

# THE YEAR-BOOK

# THE ZINE YEARBOOK VOLUME 1

**THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT ZINES.**  
THIS IS ABOUT RECOGNIZING THE TRULY AMAZING STUFF  
THAT EXISTS IN AN UNDERGROUND WE'VE CREATED.



# The Zine Yearbook Volume IV

excerpts from zines published in 1999

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The Xine Yearbook Volume IV  
examples from times published in 1999

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# The Zine Yearbook Volume IV

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I love putting together this compilation. It is my chance to show people what I spend all my time working on, and why I think zines are important and necessary. It is my chance to get people excited about zines again.

That said, this edition has been the most difficult yet. I guess I was deluding myself when I thought it would get easier with time. It seems, for zine writers, that as our lives get more difficult and complex, and as we move onto bigger and better projects, our zines often fall by the wayside. There is, of course, much evidence for this in the seemingly apparent short-lived nature of zines. It's unfortunate, I think, because these are the zines and projects which have helped us through so much, have helped us learn and grow as people, and have helped us reach beyond ourselves.

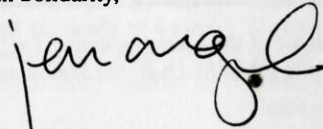
This book, and all the zines publishing today, are a testament to the resistance. This book is evidence that zines remain as important in our lives as ever, even though the supposed "zine revolution" is over and the internet is king. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the larger political implications of things—yes, we know that zines resist the dominant culture and provide access to media—we forget that zines are important to us, as people. To our lives and our well being. They help inspire us and keep us motivated, they introduce us to others with similar ideas and they stimulate arguments and discussions. They help us.

You can skip ahead to the "Notes On Articles" section to find out all of the criteria we used to choose articles and the selection process, but please remember that every article in here is amazing. Every article is here for a reason, whether it's right up front or buried deep in the middle. Although they may not all appeal to you at first, I hope you will give them a chance. And more than that — these articles are just a taste. They are a small sample of what you could get by contacting the author and reading the rest of their zine. The whole reason this book exists is to help readers find the zines they like—to give some much needed publicity to the smaller publications.

That's all I have to say right now, except thanks for all the support over the years, and I hope that we all remember that zines exist because of the community and connections we have built around them.

This year, the Zine Yearbook is made possible by Mary Chamberlain and Theo Witsell of Tree of Knowledge Distribution, and I am forever indebted to them. I would also like to thank Jason Kucsma, Mike Q. Roth, Heather Curtis, Colin Odden, Greg, Keith Myers, Kristin Schmidt, Mike McNeeley, Babak Rastgoufard, Kris Braun, Stewart Varner, Sarah Stippich, Jessica Mills, my Mom and Dad, Mary Chamberlain, Theo Witsell, John Yates, and Dave Munro for their continued help and support, as well as everyone who has contributed to this project, and everyone who publishes a zine. You make this book possible.

In Solidarity,



Jen Angel

May, 2000

To be included in the Zine Yearbook, a zine must have been published in 1999 and have a circulation of less than 5,000 copies per issue. There are a number of reasons certain zines are not included here. Some of the most popular zines like *Bust*, *Heart attaCk*, and *Dishwasher* exceed the circulation limit. A lot of popular zines did not publish issues during 1999. And, a few of the articles nominated were not considered for final publication because we could not get in touch with the authors in time (or at all).

The primary reason that a zine is not included is because it was not nominated and it is not a zine that I see regularly. This is why it is important for you to nominate zines that you like because, no matter how much I'd like to be, I'm not all-seeing or all-knowing. I only have access to a limited variety of zines, and no matter how hard I try to expand the scope of this volume, it is not something I can do alone.

I collected articles throughout 1999 through word of mouth and otherwise advertising this project. Submissions were limited to print zines (no e-zines) published in 1998 with circulations less than 5,000 copies per issue – restricting the zines that already have the exposure I seek to give.

