couples had come to obtain a license—some coming as far away as New York, Georgia, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. While many groups quickly rebuked the illegality of the Mayor's decision to offer the licenses, others felt that the spirit of Newsom's civil disobedience was an inspiring throwback to that of Martin Luther King's own actions.

Regardless of the legality of Newsom's decision, it has, if nothing else, provoked a deluge of news coverage, acquainting the television-watching masses with the earnest excitement of gays and lesbians, suffering all-nighters in waiting for a chance to receive a license, as they attempt to solidify their love in matrimony—a free-

dom so many Americans take for granted.

Nevertheless, many believe that the plight of gays and lesbians is overstated; but nothing could be further from the truth. In addition to bringing the issue of marriage to dinner tables everywhere, the jovial scenes in San Francisco have also unveiled a sad state of American liberty: same-sex couples are everywhere, yet one has to look hard to notice, because gays and lesbians, more often than not, dare not engage in any public display of affection, including holding hands. While they are afforded the same basic rights as all Americans, the reality is that they necessarily live discreet lives, ever careful to tiptoe around questions concerning a "significant" other.

Theirs is a furtive subjugation. But in many ways, it is drastically obvious. Take, for instance, the comments made by U.S. Senator Trent Lott just four months before 21-year-old gay college student Matthew Shepard was brutally beaten, tied to a fence and left to die in Laramie, Wyoming. On June 15, 1998, AP quoted Lott as having said of homosexuals "You should try to show them a way to deal with that problem, just like alcohol... or sex addiction... or kleptomaniacs." Unlike his less insidious remarks concerning how great life in America would have been if Strom Thurmond and his ticket of segregation had been elected long ago, Lott never lost clout in his party for his anti-gay remarks.

Instead, such a position on homosexuality has only spread like wildfire and continues to blaze through the Republican Party.

For instance, an AP interview with Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum quoted him as having said, "If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual [gay] sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery" ("Family Values Drive Pa. Sen. Santorum," Associated Press, April 21, 2003).

"All of those things are antithetical to a healthy, stable, traditional family," the lawmaker told AP. "And that's sort of where we are in today's world, unfortunately. It all comes from, I would argue, this right to privacy that doesn't exist, in my opinion, in the United States Constitution."

Such rhetoric was even sanctioned by the White House, which responded to Santorum's venomous language with a laudatory response. On April 25, 2003, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters, "...the president believes that the senator is an inclusive man... The president has confidence in the senator and believes he's doing a good job as senator" ("Bush Praises Santorum As 'Inclusive Man,'" Associated Press, April 25, 2003).

Still more telling is the April 25, 2003 Reuters article "Bush Sees Embattled Santorum As 'Inclusive Man'" that stated, "Many Republicans supported [Santorum] and Senate Republican Leader Bill Frist called him 'a consistent voice for inclusion.'" No other group of Americans faces such open opposition and fanatic discrimination. Prior to the Supreme Court's June 2003 ruling (*Lawrence v. Texas*), 13 states held anti-sodomy laws, including four that specifically prohibited same-sex relations. At one time, states like

Idaho, Oklahoma, Michigan, Mississippi, Louisiana, South and North Carolina carried penalties for sodomy ranging from three years to life in prison, revealing a long legacy of legalized hatred for same-sex relations.

In the *Lawrence v. Texas* case, Justice Scalia even tried to use the existence of anti-sodomy laws to thwart the plaintiff's initial argument that the "liberty" promised by the Constitution gives consent for adults to engage in the private sex (acts of their choosing. Scalia argued that many states, in fact, banned sodomy. He also said "...we have to assure ourselves that that liberty was objectively deeply rooted in this nation's history and tradition."

But such an argument, made by a man many believe President Bush hopes to one day nominate for Chief Justice, implies that if the original idea of liberty, did not expressly include freedom for African Americans, since they were enslaved at the time, then they should not be afforded freedom. Since a woman's right to vote has not a seed, let alone a deep root in our "nation's history and tradition," should they not have been given the freedom to vote? Such reasoning fails to meet the high-hopes the founders of our nation held.

Regarding the nature of liberty, James Madison clearly said, "Liberty disdains to persecute" ("Who Are the Best Keepers of the People's Liberties?" *The National Gazette*, December 22, 1792). Although such a phrase was not included in the Constitution, one might say Madison's statement on the nature of liberty sums up the ideal our nation was designed to strive for: to ensure the freedoms of all. And while many conservative family groups scream that, should the government sanction gay and lesbian relationships, the result would infringe on their right to family, the truth is same-sex couples are the ones being deprived of the liberty Madison intended when he wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Right here in the land of liberty, policy makers and politicians are treating humans who have a different sexual desire as second class citizens, even though modern psychology and science has proven homosexual love is not the result of a person's choice, but is as biologically driven as a heterosexual's love for another. While opponents of gay rights groups feel family values are on trial, so too are the original tenets of our nation that each person is endowed with the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Verifying a flood of extremism, in February 2004, President Bush broke new ground by proposing a Constitutional amendment that

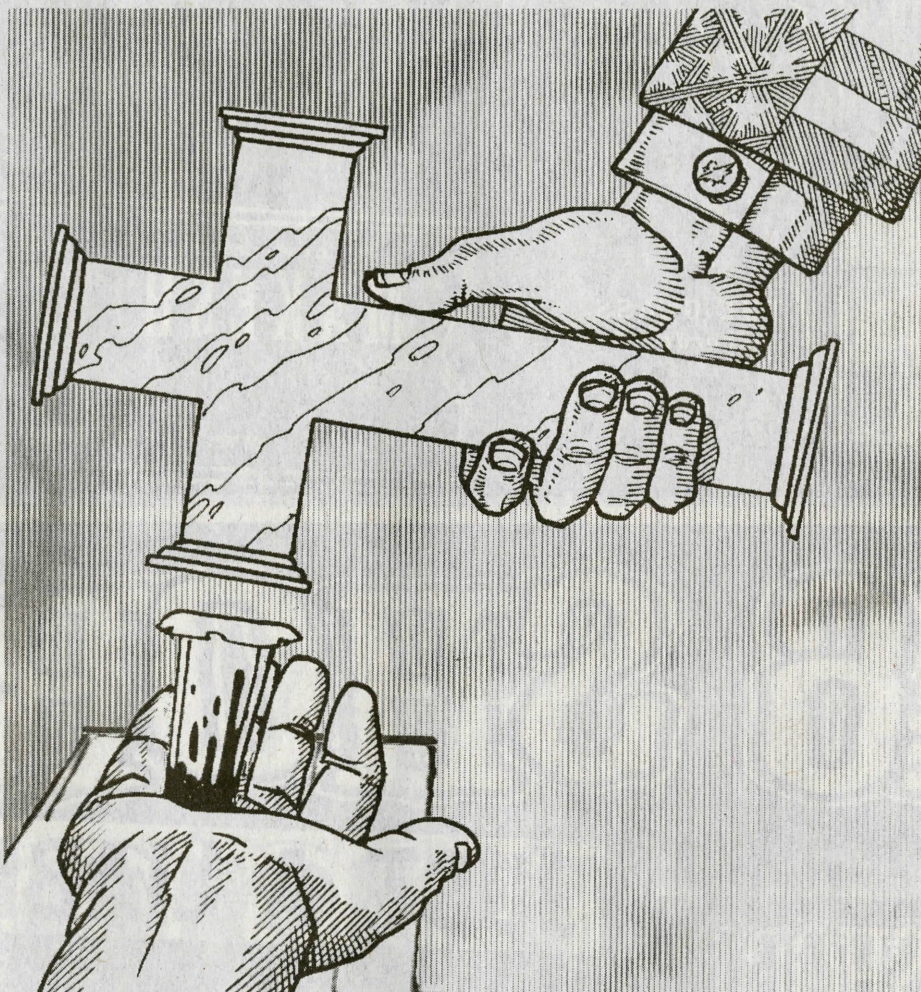
would not only limit gay and lesbian Americans' right to happiness, but also, in essence, legalize their discrimination. Bush's call to approve a constitutional amendment banning gay marriages proposes to approve an amendment that is entirely antipathetic to the nature and history of America's most revered document, which has always sought to further the individual rights of Americans (with the exception of the Prohibition amendment, which was later repealed)

Such a zeal for repression should sound the alarms for all Americans because the threat to gay and lesbian

sexual freedom is also a threat to their own. Best expressed by Martin Luther King's widow and nearest authority on her husband and his works on March 31, 1998, Coretta Scott King told those at the luncheon for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, "I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people and I should stick to the issue of racial justice... But I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'"

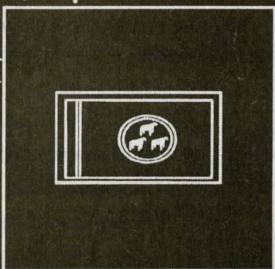
A few years later, on November 9, 2000, while speaking at the

(GAY, continued on page 37)

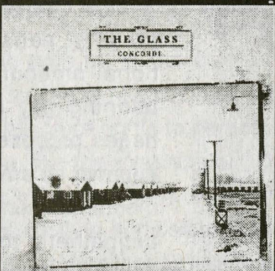




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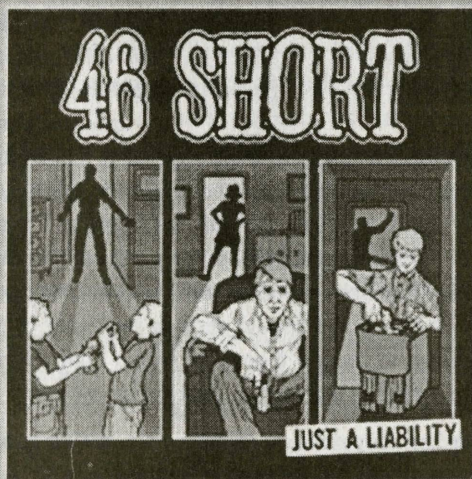
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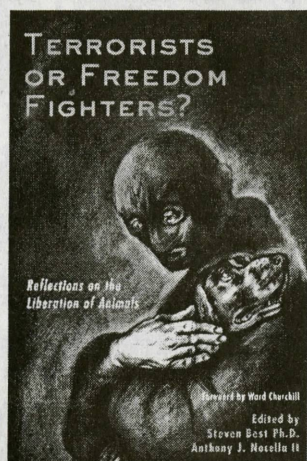
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BY DR. STEVEN BEST

ART BY
W. RALPH WALTERS

THE 1960s WAS A UNIQUE PERIOD of dramatic social change in the United States and elsewhere. Black, brown, women's, student, and gay liberation movements militated for rights, equality, and democracy. A massive anti-war movement rejected the government's pogrom against the people of Vietnam as the counter-culture and New Left challenged capitalism, social hierarchy, conformism, the work ethic, and the materialism of a soulless society.

With books like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), there was also growing awareness of environment issues such as air and water pollution, nuclear radiation, and chemical poisoning. Initially, the emerging environmental movement was not welcomed by many in the social movement camp because they saw it as elitist and as a distraction from war and social injustice issues.

By the mid 1970s, however, the civil rights and anti-war movements were losing momentum as the environmental movement was gaining ground. There was a wider recognition of the urgency of environmental issues and their connection to social justice concerns, and new attention was paid to problems such as "environmental racism."

The modern environmental movement had its official beginning on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970.

Ironically, the concept behind Earth Day belonged to Republican congressman Gaylord Nelson who obtained federal funding for a few college students to organize the event. The country was ready to embrace the new cause: from coast-to-coast, 20 million people marched, demonstrated, and participated in teach-ins about environmental problems.

The 1970s became the "decade of environmental legislation." Congress passed 28 major statutes protecting the nation's air, water, and wildlife and the Environmental Protection Agency was created by executive order. The field of environmental law exploded as citizens exercised new powers to prosecute corporate polluters. Large environmental organizations emerged and set up shop in Washington to become professional lobbying forces.

Although corporations have since exploited Earth Day to peddle greenwashing propaganda, the occasion also has become an important platform to promote education and change. More than three decades since the first Earth Day, there is greater public awareness about the environment and thousands of national and grass roots environmental groups exist. But we have to ask the hard question: For all the struggles, education, and legislative changes, are we better or worse off today than in 1970?

The Long Goodbye

The answer is shockingly clear. Since April 22, 1970, there is more population growth, consumerism, cars and highways, pollution, clear-cutting, desertification, habitat loss, and species extinction, in addition to the new threat of global warming. Consider a few facts:

- Human beings are adding to their current population of over 6 billion at the rate of 100 million new people a year.
- Human consumption levels currently exceed the planet's regenerative capacity by 20 percent.
- Industries have chopped down half of the world's rainforests, destroyed a quarter of shallow coral reefs, and depleted or over-fished 70% of the major fisheries.
- The average surface temperature of the planet may rise by as much as ten degrees Celsius within a century, killing massive numbers through heat and disease.
- In a warming world, ice is rapidly melting in the Polar Regions, Greenland, and mountain and alpine glaciers, destroying habitat for Arctic animals and creating millions of environmental refugees through rising sea levels.

We are in the midst of the planet's sixth great extinction crisis. Unlike past extinction events, the current one is caused not by *natural* phenomena such as meteor strikes, but rather by *human* actions such as habitat destruction. Human-induced changes are driving species extinction at 1,000 to 10,000 times faster than the natural rate that prevailed since the demise of the dinosaurs. Conservation biologists predict that by the middle of the century, one-third to one-half of all existing plant and animal species may become extinct. Currently, 5,500 animal species are threatened with extinction, including the great apes, the Florida panther, the giant panda, the gray wolf, the California condor, and the black rhino.

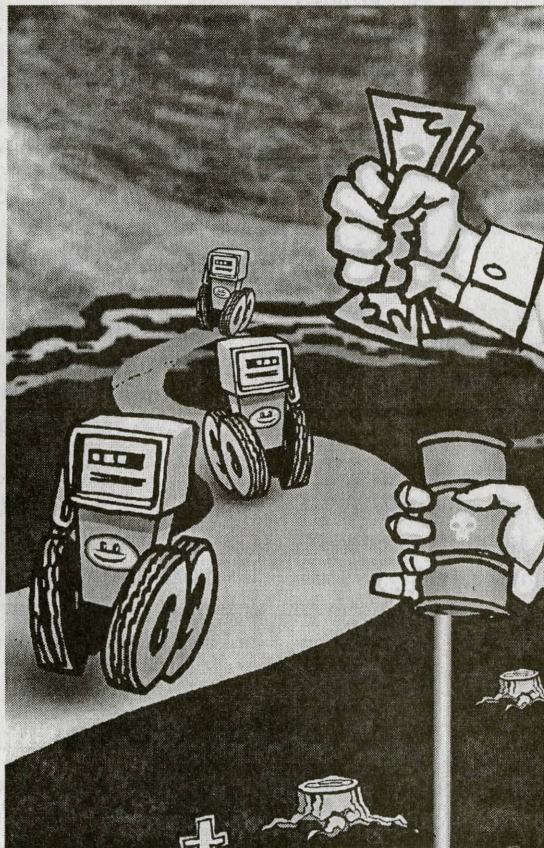
Overpopulation, species extinction, habitat devastation, deforestation, desertification, global warming, Mad Cow Disease, foot and mouth disease, SARS, Asian bird flu, and genetic mutations in frogs and other animals are major indicators that human society is out of joint with the natural order and has embarked on a mad, unsustainable path of existence.

At a time when the nation needs aggressive action to protect the earth, we instead have the most anti-environmental president in our history. Seek-

ing to complete the reactionary process corporate America, Ronald Reagan, and Bush Sr. started after the setback of the 1970s, Bush's goal is to roll back the environmental gains of the past three decades. To date, he has initiated over 200 reversals of hard-won environmental laws. The Bush administration—dominated by corporate executives and lobbyists—has slapped a “fire sale” sign on the planet and is mortgaging wilderness and biodiversity to its friends and colleagues in the timber, gas, oil, chemical, and agricultural industries.

Among other regressive acts, Bush has removed Clean Air Act restrictions on coal-burning power plants, lifted constraints on logging forests, ordered the EPA to halt investigations of factory farm water pollution, and aggressively pursued oil drilling plans in sensitive areas such as Padre Island National Seashore and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Defying 178 participating countries, Bush rejected the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which requires industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions, on the grounds that it would be too costly to the American economy. Bush masks his ecocidal programs with Orwellian rhetoric such as his “Healthy Forests Initiative” and “Clear Skies” program.

As Robert F. Kennedy spells out in his brilliant exposé, “Crimes Against Nature,” the Bush administration installs corporate pirates in cabinet positions relevant to their industry agenda, solicits junk science to quiet public fears over issues such as global warming, rewrites government research to suit industry purposes, suppresses reports warning of environmental hazards and problems, and even disbands scientific advisory committees when necessary to advance corporate interests.



Crisis Culture

Homo sapiens have embarked on an insane, destructive, and unsustainable path of existence. The human species is driving off a cliff at 100 miles an hour without brakes, and yet people live as if the most urgent issue of the day is Janet Jackson's “wardrobe malfunction” or who will win *American Idol*.

There is much talk about “national security” but nothing is said about the basis of all security—environmental security. Problems like global warming, desertification, and food and water shortages will wreak havoc throughout the planet.

As Homeland Security turns ever-more fascist, environmentalists are vilified as eco-terrorists and legal forms of activism are criminalized under the Patriot Act. While Ashcroft prosecutes activists working to help the planet, cor-

porate eco-terrorists continue to pillage and plunder. Meanwhile, Americans, who make up less than 5% of the world's population, consume 30% of its resources and produce 25% of total greenhouse gas emissions.

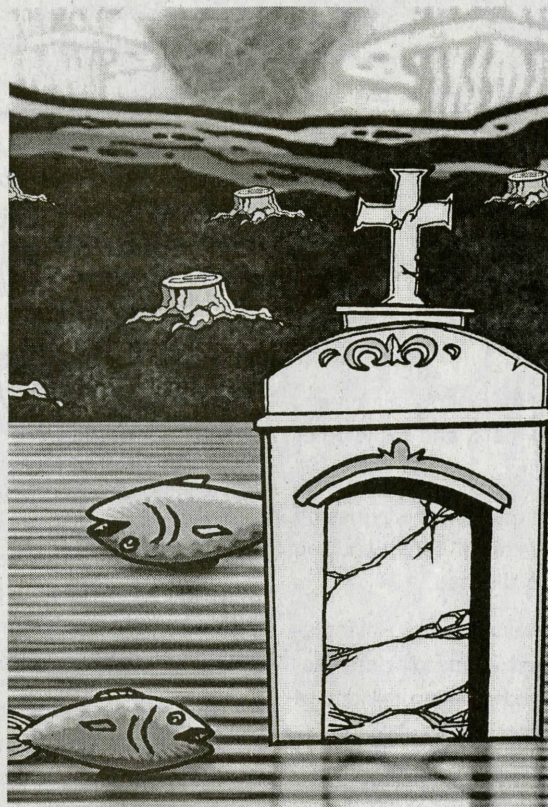
Whatever forces striving to save the environment are doing, it is not to ward off corporate and state Pac-men greedily devouring the planet. National environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club are tepid, compromise-based, reform-oriented bureaucracies unable to challenge corporate and state power, and grass-roots forces are not great enough in force and numbers.

We are in the midst of a major ecological crisis that stems from a social crisis rooted in corporate power and erosion of democracy. In Greek, the word "crisis" means decision, suggesting that humanity, currently poised at a critical crossroads in its evolution, has crucial decisions and choices to make concerning its existence on the planet. Human identity, values, ethics, worldviews, and mode of social organization need major rethinking and reconstruction. In Chinese, "crisis" means both calamity and opportunity. In a diseased individual, cancer often provides the catalyst for personal growth. As a diseased species, human beings can perish, survive in dystopian futures prefigured by films like *Mad Max* and *Waterworld*, or seize their opportunity to learn from egregious errors and rise to far higher levels of social and moral evolution.

The Human Plague

The crisis in human existence is dramatically reflected in the 1996 film, *Independence Day*. The movie is about hostile aliens with no respect for life; they come to earth to kill its peoples, devour its natural resources, and then move onto other planets in a mad quest to find more fuel for their mega-machines and growth-oriented culture. The film is a veiled projection of our own destructive habits onto monstrous beings from another world. We are the aliens; we are the parasites who live off the death of other life forms; we are the captains of the mega-machines that are sustainable only through violence and ecological destruction. We do to the animals and the earth what the aliens in the film do to human life—the only difference is, we have no other planet to move on to, and no superheroes to save us.

We are trapped in a *Dawn of the Dead* living nightmare where armies of hideous corpses, people thought long dead and buried, walk again with a will to destroy us. The dead represent all the waste, pollution, and ecological debts accrued to our growth cul-



ture that we thought we could walk away from unscathed and never again face. But we are waking up to the fact that the "dead" are storming our neighborhoods, crashing through our doors and windows, and hell-bent on devouring us.

In his article entitled "A Plague of Human Proportions" (2004), Mark Lynas frames the crisis this way: "Within the earth's biosphere, a single species has come to dominate virtually all living systems. For the past two centuries this species has been reproducing at bacterial levels, almost as an infectious plague envelops its host. Three hundred thousand new individuals are added to its numbers every day. Its population of bodies now exceeds by a hundred times the biomass of any large animal species that has ever existed on land since the beginning of geological time. The species is us. Now numbering more than six billion souls, the human population has doubled since 1950. Nothing

like this has happened before in the earth's history. Even the dinosaurs, which dominated for tens of millions of years, were thinly spread compared to the hairless primate *Homo sapiens*."

Thus, a single biological type has wreaked havoc on the estimated ten million other species inhabiting the planet. Lynas suggests that because *Homo sapiens* dominates the planet today as dinosaurs did one hundred million years ago, "We are entering a new geological era: the Anthropocene."

According to a March 2004 Earth Policy Institute report, "Humans have transformed nearly half of the planet's ice-free land areas, with serious effects on the rest of nature... Each year the earth's forest cover shrinks by 16 million hectares (40 million acres), with most of the loss occurring in tropical forests, where levels of biodiversity are high... A recent study of 173 species of mammals from around the world showed that their collective geographical ranges have been halved over the past several decades, signifying a loss of breeding and foraging area."

While insipid ideologues like Tibor Machan still publish books such as *Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature's Favorite* (2004), it is more accurate to see *Homo sapiens* as the invasive species and agent of mass extinction par excellence—not "nature's favorite," but rather nature's *bete noire*.

Conceptual Imperialism

Human colonialism created its perfect vehicle in capitalism. Capitalism reinforces the Western instrumental prejudice by reducing all value to exchange value for profit. Capitalism provides many

liberties and brings goodies to those with money. But it is a colonialist system that grows only through devouring human beings, cultures, species, and nature. Its logic is grow or die—accumulate and expand endlessly or implode and collapse.

The origin of the environmental crisis lies not directly in capitalism or modern sciences and technologies, but rather has deep roots in Western culture. In her provocative book, *The Chalice & the Blade* (1987), Riane Eisler traces the origins and effects of a monumental shift in human social organization that began 7,000 years ago. Eisler describes how a peaceful and egalitarian “partnership model” of social organization was gradually eclipsed by a violent and hierarchical “dominator model” imposed by nomadic bands onto the Neolithic cultures in the Near East. Jim Mason’s book, *An Unnatural Order: Uncovering the Roots of Our Domination of Nature and Each Other* (1993), traces the origins of such a “dominator model” further back to the demise of hunting and gathering cultures and the rise of agricultural society 10,000 years ago.

In his essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (1967), Lynn White grounds the roots of the ecological crisis in Christianity, but clearly the Judeo-Christian worldview—which White fails to note contains many positive views of our relation and responsibilities to nature—is a reflection of prior changes already in place that emphasize social hierarchy, human separation from nature and the will to power over the earth and its life forms. One finds unambiguous views of dominating nature in ancient Greece. As best elaborated by Aristotle, many Greeks believed there is a natural hierarchy where beings of lesser intelligence exist to serve those of greater intelligence. The same instrumental model that justified placing slaves and women beneath free Greek men situated animals below humans.