In April, I got together with a few friends to make selections from all the articles which were nominated. Every year, I try to get the largest and most diverse group I can to make up the selection committee. If you are interested in participating and you live in the Midwest or are willing to travel, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Each piece was read by at least three people before a decision was made. No zine can have more than two articles in any edition of the Yearbook. No one on the selection committee, other than myself, knows who the advertisers and sponsors are before publication, so there is no chance of any kind of "conflict of interest." This year's committee was made up of: Jason Kucsma, Mike Q. Roth, Heather Curtis, Colin Odden, Greg, Kris Braun, Stewart Varner, Keith Myers, Mike McNeeley, Babak Rastgoufard and Kristen Schmidt. Additional reading and work was contributed by Jessica Mills and Sarah Stippich.

All pieces are printed in their entirety, as they originally appeared, except where noted. In most cases, text files were provided by the authors themselves. However, all typos are ours, not the original authors, though we make no claim to the poor grammar and punctuation! At the request of several authors, only zine addresses are printed. The author of the article is also the zine's editor unless specified. Zine prices are not listed because they change and zines go in and out of print, so please send a self-addressed envelope to each zine you are interested in to find out the current price and availability.

## how you can help

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info • deadlines • finances

I plan to continue publishing this anthology for a very long time. I need your help to continue! Most of all, I need your nominations. The deadline for the fourth edition is February 28, 2001. The only criteria for nominations are that they must come from zines published in 2000, and the zine's circulation must be less than 5,000 copies per issue. If you read something in a zine that you think others should read, here is your chance.

To nominate an article, photocopy it, note the zine's name and address on the back, and send it in. I will then contact the zine writer directly to obtain their permission to consider the piece for publication. You may also nominate articles from your own zine, though I do prefer you send individual articles rather than the whole zine. Please spread the word and tell your friends.

Of course, I also need help financially. If you are interested in display advertising, please contact me directly. There are only a limited number of spaces so it is important that you contact me early. Sponsorships are also available. This is a way that individual, as well as labels, zines, and other businesses can support projects and a way the scene as a whole can move away from a reliance on music industry display advertising. We need to make our projects viable and self-sustaining, and a good way to start is by giving a donation to project that you think is worthwhile. Any donation of \$25 or more to the Zine Yearbook is considered a *sponsorship*, and I will recognize you in the book's introduction and be forever in your debt.

Please send any nominations or inquiries to me at Become the Media, P.O. Box 1225, Bowling Green, OH 43402, [becomethemedia@earthlink.net](mailto:becomethemedia@earthlink.net). The Zine Yearbook Volume V, excerpts from zines published in 2000, will be available June 2000.

## sponsors

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This year, Tree of Knowledge Press is paying for most of the costs (including the big ones like printing). I also received assistance from friends like Larry Nocella. Please get in touch if you are interested in helping to assure the viability of this project and others.





# Have You Ever Thought About Publishing Your Own Zine?

With the NZI's *DIY Zine Course*, you can now learn how to self-publish from the comfort of your living room, den or nook!

by Ryan Bigge  
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[www.biggeworld.com](http://www.biggeworld.com)

If you're like most people, you've considered becoming a zinester at one time or another. And why not? Writing and publishing your own magazine is a fascinating and potentially lucrative hobby. It gives you a chance to be your own boss. To set your own deadlines. To edit your own work and execute your own layout. What other form of expression gives you the flexibility to work in your spare time or pursue your dreams on a full-time basis?

Everyone has a story to tell and the experiential material for zines is everywhere. Few people are aware that there is a worldwide dearth of viewpoints from overeducated people, from underemployed people, from semi-affluent middle-class heterosexual people and from white people, especially males. Quality culture is in-demand, and the desktop publishing revolution, coupled with information technology, has made creating and disseminating intellectual property easier than ever before.

Sharing your thoughts, opinions, ideas and artwork with others means you'll never have to sprawl deadbeat on a couch watching boring re-runs again. You'll be shaping your own destiny while gaining valuable self-confidence. The proliferation of specialty magazines, coupled with the rapid expansion of content delivery technologies have helped to create an unsatiable appetite for edgy and/or groundbreaking music, writing and imagery. Culture is being subsumed faster than ever before, creating unprecedented opportunities for zinesters to showcase their work to a financially appreciative audience.