As a general principle, Greek, Roman, medieval, and modern philosophers avowed human supremacy over animals and the earth by virtue of the God-like powers of language and reason. Beginning in the 17th century, modern science declared the world to be mere matter in motion, devoid of any living spirit or holistic complexity, reducible to mathematical laws subject to human manipulation. Key architects of the modern worldview such as Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon championed technical domination over nature and saw reverence for life as superstition and “a discouraging impediment to the empire of man over the inferior creatures of god” (Robert Boyle). Mother Earth became a machine as capitalist society began to engineer a factory civilization.

Through religion, philosophy, and science, individuals in Western culture

have learned to objectify the natural world, to see it as devoid of value unless it is useful and transformed to suit human purposes. Culpits of this conceptual imperialism behold a cow and see steak, observe a tree and think timber. They speak of “wilderness” in ignorance that what they see as empty or useless is a complex ecosystem teeming with life and intricate biological relationships.

Consider the old philosophical riddle: If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound? This is but a pseudo-riddle one can take seriously only through an impoverished human-centered perspective. For the animals, surely the tree makes a sound when it falls, and its drop has an impact on what is living within and around it.

A key part of moral evolution is recognizing value outside of oneself—as it relates to other individuals, cultures, species, and the natural world as a whole. Just as within patriarchal and racist cultures, individuals began to learn that women do not exist for men and blacks were not made to serve whites, so human beings must awaken to the realization that animals and the natural world have value and beauty for their own purposes that have nothing to do with human aims.

Faustian Fallacies

To build modern civilization, humans drained marshes, damned rivers, chopped down rainforests, and massacred billions of animals. In place of wilderness, they constructed vast empires of glass, steel, and concrete with no regard for ecology and harmonizing the social and natural worlds. In a mad pursuit of “develop-

ment,” modernity reduced continents of wild grasslands to a few nature preserves, as biodiversity increasingly survives within the cages of zoos and frozen test tubes of DNA. Our conquest of nature—our “progress”—is measured by the number of skyscrapers, freeways, car dealers, fast food joints, and strip malls.

People think no “growth” means no progress, but the truth is just the opposite. “Growth” is the mantra of every politician, the mentality no bureaucrat dare question. In his 2004 State of the Union address, Bush denounced steroid use in athletes and attacked gay marriage, but said nothing about mounting environment problems. Society ignores the fact that trumpeted increases in jobs, productivity, consumer confidence, home construction, and the Gross National Product come about only through ever-greater strain on ecological systems. As Mathis Wackernagel of the Sustainability Program of Redefining Progress puts it,



"the human economy is liquidating the Earth's natural capital."

The human presence has grown so great that in a significant sense it has brought about what Bill McKibbin calls the "end of nature." Now that the human species has altered the world's climate, there is not a raindrop or breeze that is not somehow influenced or altered by its existence. And through the genetic revolution, science has begun to refashion the genetic structure of plants, animals, and humans, mixing genes from any species at will in a "second genesis" and new alphabet soup of DNA. Faustian visionaries project immanent futures where science designs genetic *ubermenschen* and humanity shapes its own evolution through active choice. As in Michael Crichton's novel, *Jurassic Park*, the new hubris will confront the debacle of unintended consequences and pay the price for its attempt to rewire billions of years of genetic programming in a rapid and reckless way.

To overcome the current ecological crisis, our species must first recognize it as one. Much of humanity does not grasp the crisis as anything but a bump on the highway to technotopia for two fundamental reasons. First, they have no intellectual understanding of ecological laws and processes and so cannot appreciate the misguided and destructive nature of the dominator paradigm. Human beings are accustomed to viewing the world as comprised of discrete parts they can manipulate and control without consequence. They fancy that the impact of their actions is partial, limited, and manageable. They presume the earth is a cornucopia of unlimited resources that can fuel endless growth. They fantasize that in a tug-of-war contest between economic imperatives (rapid growth for short-term gains) and ecological laws (long-term balance, harmony, and sustainability) they will emerge the victor. They are blithely unaware of the complexity of living relationships, the fragility of ecosystems, and the Dr. Strangelove nature of their technological existence.

The second reason involves the lack of emotional bonds to the earth and a paralysis of the will to act. The problem goes deeper than what people know or do not know intellectually. For too many, nature is an abstraction whereas media worlds, virtual reality systems, entertainment spectacles, and commodity fantasies are far more real. Few people break out of their sterile technoprisons (or bitter poverty) to see dolphins swim, hear running streams and mountain winds, or smell carpets of wildflowers. Through mass production, mass consumption, compulsive labor, and repressive policies such as the Patriot Act, the U.S. holds its citizens captive to fragmented and privatized existence, as the values, practices, and

institutions of democracy continue their steep decline.

Honey, I Shrunk the Species

One reason for the downfall of countless past civilizations is that they destroyed the ecological basis of their social world. We are facing the same fate, making the same mistakes. Since the founding of the nation, U.S. agriculture and industry has destroyed two thirds of its once rich topsoil. Without topsoil, food cannot grow and without food, people cannot survive.

If the fundamental problem is that we are out of balance with our surroundings, the solution is to restore balance—in our own being, in our society, and in the relation between the social and natural worlds. The biggest challenge the human species has ever faced is staring us right in the face: can we reverse environmen-

tally destructive trends and establish a viable presence on the planet? Or will we accelerate our rapid ride to oblivion?

The western world has lived for millennia by the philosophy of humans first, even humans only. It is now time for a new philosophy of *earth first* whereby human armies begin the process of radical retreat from their advances, provide the space for regenerating wilderness and wildlife, and find ways to harmonize their social world with the natural world. The great shrinkage of the human presence clearly requires a massive reduction of population numbers, but since human impact on the planet is measured both by the quantity and quality of its existence, human beings—those in the U.S. above all—must greatly curb consumption appetites, switch to eco-friendly technologies such as solar and wind energy power, and change in countless other ways.

Our crude material definitions of growth and progress must be replaced with psychological and ecological

meanings and benchmarks. Human behavior and thinking from now on must be ecologically-focused. Before we do anything we must first consider the long term impact of our actions on the earth, other species, and future generations. In the words of social ecologist Murray Bookchin, the only solution to our environmental crisis "is rooted in an ecological philosophy, ethics, sensibility, image of nature, and, ultimately, an ecological movement that will transform our domineering market society into a nonhierarchical cooperative society—a society that will live in harmony with nature because its members live in harmony with each other."

When society does consider the need for change, such as on Earth Day, it stops far short of needed courses of action. If they recognize a crisis, people think somehow science, technology, or



the market will find the solutions. But no god will save us. There is no reform measure or technofix for systemic problems; solutions require a radical reorganization of everything from our psyches and worldviews to our technologies, economies, and social relations.

People must leave their comfort zone of change in two key ways. First, on the principle that the personal is political, individuals must examine their lifestyle choices. Yes, we need to xeriscape, recycle, and drive hybrid cars, but the most profound change an individual can make is to shift from a meat-based to a plant-based diet. The Global Meat Culture is damaging the planet more than any other factor. While corporations like Exxon and Texaco exact massive tolls on the earth, the *creme de la creme* of corporate destruction are the meat and dairy industries. Raising animals in giant livestock farms and on massive feedlots is a principle cause of rainforest destruction, desertification, global warming, species extinction, food and water waste, and air, land, and water pollution.

But, second, people need to reach outside their personal lives and lifestyle choices to become political animals. Capitalist selves seek individualistic solutions to problems that are deeply social and political; they confuse the meaning of citizen with their role as consumer, voter, and taxpayer. No significant change of any kind is possible until citizens create a counter-force to corporate power through grassroots organizations that defend the environment as they empower individuals politically.

The environmental crisis is a social crisis; it is fundamentally a crisis in democracy whereby the elite minority imposes its will upon the vast majority of people because they monopolize power. Hence, there must be a strong social, political, and democratic thrust to a new environmental movement. People must shift from writing letters and working for legislative change to involvement in local organizations that focus on direct action.

The New Ethic

If humanity is to survive and flourish in its precarious journey into the future, it needs a new moral compass because anthropocentrism has failed us dramatically. Albert Schweitzer observed that "the problem with ethics so far is that they have been limited to a human-to-human consideration." In place of the alienated and predatory sensibility of Western life, Schweitzer proposed a new code—an "ethic of reverence for life." This entails a universal ethic of compassion and respect that includes all humanity, embraces non-human species, and extends to the entire earth.

The demand to cease exploiting animals and the earth is one and the same; we cannot change in one area without changing in the other. Animal rights and environmental ethics are the logical next stages in human moral evolution and the next necessary steps in the human journey to enlightenment and wholeness.

Sadly, on Earth Day, as on every other day, the human species continues to invade and damage the planet. As I write, I receive a report from Traffic, a British-based wildlife monitoring group, say-

ing that because of deforestation and trading of its body parts, the Sumatran tiger, Indonesia's last tiger sub-species, is on the brink of extinction. In addition, I read that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed two tropical birds, the Mariana mallard and the Guam broadbill, from its endangered species list—not because they are safe but because they became extinct. In some way we cannot possibly grasp, the entire earth is trying to adjust to their inalterable absence.

As the cliché states, "Every day is Earth Day." Truth be told, every day is Human Growth Day. On April 22, the media might turn away from Michael Jackson or Bush's terror war for a thirty second fluff piece on the state of the planet, and some individuals might pause for a moment to think about their environment. Like the evil-doer who sins all week and then atones on Sunday, human beings plunder the planet all year long and then stop one day for a moment of guilt and expiation. We congratulate ourselves for honoring Earth Day, when in fact the very concept would be incoherent in an ecological society.

In honor of Earth Day it is appropriate to ask: what does it mean to be an environmentalist? Where industries, the state, and toxic nihilists of every stripe want those who care about the environment to bear stigmas such as "kook," "wacko," "un-American," and even "terrorist," being an environmentalist must become a badge of honor.

To be an environmentalist is to realize that one is not only a citizen of human society, one also is a citizen of the earth, an eco-citizen. Our community includes not only our society with other human beings on a national and international scale, but also our relations to the entire living earth, to the biocommunity. We need to act like we are citizens and not conquering invaders. We have not only a negative duty to avoid doing harm to the earth as much as possible, but also a positive duty to help nature regenerate. ❧

Dr. Steven Best's forthcoming book, co-edited with Anthony J. Nocella, Terrorists or Freedom Fighters: Reflections on the Liberation of Animals will come out around April 2004. It features leading eco-terrorists like Paul Watson, Rod Coronado, Kevin Jonas, and Ingrid Newkirk; it promises to provoke a storm of controversy and many purchases by the FBI.

Make an IMPACT

Worldwatch Institute: www.worldwatch.org

Red List of Threatened Species: www.redlist.org

TRAFFIC, Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network: www.traffic.org

Factory Farming, The Truth Hurts: www.factoryfarming.com

Waking Up From The American Dream:

www.ecofuture.org/pk/pkar9506.html

Bush Admin. Policies & Practices: www.doyouknow.org

Union of Concerned Scientists: www.ucsusa.org

How Our Food Choices Can Help Save The Environment:

www.earthsave.org/environment/foodchoices.htm



Words and Photos by Kari Lydersen

It is a sunny afternoon in late February, just after the celebrations of Carnaval have swept the city, in Plaza Eduardo Abaroa in La Paz, Bolivia. Five months ago, protests, strikes and violence were rocking this city and the rest of the country in an uprising that led to the resignation and departure of president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. Today, things are relatively calm in Bolivia. But the stark divisions between rich and poor, the debilitating effects of globalization, corruption and internal divisions still exist, and citizens say they expect more upheaval or drastic political change in the near future. The extreme class and racial inequities in the country are clearly evident in the plaza.

A poodle in a red sweater leaps over low walls, playfully chasing a delighted little boy in camouflage pants. A fashionably slender, light-skinned girl in pre-faded bell-bottom jeans—the type popular in the U.S.—strolls by holding a tiny puppy. Kids careen around in small motorized cars; a little girl bawls as her father lifts her off a car to give her sister a chance. But parallel to this scene of perfect leisure and enjoyment are plenty of examples of people struggling just to make a living: indigenous women with their babies on their backs sell *saltenas* (chicken-filled pockets of dough) and trinkets.

Little boys and young men dressed in dark clothes with ski masks or rags covering their faces, giving them a menacing look, troll the plaza with wooden shoeshine kits. Some just point at people's feet before being waved away or granted a shoeshine. One 13-year-old boy, his face uncovered and with a mildly stoned look in his eyes, oozes an uncomfortable flirtatiousness as he asks me

to give him a kiss and buy him an ice cream or soft drink. When I ask to interview him for the price of a shoe-shine (one boliviano, less than 15 cents in the U.S.), he no longer seems seedy or stoned but becomes immediately serious. His name is Luis Gabriel Quispe Guzman. "People are poor. There's no work here," he says. He's been shining shoes since he was six years old, and he makes about 15 bolivianos—less than \$2 U.S.—each day.

Cousins Christian, 8, and Enrique, 10, are also shoeshine boys. They sit protectively next to each other across the street from the plaza on the steps of a café that serves mostly wealthy Bolivians and tourists. Next-door is a plastic surgeon's office. Leaning against a wall nearby is an older shoe-shiner, his face completely covered with gray material with only two eyeholes cut out. Christian and Enrique have worked as shoe shine boys on weekends since their families moved to El Alto four years ago from the country town of Warisata. They go to school during the week. Enrique wants to be a lawyer "to defend our people, because we don't have anyone to defend us." Christian says he wants to be a police officer, but when Enrique tells him that the police are bad, he changes his mind and says he wants to be a professional soccer player. Christian and Enrique have bright eyes and friendly, open faces, theirs uncovered. Little Christian seems to have a chronically runny nose above his gap-toothed smile. When an even tinier boy, a 6-year-old, sits down beside them and pipes up that he, too, is from El Alto, Christian rounds us up to talk somewhere else and warns that the boy will try to steal my coffee.

"He's very badly behaved," he says. "His brother is a ratero," meaning a thief or hustler.

Like the majority of people in the country, the boys' whole families are employed in the informal economy. Christian's father washes cars and his brother also shines shoes. Enrique's mother sells vegetables and his father "is in the cemetery being eaten by ants."

When asked why the shoeshine boys cover their faces, the boys give an answer that contradicts the sinister look the masks give them.

"Because they're ashamed," says Enrique, noting that Christian often covers his face. "They don't want their professors from school to see them."

Alvaro Garcia Linera, a sociology professor at the Mayor San Andres University, says that like the shoeshine boys and their families, a full 68 percent of Bolivia's population are employed in the informal economy. That's up from 50 percent in 1980, he noted during an interview in his downtown apartment, lined with tomes by Marx, Engels and Gramsci. Garcia rattles off other statistics that illustrate how life has gotten harder for average Bolivians as the country has tried to leap into the global economy. He notes that official unemployment, usually considered a vast understatement, has tripled to 12 percent today from four percent in 1980. Unofficial church figures put the number at closer to 40 percent. He says the average wage in 1980 was \$950 U.S. a year; today it is \$830.

"The process of globalization and integration [into the world market] have really hit the local traditional economies hard," he said. "Especially the labor sectors with little competitive capacity and archaic technology. We were thrown into the open market before we'd developed the competitiveness for it."

He noted that a huge percent of the population, particularly indigenous people, have long survived through traditional micro-economies based on small-scale agriculture and craftsmanship and the free use of natural resources. But now their agricultural and other products can't compete in the market, and their natural resources are being privatized by foreign companies.

"3.8 million campesinos live through traditional family and community economies," Garcia said. "But now they're being struck by foreign investment and privatization."

When asked what the coming months or years hold, many mention the possibility of civil war.

"There are three things that could happen," said Garcia, drawing a rainbow-shaped graphic to show the possibilities. "We could go back to the old regime, through a violent coup, and it would become an authoritarian regime enforced by violence. Or we could have moderate reforms driven

by the people. Or we could have a revolution led by left wing forces like Evo Morales [a leader of coca growers who came close to winning the presidency in 2002] and [indigenous leader] Felipe Quispe."

Garcia places current President Carlos de Mesa right in the center of the left to right rainbow, and says that's the road the country is on now. But it could go either way; he sees things heading toward a big "fracaso," a big mess. That's largely because there are so many different and competing interests in the country, interests who were largely united during the October protests but ultimately have different leaders and different aims.

"Social movements are a powerful part of democracy," Garcia said. "Usually you have a social movement hitting the old regime, then you have a period of transition, then you have the new regime. We're in the period of transition now, and we hope we're heading toward a new regime. But we're fragmented, so we're in crisis."

Felix Salazar Gonzalez, a pedagogical student and author in the tropical city of Santa Cruz, sees the deep divisions in the country as the primary challenge and threat Bolivia faces.

"We aren't one nation; we're many nations. We speak 200 languages," said Salazar, 55. Salazar has published several novels about homeless youth, organized crime and corruption in the country, including one called *Yocazador* about an indigenous boy displaced to the city but dreaming of the native lands he has never seen.

"The situation now is worse than ever and I don't think it's going to improve," he said. "We're divided and the foreign economic interests exploit our divisions to increase their power."

(BOLIVIA, continued on page 37)



An indigenous woman tries to make a living recycling plastic bottles in El Alto.



This is HJBMCN.

Cruelly used by Iams.

This Iams dog had no name—only a laboratory identification number. She lived in a dark, dungeon-like building with no access to the outdoors or natural light, along with approximately 100 other dogs. Because she had no resting board and was not removed from the cage during cleaning time, she often had to sit or lie on wet concrete. She was lonely, sweet, and very depressed.

Hundreds of dogs were caged in this laboratory in barren steel and cement cells, where many went crazy from intense confinement, turning in endless circles. Iams officials visited this lab, witnessed the suffering, and did nothing. Pleas for a resting board and exercise for the dogs were ignored. The lab director ordered the dogs' vocal cords to be cut because their cries irritated him. And despite Iams' claim that it doesn't deliberately kill animals in its tests, in this Iams contract lab—one of many—at least 27 dogs were killed.

Please join us in calling on Iams to rely on non-animal laboratory-analysis and in-home tests using dogs and cats whose human companions have volunteered them for such tests. Visit IamsCruelty.com to learn how you can help.



1-866-TEST-KIND • IamsCruelty.com

Surviving In Bolivia

(BOLIVIA, continued from page 35)

As in many Latin American countries, one of the effects of economic distress and dislocation caused by privatization and globalization has been migration within and out of the country. Thousands of campesinos and indigenous people are leaving their homelands to try to survive in the cities, as difficult as that is. El Alto, the working class city on a plateau above La Paz that was the cauldron of the October uprisings, is made up largely of former miners, campesinos and indigenous people displaced from their homes. This migration is leading to the loss of indigenous language and culture, as indigenous youth who move to the cities "feel ashamed of their origin, imitate Western culture, form gangs imitating the style in T.V. shows, dance to rock music in discos and seldom or never participate in indigenous festivals," says a recent book about Bolivian indigenous uprisings called *Ya Es Otro Tiempo El Presente*.

"There have been big social consequences from globalization," said Elizabeth Peredo, a social psychologist who works with the La Paz-based anti-globalization group Fundacion Solon. "People are going to the cities looking for work, even though there's almost no work there. People will live by selling lemons, even though they might only sell four lemons a day for 10 bolivianos (about \$1.30 U.S.)—barely enough to eat. But they'll be out there the next day selling lemons."

Finding they can't make a living in the city, thousands of Bolivians per year are also immigrating out of the country, mainly to Argentina and the U.S. The large population of Bolivians in Argentina face xenophobia, labor exploitation and discrimination, while those who travel the thousands of miles and pay the thousands of dollars to enter the U.S. illegally find the typical challenges of undocumented workers: low-paying and insecure jobs, the constant threat of deportation and separation from family. There are about 500,000 Bolivians in the U.S., with the majority of them living in the Arlington, Va. and Washington D.C. area as well as Los Angeles, Chicago and New York.

The majority of Bolivian immigrants in the U.S. are campesinos who forever dream of returning to Bolivia but rarely do. As in other Latin American countries, immigration has changed the nature of rural Bolivian life.

"Women are being forced to do what used to be considered men's work because the men are all gone," said Peredo. She notes that one of the things that has not happened as a result of globalization and the weakening economy, however, is a major crime wave of the type taking place in other countries.

"People don't turn to delinquency here. You don't have to be afraid to walk in the street like in Colombia or Peru," she noted. "Even in this globalized culture where people want comfort and all the material things, we maintain our humanity and moral values. This is a form of resistance against globalization." ❧

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Gays Rights vs. American Hatred

(GAY, continued from page 25)

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 13th annual Creating Change conference, King said, "All forms of bigotry and discrimination are equally wrong and should be opposed by right-thinking Americans everywhere." She went on to add, "I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brotherhood and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people."

But MLK's dream hasn't been realized; neither has that of our founders. Still, everywhere, momentum to restrict the rights of gays and lesbians is growing, and Americans have to begin questioning the roots of this new hatred. When popular radio therapist Dr. Laura Schlessinger openly refers to homosexual behavior as "deviant sexual behavior," we must ask ourselves, has America simply exchanged its cultural antipathy for blacks, simply to make gays and lesbians its new whipping post? What is it about hate that draws so many supporters, yet requires decades to overcome? In part, the answer may lie in our nation's arrogance.

Consider these points: President Bush tells us he went into Iraq to root out injustice. President Bush tells the American people that injustice was a trademark of Saddam Hussein's regime: women were not treated as equals, and the citizens of Iraq were subjugated to an intolerant government void of "justice." Meanwhile, in the year 2003, while Saddam's regime was being toppled and his statue drug irreverently through the streets of a "liberated" Baghdad, same-sex couples in Texas were pulling their blinds down, careful not to mutter a word of their private relations in public for fear of arrest and condemnation. While American servicemen risked—and some lost—their lives to accomplish Bush's goal of ousting an "evil" dictator and bringing democracy and justice to Iraq, gays and lesbians weren't even permitted the right to adopt one of the 43,000 children languishing in the state of Florida's foster care system.

And while those opposing the advances of the gay and lesbian rights movement have used issues like morality, the family, nature, and perfect love to aid their opposition, in a world so vacant of compassion and bona fide love, what could be more immoral than to deny a child a loving home? And what is more contrary to humanity than denying, be it constitutional or otherwise, a union between two lovers who are fully betrothed to one another? What could be more malicious, more unnatural, more unhealthy than raising children in a society that says yes to war, yes to greed, and yes to intolerance, and, yet, says no to compassion and acceptance?

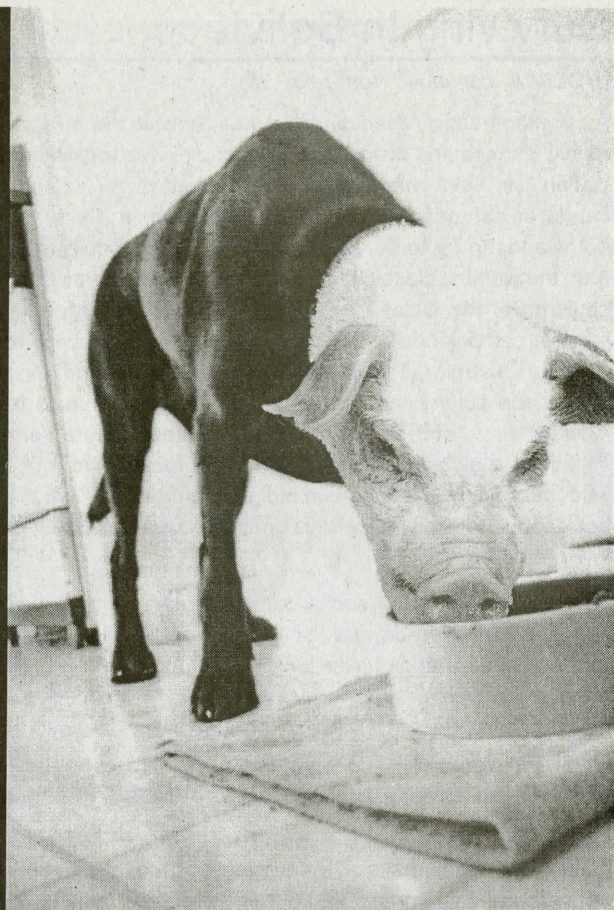
When all is said and done, what act could be more deviant than squandering love, the world's most divine substance, with a message of prejudice and hate?