If you fear your experiences are too mundane, or your ideas too tired, you're worrying needlessly. If you've ever had a bad job, or if you like weird music, politics or art, or if you have a wacky hobby or if you've taught English overseas, or if you worship unusual people, places and things or if you've ever had the label of "slacker" or "Xer" used to describe your lifestyle, then you've got the seeds of a zine that are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to blossom. Isn't it time you joined the booming culture industry that's easy to learn and fun to do?

If showcasing your talent on the world stage sounds exciting, then contact the National Zine Institute. Our shortcut training will show you how to mould raw potential into a finished product with less time, trouble and money than you might think. Our *DIY Zine Course* includes six volumes of our award winning instructional "how-to" books, plus a 90 minute motivational video, all for the low, low price of three installments of \$29.99, a figure which includes shipping, handling and all applicable taxes. And for a limited time, those ordering the course will have an opportunity to purchase a Zine Machine at 40% off the suggested retail price.

Our books will teach you typesetting, cut and paste (both digital and manual) and editing plus full training in distribution and marketing. We provide profiles of successful publishers that inform and in-

spire. We provide the "eye of newt" needed to make "classic" topics like anarchism sparkle anew. We'll teach you to convincingly describe the life of a temp and the crass indignity of having to earn a living like everyone else. You'll learn the hottest skills in independent culture from the top zine industry leaders. Over two million zines have already been sold and demand continues to grow. Just ask Paul Lukas, author of the wildly popular zine *Beer Frame*. "I used to sweat over a hot Xerox machine at Kinko's at 3 am and now I'm in *Spin Magazine*! And I had a book of my writing published! And I'm on CNN!! Open your mind to the possibilities of zinedom."

There's never been a better time to produce zines than right now! People are so desperate for zines that they're willing to mail concealed cash to complete strangers to get them! The NZI can get you in on the action with convenient and effective at home training. Our *DIY* course delves deep into all aspects of research methods, zine theory, sociology, psychology, epistemology and philosophy, that will ensure that your zine education is well rounded and relevant.

Still not convinced that zines are right for you? Never heard the word before today? Then allow the NZI to help you make an informed decision. Simply fill out the coupon on this page to receive Volume One: *\*The Wonderfully Crazy World of Zines\** absolutely free! Discover

for yourself how exciting the world of self-publishing can be. Volume One contains a 100 page look into tomorrow and outlines the possibilities for a big new future for yourself.

Once you're ready to take the *DIY* plunge, phone our toll free number and we'll send you another volume every other month until you receive the complete set. These books will provide an in-depth focus on every aspect of zines imaginable. We've left no stone unturned in our efforts to present up to the minute information and crucial shortcuts. Our books are full of easy to follow instructions and clear, full colour diagrams that will ensure that *anyone* can do a zine. If you can write a complete sentence, or draw a smiley face freehand, you're well on your way to a future in self-publishing. Competing books and magazines like *Re/Search*, the *Chip Rowe Reader*, the *Zine Guide* and *Broken Pencil* provide limited resources and questionable inspiration. Only the NZI will tell you how to avoid paper cuts and navigate the dangers of the industrial stapler.

Remember, there's no risk or commitment — you can cancel at any time, and each volume comes with a 14-day, money back guarantee. Still undecided? Here's a quick look at the other volumes you'll receive on the way towards Do-It-Yourself heaven.

Volume Two: *The Business of Do-It-Yourself*, provides a primer on the various zine styles and topics and will help you acquire street cred within days, not months. Learn about Riotgrrl and Queer culture. Learn about personal zines and their glorification of minutiae and discover how mundane is too mundane. Learn about zines that contain artwork and text that refuses to follow any recognizable narrative or purpose. Learn about independent comics like *Hate*, *Optic*



No more reading *People* magazine for me! Now I'm writing the stories. Now I'm in control. Thanks for my new start in life NZI!

— Brad Metzger, NZI Grad and publisher of *Cinnamon Raisin Oppression*



Nerve, Eightball, Acme Novelty Library and 19 other vital underground comics that no one actually reads or buys but always name checks. Discover how to dissect pop culture, independent films, pirate radio, thrift store fashion and antiquated technology.