Alas, Americans have grown up believing themselves "liberators" and purveyors of "equality" and "justice." But the truth is, America may need to liberate itself from its perpetual propensity to hate. ❧

**If your dog
tasted like pork,
would you eat her?**

What's the difference?

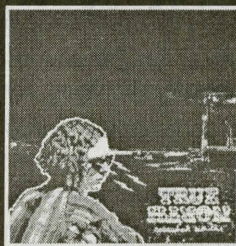
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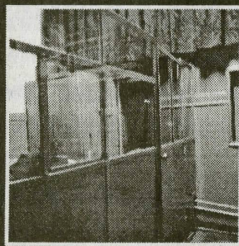
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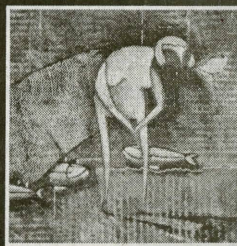
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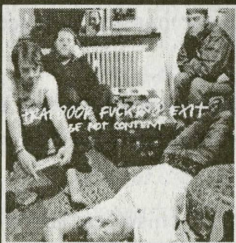
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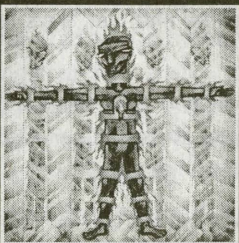
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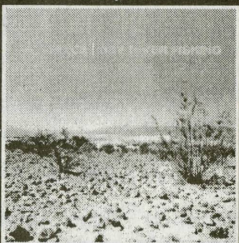
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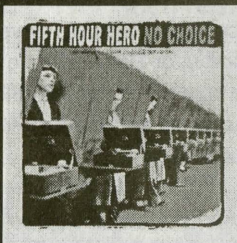
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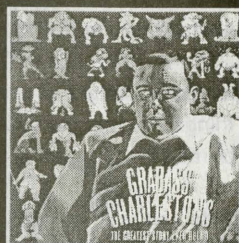
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Gratuitous Nudity

(NUDITY, continued from page 9)

other movie ever had—thus it is true to the spirit of the Gospels. Both *Jesus of Montreal* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* are better movies. Both reveal spiritual truths about the nature of martyrdom without falsely pretending to be “faithful” to the sacred texts.

The Passion, on the other hand, merely beats the audience over the head with scenes calculated to instill shock, outrage, and pity. Despite the Aramaic and Latin dialogue, *Passion* is riddled with Biblical inaccuracies, its Gospel embellished with agenda-laden fictions. It's the cinematic equivalent of the sort of fire-and-brimstone sermon any pulpit-thumping snake-handler could deliver.

That's too bad; given that our society's conception of religion is more influenced by *Paradise Lost*, *The Inferno*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *The Simpsons* than the Bible, the next few generations of Christians will probably not only dislike the Jews for killing Jesus, but swear Judas was driven to suicide by a bunch of little kids with faces like Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*.

As I write this, I have reconsidered my nudity. It's not gratuitous—I'll use it to protest people and institutions who make obscene amounts of money by exploiting ignorance and promoting stupidity, be it religious stupidity or the stupidity of intolerance.

Therefore, to (poorly) paraphrase Descartes: Cogito ergo sum...nudus. ☐

Morris Sullivan is a freelance writer living in DeLand, Florida.

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The Little Mermaid: So Round, So Firm, So Fully Packed

by Adam Finley

Apparently, actors are smoking too much in the movies these days. You might not be aware of this, but the University of California released a study that claims not only does smoking occur in many films, but those films glamorize the act in such an alluring manner that every child who leaves the theater immediately breaks into a 7-Eleven, steals every tobacco product, then hordes it inside a cave and guards it for the remainder of their lives with a non-functioning musket.

Many films, no matter what the rating, have at least one character who smokes. In Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," Jesus spends the last twenty minutes of the film unwittingly trying to grasp a cigar between his lips, which has been callously placed in his left hand, which in turn has been nailed to a two-by-four. As anyone can tell you, craning your neck in one direction for a long period of time can result in nasty muscle spasms. Believe me, I've had muscle spasms, and there's no pain worse than that.

The study recommended that the Motion Picture Association of America should treat smoking the same way it treats swearing and rate each movie accordingly. Therefore, a movie such as Disney's "101 Dalmatians"—whose nefarious villain Cruella De Vil smokes a cigarette from a slender holder—would be rated NC-17, whereas "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre," which features no smoking at all, would be rated G and shown to preschoolers during church functions.

What this study failed to conclude was that the problem isn't how movies are rated, but the ubiquity of product placement. If a character in a movie lights up a cigarette, it's most likely because Phillip Morris reached deep inside its pockets and gave the producers a hefty amount of money to have that cigarette glowing on screen. Many people found this difficult to believe until this 1988 transcript of a conversation between the CEO of Phillip Morris and Howard Ashman, producer of "The Little Mermaid" was leaked to the public:

CEO: Okay, now the scene where Ariel emerges from the water onto that rock?

Ashman: Yeah, my animators spent months on that.

CEO: Right, right. I love that scene. Absolutely love it. She just needs to be smoking.

Ashman: You want her to light up a cigarette after she comes

out of the water?

CEO: No, she should have the cigarette in her mouth when she comes out.

Ashman: Of the water.

CEO: Well, yeah. This is a fairy tale, right? We'll say it's a magic cigarette that can be lit in water. We'll probably need a subplot for that.

Ashman: Uh huh.

CEO: And make sure the cigarette is big. I'd say it should cover about ninety five percent of the screen. Also, she should have it in her mouth for the remainder of the movie so that all action on the screen is obscured by this fantastic magical cigarette. In fact, just change the name of your movie to "The Fantastic Magical Cigarette."

Ashman: I wouldn't want to glamorize smoking, though. I mean, kids will see this movie.

CEO: Look at it this way: Is it better for a kid to smoke a cigarette, or to fall face first onto a cordless drill?

Ashman: What are you talking about?

CEO: I'm just saying that cordless drills kill more people every year in my mind than cigarettes give people cancer in real life.

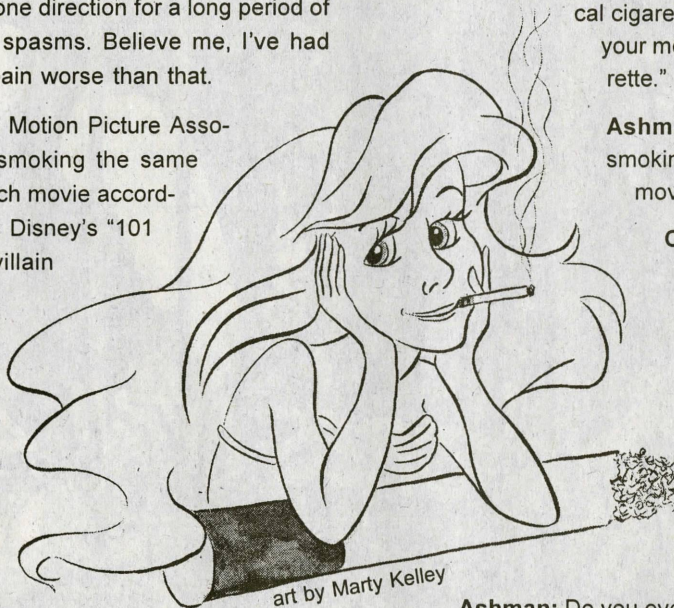
Ashman: Do you even know what you're saying?

CEO: I know you can't set a cordless drill on fire in a swimming pool.

Ashman: I have to go now.

Rather than feign concern for the public, the tobacco industry would probably do much better if it took over the movie industry completely. Essentially, every actor in a film would be smoking non-stop. In addition, all inanimate objects would have cigarettes and tobacco pipes epoxied to them to give the illusion that they are also smoking. It's important to remember that smoking, just like drinking or spending valuable time writing up an idiotic study on smoking in the movies, is a personal choice.

Marijuana smoking, however, should never be shown in movies marketed to children, as it will cause them to actually cook and devour their siblings. I don't think any of us need a study to support the veracity of that claim. ☞



I'M SURE MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN HEARING ABOUT THE RAMPANT PROLIFERATION OF GAY MARRIAGES HERE IN THE SLEEPY LITTLE HAMLET OF SAN FRANCISCO, CA., HOME OF YOUR HUMBLE NARRATOR....

BUT NEWS OUTLETS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONVEY THE SHEER & UTTER CHAOS THAT CURRENTLY ENGULFS THE CITY....



JUST THINK OF IT, FOLKS... THOUSANDS OF MEN & WOMEN, OFFICIALLY CONFIRMING THEIR LOVE SUPPORT & COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER....

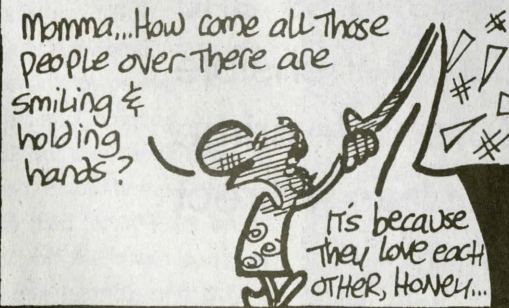
WHY, I CAN JUST FEEL MY OWN REGULAR MARRIAGE BEGINNING TO UNRAVEL BEFORE MY VERY OWN EYES...

CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING MORE DISTURBING?!!



I'm sorry, babe... BUT I can't do the CRISCO-anal-cucumber surprise knowing that gay folks are getting married... DAMN YOU, GAY MARRIAGE!!

AND THE CHILDREN!! WHAT THE HECK KIND OF MESSAGE ARE WE SENDING TO THE KIDS?!!

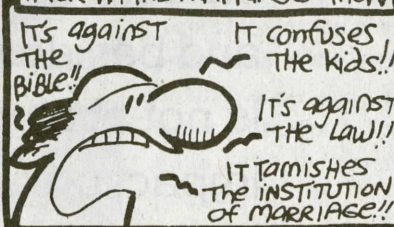


..AND IT'S ALL HAPPENING AT CITY HALL, THE VERY SPOT WHERE ME & THE MISSUS GOT HITCHED A YEAR & A HALF AGO... THE HORROR!!

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE: NOW



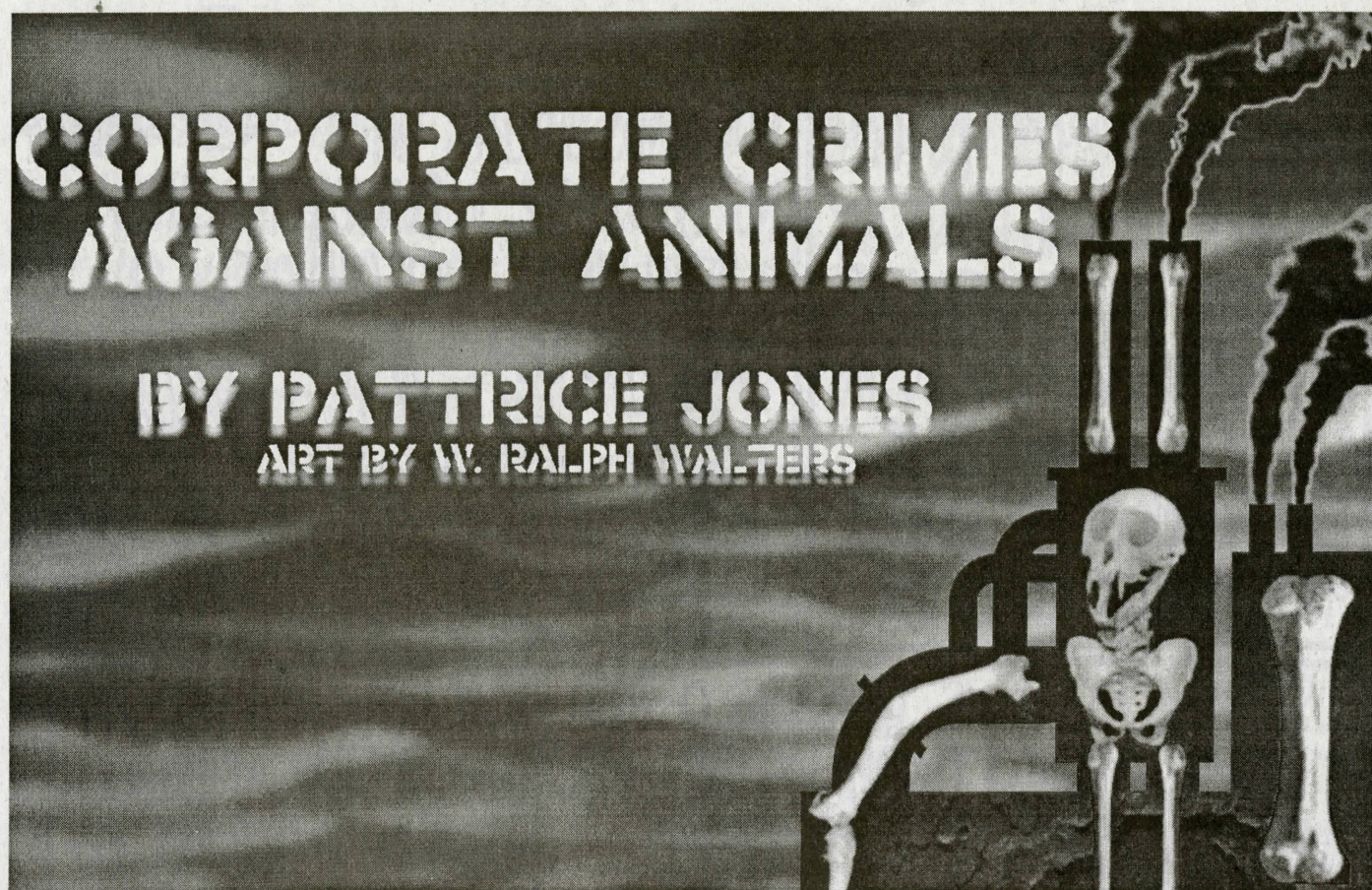
THE ARGUMENT AGAINST INTER-RACIAL MARRIAGE: THEN



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Martha Stewart.

Enron.

Worldcom.

These are the names that come to mind when we hear the words "corporate crime." For those of us grappling with the everyday emergencies that threaten ecosystems and animals, the esoteric details of accounting scandals and insider trading can seem both incomprehensible and beside the point. But most corporate crime is not at all abstract and much of it has a direct impact on animals and their habitats.

Every animal advocate ought to be concerned about corporate crime and efforts to fight it. After all, however many unique atrocities are committed by depraved individuals motivated by personal psychopathy, the fact remains that the vast majority of everyday animal abuse is perpetrated by corporations motivated by an amoral drive for profit. Factory farming, vivisection, and genetic engineering of animals are all practiced primarily to serve the aims of corporate profiteers. Furthermore, the rapidly growing worldwide movement against corporate crime comprises energetic activists who have already made changes in their consumption habits for ethical reasons and might be convinced to go further and go vegan.

Russell Mokhiber of *Multinational Monitor* has just released a reckoning of the "Top 100 Corporate Criminals" of the 1990s. Using a strict definition of "criminal," Mokhiber has ranked corporations that pled "guilty" or "no contest" to crimes according to the fines they were forced to pay. Of course, this leaves out the corporations that were able to get away with their crimes as well as those with enough political power to ensure that their destructive activities are not considered crimes. But it does offer a useful overview of the corporations that everyone must agree have violated the law significantly.

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLOITATION

Animal advocates may be interested to note that the category of environmental crimes tops the list, with 38 of the 100 corporate criminals fined for actions that significantly harmed ecosystems. Environmental crimes virtually always have animal victims, regardless of whether or not the animals who are killed or hurt capture the attention of the public. From birds coated with oil from dramatic spills to frogs with extra limbs due to less visible forms of pollution, animals always pay the price for environmental corporate crimes.

It's interesting to note how many of the corporate criminals making the top 100 are oil companies. From big names like Exxon (a recidivist coming in at both #5 and #96, for the Valdez and Arthur Kill oil spills), Chevron (#41, for Clean Water Act violations), and Marathon (#85, for Clean Water Act violations) to relative unknowns like Colonial Pipeline Company (tied for #39, for the Reedy River oil spill), Eklof Marine Corporation (tied for #39, for an oil spill off the south coast of Rhode Island), and Doyon Drilling (#82, for Oil Pollution

Act violations), companies involved in the oil industry appear to feel free to pollute the environment with impunity. That's not surprising, since extractive industries are based on an inherently exploitative attitude toward the environment. That's the same attitude that excuses the exploitation of animals.

The oil industry hurts the animals in three ways: (a) by polluting the ecosystems on which they depend; (b) by fostering the cultural attitudes that underlie their oppression; and (c) by contributing to the climate change that has already disrupted the habitats of many animals and that threatens to disrupt the lives of countless communities of animals if human patterns of fossil fuel consumption continue.

What can people who care about animals do? In this instance, being vegan means more than not consuming animals themselves. While a vegan diet does require considerably fewer petroleum resources than a meat-based diet, many vegans still do use far too much fossil fuel. So, just as we ask environmentalists to extend their environmentalism by going vegan, we must extend our veganism by being more careful to reduce, reuse, and recycle in relation to petroleum products (which include plastics, as well as gasoline). We must also find ways to support the work of those who challenge the oil companies because, whether or not they are personally vegan, whatever they can do to make life difficult for the petroleum industry will surely make life easier for the animals.

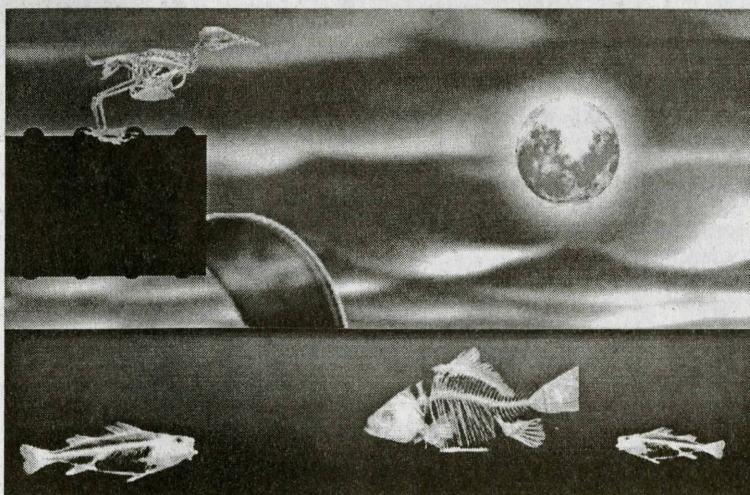
PROFITING FROM ANIMAL CRUELTY

Another group of animal abusers, pharmaceutical companies, also dominate the "Top 100 Corporate Criminals" of the 1990s. All pharmaceutical companies engage in animal testing and most are vociferous advocates of vivisection.

It's true that the government mandates that new drugs be tested on non-human animals. But powerful pharmaceutical firms are hardly impotent in the face of government regulations. To the contrary, these companies influence government policy to an extraordinary degree. Furthermore, most engage in non-mandated vivi-

section. From tests of non-drug products like cosmetics to experiments in genetic engineering, pharmaceutical companies torture animals for profit in a variety of ways. Typically, these companies have little more respect for human animals, profiteering at the expense of sick people and patenting the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.

The industry's disrespect



for people, animals, and the environment is evident from the number of pharmaceutical companies making the top 100. The top corporate criminals include F. Hoffman-La Roche Ltd. (#1, for price fixing); Haarman & Reimer, a subsidiary of the corporate giant Bayer, (#10, for price fixing); Genetech, Inc. (#15, for marketing a synthetic human growth hormone for uses for which it had not been approved); Pfizer (#17, for price fixing); Copley Pharmaceutical, Inc. (#27, for defrauding the Food and Drug Administration); Warner-Lambert (#30, for withholding information about stability failures concerning the prescription drug Dilantin); Ortho Pharmaceutical Corporation (#44 for obstruction of justice); Bristol-Myers Squibb (#62, for dumping chemical pollutants into New York waters); and Warner-Lambert (#62, for filing false reports concerning the discharge of pollutants into Puerto Rican waters and for 337 instances of excessive discharge of pollutants into those waters).

As with oil companies, pharmaceutical companies routinely hurt animals in a multiplicity of ways. Again, it behooves animal advocates to make alliances with the people who are working against these behemoths. Two issues jump out as potential points of consensus: genetic engineering and patents on life. Working together on those emerging and emergent problems might help us to achieve a mutual understanding of the underlying ideologies that lead to abuses of both people and animals. It's no accident that the same companies that withhold medicine from people in impoverished countries also withhold food from animals in vivisection laboratories.

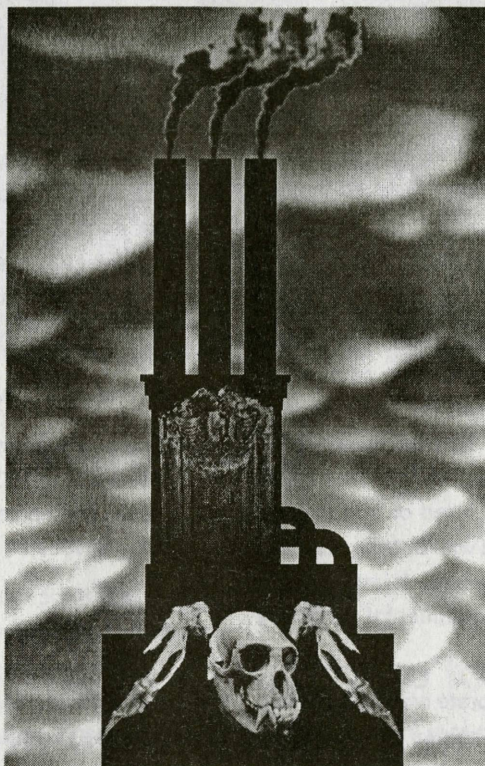
EXPOSING AGRIBUSINESS

Nor is it an accident that so many agribusiness corporations, including meat and dairy operations, have landed on Mokhiber's list. Borden, Inc. and Southland Corporation are tied at #52, each with \$4 million fines for conspiring to rig bids to supply milk to United States military installations and to the federally subsidized school breakfast and lunch programs. Even without bid rigging, the school milk programs hurt students and bilk communities so that corporations can squeeze money out of the sore and often infected mammary glands of confined cows. Price fixing adds insult to injury by increasing the cost to the public.

Also tied for 52nd place, and also with a fine of \$4 million, is a corporation that finds itself in trouble once again. Tyson Foods, which faces continuing legal difficulties concerning the use and abuse of undocumented workers, got in trouble during the 1990s

for giving "gratuities" (i.e. bribes) to Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy while matters concerning issues such as the labeling of raw poultry were being decided by the USDA.

Coming in at a very respectable #7 is agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), which supplies seed, feed, and additives to the factory farms and family farms on which exploited animals are confined. At the time, ADM's \$100 million criminal fine for price fixing was the largest ever in a criminal antitrust case. ADM is one of the companies that manipulate markets in order to keep meat cheap while at the same time ensuring that the profits (from both consumer sales and farm aid) continue to flow to the agribusiness giants. Citizens pay in two ways: as taxpayers and as the unwitting consumers of unhealthy food. The animals pay the biggest price of all, enjoying neither liberty nor happiness before the early termination of their lives.