As well, you'll learn about the behind-the-scenes machinations of the corporate culture mavens. In the *Four Steps Toward Achieving Nirvana* chapter, we'll show you how and why the mainstream takes genuine rebellion and authentic street trends and strips them of all context and meaning in an attempt to bleed dry "disenfranchised" suburban youth. You'll learn how to spot trends that won't ignite for a months or a few years — a staple trait of the cool and hip zine writer — and how to spot decayed goods. Honing your Zeitgeist antennae will ensure that you'll know when to get on the bandwagon and when to leap towards safety.

Volume Three: *Corrective Ideology and Revolutionary Thought*, explores the lifestyle choices that are often part and parcel of the zinester mystique. Did you know that some people who do zines *don't eat meat*? It sounds crazy, but it's true. Some zinesters don't eat dairy products either! They're called vegans. These and many other outrageous "alternative lifestyles" are explored in detail in this volume plus a crash course in indie and underground culture

including Schwa, SubGenius, Negativland Vs. U2, The Baffler, Robert Dupree (KOOL Man) Vs. Craphound, Ben is Dead Vs. R. Seth Friedman, Burning Man, Joey Skaggs, the Cacophony society, William S. Burroughs (pre-Nike ad era), Dishwater Pete fooling David Letterman, Andre The Giant Has a Posse, Jack Chick pamphlets, culture jamming, piercings, tattoos, branding, Bob Flanagan, Mike Diana, Critical Mass, Food Not Bombs, hemp — wonderful, magical, environmental, parachute making hemp — workplace sabotage, conspiracy theories and Radio Free America. Plus a special section on the zine Answer Me! featuring four good and five great reasons to hate Jim Goad.

Volume Four: *Music You Might Never Have Heard of Otherwise*, explores the albums and limited edition red vinyl split-seven inches that aren't found in Walmart or Columbia record house catalogs. Learn about indie-rock, including Pavement lore, Sebadoh myths and mythology and a retrospective on living legend and alt-rock angel Steve Albini. Learn to pepper your speech with obscure bands without sounding awkward or ignorant. Learn which Guided By Voices albums are actually worth owning — it's fewer than you might think! Learn how to get a passing grade in math rock. Discover the eight noble truths of the holier-than-thou lifestyle. Learn to unlock the secrets of post-rock with the least amount of pain possible and make Stereolab and Tortoise less grating.

Finally, explore the non-indie rock world of exotica, swing, musical oddities and non-traditional musical formats, such as eight track cassettes.

Volume Five, *Design Through Re-Integration*, teaches you how to "borrow" layout ideas and copyrighted images and make them your own. We delve into the controversial question: "Is it ever possible to use too much Eironic' imagery from the 50s and 60s?" We also examine Raygun magazine to try and answer the question: "How unreadable is hip? How unreadable is annoying?"

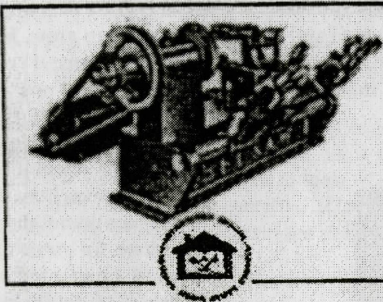
The overwhelming and perplexing multitude of fonts will be made understandable in our *Font-tasia* chapter. Which are the "good" and "cool" fonts? Which fonts are overused? What is the maximum number of fonts you should use per page? Per issue? Learn how to make typography work for you.

In the *Punker Than Your Mother* chapter, we'll examine Punk Planet versus Maximum Rock and Roll and every other punk zine as we debate the merits of legibility vs. illegibility. While poor Xerox technique may look easy, making a zine look truly ghastly is tough. As well, learn the paradox of Cometbus — too smart to be punk, too punk to care. Discover how to write about punk without alienating others with your intelligence and insight. Learn to spot the six kind of punk scenes and determine which one will best complement your lifestyle and aspirations.

Finally, Volume Six, *Nitpicking Your Way To Glory*, examines the dangers surrounding distribution, selling out, and the proper pronunciation of the word "zine." It also examines that darn apostrophe in a chapter entitled, *Zine Vs. 'Zine*. Learn the fine art of shameless promotion — how much is too much? Also provided is a twelve point diagnostic checklist to determine if someone or something has sold out.