Other agribusiness corporate criminals include Nippon Gohsei (#16, for price fixing and conspiracy to suppress competition); Pfizer (#17, for fixing prices of food additives); and ConAgra (#50, for adulteration, misgrading, and misweighing of grain). Like ADM, ConAgra is a "middleman" corporation that derives its profits through tactics that disadvantage both farmers and ultimately consumers. Like ADM, ConAgra is an invisible element of the meat, dairy, and egg industries, participating in their abuses of animals through its role as a supplier of feed and other inputs.

Agribusiness is another arena of struggle in which animal advocates can and must work with other activists in order to achieve shared aims. The world food supply is almost wholly controlled by corporations based in affluent nations. These corporations control what is available to eat and, thanks to the combination of persuasive advertising and influence on govern-

ment guidelines, what people choose to eat.

Factory farms, along with the acres of genetically identical corn and soy grown to feed the animals in these farms, long ago took over the agricultural landscape of the United States. Now, both the factory farms themselves and the unhealthy dietary choices that sustain them are moving forcefully into impoverished regions, creating hunger and ill-health among humans at the same time as they expand and exacerbate animal misery.

From the Indonesian Farmer Association, which actively resists "package technologies" imposed by corporate agribusiness under the guise of "development," to the Ecuadorian dock workers who blockaded the port at Guayaquil against ships carrying ge-

netically modified seed, people and organizations all over the world are coming together to pool their power against the immense strength of corporate agribusiness. Because we cannot hope to match the power of corporate agribusiness alone, because anti-agribusiness activists are often principled people who are open to new information and ideas, and because we need to ensure that the animals are not left out of the anti-globalization movement's vision of "another world," animal advocates must become a more vital and visible bloc within the worldwide movement for peace and justice.

Vegans and animal liberationists who are already active antiwar or anti-globalization activists must "come out" and explain the connections to their comrades. Vegetarian and animal liberation organizations must make respectful contact with their peer organizations in other movements and explore the possibility of working together on joint projects. All of us must challenge ourselves to be at least as willing to change our own behavior in relation to issues like poverty or sexism as we expect others to be in relation to animals.

STOPPING CORPORATE CRIME

Nobody likes corporate criminals. Working together to expose and punish corporate crime can be a jumping off point for even more substantial joint activism between animal, environmental, and

social justice activists. Together we can reconstruct a world of peace and plenty—for everyone, including the animals. ❧

Patrice Jones operates the Eastern Shore Sanctuary & Education Center, which is located in a rural area dominated by the poultry industry. She also coordinates the Global Hunger Alliance, which is an international coalition of environmental, animal, and social justice organizations.

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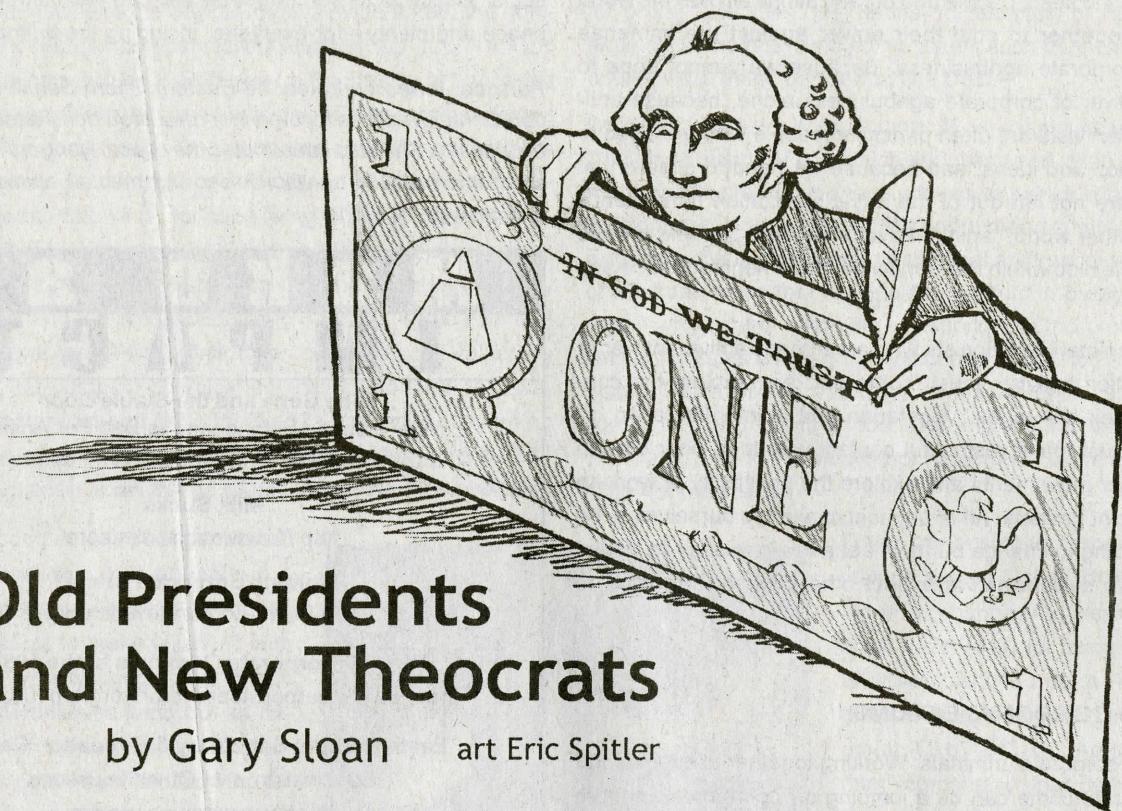
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Tue-May-11	Lawrence, KS Liberty Hall
Wed-May-12	Omaha, NE Sokol Auditorium
Tue-May-18	Denver, CO Ogden Theatre
Fri-May-21	Portland, OR Crystal Ballroom
Sat-May-22	Seattle, WA Neumos
Mon-May-24	San Francisco, CA Great Am. Music Hall
Tue-May-25	San Francisco, CA Great Am. Music Hall
Wed-May-26	Los Angeles, CA Troubadour
Thu-May-27	Los Angeles, CA Troubadour
Fri-May-28	Los Angeles, CA Troubadour
Sat-May-29	Pomona, CA Glass House
Sun-May-30	Pomona, CA Glass House
Mon-May-31	San Diego, CA Soma
Wed-Jun-02	Las Vegas, NV House of Blues
Thu-Jun-03	Tempe, AZ Marquee Theatre
Fri-Jun-04	Tucson, AZ Rialto Theatre
Sat-Jun-05	El Paso, TX Club 101
Mon-Jun-07	Austin, TX Emos
Tue-Jun-08	Houston, TX Engine Room
Wed-Jun-09	Dallas, TX Trees



Old Presidents and New Theocrats

by Gary Sloan art Eric Spittler

On the editorial pages of U.S. newspapers and at sundry Web sites, proponents of an impregnable wall between church and state intermittently clash with modern theocrats (a.k.a. Christian fundamentalists) who would delve beneath the wall and, as Hamlet might say, "blow it at the moon." Whether the immediate provocation be placement of the Ten Commandments in courthouses and statehouses, Bible classes in public schools, school prayer, school vouchers, public display of the crèche, tax exemptions for churches, federal funds for faith-based initiatives, or judicial interdiction against the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, the new theocrats seek to undermine the Establishment clause of the First Amendment. A favorite ploy is to attribute Christian-ish remarks to the first U.S. presidents. Modified or wrenched from context, when not altogether spurious, the remarks are supposed to demonstrate that the most eminent founders of the nation sanctioned state furtherance of religion.

Hence, in his farewell address to the fledgling nation, George Washington, the theocrats often point out, warned that when the body politic is devoid of religious sentiment, the nation must suffer: "Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." On a similar count, John Adams is customarily cited: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." A local letter-writer theocratized Washington in a most brazen way: "The mission of America and the church is one and the same: to further the cause of Christ," the father of our country supposedly pontificated.

The early presidents, the theocrats would have us believe, were all devotees of Scripture who deemed the Bible a desideratum for both governor and governed. Did not Washington postulate that "it is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible"? Did not Adams eulogize the Book: "I have examined all religions, as well as my narrow sphere, my straitened means, and my busy life, would allow; and the result is that the Bible is the best Book in the world?" In the theocratic eye view of American history, James Madison, the father of the Constitution, was an ideological forbear of Judge Roy Moore. After all, it is frequently alleged (falsely, it turns out), Madison remarked: "We have staked the future of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

Even were all these presidential puffs for religion authentic, they would scarcely validate a liaison between church and state. Even if it could be shown that the "religious principle" heightens civic morality and nourishes polity, it doesn't follow that the state should conspire with the church to inculcate the principle. The state has no expertise in soul-making; that is the bailiwick of the church. If the church falters, it shouldn't expect the state to bail it out.

Notwithstanding the above quotations, the first presidents weren't exactly gung ho for institutionalized religion—including Christianity—supported or unsupported by the state. In an 1831 sermon delivered in Albany, New York, the Reverend Doctor Bird Wilson, an Episcopal minister and historian, lamented that "the founders of our nation were nearly all infidels." Certainly, the first five or six presidents, all deists, fill the bill.

In their private correspondence, they inveighed against "superstition" or "dogmatic" Christianity. In an 1816 letter to F.A. Van der Kamp, John Adams mused: "How has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed?" In a kindred vein, Thomas Jefferson wrote Adams: "I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition [Christianity] one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded upon fables and mythologies." Jefferson concocted his own version of the Gospels, expurgating the miraculous, legendary, and dogmatic elements. Vetoing a bill granting public lands to a church, Madison observed: "During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution." James Monroe was a loyal friend of Thomas Paine, author of the incendiary *Age of Reason*, which skewered the Bible and national religions.

Although George Washington maintained a politic silence on his religious beliefs, Thomas Jefferson quoted a revelatory contemporary witness to Washington's disrelish for Christianity: "Dr. Rush told me (he had it from Asa Green [chaplain to Congress during Washington's administration]) that when the clergy addressed General Washington, on his departure from the government, it was observed in their consultation that he had never, on any occasion, said a word to the public which showed a belief in the Christian religion, and they thought they should so pen their address as to force him at length to disclose publicly whether he was a Christian or not. However, he observed, the old fox was too cunning for them. He answered every article of their address particularly, except that, which he passed over without notice" (*Jefferson's Works*, Vol. iv, p.572). At the Episcopal church he attended while president, Washington was invariably absent on Communion days.

Given their distaste for clericalism, it isn't surprising that the presidents wanted to quarantine the national government from sectarian contamination. Washington reminded members of the New Church in Baltimore that the nation had no religious bias: "In this Land, the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition. In this enlightened Age and in this Land of equal liberty, it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the Laws, nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest Offices that are known in the United States." The Treaty of Tripoli, carried unanimously by the Senate and signed into law by John Adams in 1797, specifically disavowed any proprietary influence of Christianity on shaping the guiding principles of the new government: "As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion, it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of [Muslims]."

The first presidents left ample evidence that they favored a broad interpretation of the Establishment clause. The testimony of James Madison, since he was the prime architect of both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, is especially enlightening. In an 1803 letter objecting to the use of government land for churches, Madison

wrote: "The bill in reserving a certain parcel of land in the United States for the use of said Baptist Church comprises a principle and a precedent for the appropriation of funds of the United States for the use and support of religious societies, contrary to the article of the Constitution which declares that 'Congress shall make no law respecting a religious establishment.'" As president, Madison vetoed an 1811 bill giving a charter to an Episcopal church to disperse charity and education in the District of Columbia. He said the bill would blur "the essential distinction between civil and religious functions." In an 1822 letter to jurist and statesman Edward Livingston, Madison noted that strict separation of church and state benefits both: "Every new & successful example therefore of a perfect separation between ecclesiastical and civil matters, is of importance. And I have no doubt that every new example will succeed, as every past one has done, in showing that religion and Government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

Despite the demurrals of wistful theocrats, separation of church and state is an even better idea today than it was in 1791, when the First Amendment was duly ratified. The nation is far more pluralistic now than it was in its formative years. Once, an intrusion of Christian baggage into the affairs of state was prejudicial to few since nearly all citizens were at least nominally Christian. Now that the nation includes twenty to thirty million (estimates vary) agnostics, atheists, skeptics, freethinkers, and secular humanists, state aggrandizement of theism, even when stripped of sectarianism, is inevitably discriminatory.

In his most recent State of the Union address, George W. Bush plumped for legislation allowing religious organizations to receive federal funds for faith-based initiatives—presumably even when, as some funded church organizations now do, they pursue religious agendas and engage in discriminatory hiring practices. Bush grouched that "government has often denied social service grants and contracts to [religious institutions] just because they have a cross or Star of David or crescent on the wall." Bush touted his crusade to right the putative wrong: "By Executive Order, I have opened billions of dollars in grant money to competition that includes faith-based charities. Tonight I ask [Congress] to codify this into law, so people of faith can know that the law will never discriminate against them again."

In a January speech in New Orleans, Bush characterized the Bible as the ideal handbook for carrying out child-care services at a local church. In the same speech, he enunciated the grandiose intent of his administration's faith-based initiatives: "We want to fund programs that save Americans one soul at a time."

Instead of agitating for an amendment to ban homosexual marriages, the new theocrats should reexamine an amendment cherished by old presidents and trampled by the latest avatar to High Office. ❧

Gary Sloan is a retired English professor in Ruston, Louisiana. Besides IMPACT press, he has written articles for *Skeptical Inquirer*, *Free Inquiry*, *The Humanist*, *Skeptic*, *American Atheist*, *American Rationalist*, and *The Freethinker* (London). He has also written commentaries for the *Scripps Howard News Service* and *Nando Media*.

TOP PICKS

Below represents the "best of" music that was reviewed for this issue as determined by IMPACT press music reviewers.



Azeem with Variable Unit • *Mayhemystics* • Wide Hive Records
• You take an introspective emcee and add a jazzy background band with two DJ's and an assortment of musical instruments, and you figure you got some pretty tight stuff right? Well, the groovy vibe that Variable provides and the in-depth and enlightening ideas that Azeem brings to the table turns this into a solid political and idealistic collection of songs. A lot along the lines of Common and the Roots, but more complex and musically loose like a Pink Floyd record, this release further expands the walls of the hip-hop sound. Lyrically, the poetic verses detail many stories to decipher with an awareness of the world revolving around us, and the creativity to inspire an opportunity to evolve. (JC)

Beauty Pill • *The Unsustainable Lifestyle* • Dischord Records
• Beauty Pill is one of the best bands I've heard in a long time, actually I think they have become my new favorite band. The shared female and male vocals are great, perfectly dovetailed into the varied, intuitively complex instrumentation. The lyrical content is highly socio-political in nature, though never preachy, and yet, without sacrificing the urgency of the message. This is a perfect balancing act of content and entertainment, beautiful to behold. Deep in meaning, intricate in construction, and highly listenable, this album has completely blown me away. Hats off to Beauty Pill! (SJM)

Before Braille • *Cattle Punching On A Jack Rabbit EP* • Sunset Alliance Records
• Goddamn, this is good! A level of infectiousness like this is scarcely reached by other bands. Starting with the opening track, this is a tour de force, a brilliant blend of indie rock rhythms, punk attitude and hyper-catchy hooks. The vocals, meanwhile, blend perfectly with the groove-infested rock, adding a passionate, but not overbearing, voice to the music. Fans of bands like Pilot To Gunner, Braid, Bear vs. Shark and Coheed & Cambria don't want to miss this one. My only complaint is that there are only seven tracks. Guess I'll have to patiently wait for their full length. (CM)

Billy Overton • *Faith of Steel* • Steel Water Records, Inc.
• Everybody should own a steel drum album, and this is the one for me. It sounds so obviously homemade that you can't help but fall in love with its "Casio-keyboard-on-demo-mode" sound. Not to say that Overton is a poor steel drum player, quite the contrary. The songs are upbeat, and even inspirational, which I suspect is the whole point of *Faith of Steel*. (AL)

Blanche • *If We Can't Trust The Doctors...* • Cass Records
• Moods are created on this album that combine the bluegrass, folk, blues and country boundaries to form insightful masterpieces in song crafting. Dusty vocals on "Who's To Say" are greeted nicely by the soulful sounds of "Do You Trust Me?," which begins an album heavy on superstition, sadness, betrayal and redemption. Feels as if it's in the spirit of Johnny Cash or Billy The Kid the way the pickin' and steady tone carries on. The pedal steel, banjo, guitar and drums sound is authentic to the deep woods loneliness and appreciation for the surroundings that only a true cowboy may know about. (JC)

Crosstaps • *Truck and Disorderly* • Malt Soda Recordings
• If you can imagine a meeting of the minds between Johnny Cash and FEAR, you have some idea of what these guys are cranking out. This is a really great disc, bursting at the seams with rockin' punk, catchy riffs, tight playing, and balls out fun-for-all. Poignant and touching songs like "White Trash Blue Ball" will have you crying in your 20 oz. Old Mil. (MK)

Eyedeas & Abilities • *E & A* • Epitaph
• The last time these two

teamed up, the underground was just about to split the earth and let the world know what it's been missing. If their first offering was considered to be a mellowed-out mind-trip of great storytelling and skill, the follow-up is a shared progression of the beats and turntablism brought on by Abilities and the rhymes delivered by Eyedeas. Starting off with slamming snares, scratches and a hostile delivery of words on "Reintroducing," one can tell this will not be another *First Bom*, and that's a good thing. Eyedeas spits with a fury at times and bounces back and forth while calming down and almost speaking his thoughts, while Abilities takes more chances this time around with the one's-n-two's and lays out a soundscape that keeps the listener tuned in to this concept. (JC)

Mischief Brew • *Bakenal* • Fistolo Records
• What really pisses me off is that there are only 5 songs on this disc. This is one of the best discs I've heard in a long time. Acoustic, folk type music is the best way to describe this, but then it is a woefully inadequate description of this fun, quirky, catchy and wildly entertaining music. I really love this. It could only be improved by being about 2 hours longer. (MK)

MTX • *Yesterday Rules* • Lookout!
• MTX is back with their tenth album! There are some lineup replacements, but the name MTX is still a punk rock icon, and they don't stray from their tried and true formula of super-intellectual, super-clever catchy pop punk. Front man Dr. Frank is a lyrical genius, and I could have just as much fun reading the album insert as I could listening to the record. The subject matter is the usual brilliant deconstruction of relationship dynamics, girl thought, and other philosophical musings. Fans will not be disappointed! (DP)

Old Time Relijun • *Lost Light* • K Records
• Very groovy stuff here, cooler than the Stray Cats, looser than Velvet Underground, and more dangerous than old-school surf music, these guys carry on with a jam-band attitude and deep dynamic. Throughout the album, human struggles and vices are told of in tracks like "The Door I Came Through Has Been Closed," "Vampire Victim" and "The Rising Water, The Blind Light." All of this is raw punk and garage rock that is mixed with great rhythms and beats, with lyrics tackling issues of the spiritual beings in our world. (JC)

Rasputina • *Frustration Plantation* • self-released
• Such delicious ingenuite - conjuring in equal amounts Beezlebub and Jehovah. I've been afflicted with a strange malady upon hearing this masterpiece of cello rock. I have been thoroughly charmed by these most beguiling purveyors of sculpted sound. Rasputina is an appropriate moniker indeed, relating as it does both to power of demonic scale, and depths of genius most insane. From the down and dirty saloon jaunts of "If Your Kisses..." to the emotional heights of "Girl's School" and "November 17dee" and on to the thoroughly sexy "High On Life", this is a masterpiece. My god, I could worship at the feet of Melora Creager - repeat this in public, though, I shall not. (SJM)

The Kite Eating Tree • *method: fail, repeat...* • Suburban Home Records
• Forming from members of Sunday's Best and Hyphen (the first by the way is well worth a listen,) this CD screams catchy but with a large dose of that post punk sound that is all the rage. "The Burn of Tiles On Re-entry" is a great song with a catchy pre chorus that leads right into a huge sing along type chorus. The song's are well thought out and have yet to leave my CD player since I got the CD to review. If their live show holds half the power that their album does, then I can't

wait to catch them at a show. This is a great album and a promising band. If you are a fan of any of J. Robbins projects (Jawbox, Burning Airlines) or mid nineties bands like Quicksand, then you should definitely pick this CD up. (MC)

Tin Tin • *self-titled* • Sao Bento Music
• Dynamic indie space-rock with soothing melodies. The beginning track, "Science generals," was seven minutes of greatness. The bass drives some of the tracks, while the vocals capture the Hum we all miss so much. Some of the tracks take you here, there and everywhere. The guitar arpeggiates, the bass flows right along and it all mixes to make a melodic masterpiece. The chaotic, yet catchy, riffs come and go, giving enough relief to catch your breath and take in what just happened. While some of the tracks are longer, it flows from one song to the next, without recognition of length. "Alternate" creates the most dramatic build-up, but it is worth the wait. There seems to be an underlying sadness through some of the darker moments, but that just adds another layer to the eight atmospheric tracks. This entire album is beautifully rhythmic from start to finish. (MP)

Various Artists • *Anticon Label Sampler: 1999-2004* • Anticon
• Whether you're familiar with the Anticon label or not, fans of hip-hop take note: This may be the best compilation ever. Anticon is a collectively owned label that first formed in 1998. It's made up of eight hyper-creative individuals who don't stick to any formula or plan and have no problem flipping everything on its head and seeing how it sounds. The end result, on this release in particular, is a collection of varied sounds, all original. Some are more lo-fi, others are melodic, rockin' cuts. Some feature a poetic flow that overpowers the music, yet others have musical production that simply can't be ignored. The fact is, this album is 80-minutes and 33 seamless tracks worth of groundbreaking hip-hop from Anticon (mixed together by Odd Nosdam), a label that has sparked a media/fan buzz in the last couple years, even though these cats have been breaking boundaries for over five years. So, either you're already along for the ride or you need to move your ass and hop on board. Regardless of where you're at, getting a hold of this compilation is where you need to be. (*Bargain Alert: While I'd gladly pay more, the cool-ass folks at Anticon are selling this CD for only \$8. I'm not kidding.*) (CM)

Various Artists • *Blue Note Revisited* • Blue Note Records
• Blue Note is not a label that wants to left behind as music evolves around them. They also acknowledge that much of today's music can be directly attributed to the work they have done throughout the decades. It is with these ideas in mind that they recruited some of today's most popular acts to rework some of their back catalog, including Madlib, Kyoto Jazz Massive, DJ Spinna, Jazzanova, DJ Cam, 4 Hero and others. Calling these songs remixes would be too simplistic. (AL)

Various Artists • *Zen CD-A Retrospective / Zen Rmx-Remix Retrospective* • Ninja Tune Recordings
• For more than ten years, Ninja Tune has been cranking out excellent electronica from highly talented artists. In that time, they have released tons of compilations, but all were of unreleased material. This time, they went through their catalog and assembled 52 tracks in two double disc releases, one of remastered original tracks, and another or remixes. Unless you are a die-hard Ninja Tune fan, chances are you don't have all these tracks. Therefore you better go out and get them soon. Original tracks from DJ Food, Coldcut, Amon Tobin, Mr. Scruff, Wagon Christ, Luke Vibert, Kid Koala, Hexstatic, Cinematic Orchestra, Funki Porcini, and remixes by Squarepusher, Manitoba, Cornelius, Four Tet, Dr Rockit... you get the idea. (AL)

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

CD releases

1090 Club/The Forecast • Split EP • Thinker Thought Records • Three songs from each band on this split release. The Forecast proves to be the better of the two bands with a little more of an edge within the tightly wrapped pop-metal sound found on tracks like "This House Is Not A Home" and "After Winter." 1090 Club brings a soothe-based pop rock sound that stays isolated in emotion, such as on the track "Due Date" where an up and down tempo is driven by wrenching lyrics. If one half is somber and the other half is aggravated, this release provides the better of both worlds, per say. (JC)

20 Miles • Life Doesn't Rhyme • Fat Possum Records • Judah Bauer, guitarist for The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, is the man behind this project. With 20 Miles, Bauer writes the material, sings and plays guitar, while joined by an ever-changing cast of characters. The result is a guitar-heavy take on blues and rock and roll. Bauer's vocals are non-intrusive or overbearing, working in collaboration with the mesmerizing music. You don't even have to be a fan of the genre to appreciate what Bauer does with 20 Miles. (CM)

40 Watt Domain • Short Wave • Gaki Records • Southern California power-pop band 40 Watt Domain is chunky and spunky. Maybe too spunky. Their claim to fame is that their first gig was at a Keanu Reeves birthday bash, and it's appropriate. Keanu Reeves is Ted of Bill and Ted's fame, and he would love this stuff. Inexplicably sexual, immature in message, but poppy and rocky, so's you can dance to it. Bleh. (SJM)

60 Channels • Covert Movements • SupaCrucial Recordings • 60 Channels is one of multiple musical personalities of The Angel. As 60 Channels, the music goes back and forth between dub, downtempo, drum n bass and trip hop. This is done effortlessly, with no break in continuity. Many artists lend their vocals, including Navigator (Freestylers), Angie Hart (Frente), Karen Hart (Andrew Tosh) and DJ Collage. (AL)

A Wilhelm Scream • Mute Print • Nitro Records • Formerly known as Smackin Issah, this Massachusetts five-piece has a four-year history, a new name and a new album. A Wilhelm Scream comes out blazing with this 11-track release, fusing elements of Strike Anywhere, Boy Sets Fire and Lawrence Arms. There's a perfect blend of hardcore aggression and power punk melodies, a balanced mix of screamed and sung vocals and enough tempo changes to keep the most attention-deficit rocker occupied. The guitar parts are incredible, intricately woven through each track and the pounding rhythms are infectious and intense, creating an irresistible result. (CM)

Abodox • New Knife Of The Berserker • self-released • I found myself thinking of The Locust and Fantômas as I listened to Abodox. They share The Locust's insane speed and high pitch screamed vocals, and Fantômas's sporadic vocal eruptions. Their music tends to devolve from whacked out grindcore into intense noise sessions. (AL)

Aceyalone • All Balls Don't Bounce Revisited • Project Blowed/Decon • After seven years, Aceyalone has re-released his first solo endeavor and has included an extensive bonus disc to commemorate the occasion. As one part of the force behind Freestyle Fellowship, this emcee has not lost his lyrical flow that has continued to keep the underground abuzz. Had this release been given the proper push in 1995 the world would have been introduced to the hidden musical gems of the underground much sooner than the new millennium explosion that has taken place. Beats are thumping with eerie background organs and instrumentation alongside tight flows that show off this emcee's diversity and relevance. (JC)

Affront • When Death Won't Kill You • Inferno Recordings • Affront, still ripping it up! When I first became a member of the IMPACT family, I reviewed Affront's last release and was blown away. This release was no different, taking every song they cherished from their previous albums and reforming them to produce *When Death Won't Kill You*. Enough hardcore/punk to last you for ages. Currently resembling in my mind, strong similarities to AFI and With Honor. The solos, harmonies, and so forth are never forgotten and will haunt you past the period of when death won't kill you. (CMX)

Ahleuchtastis • On The Culture Industry • Angura Sound • This trio from western Carolina take their cues from the mathematical instrumentation of Don Caballero and infuse free-form jazz techniques into their sound. The result is twelve tracks of sometimes frenetic, sometimes aloof instrumental songs. After Don Caballero's unfortunate demise, only a band like Ahleuchtastis can take its place. (AL)

Akimbo • Elephantine • Dopamine • Akimbo are from Seattle but wouldn't be caught dead in a flannel and I'm not so sure that is a good thing. This album is meant to harsh the mellow of all the leftover grunge rockers in the northwest and they do a pretty good job of it, I think. Blending classic

rock with today's best hardcore, Akimbo has managed to put together an album that any recovering post grunge hipster will love. Think Botch meets Black Sabbath backstage at a Led Zeppelin show to exchange riffage. If you're pickin' up what I'm putting down you might be into this. (RP)

Album • Eureka Son • self-released • Don't let the Spanish lyrics turn you away from Album, for they are a solid rock band. They sometimes infuse electronic effects into their catchy sound, and process the vocals with an attitude that reminded me of Platiina Mosh. (AL)

American Heritage / Foe / Art of Burning Water • The Combined Stupidity of Spiteful Men • House of Stairs • Three bands with awesome power on one album! American Heritage changed their sound a bit, adding a fourth member and incorporating lyrics into their sound. Foe blends chugging guitars into their math rock sound. Art of Burning Waters is the most experimental sounding band, but they keep things just as heavy as the others. (AL)

Amps For Christ • The People At Large • 5 Rue Christine • Amps For Christ is an odd listen. The mixture of folk style, often expert instrument ability with experimental electronics and, in some songs, thick fuzz, is quite disparate. I actually can't decide if I like it or not. This self-proclaimed "folkcore" band mixes Appalachian and British Isles folk with homemade instruments and "Caveman Electronics" to make a statement about America's leadership, and the experimentation is welcome. While making a broad following unlikely, I applaud their attempts to broaden the sounds of modern music. (SJM)

Anonymous • A Day In The Life • NYC Grounds • The intro to this release features a female voice praising the skills of this emcee, but only one track is worth checking out here. "No One Can Stop Us" is a prime example of using beef in hip-hop to gain notoriety. On this track, Anonymous bitch-slaps Nas while using his song and album titles to cleverly diss every aspect of his music career, though the corny hook sample is unnecessary. Apparently a run-in with Nas caused the ill will, no pun intended. As for the rest of this release, it is easily summed up by using one word – garbage. How can you put out a diss on one of the top emcees of all time as your opening track and fill the rest of your album with as much junk as is on this release? The production, especially the samples, are trash, not to mention the Anonymous flow. (JC)

Antelope • Crowns/The Flock • Dischord Records • The only complaint I have about this two-song CD is that it is far too short. The jagged, minor-chord post-punk puts me in mind of Gang Of Four, no faint praise in my book. I'll be waiting impatiently for more from this band. (SJM)

Arthur Yoria • I'll Be Here Awake • self-released • Yoria wrote and produced the entire album, playing guitar, bass, keyboards and handling the vocal duties. The result is a 10-track power pop album with plenty of fuzzed out guitars, simple keyboards and sticky sweet melodies. While Yoria is definitely talented, it's easy to hear how this could get lost in the mix. At the same time, he could be the lucky one and this guy could be huge in six months. There's plenty of potential for success, as the album is well crafted and showcases Yoria's solid musical abilities. (CM)

Atvin • Night Mute • Secretly Canadian • Drawing influence from Horror literature and film, Atvin's mixture of heavy math rock and Tortoise-style meanderings is disturbing, and wonderfully so. The band is a trio: two guitars and a drummer, and this itself makes for an important differentiation. Creepy, sometimes oddly pretty, this band has achieved the difficult accomplishment of finding itself in heavy rotation in my car stereo. (SJM)

B.E. Mann • Kaleidoscopes Pt. 1 'The Pop Songs' • self-released • 16 reggae songs infused with pop elements. B.E. is credited for all instruments, which deserves a mention. Tracks like "Erotic City" capture the sound of an early '90s cheesy dance song with a guest appearance by Shaggy's twin. There's a guitar solo in between R&B beats and then hom accompaniment. So basically, this album is all over the place. It's a backbone of reggae with a plethora of styles on top. (MP)

Baby Dayliner • High Heart & Low Estate • Brassland • In the same style as Har Mar Superstar and Atom & His Package, Baby Dayliner pre-records his music and sings along with it on stage. The songs could not sound more lo-fi, sounding like they were created entirely on cheap synths. His low, non-chalant voice and new wave leanings reminded me of early New Order. (AL)

Bagheera • Twelves • Asian Man • Bagheera are a delightful male-female partnership, featuring interwoven vocals reminiscent of Mates of State, with a more straight-up pop rock sound. Theodore Moll of MU300 is the male aspect. Both members round out all of the instrumentation tracks on the album, which is lush and varied, and they sing about "love, space/time travel, electronic redemption, and the promise and fear of scientific endeavor." The world can never have too much geekiness! A shining debut — I look forward to future releases. (DP)

Balboa • self-titled • Forgeagain • Balboa are a Philly hardcore screamo band along the same lines as Thursday and Hopesfall. I wish I had more to say about these guys, but I don't. This genre of music has been done so many times over. You can easily spot the recipe used to make each one of these songs and I have figured it out and am more than willing to share it with you. So here goes: start with one part melodic guitar, add one wussy singer with a dash of tough guy and don't forget two parts spoken word, then gently blend heavy guitar and gruff vocals. And there it is; repeat when necessary. (RP)

Beanfield • Seek • Compost Records • Beanfield is a band that fits perfectly at Compost Records: they create electronic music with a soulful edge, with references to jazz and funk. After a lineup change, the band is now composed by original member Jan Krause and Michael Mettke. They found a man and a woman to lend their voices to some of the tracks, completing the sound. (AL)

Black Cougar Shock Unit • self-titled • Newest Industry • Gainesville, FL has a tight punk band in Black Cougar Shock Unit. Much harder rocking than any of its contemporaries, they are clearly drawing their influence closer to the source, unlike a particular punk-pop band that I refuse to mention by name. Occasionally, the vocals over-reach their range, but overall, these guys rock. (SJM)

Black Love • self-titled EP • self-released • I had no idea there were be political statements within a lo-fi production from this two man electronic band, but there sure was. Beyond some less than compelling lyrics, there is what sounds like a Casio beat driving some of the more monotonous tracks like "Burning Effigies." The album takes an upswing during "Heard" where an acoustic guitar and saxophone melody mix in for variety, but it still doesn't do them a lot of justice. It is strange, eclectic and experimental all at the same time. Not bad, but not good. (MP)

Blockhead • Music By Cavellight • Ninja Tune Records • The best thing about Blockhead's instrumental hip-hop tunes is the way they soothe your spirit while you simultaneously bob your head to the beat. His inner comedian comes out once in a while, as he uses comically slowed down or sped up vocal samples. If you had to compare his music to someone else's, DJ Shadow comes to mind. The limited version of this CD features an extra CD with tracks produced for Aesop Rock, but without any vocals. (AL)

Bones Brigade • I Hate Myself When I'm Not Skateboarding • Fight Fire With Fire • Ian Mackeye, you better watch your back, Bones Brigade have caught onto your revolution and will skate way into the dark abyss with the hardcore scene slowly entangled within its hands. Bones Brigade bring to the table what everyone needs, fun! This straight edge, straight ahead hardcore/punk band capture the sounds of Minor Threat, Youth Of Today, Gorilla Biscuits, Dead Kennedy's and the new reformed sounds of The Deal, Embrace Today and On Broken Wings to form this entertaining disc of "rip and shred" skate anthems, angst, more than four-chord bass lines, and infectious solos, leaving any hardcore fan on their death bed with amazement or busting some skulls on the dance floor. (CMX)

Books Lie • Hall Of Fame Of Fire • Level Plane • Books Lie will amaze you with some of the sounds they produce on *Hall Of Fame Of Fire*. There is an element of hardcore on this album, punk rock, and something a little fresher and edgier that most hardcore bands can't deliver. (NP)

Brad Postlethwaite • Welcome To The Occupation • Makeshift Music • Brad Postlethwaite, of the indie-pop group Snowglobe, has delivered an impassioned plea in behalf of victims of war, particularly in the Middle East, in this primarily acoustic album. It is very difficult to convey political messages in pop form, and he should be lauded for the effort. Much of the music itself is appealing, well constructed and played. When the passion for his subject takes over, his voice reaches for areas that it cannot go, which is a bit annoying, but forgivable. This dichotomy is most evident on "Empty Burning", where he is not quite up to the beautiful vocal idea, but still the song is enjoyable. With some more vocal work, this could be a great album. (SJM)

Brandon Patton • Should Confusion • self-released • This is essentially singer-songwriter music, but, it is good. Witty, well recorded, and friendly, this should appeal to anyone who hasn't let their cynicism overtake them. The often-clever lyrics are soulful, and the guitar playing is first-rate. I wish you luck, Mr. Patton. (SJM)

Break the Silence • Near Life Experience • Hopeless Records • I don't know, it's kinda cutesy for hardcore don't you think? Instead of being that emotional blend of sung lyrics and screams, it's more a car crash of genres. Sure to please the 14-something crowd and the cute college girls stuck in the midst of an SUV driven rebellion, which is sad cause there is some good music here, some really creative work. It does remind me a bit of Boys Night Out. (KM)

Broken Bottles • In The Bottles • TKO Records • TSOL, Social Distor-

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

tion, and other legends come to the mind of any adolescent in the dawning stage of their pre-punk glory days. Nothing original, just four guys blending the sounds of four-chord punk with the vocals of a depressed cow. However, punk is founded under these frequent characteristics which makes me game! With plenty of sold out shows behind their belt, be sure to look out for Broken Bottles! (CMax)

Budhi Brown • *The Time or The Place* • Green Room Records • Showcasing the two-string slide bass and the baritone saxophone, this band sounds like a caffeine induced version of Morphine or the Stray Cats, with comparisons being made to The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion as well. Very groovy and horn heavy, the songs are full of lyrics that fit the late night, smoke-filled barroom atmosphere precisely. This album is refreshing, and well worth checking out, just a little to restricted in its sound. (JC)

Burns Out Bright • *Distance And Darkness* • Deep Elm Records • Energetic, nicely constructed, passionate, and tight are words that come to mind to describe this effort from Burns Out Bright. As an older listener probably recuse myself from this review, but it's too late for that. One who is still moved by this kind of emo-core should not listen to me when I say that it bores me now. (SJM)

CafFiends • *Fission, Fussion And Things Made Of Concrete* • Indianola • These guys are super fuckin' cool. Where they don't exactly sound like Snapcase, they do sound a lot like them, and I'm a big fan of them so I loved this album from the start. Angular guitars that'll kick your ass. The vocals are awesome, sounding like The Refused. If you're a fan of one or both of these bands then check out CafFiends. (NP)

Calliope • *Sounds Like Circles Feel* • Thick Records • This mature, interesting effort from East Lansing, Michigan's Calliope is a welcome beacon in a sea of smooth, overproduced indie-pop. The vocals are strong and assured, the sound is tight and sloppy all at once, the band is one of those where you are forced to ask why they are not better known. They certainly deserve to be, though if that were the salient criterion, the face of popular music would be unrecognizable. So here's to all the good and great bands out there doing what they do for the love of it. It shows, and I for one, appreciate it. (SJM)

Captain Yonder • *Mad Country Love Songs* • self-released • I'm not sure what to make of the back-story of this band, regarding a certain "Captain" Jack Yonder, who may or may not have bequeathed a trunk of folk songs to Ryan Pfeiffer after a long, adventurous life. What I am sure of is that this album is perfectly named - keep in mind that "Mad" in this context does not mean "Angry". Ryan Pfeiffer's voice harkens back to a different age; an earnest, manly, rural folk sound that is otherwise absent from modern music. Without the inclusion of the occasional discordant element, the songs themselves would feel as if they were in fact from another time in America. This is some deep, intriguing, impeccably constructed artwork. Kick back with some Old Style, think about a lost love, and weep. (SJM)

Cheval De Frise • *Fresques sur les parois secrètes du crâne* • Frenetic Records • It's hard to believe that two guys can make such a racket sometimes, yet be so subdued at other times. Hailing from the French post-rock scene, they decompose melodies with electro-acoustic guitars and drums and nothing else. Tempos change, but the quality remains the same. (AL)

Chez Stadium • *Freshman Slump* • Success Pool Records • There's no slump here, just some smart, clutch indie pop. Led by singer/songwriter/mastermind Randall Payton, the smartasses of Chez Stadium (and I mean that as a compliment) have a knack for clever hooks and offbeat lyrics. They take familiar elements like Tom Petty and Guided by Voices, and turn them into something new and original. Just check out "I Could Throw You": the song's been stuck in my head for a week and I'm still not complaining. (CL)

Chromatics • *Plaster Hounds* • Gold Standard Labs • This is Chromatics second full-length album. Definitely an old New York punk sound on this album. A little bit deep and dark sounding at times. I liked the first track and then it kind of died off from there for me. (NP)

Conation • *Troubled Waters and Fortresses* • Deplorable Recordings • I'm a sucker for packaging, and damn if I don't love what Conation have done. The music is pretty well crafted as well. Great almost '90s style hardcore (Overcast, Outspoken, Endpoint, Ignite) with all sorts of complements. Accents of female vocals, violins, and acoustic guitars make for something nice and not cheesy, which can happen easier than some bands think. I'm pretty excited about this one, and recommend it pretty confidently. (KM)

Contrived Violence • *Cannibal Planet* • self-released • What the hell is this? The cover of this CD looks like a crust punk album. But to my dismay, I was sadly disappointed by what I heard. It sounded like Herbie Hancock remixing the Miami Vice soundtrack. If you're a fan of electro pop retro house music, check these guys out. (RP)

Crime In Choir • *The Hoop* • Frenetic Records • Prog rock is king in Crime in Choir's world. These instrumental tracks feature complicated drumming and always changing guitar lines, with layers of keyboards giving it a mood I hadn't heard since Return To Forever's *Where Have I Known You Before*. (AL)

Dani Siciliano • *Likes...* • IK7 Records • After teaming up with Matthew Herbert for some of his work, Dani Siciliano breaks out on her own with her debut, *Likes...* It is a slow-tempo affair, and features Siciliano's sensual vocals over tweaked minimalist beats. Her cover of Nirvana's "Come as you are" is both alluring and humorous. (AL)

Deadsure • *From Your Head to your Sacrum* • No Idea Records • Holy shit! It's the lead singer from Sparkmarker's new band! The world hasn't heard a peep from him in like 10 years, after fronting what has to be one of the most under appreciated bands in the 90's hardcore scene. This release is beautiful, with a sound that comes to the front of the room and tears out new windows and breaks out a few doors too. Unconventional hardcore (thank god) and brilliant all the way through. Not unlike At the Drive-In. (KM)

Deceased • *Rotten To The Core* • Malt Soda Recordings • Even though Deceased is usually lumped into the death metal genre, they decided to put out a record of punk songs that influenced them throughout their 19-year career. They pay homage to the Ramones, Dead Kennedys, Sex Pistols, Angry Samoans, Bad Brains, an others for a total of 16 tracks of raw punk rock covers. (AL)

Deerhoof • *Milk Man* • Kill Rock Stars / 5 Rue Christine • Comparing Deerhoof to Blonde Redhead is inevitable. Both bands feature bold, forward looking rock music led by an Asian female singing in a falsetto voice that is unusual at first, but becomes irresistible within minutes, and sing in different languages. And both are excellent bands. (AL)

Desperate Measures • *Never Enough Time* • Youngblood • DM is a straight up hardcore band from Maryland. This is a pretty traditional hardcore album with not too many surprises. If you like Bouncing Souls, Sick Of It All and Agnostic Front, you will be happier than a pig in shit with *Never Enough Time*. (NP)

Destruction Unit • *Destruction Unit* • Empty Records • This Arizona trio relies on electronic beats and whirlwind guitar work to tangle with screaming vocals of death and destruction running from the western burning sun. Urgency runs rampant on this release as a new wave sound becomes meshed with gothic influences to tell tales in the forms of "Cancer," "So Shattered" and "Self Destruction Of A Man." While the emo kids are crying on one another's shoulder, these three are smashing up whatever is around them. (JC)

Devil To Pay • *Thirty Pieces of Silver* • Benchmark Records • Hell yeah! Devil To Pay is straight up stoner rock that does not rest. Think of Scene Killer or Men of Porn, but the tempo never slows down. These guys are here to kick your ass into submission, and they will not fail. (AL)

Diplomat • *The Divine and the Impure* • Nicenise Records • There must be something in the air. I don't know what it is, but each month or two I pick up CD's to review and generally I can find one CD out of the 15 or so I think is decent enough to keep and listen to. Often times I will review a CD and it will hit the shelf not to return. This month, though, I have not found one but many CD's that are not only a refreshing listen but also worth putting back in the ol' CD player. Diplomat falls into this category with a lo-fi take on a very technical sound. Interesting time changes get led along with angular guitar parts. Some sounds are muddy and slow, reminiscent of overly melodic, early 90's Seattle bands, but there is a definite Dischord Records influence on these guys as well. Some of the parts could even be references to the pseudo dance/new wave movement in NY, that include bands like Interpol. The only bad thing I can say about this record is that it is only an EP and has a scant five tracks on it. It is enough to hold you over until they release a full length though. (MC)

Downset • *Universal* • Hawino Records • I'll be the first to admit I used to love Downset. In the earlier 90's they were the perfect underground hardcore rap core alternative to radio friendly Rage Against the Machine. I loved the political nature and the hard stances against racism and sexism. So it's with regret that I have to say this release is a completely worthless and horrible recording. Gone are the great raps, and in are the lame standard of the day of chorus repeated ad nausea, and the raps don't even save them. Slipknot fans might love it, which is just another sign of how bad it's gotten. (KM)

Ee • *Ramadan* • Asian Man • San Francisco based Ee is a foursome that creates peaceful, laid-back works of meditative pop. Their instrumentation is lush, with droning, layered movements forming an ethereal mood in one's mind. I was reminded of the band "The Ocean Blue," but the feel is a bit more emotionally revealing. Some songs are soft and introspective, while others aren't afraid to rock. This is a re-release

of a record originally pressed in 2000, which sold exclusively at the band's live shows. (DP)

Electric Lawnchair • *Double Platinum* • Smiley Jones • Why Electric Lawnchair decided to name their album after Kiss's *Double Platinum* is beyond me. In fact, they also copied the names of all 20 tracks on the album, even though these are not cover songs, and are in fact not even rock songs at all. This album features electronic, almost ambient tracks with some vocal samples that cut in here and there, but no obvious relationship to the legendary metal band. (AL)

Elefant • *Sunlight Makes Me Paranoid* • Kemado Records • I've said it before and I will say it again, these guys make me think of Duran Duran. They don't overly sound like the creators of Rio, but their visual style, i.e. makeup and 80's brit pop sound definitely remind me of them. I would actually put their sound somewhere closer to Bowie and the Smiths'. It's a bit subdued and lacking in substance at times, but overall it's a pretty dancey record that you could have fun listening to. The standout track to me would have to be "Now That I Miss Her". A fun little song that keeps the beat bouncy and the lyrics are only slightly trite. (MC)

Elf Power • *Walking With The Beggar Boys* • Orange Twin Records • The restructuring of the band on this recording, with the addition of Olivia Tremor Control's Eric Harris, has marked somewhat of a shift to a more focused pop sound. Not lost is the pleasurable folk-rock qualities that help ease the pointedness of the lyrics. The title track features the guest vocals of folk-rock legend Vic Chesnutt, a nice addition indeed. In addition to making excellent albums such as this, Elf Power runs a record label / land conservation group called Orange Twin. Check out the website to see how you can contribute. (SJM)

Elizabeth Anka Vajagic • *Stand With The Stillness Of This Day* • Constellation Records • Elizabeth Anka Vajagic is one of those singers, Radiohead's Thom Yorke comes to mind, that sounds terribly melancholic every time they open their mouth. The somber music accompanying her doesn't brighten up the mood either. It is a bit folk, a bit goth, and quite appropriate. (AL)

Emilie Autumn • *Enchant* • Traitor Records • Emilie Autumn is a classically trained musician gone wild, with an amazing voice and electric violin skills. Her blending of styles is sometimes unusual, but some of the songs tend to feel flat, making her voice sound out of place. (AL)

Enemy From Space • *The Condition Of Music* • Smiley Jones Records • The tracks on this CD reminded me of Tangerine Dream and Ray Lynch at times, but most of the time *The Condition Of Music* sounded like the soundtrack to old school video games, somewhat in the same spirit as Aphex Twin's hard to find *Melodies from Mars*. (AL)