As well, learn all about small press and zine fairs — what to wear, how to decorate your table and how to sell your zines to seemingly disinterested patrons.

B u t your education won't end with mere books. Our videotape, "Leaping the Hurdles" features the NZI's patented "Take Action" motivational system



The Zine Machine pictured here is able to precision craft over 12 zines an hour. It requires little maintenance while providing the highest quality output for its size and price range. The Zine Machine guarantees you years of self-publishing enjoyment for only pennies a page!

that will inspire hesitant novices of all shapes and size. This high grade VHS tape is sent the moment you phone our toll free number and order our revolutionary system. This audio-visual guide contains daily affirmations that will teach you how to master the art of self-encouragement and self-discipline. The video is hosted by Ben is Dead publisher Darby Romeo who has distilled her 10 years of publishing experience and confidence into mantras such as:

I will finish this issue on time, even if that means getting out of bed before noon.

I will not extend my self-imposed deadline by more than two days at a time.

I will work on my zine during company time. I will abuse the office photocopier, fax machine, computer, stapler, laser printer and whatnot to produce my zine.

I will try to leave my apartment today.

I will kiss a girl or boy before I turn 21.

After you've completed your theory and practicum, you'll be itching to hit the start button on a photocopier and inhale the aroma of freshly minted pages. But if you live in a small town, or if you dislike facing the hassle of crowded copy centres staffed by bored cashiers wearing minimum wage smiles, then consider purchasing the final piece of the self-publishing puzzle — our patented Zine Machine. Made in the USA of stainless steel and graphite, this precision instrument will give you years of service. Competitively priced at \$225, this investment will rapidly pay for itself.

Remember, the NZI commitment to your education is an ongoing one. It doesn't end when we cash your cheque or debit your credit card. Our website and 24 hour telephone support staff mean your questions and problems won't go unanswered. We want to help you succeed today and tomorrow.

With the recent death of zine bible Fact Sheet Five, who can you turn to for guidance and support? Who can show you how to understand the demographic profile of your zine readership? How can you be assured that your zine will get the right reviews, be reprinted in the right magazines and attain its full potential? Only the NZI can make it happen.

NZI: Putting the "you" in Do It Yourself since 1989.



# Ten Stories of Love

by CrimethInc. Eastern Writers Bloc

ATR Zine

ed. Eric Boehme

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I. The man is a god, and is able to grant the woman her every wish and desire. But her only wish is that he not be able to grant her everything she desires, that he not be able to satisfy her every need. Finally, after much contention, he grudgingly, uncomprehendingly grants her wish. But he discovers that without his godlike powers, he is unable to find any satisfaction in the relationship. Finally he leaves her, to pursue godhood elsewhere. The man is far more confused by what has happened, and why, than we are, looking on from afar.

II. Her greatest, truest need is to be held tight and safe as she sleeps. At first, the man does not understand this, or does not care; besides, he has always found it impossible to sleep with his arms around someone. Each night he shrugs off her requests and turns over to sleep facing away from her. But as time goes on, he falls deeper and deeper in love with her, and comes to need and cherish her more and more. Realizing how cold and unfeeling he has been and how many opportunities to make her happy he has missed, he resolves to learn to sleep with her in his arms. For many weeks, he practices holding a pillow tight to his chest while sleeping. He gets no sleep at all on the first few nights, then begins to achieve a few fitful hours, and finally accustoms himself to sleeping with his arms around the pillow. He feels proud and excited that he will now be able to grant the request he has denied her for so long. But while he has been laboring to learn to hold her in his sleep, she has lost hope of it ever happening, and has, with no little difficulty, excised that desire from her being. In fact, when the night comes that he finally wraps his arms tight around her and falls asleep, she discovers that she herself is now unable to sleep this way. She tells him this, but it seems impossible to him; and, in disbelief and desperation to give her something, to give her what he knows she has wanted for so long, he persists in holding her every night. At last, exhausted and unable to sleep, she leaves him.