Erlend Øye • *DJ-Kicks* • IK7 • A relative newcomer to DJing, Erlend Øye has picked up the skill quite well, being featured on IK7 Records' latest *DJ-Kicks* compilation. What makes him this one stand out over other compilations is his propensity for singing verses from well-known songs over house or techno instrumentals. It took me a while to realize he was singing the lyrics to Bananarama's "Venus" on one track and The Pet Shop Boys's "Always On My Mind" on another. (AL)

Evening • *Other Victorians* • Lookout Records • I wish I could have captured my face when I looked down to see this band was on Lookout Records. From the label that got you into dirty East Bay punk rock here comes something downright indie. My look was quizzical at best, but hey evolution isn't so bad. At least they chose something pretty good. With driving guitars that sound just out of the south of England and the mid-nineties, and vocals that could lead any indie rock band with confidence, this one grows on you. It rocks pretty hard surprisingly. Not so bad at all. (KM)

For The Worse • *Couldn't Give Two Shits About The Kids* • Rodent Popsicle • For The Worse play old school hardcore sounding, at times, much like DRI and Suicidal Tendencies. At first, I wasn't into this album; but after a few listens I really started to enjoy it. I recommend this band to anybody who likes their punk with a little thrash. So buy this album and go skate. (RP)

Foreign Legion • *Playlight* • Look Records • This is some solid indie hip-hop with bad-ass production. The entire album is crisp, an ass-shakin' 12-track collection that is the perfect soundtrack to a bargin' party. There's a bit of funk, jazz, soul and a whole lot of energy, keeping this album going from start to finish. The MC'ing is tight as hell, with Marc Stretch and Prozac holding it down while DJ Design keeps the beat bumpin'. This is some positive, party startin' hip-hop, but it sets itself apart with some untraditional musical orchestration and incredible vocalists. (CM)

Friends For Heroes • *Years In A Costume* • Blackhouse Records • With the popularity of Postal Service I assumed that there would be a rash of programming, open heart, indie rock kids. I haven't noticed too much, but

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

Friends for Heroes are a definite stand out. Songs like the soaring, atmospheric "Come On Over" and the more upbeat "Storming" are catchy but maintain a melancholy feel to them all along. This is definitely a beautiful album but not so artsy that you couldn't dance around your room to it in your underwear...I've said too much. (MC)

From Bubblegum to Sky • Nothing Sadder than Lonely Queen • Eenie Meenie • This is a solo project with a band name, as the name "Mario Fernandez" didn't really convey what the artist is all about. He having grown up in Japan, there is a lot of that kind of that super-happy cultural bizarreness thrown all about, a sort of sickly pop puffy-sticker feel to it. And that is the big joke—the record's strains are all happy and cheery and funny-pop Beatles/Bowie bubblegum, irresistibly catchy, and that is what you hear at first. But listen to the words, and they're completely hateful and spiteful. It's totally oddball creative. (DP)

Funkstörung • Disconnected • IK7 Records • During the past four years this duo has worked on a ton of remixes, but did not release any albums. The wait is over with *Disconnected*, and it comes as a bit of a surprise. They confess that they were bored with electronica, so they found some people to lend their voices to the album, which is decidedly slow to mid-tempo. If it weren't for the ever-present glitchiness that they have perfected over time, this would be a soul / hip-hop album. Thankfully, they did not abandon their sound entirely. (AL)

Furious Billy • Sissyfoot • Mungler Winslow Records • This is a rather diverse album. While the entire release has a lo-fi sound, some tracks are melodic, jangly, indie pop, while other tracks are noise-infested, raucous, rock tunes and some are borderline country. All of the material is the work of one man, Casey Brandt. Maybe he's schizophrenic, because this album certainly feels that way. At times, it reminds me of Elliott Smith, Palace or The Pinehurst Kids, but when it gets feedback frenzied, it becomes a beast all its own with big, messy guitar riffs and spastic vocals — at times, like a mutated Modest Mouse. This is certainly a unique release. (CM)

Gauge Means Nothing • The Absent Trail of an Echo and My Future Plagued Surrender • I've Come For Your Children • I'm going to start this review by saying the title of this album is almost longer the album itself. Now that I have that out of the way, GMN are a hardcore band from Japan who play epic hardcore music. Imagine God Speed You Black Emperor meets Marakate at a Theron band practice. (RP)

GeheimMission • Brick Sand Sky • Hydrogen Line Records • It's kind of all over the place. Heavy distortion and clunky beats, smooth sounds and clean rhythms. This disc has it all. There are several instrumental songs that seem as if they could be background music on a movie or a video game. Lots of long introductions to songs and winding rhythms and repetitive beats that don't seem to go anywhere. It's actually not a bad disc to sit through, but it doesn't seem to take you anywhere. (MK)

Get Fucked • self-titled • Level Plane • Get Fucked plays super aggressive hardcore with total disregard for your ears. I don't think I could take more than the 17 minutes on this disc, but not because the music was bad. Any more than that and I would have spontaneously combusted. (AL)

Grey Does Matter • How To Make Millions In Real Estate • JankoMatic Music • Using super slick melodies and solid vocals, this indie rock album sucks you in with infectious hooks and catchy tempo changes. But, while most would think this was a four-piece band rockin' out the tight tunes, it turns out that Jason Crawford wrote, performed, produced, recorded and mixed this entire 11-track release. The fuzzed out guitars and the wicked keyboard are what keeps this album so solid and its simplicity makes it easy to like. Fans of Weezer and Material Issue take note. (CM)

Harris • New Morning Pulse • Urinine Records • Indie-rock has yet another self-issued card-carrying member. The music is put together well, but the vocal is grating and mostly tuneless. "Lampost Lights Out" almost turned me forever against analog synth flourishes. It didn't help that the press kit included an asinine text written by a frat-boy friend of theirs whose opinion no one should respect. A better excerpt: "The first song rocks, and then there are a couple of emo songs that girls like on it, and this other one that sounds like Braid or something and you can't get it out of your head..." Yeah, great. (SJM)

Havergal • Elettricità • Secretly Canadian • This is very minimal pop under the influence of Brian Eno, without being derivative in the least. Also welcome is the straightforward, unashamed quality of the vocals—unlike Eno, who always seems to need to drape his singing beneath some kind of thick reverb. Apparently, Havergal's construction method utilizes multilayered simple tracks to build his meticulous songs, the effect of which is a pleasing thickness to the very simple tunes. Admirers of Eno and Erik Satie's work will enjoy this album very much. (SJM)

Haymarket Riot • Mog • Thick Records • This four-piece from Chicago captures post punk melodies with harmonies and dynamic guitar lines.

Nine tracks of solid rock n' roll recorded by Steve Albini. "Uneasy Consequence" is a track that exemplifies their unconventional song structure. At their more dissident times, they are reminiscent of Fugazi. I was put in Fugazi mode during the track, "Plastic Bottle Kid." Other moments brought some Braid similarities with structure and vocals. They are a good representation of this genre and are well worth a listen. (MP)

Heidi Howe • Give A Hootenanny • self-released • I admire Heidi for her political and social activism, her desire to put out an album that benefits so many great organizations and her lyrics that are proactive, clever and informative. But Heidi's vocals are tough for me to get used to. They are a bit squeaky and, at times, sound off key. They remind me of the voice for Sandy, the squirrel on *SpongeBob SquarePants*, almost a bit chipmunk-like. While the musical mix of bluegrass, country and pop isn't that bad, Heidi's vocals have hit a sore spot for me. (CM)

Hidden Tracks • The Sweet Sound of Excess • Disposable Pop Revolution • OOOohhhh. I'm all moist and stuff. This is a great disc. Self described artsy-fartsy wuss rock. This is catchy and fun and a really great listen. These guys have played with groups from The Crash Test Dummies to The Mr. T Experience. One listen will be enough to tell you that they would go over well just about anywhere. It won't come out of your CD player for a long time. (MK)

Horizen • self-titled • self-released • Unmistakably influenced heavily by Sublime, this Orange County, Florida band brings the reggae, rock, hip-hop and dub flavor with style. Self described as "Herbfunk," you can bet there are a few songs being fired up after scoring a bag on O.B.T. and making your way to the coast to cruise I-95. Styles and songs on this release pay homage to the likes of Sublime and the Beastie Boys, and come across authentic enough to seem like their own. What you get here is the equivalent to a cover band jamming out at your favorite dive. (JC)

Hospital Grade • Written Axe To Trigger • Urinine Records • These Canadian lads produced a good punk rock album with hints of the "post-punk" sounds of greats like Jawbox and a little Jawbreaker as well. One can never get enough "jaw" bands I guess. The song "You Don't Want to Rust" is heavily Fugazi influenced and probably the best song on the CD. Overall the CD is worth a listen and if you want to see what our northern neighbors did with our D.C. heavyweights, Hospital Grade is a good example of just that. (MC)

Housewife • Stretch to Fit • self-released • There is a band called Shiner that has a song called "My Life as a Housewife," it's on *Lula Divinia*. The song is amazing, off time, heavy as hell, just great musicianship. Wait, that's not what I listened too, I listened to some other CD...it sucked. They sing to a girl to "kill her boyfriend" in the first song, I zoned out on the second song and then they began to surprise me with the third when some actual good music starts it off and then they proceed to ruin all fragments of hope that were left by TALKING THROUGH FOUR MINUTE'S OF IT. I can't in good conscience recommend this CD, I'm sorry. (MC)

Humble Gods • Born Free • Suburban Noize Records • Humble Gods, soon gracing an over-polluted college radio station or, even better, mainstream, bring to the table what any other punk band does. Lyrics concerning freedom, or the lack thereof, pissed off at the government, let's play four chords, scream and shout! The artists themselves are fairly descent with the ever popular solo and bass line, and I love Rancid and Anti-Flag, but I don't need one out of every three punk bands resembling them. (CMAX)

I Voted For Kodos • self-titled • self-released • This ska-punk band's name is a Simpson's reference, in case you weren't aware. The music is competent—par for the course for the genre—but the vocals are a little weak. Too young, trying too hard, I think. That said, I did really like the structure of "Where Are We Going To?", especially the first break. (SJM)

IfiHadAHIFI • No More Music • Contraphonic • Hailing from someplace in the woods of Wisconsin, IfiHadAHIFI have returned to the civilized world with another collection of jittery post-punk. Driven along by the propulsive drumming of Dr. Awkward, *No More Music* is a near perfect blend of dissonant, angular guitar rock and quirky

melodic sense. And, there's a secret bonus track, a fucking bad ass cover of Stevie Wonder's "Uptight (Everything's Alright)" that will get even the most rhythmically-challenged (that would be me) shaking their ass. (CL)

Jesus And The Devil • Destructive Music Resists the Oncoming Light • Fudge Sickill Records • Getting right to the roots of rock and roll music, this band out of the south side of Chicago carries the aspects of the Stooges. At The Drive In and Fugazi to provide and energetic and sloppy offering. Their musical direction is apparent in tracks like "Bring Out The Guns" and "Virgin Cheerleader Brainwash" where a solid garage sound is only hurt by the sound recording quality. (JC)

John P Barton • Does Not Play Well With Others • self-released • Singer/Songwriter pop rock. So one guy put together an album where he played nearly all the instruments and vocals, while acting as producer and engineer. I got to give him credit for that and for some of the "guitar licks" he throws down on tracks like "Faith." I call them "licks" in that 80s sense. You know the solos that come out of nowhere, almost like they were put there just to show you what the guitarist could do. "Sleep," a slow acoustic tune, is one of the better tracks, mostly because of the violin accompaniment. Barton isn't a bad musician, but this S/S isn't doing anything original. He may not play well with others, but these 15 songs don't play well with me. (MP)

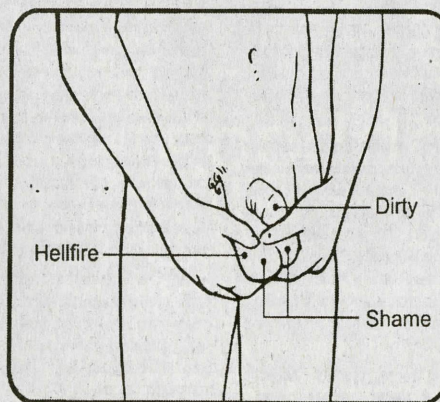
John Vanderslice • Cellar Door • Barsuk Records • On his forth album, Vanderslice releases his inner confessions in the forms of loners, murderers, and a confused child at odds with his family, and does it all with great melody and musical experimentation. The autobiography type lyrics are detailed and deep, sung with a weary tone while a jazz-pop sound helps balance the somber and joyful moods on tracks such as "Wild Strawberries" and "Heated Pool And Bar." This release finds the singer/songwriter getting back to his roots in a way, using the keyboard to add atmosphere to a guitar laden rock sound that journeys through one man's darkness just to see the light when all is over; turning something so serious into something so refreshing. (JC)

Joseph Patrick Moore's Drum N Bass Society • Volume 1 • Blue Canoe Records • Mixing jazz, world music, funk, and rock, this large group of musicians play excellent covers by Phish, Men at Work, Tony Williams, The Specials and the Fixx, plus some original tunes. I was reminded a lot of Groove Collective while listening to *Volume 1*. (AL)

Kieskatago • You Are the One Who Can • Iconic Rocket Records • Rock bands with trumpets usually piss me off; they're like, "Oh, we're so unique, we've got a trumpet." Assholes. Much to my surprise, and thankfully so, Kieskatago is not one of those bands. These guys mix together elements of indie rock, jazz, funk, and Latin music, and somehow manage to pull it off successfully. It doesn't feel forced, like so many bands that try to blend seemingly disparate styles of music. There's a bit of a Radiohead vibe as well, as Josh Vasby's vocals are reminiscent of the 'head's Thom Yorke. Don't let the trumpet scare ya, this is good stuff. (CL)

Kitchens & Bathrooms • Vehicles Beyond • Forge Again Records • The Hamilton, Ontario math rock trio Kitchens & Bathrooms is taut and heavy, an angular, jarring sound that is nonetheless appealing. The plain but fully-projected vocals, when they hit the mark, are awe-inspiring. This is a high-energy band that, while suffering from some inconsistency and non-functioning moments, are capable of some amazing heights. (SJM)

K-Line • How You Gonna Scare Us Now? • Does Everyone Stare? Records • Supposedly hailing from the roots of "British punk" and conducting the same, K-Line are definitely not. They combine the fun loving sounds of



Feast of Hate and Fear

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☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

Motion City Soundtrack, Hot Water Music, with a touch of good ole fashion punk rock and a slight spray of Suicide Machines. K Line portrays teen crazed anthems of girls and all that jazz. Not bad, however, creativity is not something you can find within a band incorporating the styles of what's currently infesting the evil "M" word, the mainstream scene. (CMax)

Lali Puna • *Faking The Books* • *Morr Music* • 2003's *Left Handed EP* saw the addition of distorted electric guitars to Lali Puna's electronic sound. The follow-up full-length album, *Faking The Books*, is full of well-rounded space-pop songs, all featuring the whispery, relaxed vocals of Valeria Trebeljahr. (AL)

Languis • *The Four Walls* • *Plug Research* • Languis strikes a perfect balance between live instrumentation (drums, guitar, vocals) and electronic music. These pop songs are engaging, and the male vocals are smooth. Some of the songs are more atmospheric soundscapes than songs, making the whole album extremely hypnotizing. (AL)

Lesser Birds Of Paradise • *String Of Bees* • *Contraphonic* • The Birds are a warm cup of cocoa on a cold day and a cool pool in the Florida sun. This is comfort music, part country jangle, part indie-rock smartness. The vocals are distinct and remind me a bit of John Sampson (The Weakerthans). The meandering acoustic tunes are compiled of a number of instruments (ukulele, banjo, musical saw, dulcimer, drums, guitar, etc.), woven together to create sincere, heartfelt tunes that can bring both joy and sadness. This is slow moving, clever music that can be appreciated by just about anyone. (CM)

Like Clockwork • *A Cross In The Ground* • *self-released* • Emotionally powerful, Like Clockwork couples heartfelt, passionate vocals (at times, reminiscent of the awkward, wavering Conor Oberst style) with intricate, creative indie rock and electro elements. The songs cover a variety of emotions, none seeming particularly positive, leaving the listener to experience what seems to be some troubling times for the songwriter. The multitude of stylistic influences keeps this 15-track album fresh. (CM)

Lion Fever • *Lustre* • *Dim Mak* • This 5-song EP is a powerfully rockin', female-fronted infusion of blues, Joan Jett rock, honky tonk, and punk, with heavy emphasis on the rock. Did I mention the rock? It is rock above all else. This is the kind of band that no doubt has a shrine to rock and roll gods past in their basement, because they are true believers, and they make you know it. It has that classic early rock sound, yet everything about it screams, "We are hardcore." (DP)

Local H • *Whatever Happened To P.J. Soles?* • *Studio E Records* • Amazing how this Chicago two-piece can sound so good and raw on a consistent basis. This album is named after the 70's/80's star of such movies as *Rock and Roll High School*, *Carrie*, and *Stripes*. A heavy rock assault full of aggressive hooks and spontaneous tempo changes balances this noise with wrenching vocals on tracks like "California Songs," "Dick Jones," "Everyone Alive" and "Buffalo Trace." Melding their classical and indie rock influences, Local H manages to provide an edgy sound that works once again. (JC)

Loch Lomond • *When We Were Mountains* • *In Music We Trust* • In addition to being the largest freshwater lake in Great Britain, Loch Lomond is also a band, sort of. Well, now they are. Here, lemme explain. Originally intended as a series of demos by songwriter Ritchie Young and friend Rob Oberdorfer of the Standard, the project gradually grew into a full-length album and full-fledged band with various members of the Portland music scene providing their talents. *When We Were Mountains* has a very grand, dramatic feel, with varied and rich instrumentation. The Loch certainly isn't afraid to take chances with arrangements, and they hit more often than they miss. This is a very creative and unique record that reveals more subtle nuances with each listen. (CL)

Lost On Purpose • *1st EP and Rising Wildfires* • *self-released* • Wil Holland, the sole member of Lost On Purpose, should have a good backing band for his music. He's a far better writer and singer than the majority of the bands I've reviewed, full of good ideas and good songs. I hope to hear more of his work. (SJM)

Madvillian • *Madvillainy* • *Stones Throw* • Curse these promo samples running over parts of each track. Maybe they help prevent piracy, but they also annoy the hell out of the reviewer, me! That aside, this is a dope-ass album. Producer extraordinaire Madlib joins forces with MC superstar MF Doom. Together, they rock the mic and the speakers, droppin' funky basslines over smart beats and jazzed-up loops. But this isn't your standard formula stuff; these cats would never allow generic material to get their names put on it. As a result, the tunes are wicked original, exuding a '70s vibe, featuring some of the coolest samples ever and offering up a style that is swank as hell. (CM)

Major • *The Bliss Domestic* • *Laughing Outlaw Records* • Acoustic guitar and violin compliment the beautifully melodic vocals to create a symphony of folk music. At least the beginning starts off that way, but it

explodes into jangly pop rock. This four piece from Australia even moves into the blues realm in some of their slower tracks. "Shake" is a power pop track that sounds like it was written for the radio. Some more Aussie guitar pop for your listening pleasure. (MP)

Martyr AD • *On Earth As It Is In Hell* • *Victory Records* • From the ashes of Disembodied and Holding On emerged the current lineup of Martyr AD, ready to take on the world. They bring forth unparalleled aggression to the metalcore genre, with comparisons to Converge and Meshuggah inevitable. (AL)

Mashlin • *The Process Of Automation* • *self-released* • This Orlando, FL band is populated with some really good musicians, unfortunately, the vocals are really breathy and out of key. Not to mention that I'm pretty sure the last thing the world needs is another overproduced-sounding heavy-alterna-pop band. (SJM)

Maylay Sparks • *Graymatter* • *Rapster Records* • With a number of beat makers and turntable techniques paving the way, Maylay manages to keep his first full-length flowing as one unit, with the soulful, funky sounds inspired by this Philly native's time in the game. One part founder of the Eastern Conference label and projects with Baby Blak, The Roots and others, this debut is one not to miss. Malik B appears on "Black Sheep," but you'd hardly notice it because Maylay manages to spit his stories of stick-ups on "Robin Hoodz" and being blunted on "The Method" and is clearly the star of his own matter. Tight flows and a musical backdrop of instruments, samples and consistent beats keep this together. (JC)

Meow Meow • *Snow Gas Bones* • *Devil In The Woods* • There is very heavy immediate resemblance in Meow Meow's music to The Flaming Lips. I should also mention the influence of Kevin Shield's (My Bloody Valentine) guitar work, though the influences do not degrade the music by tagging it as derivative. In fact, some of Kirk Hellie's super-effected guitar (and/or keyboard?) solos are groundbreaking, absolutely fucking amazing. There are a lot of secretly pretty melodies and harmonies as well, filling out this great album to the brim. Occasionally, the guitar work gets a little precocious, and should step away from center stage, but this is only rarely the case. Good luck, guys. (SJM)

MF DOOM • *Special Herbs Vol. 5 & 6* • *Nature Sounds* • Volumes 5 & 6 in the Special Herbs series features tracks that have appeared in previous recordings by MF DOOM, KMD and King Ghidra, as well as brand new tracks to be added to future projects. These instrumental hip-hop tracks have a definite 1970's influence. (AL)

Minus Story • *The Captain Is Dead, Let The Drum Corpse Dance* • *Jagjaguwar* • This band's self-proclaimed "Wall Of Crap" sound is occasionally overwhelmingly overpopulated with instruments, often disturbing, and sometimes beautifully inspiring. There is an underlying strong pop element that connects the noisy dots, giving the chaos a purpose, that while unbeknownst to me, is imminently appealing nonetheless. If you like your pop crisp, clean, and unchallenging, go elsewhere. I, however, will be astir the beautiful wall of crap. (SJM)

Mirah • *C'mon Miracle* • *K Records* • Mirah makes some very heartfelt, pretty but somewhat melancholy music the likes of which is also crafted by Kristen Hersh and Cat Power. The excellent recording has an honest, DIY feel, and the soft tone of her voice belies a powerful range. Her meditations are punctuated with rollicking, rocking interludes that propel her songs forward. This is really some beautiful music. Go get it! (SJM)

Modern Income • *It's Rewinding* • *Happenin' Records* • This is mostly reworked material from the band's first album. The music is a lo-fi indie pop trip through melodic, jangly, head-bobbin' tracks with a bit of quirky weirdness. Nothing amazing, but not crap either. (CM)

Modern Life Is War • *My Love, My Way* • *Martyr Records* • My friend and I used to have a joke about how there wasn't life in Iowa. Simple point we'd never had any proof presented to argue against it. Years later we met a cute girl with a great record collection to prove us wrong since she was from Des Moines. (She was also the end of our friendship, but that's another story.) I might have to track that old friend down and turn him on to these guys, more proof of cultured folks from the land of corn. Great hardcore with just the right mix of emotion and power. Production from hardcore hit maker Dean Baltulonis doesn't hurt either. This band needs to stay together, tour a whole bunch, and kill everything in sight, because they could if this debut is any indication. (KM)

Molar • *The Time And Motion Studies* • *False Walls Records* • *The Time And Motion Studies* is really a study in improvisation. The only instruments are guitar, keyboards and a laptop. Though the guitar is played live, it gets an electronic feel due to the processing involved. Tracks blend into each other, and the lack of structure hypnotizes the listener from beginning to end. (AL)

Mum • *Summer Make Good* • *Fat Cat Records* • For *Summer Make Good*,

Mum decided to use more live instrumentation and less electronics, even using old vintage amplifiers and gramophone speakers in their moody, slow compositions. The resulting sound is more lush and vibrant. The female vocals are barely there, slight whispers with a thick Icelandic accent only previously heard from Björk. (AL)

Natural Dreamers • *self-titled* • *Frenetic Records* • Including members of Deerhoof, The Curtains, Gorge Trio and Dilute, Natural Dreamers take two guitars and a drum set on a journey that sounds completely improvised. Gentle guitar picking leads to spastic drum breakdowns and back. Keyboards show themselves at inopportune times. In short, a masterpiece. (AL)