III. The lovers are both open wounds. They come together because no one else understands pain like they do, because no one else can understand them in their pain. They huddle together, cushioning each other from the outside world and from more menacing worlds within, with the tenderness that only rape survivors and asylum inmates can show. They stroke the anesthetic absolution of numbness into each others lacerated limbs and hearts; they pluck the thorns and needles from each others torn and twisted nerves. At length, under such care, one of the two heals. One day, he wakes up under a beautiful blue sky, and the world is full of possibilities and delights again. He awakens the other, and gestures with excitement at this new world; but she cannot see anything above herself but the ceiling of a black and squalid cave. He stays with her as long as he can, rubbing in balm with increasing impatience and endeavoring to show her the vistas opening before him; but eventually he is bound to leave.

IV. No two people have ever been closer. They think together, they feel together, they even dream together, exploring the landscapes of sleep hand in hand. A day comes when they must part, for a time. They swear eternal allegiance to each other, an almost superfluous oath, it seems, since they have been so close for so long. And at first, their time apart goes as they expected; their lives and hearts continue to revolve around each other, in absentia. But slowly each of them finds that the things and people around them, though less magnificent than the longed-for beloved (all the more perfect on the pedestal of memory), are more and more compelling in their tangible reality. Each

one comes to find that where ardent love once reigned alone in the heart, other, lesser attachments have now established themselves. Possessively, they fight to guard their fading passions against eroding time, but time passes, unremitting as ever. Shaken but determined, they tell themselves that everything will be as it was when they are able to see each other again. Whistling in the dark at the top of their lungs, they wait for the last days to pass before they can be together again. But when they have run into each others arms and held each other, kissing, for hours, and they pull back to look at each other, they find that they are looking at faces they do not recognize that they will never recognize again.

V. Every force in the world is aligned against the lovers. To be together, they will have to cross vast, uncharted deserts, swim lakes of fire, run gauntlets of every kind of privation and tribulation. And to be together, they do. But when finally they stand together, with no obstacle to overcome, nothing to separate them ever again, they discover that what they loved was not each other, but the romance of their struggle itself.

VI. She loves him more than she has ever loved anything or anyone; but she cannot speak, she cannot tell him. She writes him endless love letters in her journals, whispers to him for hours as he sleeps, draws hearts onto his back with her fingernails when she is sure he is not paying attention. He loves her, too, and needs to know that she loves him; but just like her, he cannot ask it, he finds himself mute. Finally, he can wait no longer. He tells her that he is leaving. They both know that this is the moment when they must tell each other the truth or lose each other forever; but they find themselves paralyzed, and the moment passes. Perhaps years later, tracing the path of a half-remembered caress on skin he shed long ago, he finds the outline of a heart.

VII. She is a keeper of secrets. Nothing is more sacred to her. She knows that the most important things are incommunicable, that the most beautiful moments happen in isolation from others, even if you are with them, even if you are in love with them; she knows that the holiest things are fleeting things, things that pass away in instants, things that cannot be held by any power in the universe, let alone passed on. He knows this, too, but he cannot bear it; for he is in love with her, and for him, being in love means a liberation from his solipsistic universe, means seeing through her eyes and hearing through her ears: feeling with her nerves, her heart. He wants there to be no secrets between them, no chambers of the heart into which she cannot take him. And he cannot help but fear that it is the most beautiful, most precious things that she keeps from him. He feels oppressed by the shadow of this unattainable beauty: both the beauty that she knows that he cannot know, and her beauty, that she can see this hidden world which will forever be invisible to him. He can only sit at the feet of her and her secrets, worshipping splendors he can never experience. She feels how her secrets hurt him, but she doesn't know what to do. Of course there is no way for her to render access to the secret ways of her spirit; but she loves him truly and cannot bear to be such a source of pain for him. He has begged her to tell him everything, to share every part of herself with him; and finally she finds a way to do this. She presses herself flat, like a flower in the pages of a diary, squeezing everything incommunicable, everything inexpressible, from her soul, severing herself forever from her secret life. The mysteries she once had are gone, she becomes all surface, all clarity and sim-



plicity. But now, when it is too late, the man realizes what it was that he loved in her: it was precisely what he found unbearable, her secrets, her hidden and unreachable worlds, that drew him to her, to pursue what he could never have, the ever-receding enigma of desire. Now he is left with even less than he had before... as is she.