Never Surrender • *self-titled* • *Fight Fire With Fire* • Never Surrender blends heavy old school thrash with heavy emotional lyrics. Their self-titled EP was released in the summer of 2003 and can be found in your local record store. (NP)

Novi Split • *Keep Moving* • *Sunset Alliance Records* • Here are 15 melodic and infectious tunes that have sad undertones while contrasted with dance beats. What else does anyone need? Some of the slower tracks, like "You sleep, I drive," and "Me an Andy," are reminiscent of Death Cab For Cutie, while some of the dance tracks are more along the lines of The Postal Service. It's catchy indie pop rock featuring David J, a member of Kind of Like Spitting. Novi Split's press release puts its best when it says the band "almost makes you want to tap your foot at a funeral." (MP)

Now It's Overhead • *Fall Back Open* • *Saddle Creek* • Hypnotic and energetic in the tradition of bands like Information Society, this foursome creates a loop-based brand of dark pop, using audio wizardry as a backdrop for desperate, spacey, emotional vignettes. As an added bonus, this record features vocals by the wonderful female duo from the band Azure Ray. Make sure you listen to this with your levels turned up so you can appreciate the carefully placed nuances. (DP)

Onlinedrawing • *The Volunteers* • *Jade Tree* • Jonah Matranga is behind the second album from Onlinedrawing and he may have exceeded his previous accomplishments with this emo-rock release that includes the pulsating grunge of "We Had A Deal" and the melodic and simple poetry of "Superhero." Armed with his well-worn guitar and drum machine, Jonah creates a valiant release that is tightly wound together with changing sounds and atmospheric mood swings that captivate your attention in a way those emo songs on the radio can't. This offering deserves to be considered near the head of the line within its peers. (JC)

Paradise Boys • *The Young And The Guest List* • *Princehouse Records* • Combine 80's new wave with a more House-y element, and you've got one of the two bands to form from the ashes of The Calculators, also reviewed this month. Retaining the moodier aspect of new wave while adding the more upbeat elements and sounds of House, the vocals remind me of what happened to the Gang Of Four when the dance element killed their punkness. This is a weird subset of club electronica that I probably don't do enough cocaine or X to get, though it does provide one answer to the question I posed at the end of my review of The Calculators. (SJM)

Pepper • *In With The Old...* • *Volcom Entertainment* • Let the good times roll as you listen to Pepper's *In With The Old...* The vibe is much like 2002's *Kona Town*, with plenty of good times, surfer attitude and reggae inspired songs. They sound a lot like Sublime, especially the vocals. (AL)

Post-Haste • *"Untitled"* • *lonik Recordings* • This is truly garage post-punk. It's crass and noisy, but somewhat endearing. Unfortunately, it suffers from the malady of too many bands out there - the vocals are awful. You know, I hate saying this, and I can imagine the rest of the band members, most likely being friends, are reluctant to say it also. But, it's true. Sorry. (SJM)

Rajiv Patel • *Obey The Cattle!* • *Sunset Alliance* • *Obey The Cattle!* is a short collection of mostly instrumental songs that inject middle eastern musical influences and instruments into slightly mathy compositions. Acoustic guitars are endlessly picked, creating a layered effect. There is some sporadic singing, which frankly seemed out of place among the instrumental tracks. (AL)

Red Eyed Legends • *The High I Feel When I'm Low* • *Gold Standard Laboratories* • First of all, thanks for the semi-nude pictures on the CD. Second, thanks for the remix of "Hamicus," the "Super Indoor Version". This is some really raunchy punk, and I do mean punk - not the Unnameable pop-punk band that I detest so much with the guys in the underwear (wasn't fucking groundbreaking, by the way). Thank God I'm not to old to enjoy noisy crap like this! (SJM)

Reed Dickinson • *Ruby* • *Flying Kite* • Dickinson is a Boston-area native who plays a unique brand of lighthearted rock, extolling the virtues of living, in vibrant songs of sheer optimism. The musical prowess is

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

quite advanced, many songs feature fantastic guitar solos that reinforce the inherent light of the vocals. His music has been compared to the Beatles, and I definitely sense Beatlesness in it. Truly a feelgood album — one could not logically listen to this record and then jump off a building, unless there was a serious chemical imbalance in one's brain. (DP)

Remembering Never • Women And Children Die First • Ferret Music • Leave it to Remembering Never to always deliver some of the most furious metalcore around, keeping the momentum built by their 2001 debut *She Looks So Good In Red*. The screams are just as powerful, the guitars just as fierce. (AL)

Rescue • Volume Plus Volume Plus • Forgeagain • Kind of an emo style with a lot of start-stop guitar work. Vocals are real good, too. Sometimes sounds like Cursive or a better Thursday. Not recommended to fans though, just cause it's usually better. (NP)

Retisonic • Return To Me • Silverthree Sound Recordings • Rock, baby, rock. This is pretty good stuff. Lots of diverse influences combine to create a sound that is easy to listen to and difficult to forget. This is a melodic and harmonic collection of songs that, for all their energy, doesn't resort to simply making noise. The talent is obvious here. (MK)

Richard Youngs • River Through Howling Sky • Jagjaguwar • On this installment from Youngs, he delves back into the transling, meditation drones of a few of his earlier releases. The opening track begins this morbid journey with wind-chime rings in the background and screeching guitars that accompany tribal drums and painful melodic vocals. Everything here is very emotionally charged, in a lonely and disgruntled way, not sure if the experience was a positive cleansing for him, or just a set-up to the project set to follow. (JC)

Ritter • Six Degrees Of Variation • Jumpstart Records • From the streets of Ritter, Pennsylvania, Ritter bring the ruckus to anyone who can appreciate the talent of four unbearably talented young men. Intertwining the high resolutions of volume currently residing with bands like Strung Out and Rufio, Ritter throw in pop punk, punk, rock, and even a little hardcore in their fresh bowl of genius, producing an album full of intricate song structures and melodies. Jumpstart, however, holds the key to success with this piece of artistic beauty they call *Six Degrees Of Variation*. Soon everyone will witness the variation face to face, and I will become a legend. Until then, pick this up! (CMAX)

RJD2 • Since We Last Spoke • Definitive Jux Records • Fans of DJ Shadow and Dan the Automator will love this. RJD2 comes at you once again with mostly instrumental compositions that inject rock, funk, Latin, and downtempo into his hip hop beats. The songs are well-rounded enough that they don't feel like they were thrown together. (AL)

Rob Hornfeck • How Do I Know You? • self-released • Hey. One guy does it all. It must be pissier to see him live. Rob is obviously an excellent songwriter and a multi talented musician. These songs are well written and fun. A broad and occasionally disorienting array of styles and influences make this a very easy to listen to. Catchy riffs make it one you will want to listen to again and again. (MK)

Royce Da 5'9" • Death Is Certain • KOCH Records • After listening to the second release from Royce, you can't help but wonder what could have been for this former sidekick to Eminem. After falling out with Eminem's crew D12, sides were picked and Royce was left to seek out his own way. He sheds light on the situation on "I & Me," just one of many topics on a collection of tracks full of mental substance and rhyme skill, twisted by tight snapping production that complements his one-liner style storytelling technique. Overall, this album is a collage of Royce's ups and downs through troubles with his crew and his labels. "What I Know" and "Something's Wrong With Him" are a couple tracks worth checking out. (JC)

RPM • Irrational Anthem • 7940 • Like DMX, RPM is a single person — however, a female. This is her debut album, and it's a doozie. Armed with a Les Paul guitar, this self-proclaimed "patron saint of aggravation" makes her powerful presence and beliefs known through incisive, anthemic (it's not just a clever album title) attacks on religion, apathy, and selfishness. An activist in politics and charity, she truly takes angry, power pop to a higher level. If Alanis Morissette is Coca-Cola, RPM is Jolt Cola. (DP)

Salim Nourallah • Polaroid • Western Vinyl • Salim's slow, haunting vocals are emotionally charged and the result can be a mix of feelings, both happy and sad. The music, for the most part, is slow tempo, creating a rainy afternoon kind of feel. While the message of the album is not entirely depressing, it certainly made me feel that way. However, there's no doubt, this album is a passionate work of art and Salim is a very talented songwriter. (CM)

Sanford Arms • The Twilight Era • Blue Disguise Records • Sanford Arms isn't exactly what you'd expect from former Alcohol Funnycar frontman Ben London. Much like Eric Bachmann's post-Archers of Loaf

efforts under the Crooked Fingers moniker, Ben London turns down the volume to reveal some well-crafted, alt-country influenced tunes. London's melancholy pop is reminiscent of Mark Eitzel and the Pernice Brothers. (CL)

Scoville Unit • Everybody Knows • Ernest Jennings Record Co. • This is sweet pop melodies with extremely catchy keyboard parts. Unfortunately, the singer could use a lesson or two. While not horrible, it just sounds like your friend who consistently sings along with his CD player in the car while you are driving with him, but he isn't quite sure of his range so he sings to low. It really is too bad too because minus that this is a good and catchy CD. Tracks like "Do Not Disturb" let us into a softer and more expressive side of the band, while "The Switch" hammers out a catchy riff that repeats until it is drilled into your brain. It shows good promise and the band could be good, just not yet. They are on the verge of maybe making that one song that changes it all. (MC)

Sheek the Shayk • Hour of the 7th Moon • Laughing Outlaw Records • Their promotional material says that the disc is "a 57 minute one-way trip into the blubber zone." I've got no fucking idea what that means. The disc, however, is a good rock and roll disc. Reminiscent almost immediately of old AC/DC with a slight psychedelic twist from the 60's thrown in. This disc has enough strangeness and straight up rock and roll to satisfy just about anyone. (MK)

Simon Joyner • Lost With The Lights On • Jagjaguwar • In the spirit of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and the endless number of folk singer/songwriters comes yet another dreary and detailed journey through one man's jangly trials in life. Simon possesses a voice that soothes and a guitar that aches along emotional changes and atmospheric soundscapes on an album that carries on like a lonely afternoon that never seems to end. (JC)

Smogtown • All Wiped Out • TKO Records • It's the beach! It's new wave! It's punk! It's defunct. Smogtown is, in fact, no longer a band. This is too bad because these 8 tracks from their last 2 recording sessions are a good sampling of a band that obviously had a lot to offer. Catchy riffs and lots of rock and roll fun make this a good disc. (MK)

Some Girls • All My Friends Are Going Death • Deathwish • With members from American Nightmare, Unbroken and The Locust, you can imagine how aggressive Some Girls is. Their debut CD includes some new songs alongside tracks from their previous 7's and some demos, all remixed and remastered for your listening displeasure. (AL)

Sounds Like Braille • Right out of Left Field, Straight to the Middle of Nowhere... • Contraphonic • Sounds Like Braille have the ability to lull you into a trance with soothing guitars, only to jolt you to your feet after turning on the distortion, they turn it down again. They employ two drummers and two bass players, and a guitarist, creating a wall of sound that is as complex to the ears as Braille is to the eyes. (AL)

Sour Grapes • Divine Grind • self-released • How can you say anything bad about a band that just seems to love to play? This is an acoustic folk trio with 11 tracks that were recorded at three different locations, one being Orford's River Jam at The Pastures Campground. They give you Caribbean influenced hippy rock complete with conga drums, harmonica, male and female vocals and foot percussion (tap shoes on pine boards). (MP)

Spanish For 100 • Newborn Driving • self-released • This is up-tempo indie rock in the realm of Modest Mouse, mostly vocally. The title track seems to emulate bands like Built to Spill. It is a little too poppy to really fall into the same category as some of the aforementioned, but this four piece from Seattle does what they do well. The tingly guitars do seem to match well with their style and pop melodies. These ten tracks feel like the kind that will grow on you the more you listen. It's also the debut release from the band, so I'm very interested to hear from these guys in the future. (MP)

St. James • The St. James Experience • self-released • In the spirit of the onslaught of talented female artists comes the compelling St. James. Her multipurpose voice and sound is in the same realm as that of Nelly Furtado, Beyonce Knowles and the like. Many tracks on this release are radio and music video ready with a womanly attitude somewhere between comforting and independently strong. She combines the soulful, hip-hop and alternative rock elements of today's pop music

to create engaging songs such as "Burnin' Inside Me," "The Truth" and "Trains Of Thought." With just enough of an edge to this release, the familiarity and catchiness found here should result in quite the experience. (JC)

Subhumans • Live in a Dive • Fat Wreck Chords • The next in the *Live in a Dive* series brings UK's Subhumans and 26 of their favorite tracks to a CD player near you. Even though they originally broke up in 1985, their never-ending popularity forced them to tour again in 1998 and other times since then. If you never got the chance of experiencing them live, here's your chance. (AL)

Sweet William • Gone To Seed • Zendevel Records • Hailing from the "backwoods of Brooklyn" comes Sweet Williams, a banjo pickin', mandolin and guitar strumming, 'chime-playing kind of band too drunkin' happy for their own good. Musically this album is a superb mixture of country honky-tonk, beer soaked ballads, folk and rock songs that are ideal for any campfire. The liner notes give insight behind each track that comes backed by The Country Gentlemen with a refreshing approach and enlightening sound no matter how deep the sorrow, or how high the tide. (JC)

The Blithe Sons • Arm of the Starfish • Family Vineyard Records • The tracks on this album cannot really be called songs. No structure exists, and instead the songs follow more of a stream of consciousness path. These are minimalist folk atmospheres performed outdoors so the environment becomes part of the band. (AL)

The Bloody Lovelies • Some Truth & A Little Money • Cheap Lullaby Records • From the opening track on, high-energy, down-home rock-n-roll is conjured up by tales of "loneliness, liquor and femme fatales." "You Don't Love Me" is a piano laced track that comes off as a new century Doors rock song with the band building the suspense while Randy Wooten croons about his chaos of emotions. As things progress, hints of Billy Joel, The Police and pure raunchy rock music are blended well. What you get with this band is a combination of great songwriting and perfect musical execution. (JC)

The Building Press • Young Money • 54°40' or Fight • This was my first time hearing The Building Press and I loved every second of it. TBP play awesome angular northwest postcore rock reminiscent of bands like Farquet, 31 Knots, and Rockets Red Glare. This album is a true gem. Everything this label touches turns to gold, I swear. Check for yourself. (RP)

The Calculators • Circuit Breaking Silence / Simplicity And Style 10" Reissue • Princehouse Records • This reissue of the now-defunct (1997-99) San Francisco band The Calculators is New Wave worship, pure and simple. If the singer isn't English, he's pulling an Alain Jorgensen on us. Too bad this band isn't still around, I'd love to hear how they would have mutated. (SJM)

The Casualties • On The Front Line • Side One Dummy Records • California's "Gods of Street Punk/Oi," The Casualties, have unleashed yet another album with *On The Front Line*, which is exactly where The Casualties stand when someone commits an act of blasphemy on anyone willing to denounce their faith in punk or the scene in which they so strongly represent. This album brings more angst, revolting and bloody carnage than any other album and, unlike the tendencies of most (selling out or slowing down), The Casualties are kicking faces in harder than every before. Take all those sing-a-longs, thrashy vocals, solos, and bass lines, multiply this by 10 and you're now *On The Front Line*. (CMAX)

The Change • self-titled • Fight Fire With Fire • Wow! Sweden is so cool and they know how to make their hardcore bands sound just like ours. I



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think that is so rad when bands from other countries copy us; it's so flattering. I bet that Sick Of It All will be stoked to hear that they have a carbon copy of themselves in Sweden. (RP)

The Crumbs • Last Exit • TKO Records • Miami, FL and The Ramones? Totally antithesis of one another, however, The Crumbs can produce an efficient analogy between the two. Hailing from Miami, The Crumbs formed due to their love for The Ramones, Dead Boys, and the "old school sounds." Try The Ramones meets a little bits of Tim Armstrong, throw in The Hives, and you've put the crumbs together to form the foundation on which The Crumbs have built themselves and will forever reside. Not my favorite, however, any fan of The Ramones or any "old school" act prevailing dominantly in the '80s, this one is for you. (CMAX)

The Eternals • Out Of Proportion • Discos Antifaz • Chicago based group The Eternals features ex members from Trenchmouth and Tortoise, and specialize in dub influenced music. The bass is deep, the groove heavy. Even though dub is an important part of the sound, they also add a bit of jazz and funk flavors, which set them apart from the rest. (AL)

The Everyothers • The Everyothers • Hautlab • "I'm working on my New York tan" says so much in the opening track of this 70's style rock album similar to the heyday of David Bowie and Iggy Pop, mixed with The Strokes and Queens of the Stones Age of today. The edginess in sound is complimented by the drug-induced (sounding) vocal duties of Owen McCarthy, who sings about a slut at a bar, intoxication, and death among other things. Their simple, and raw, approach brings their live show sound to disc with an energy that keeps this band tightly wound and jamming throughout. (JC)

The Faithfull • Our Own Heroes • Reason Y Records • The Faithfull play some emo-esque, anthemic rock, along the lines of Hot Water Music. While the songs are solid, there's the overwhelming sense that you've heard this somewhere before. The lyrics cover many of the same topics of girls and girls who don't love us/the band/insert someone's name here. There's nothing that really distinguishes them from the many bands mining this same territory. (CL)

The Fierce Lime and His Ponytail Assassins • Modify The Engines • Woosley Band • This is not what I expected. Always a good thing. This collection of mostly short songs is an eclectic mix of styles. This is radio rock that you could hear on any commercial radio station. Some of the longer, slower songs stand out as being examples of what this band is capable of. They are pretty good. (MK)

The Frequency • self-titled • NEI • Sebastian Thomson of Trans Am has announced with this first solo album that he "want[s] to make a record that could wake the shoe-gazers from their corpse-like sleep, breaking their habit of going to shows, standing in the corner, [and] nodding like human bobbleheads." If the intent of this music is to command me to dance, you're going to have to do better than rehash Gary Numan with a flourish of Miami bass. (SJM)

The Glass • Concorde • Makeshift Music • From the banks of the muddy waters of the mighty Mississippi, or some other cliché about being from Memphis, the Glass skillfully blend indie rock and Americana. Imagine Low's reverberated slo-core spliced with alt-country, and some uneasy, quivering vocals like a distraught Jay Farrar. (CL)

The Good Brothers • Project Blowed Presents • Project Blowed • Headed by Aceyalone, this collection features underground hip-hop heavyweights from the west coast with beats coming from RJD2, Fat Jack, PMG, Boss Beats and Riddlore. Unfortunately there is just a bit too much tangled up within this release to make things flow easily. The sound comes off dated at times, sounding like it's been made in the late nineties, but the true-school hip-hop head will appreciate the diversity brought to the table by each emcee on a release that features a taste from everyone. Appearances are made by Abstract Rude, Bus Driver, 2Mex, Cypher 7 and Awol One to name a few. (JC)

The Hiss • Mute Print • Nitro Records • Formerly known as Smackin Issah, this Massachusetts five-piece has a four-year history, a new name and a new album. A Wilhelm Scream comes out blazing with this 11-track release, fusing elements of Strike Anywhere, Boy Sets Fire and Lawrence Arms. There's a perfect blend of hardcore aggression and power punk melodies, a balanced mix of screamed and sung vocals and enough tempo changes to keep the most attention-deficit rocker occupied. The guitar parts are incredible, intricately woven through each track and the pounding rhythms are infectious and intense, creating an irresistible result. (CM)

The Letter Press • Input/Output • Sunset Alliance Records • A three-piece band with no guitars? And they're good? Yes and yes. Two basses work together to create rhythmically beautiful melodies. Seven new songs of tight, very smooth indie rock that really can't be compared directly to another band. Each track sounds fuller than the last and it is easy to forget they are only a three piece. "Ember" reminded me of something that could have been on Jimmy Eat World's "Clarity," with its slow, driving melody

and harmonies. Great musicianship with an original niche. (MP)

The Lift • Road To Hana • Little Red Records • Following in the tracks laid down by Radiohead, Coldplay and The Flaming Lips, this band has an edgy rock sound that tends to get intricate at times. Influenced by bands such as U2 and R.E.M. throughout growing-up, The Lift has put together an album that flows well from beginning to end. Touching on issues of war in "War Parade" and the attempts at removing ourselves from the world's problem in "Spaceman," the atmosphere on this album ranges from straight ahead rock songs to indie-pop emotions and carries a good groove throughout. (JC)

The Method and Result • The Things You Miss • The Losing Blueprint Records / Kirakira Disc Records • If you've liked Björk's last couple of albums, then you will like The Method and Result's *The Things You Miss*. In it, this duo combines female vocals beautifully singing over electronic beats created from regular instruments and random noises, including office supplies and the ambient noise from inside a cave. While the background music is pure electronic genius, and the vocals are superb, the combination of the two did not work for me. Megan Wendell would sound better singing over acoustic guitars. (AL)

The New Black • self-titled • Thick Records • These guys, and girls, have influences that are all over the map. Ranging from some of the old punk rock like Wire and some of the new wave bands like Siouxsie and the Banshees. Tracks like "Last Wave" even have a Dick Dale surf rock feel to them. This CD is good but not great. If they keep it up it will be interesting to see if they follow the path of the ever increasing popularity of bands like the Yeah Yeah Yeah's or if New Black will lead us down a brand new path. (MC)

The Nick Strange Group • Ghost of Love • self-released • I love it when I get a disc that I can't classify. This could be soft rock. It could be smooth pop. It could almost be contemporary jazz. The Nick Strange Group is a talented group of musicians who have managed to hammer out a unique sound in an increasingly homogenous music scene. Great licks and catchy riffs will keep you listening. (MK)

The Normans • Dreams of Autocrashes • India Records • Slow to mid tempo indie pop with soothing vocals. Distorted vocals over poppy guitar lines on the track, "Writing" threw the album off. Its slightly twangy feel on this song is contradicted with vocals that sound more reminiscent of a new wave band. These 16 tracks are for the indie pop new waver. (MP)

The Pubert Brown Fringe Occurrence • A Once And Future Thing • Laughing Outlaw Records • That's some kind of name you got there, fellas. Sydney, Australia's music scene has produced a group capable of channeling the spirit of late 60's British Beat, psychedelia intact. The album opens with an appropriate cover of The Beatles' "Eight Days A Week", and then ambles through a group of fun, weird, weirdly fun, and funnily weird songs. Seriously, if you muddy the mix, fill it with some more vocal reverberation, you could release it on LP and no one would know it wasn't from that time period. Silly stuff, indeed. (SJM)

The Sinister Quarter • Pink Guillotine • Exotic Fever Records • The Sinister Quarter's singer immediately reminds me simultaneously of Grace Slick and Björk, with an underlayment of Cher(!). The music is experimental, inspired angular indie math rock. It's not really possible to get an accurate feel for them from this explanation, though, and I would feel like a dick if I left it at that. It's really angry and powerful, and requires multiple listenings to get a feel for. That alone makes it worth a shot. (SJM)

The Slackers • Close My Eyes • Hellcat Records • Since 1991, the Slackers have been creating some of the best ska out there. *Close My Eyes* continues the trend, with twelve tracks of traditional ska. Only a band as good as this one can ride the waves of popularity that this genre has experienced, and come out unscathed. (AL)

The Sun • The Moon • self-titled • self-released • This self-released album is recorded perfectly on target, giving the songs a stronger impact than a squeaky clean production would have. Instrumentation is excellent, and the nice harmonies lend buoyancy to the already bouncy tracks. There is a strong hippie, folk element that I don't personally care for, but that is not to cast it as backwards-looking, nor should it dissuade anyone who likes this style of music. It's soulful and fun - give it a try. (SJM)

The Talk • It's Like Magic In Reverse • Morisen Records • From the get-go, this is a super, melodic, pop rock romp. The vocals led me to, initially, believe the band is from the UK. But, hark, wrong is me. They're from Charlotte, North Carolina. Regardless, this quartet's second full-length album is an impressively crafted bit of joy. Produced by Mike Mogis (Bright Eyes, The Faint), his previous project involvement comes through on this release, with at least a few tracks sounding reminiscent of Bright Eyes and The Faint, as well as Conor Oberst's (Bright Eyes) side project, Desaparecidos. The resulting 12 tracks are a guitar rockfest with plenty of sweaty, feedback-happy pop. (CM)

The Vroom • In This Scene • The Vroom • Shades of The Police,

certain structural elements of lounge jazz and 60's pop, and open two and three-part harmonies distinguish this self-released band. You can't fault these guys for not having a signature sound - they do. Though listening to the album straight through can cause the songs to blur together. Many of these songs are really good; perhaps a little variation in sound could elevate them to excellent. (SJM)

Thomas and Sampson • When the Lower Resembles the Higher • West-ern Vinyl • I was starting to become a fan of this kind of lo-fi synth pop indie thing that's been happening lately. The pulsing pushing sounds kinda dig a groove into you like a greatly worn out record, and the sugar pop sweetness puts you under a giant oak on a spring day... But the vocals ruin it for me, like a rain cloud catching you under that very same oak tree. (KM)

Tony Touch • The Peace Maker II • Koch Records • Another mix coming from Puerto Rico's finest Tony Touch, this follow-up may be a slight step-up from the original *Peace Maker*, because it comes off sounding like a solid collective, rather than half-hearted offerings. Right away, the English-Spanish dialogue is greeted swiftly with stellar thumping beats and a high-energy approach with a host of emcees flowing along for the ride. Much of this gives props to New York, Spaniards and street level bravado. "How You Want It" with Redman, Erick Sermon and Keith Murray, "Rock Steady" with Raekwon, Method Man and U-God, and "Trouble On The Westside Highway" with Slick Rick are just a few tracks that stand out. Dead Prez, Nature, Fat Joe, Sean Paul and the Bad Boy camp also appear. (JC)

Toxic Narcotic • Shoot People, Not Dope • Rodent Popsicle Records • Coming strong with a scream core punk attitude and four new tracks on this release, Toxic raises more hell on tracks like "People Want To Kill Each Other" and the remix of "Cockroach." The downfall is that the chaotic musical approach is not mixed well, drowning out the hostile and aggressive vocals that make this worth the time. (JC)

Toys That Kill • Flies • Asian Man Records • This is fun, catchy punk rock from San Pedro, CA. This four-song EP is much more intelligent than your typical fare, with a bouncy, raunchy cover of Wire's "I Am The Fly." The vocals meet the highly snotty criteria of punk to a tee. Enjoy. (SJM)

Transistor, Transistor! Wolves • split CD • Level Plane • Transistor Transistor and Wolves are two loud, screaming hardcore punk bands from New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Transistor has a heavy rock sound with catchy guitars. Wolves have a more old sound, almost like G.B.H., Casualties or something along those lines. (NP)

T-Rivers • Anytime-Anyplace • Urban Ikon • Fresh from battle rapping in the streets of North Philadelphia, T-Rivers keeps it gutter and brings out his braggadocious demeanor on this release that shows him flaunting his O.G. status about cars, friends, ladies and Scarface admirations. Production is pretty basic, with thumping beats that have a slight southern bounce to them, but at times don't fit with the rhyme styles being displayed that mainly refabricate typical thugged-out releases of the past. (JC)

Tungsten • Aleatory Element • Technical Echo Records • As opposed to many instrumental bands out there who simply play a certain style for the entire disc, Tungsten keep things interesting by constantly changing what they are playing. What's amazing is that it was pretty much completely improvised. Some parts are acoustic, some electronic, and others delve into noise, but all are hypnotic and well worth a listen. (AL)

Tweaker • 2 a.m. Wakeup Call • IMusic • For his second venture as Tweaker, Nine-Inch-Nails founding member Chris Vrenna changes his sound a bit, adding more live instrumentation, including drums and guitars. The album revolves around insomnia and what it makes you feel, so the atmosphere is quite creepy and moody. Guest singers include Robert Smith, Mellowdrone, Nick Young and Jennifer Charles. (AL)

Ty • Upwards • Big Dada • Self-produced with the help of Drew from Psychic Phenomena and Doze Guys, Ty spits his British, Reggae accent around tightly combined funky, soulful, dance hall beats. "Ha Ha" gets things started in style but things turn a bit soft by the end. This emcee often rhymes of the fun and heartfelt times with his lady alongside melodic hooks throughout much of this. Ty shines on tracks such as "Oh You Want More?" and "The Willing" with great musical direction, but much of this comes off undecided. (JC)

U.N.I.T. • UNTITLED • Urban Ikon • Comprised of emcees Baff and Sinis, with the majority of beats provided by Stoutamire, this release is packed with radio versions and sub par songs. Baff brings a street level approach lyrically and Sinis provides a little wordplay with his rhymes. But it's mostly full of "money this," "drink that," "freak this," "runnin' that," type of flows. Production wise, this crew is a few steps behind, with a thumping sound and string-layered backdrop that carries some cobwebs. (JC)

Uncle Fucker • Usurpers of the Tradition • self-released • You may think it crazy, but Uncle Fucker, the world's only bluegrass, thrash metal band says that they have something of a difficult time getting press coverage. This should change. Here is a really cool band that plays the most disturbing blend of music I've had the pleasure to subject myself to in a long

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

time. They should become the new official band of the USA. It sucks you in, kicks you in the nuts, and keeps you listening. (MK)

Various Artists • Blood Sweat & Ten Years • Trustkill Records • This is the tenth anniversary of the heavy music purveyors at Trustkill Records, and to celebrate, they released this compilation with 18 tracks from some of their best. Featured on the disc are Eighteen Visions, Walls of Jericho, Throwdown, Poison The Well, Nora, Most Precious Blood, and others. This is the perfect label sampler...get this to get a flavor for what the label has to offer. (AL)

Various Artists • Building Records Presents... 60 SONGS • Building Records • Well I think it will be near impossible to review 60 songs. That's right, the CD title isn't lying, this is a double album containing 60 of the finest bands from Building Records, Robotic Empire, Lovitt Records, Level Plane Records and Deplorable Records. I will name some stand out songs for you: Division of Laura Lee with their track "fourty four"; Bats and Mice with "sliding scale"; Pilot to Gunner with "action items"; Black Sea with "landscapes" and the ever wonderful Fin Fang Foom with "in harm's way", and that's just disc one. For disc two I would have to say Oil with "autonomous"; Engine Down with "songbird"; The Now with "she's heroin"; and Pinebender with "well-calibrated moral compass". It is a lot of songs to go through, but well worth the \$12 dollars. It is a good mix of metal and indie. (MC)

Various Artists • DJ Rhetmatic - Exclusive Collection • Up Above Records • This two-disc set features a long line of emcees with the mixing of World Famous Beat Junkies DJ Rhetmatic. In a world full of mix tapes and guest appearances, it takes a lot to stand out from the bunch, and though this release is sub-par, the bonus disc is tight and the *Exclusive Collection* does have some highlights. Talib Kweli and Sadat X spit nicely over the sonic production of Geology on "Communicate," Dilated Peoples presents the long sought after "Bullet Train" and the Visionaries shine with "Hindsight." Appearances also include Jurassic 5, Pete Rock, Kool G. Rap, The Beatnuts and Jay Dee. (JC)

Various Artists • Embedded Joints • Embedded Music • The production duo of Ese & Hipsta have done it again. This label sampler consists of a bangin' collection of tracks due for release on upcoming albums from the likes of Embedded, Tes, Babbletron and Not For Nothin', each gets three tracks, back to back with bonus material rounding things out. Very much worth the experience, because this labels formula caters to the hip-

hop head and the casual listener. These beats stay funky with production and emcee help from El-P, DJ Pre, Donnan Linkz, Aceyalone, Atoms Family, Vast Aire and Mr. Complex. (JC)

Various Artists • Makeshift #3 • Makeshift Music • Makeshift #3 is the third compilation out of Memphis from this label heavy on an intricate alternative to the formulated rock of today. Kicking things off is The Coach and Four, sounding very much like The Police of the eighties, before blending nicely into the atmospheric acoustics and melodies of Vending Machine. The experimentation and disregard to musical boundaries makes this an excellent collection of tracks that at times gets emotional but always keeps a groovy resolution. Standout tracks on this lengthy installment come from Snowglobe, Nervous Patterns and The Reigning Sound. (JC)

Various Artists • MIAD • Somia Music, Inc. • Miami is the last place from which you would expect top rate glitchtronica, but labels like Schematic and Somia Music are turning heads with their forward thinking music. In this compilation, fourteen artists showcase their talents in creating songs with plenty of glitchy beats and beautiful melodies. Contributing tracks are Captain Marmalade, Clapan, Otto Von Shirach, Phoenicia, Xanopticon, and others. (AL)

Various Artists • SCRAP Punk Compilation • SCRAP Records • Great hardcore and punk stuff, mostly from the UK and a little from Europe, and a touch of the Americas as well. The one band you'll know is Conflict; the bands you'll want to know are Wall of Denial, Discoeder, Broken, and Bacchus Temple Addicts. Over all this comp really pretty much rules. (KM)

Vast Aire • Look Mom...No Hands • Chocolate Industries • For the first solo release from one part of Cannibal Ox, Vast spits versatile one-liners over atmospheric and spacey beats filled with organ, synth and bass sounds reminiscent of Ox's underground classic *The Cold Vein*. His flows are at times recycled from previously released material and delivered with a heavy "huffing" voice, which comes from the depths of his largely framed build. The line-up of guest appearances on this release is thick, beginning with S.A. Smash, Blueprint, MF Doom, Sadat X, Aesop Rock and more. Sounds bounce around, from newera g-funk beats to soul driven tempos, production work is provided by RJD2, Ayatollah, Da Beatminerz, Camu Tao and Madlib with scratches cut by DJ Cip. Things start slowly in the beginning, as this release comes out after numerous impressive cameos by Vast have set the bar for his first effort, and is a telling tale of poetic insight and tricky street play. (JC)

Vice Dolls • Die Trying • Crosscheck Records • This is a good hardcore disc. I love female lead singers, especially in ferocious music. This chick has a tiny little cartoon voice that seems to stand in stark contrast to the ferocious thrashing of the music. It works better in some songs than in others, but n all, it is a nice break from the howling testosterone screams that most HC bands fire off. (MK)

Walls of Jericho • All Hail The Dead • Trustkill Records • This is what Kittie wish they sounded like. Only one member of Walls of Jericho is female, but lead singer Candace Kucsulain blows away most other hardcore singers with her aggressive vocal style. Not that the rest of the band members are slouches. Guitar riffs that sometimes remind of Slayer and insane drumming round out this aural assault. (AL)

Wheelhorse • Victrola for Sale • self-released • Victrola for Sale is the debut album for Kentucky's Wheelhorse. These guys take a variety of traditional styles such as blues and bluegrass, and incorporate them into their classic rock-based style. The mandolins and banjos fit in nicely beside the tube-driven electric guitars. At the band's heart are the stylings of traditional country, with narrative storylines of lost love, traveling, and other familiar tales given their own unique perspective. Fans of alt-country, Americana, and classic rock will definitely enjoy this album. (CL)

Whitman • Music And Dancing • Happenin Records • This assemblage of often hilarious, creepy source material put to a beat is really just that. While I would love to hear the source material, I feel like I could do a better job of putting it together using the music software in my computer. Check out their website (www.threehappeningguys.com) though. It's a nice joke. (SJM)

X • Evil Rumors • Laughing Out Loud Records • So when you think 'X', you think heroin and old school punk, right? When you think of a new live two-disc set you think, "Playing for beer money?" right? No. This is a great disc. It's like X unplugged. cello, violins, sax, organs - all kinds of fun stuff to keep the sense of unpredictability going. This disc shows the talent of the band and brings a new side of them into view. (MK)

Yes Sensei • We Who Transplant Sustain • ROK Lok Records • When first entering the dojo of Yes Sensei, I was struck in the mouth by noisy disorienting rock and then, just moments later, I was kicked in the nards by their blatant disregard for song structure. When I finally recovered from this ass beating, I realized that these guys reminded me of Jesus Lizard with a hint of punk rock and roll. I strongly recommend these Long Island ass kickers for your next big showdown. No Mercy! (RP)

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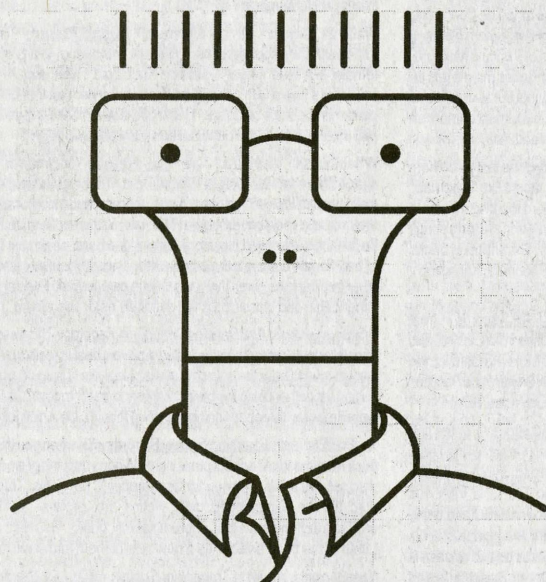
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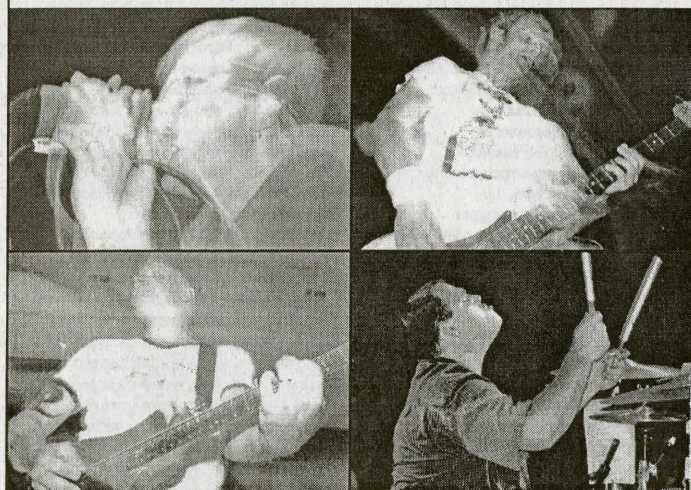
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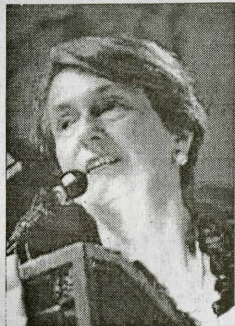
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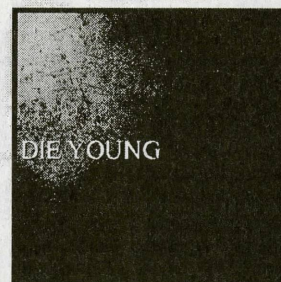


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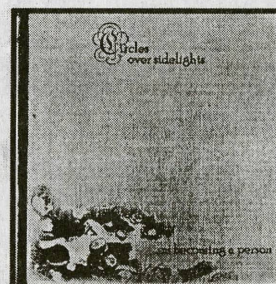


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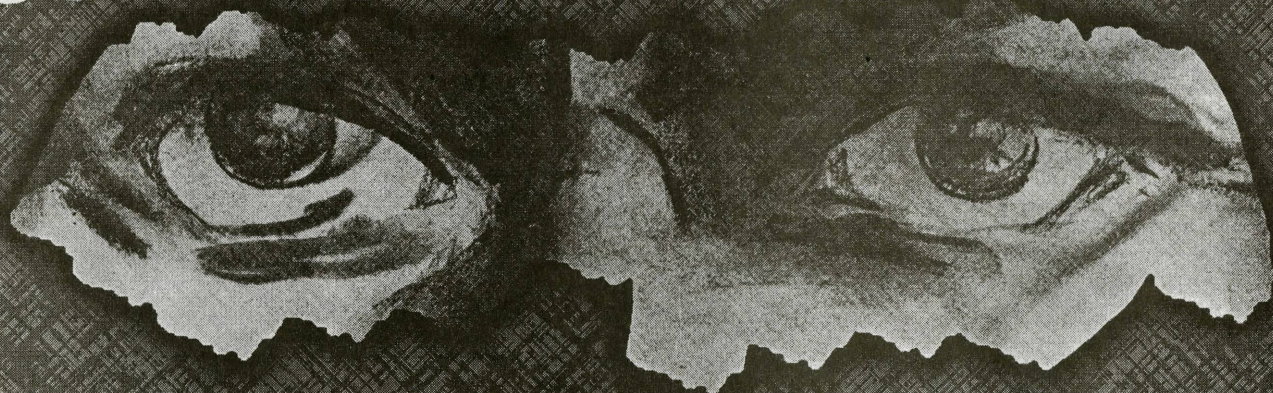


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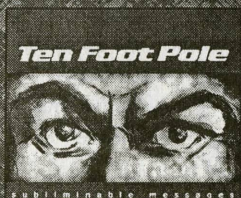
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thoughts,
which
bring
actions,
are filled
with hate
against
anyone,

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or white,
we are in
a living
hell.
That is
as real
as hell
will ever
be."

George Washington
Carver

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Mobilize for Global Justice

When: April 21-25, 2004

Where: Washington, DC

Info: <http://sept.globalizethis.org>

Animal Liberation Student Assoc. Conf.

When: April 23-24, 2004

Where: Syracuse University, NY

Info: <http://www.cala-online.org>

March for Freedom of Choice

When: April 25, 2004

Where: Washington, DC

Info: <http://www.naral.org/takeaction/march.cfm>

Boston Social Forum

When: July 23-25, 2004

Where: UMASS, Boston

Info: <http://www.bostonsocialforum.org>

Global Action vs. Capitalism @ G8 2004

When: June 8-10, 2004

Where: Sea Island, Georgia, USA

Info: www.infoshop.org/octo/g8_2004.php

Finish The American Revolution

When: July 26-29, 2004

Where: Boston

Info: <http://www.blackteasociety.org>

Earth First Summer Gathering 2004

When: August 4-8, 2004

Where: Yorkshire, UK

Info: <http://www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk>

Mass Protest During Republican Nat'l Convention

When: August 29, 2004

Where: New York City

Info: <http://www.unitedforpeace.org>

RNC Not Welcome

When: Aug. 29 - Sept. 4, 2004

Where: New York City

Info: <http://www.rncnotwelcome.org>

Media Democracy Day

When: October 22, 2004

Where: International Day of Action

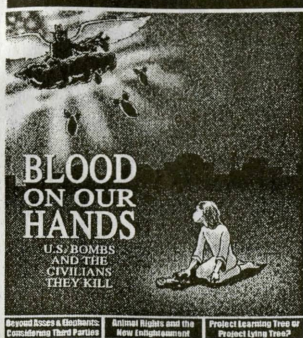
Info: <http://www.mediademocracyday.org>

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Issue #47, October/November '03, Cover Story: Global Fear And Loathing - How The World Really Sees The American Empire - Also: Swazi Elephants - Born Free, Sold Out; Holocaust In The Forests

Issue #46, August/September '03, Cover Story: Barbarism In The Afternoon - Bullfighting, Violence and the Crisis In Human Identity - Also: Got Veal?; Trashing The Border, Taking Human Lives

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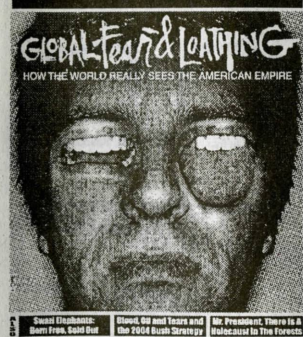
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issue #47

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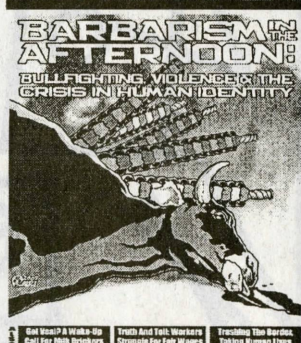
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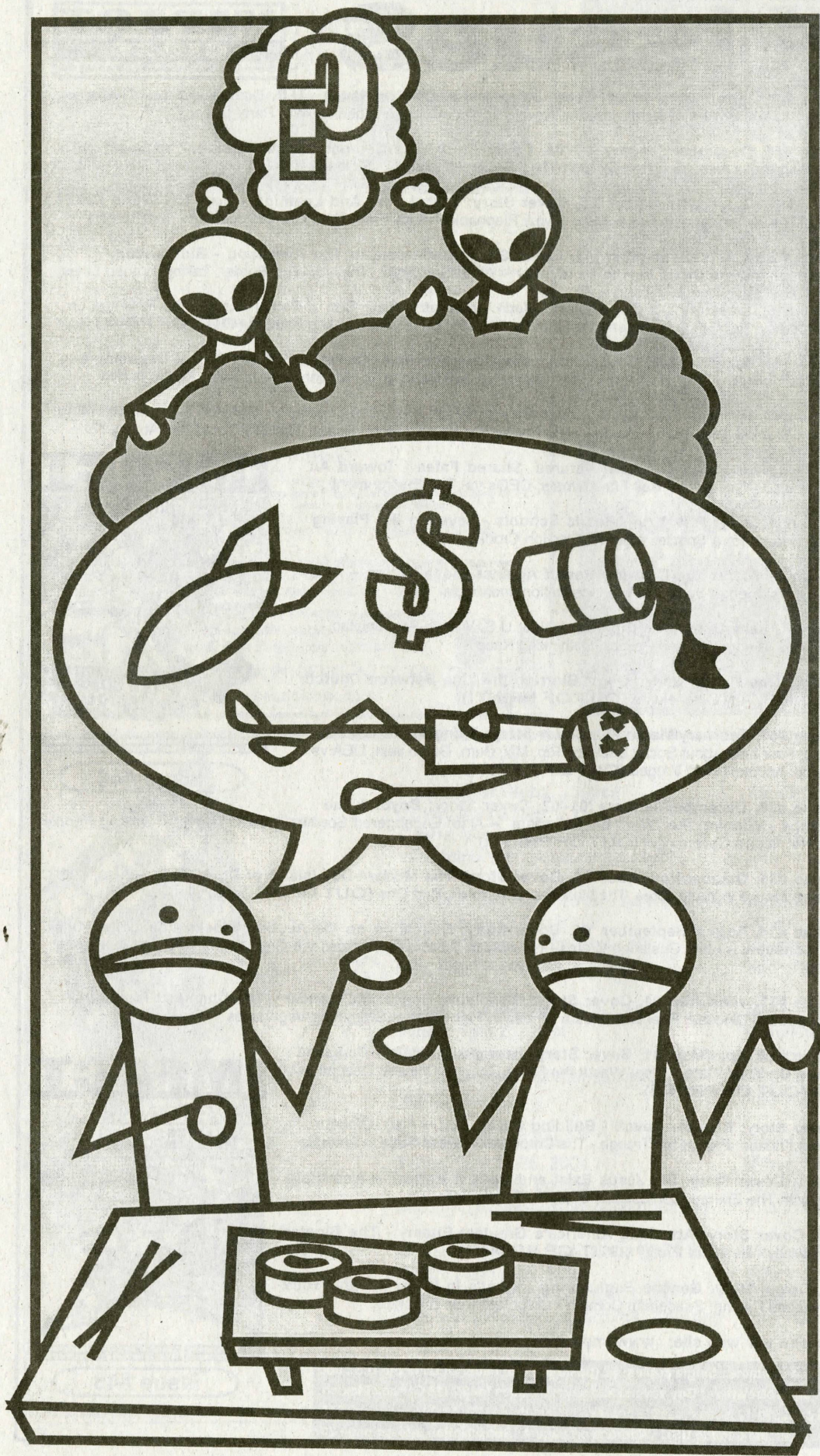


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