VIII. The two lovers seek to fit together perfectly, to come to know each other inside out and thus to lock like puzzle pieces, two parts of one whole. They draw closer and closer together, each step nearer more rapturous than the last, until one day they reach an impasse and realize that their dream is impossible. No matter how close they come, there will always be pieces of themselves that elude each other, slipping out from under articulation or escaping unnoticed into dark corners of heart and history. And now that their dream is impossible, they realize that they no longer have any use for each other.

IX. Their love is a raging fire, consuming and transforming everything, propelling them higher and higher like a rocket shooting into the sky; but this is a fuel-burning passion, and it burns hotter and

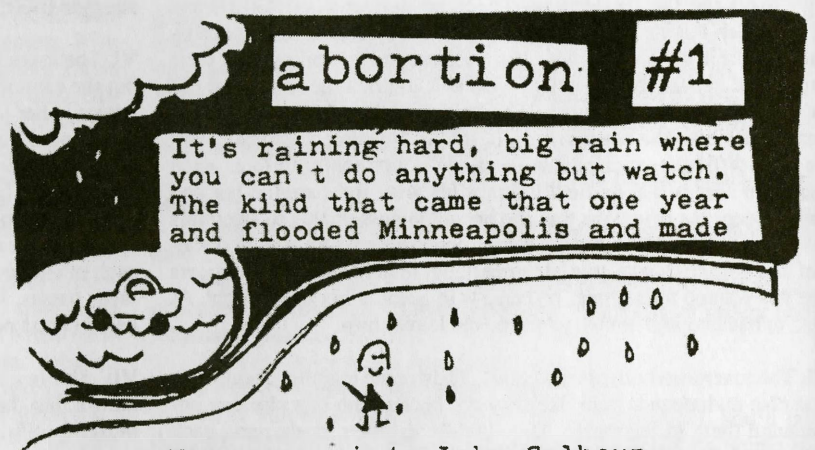
hotter until there is no fuel left. Then the lovers fall back to earth, landing apart, blackened, astonished by what has happened.

X. The lovers promise each other the world, and their love lasts and increases while they have the exhilarating sensation that they really will be able to offer it to each other, to be it for each other. Each one truly wants to give the other whatever is needed, at any cost or difficulty. But each of us is both a body and a soul, and sometimes where the soul wants to go, the body won't go, can't go, wills to go somewhere different. So they strain towards each other and the stars as long as they can, until eventually one of them promises something that she cannot do her body, all the unconscious forces and needs existing within her, will not obey the demands of her heart. Discovering that they were promising things to each other and themselves that they couldn't deliver, that all their lovers' dreams have, despite all their intentions, been lies, they start to fall apart. In the end, one accepts the inevitability of dissatisfaction, of everything that is mundane and imperfect and unromantic; and the other flees, more desperate now, to pursue his quixotic quest with another.

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## Abortion

by Cindy  
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cars float away into Lake Calhoun. That flooded my basement and Padrick came over to help me pick my wet records up from the floor and wait for my pregnancy tests to come back. I didn't know they had to do it yourself home kits then. Padrick was my friend, not my boy. My records were ruined, but the phone rang, negative she said, and I jumped up and down and we walked down Highway 7 to the Willhopin to celebrate with a game of pool.

Those were the days of being 16-18, and worrying forever about pregnancy. When I was on the pill, but still scared every month that my period wouldn't come and my life would be



ruined. No matter what I did, there was always the chance that my body would betray me. I hated it and distrusted it for that. Abortion was one of those "It's ok. I'm not against it, but I couldn't do it myself" kind of things, and my friends mostly felt the same way.

I got my pills and exams at the teen clinic, where they made you feel guilty for even coming in the door. The old man doctor would put

that cold metal speculum in, poke around without telling you a thing about what he was doing. That shit was more traumatic than the first time I got pregnant, 5 years later. I'd learned some things by then and knew that what happened in my body was my own decision. I didn't have any moral problems or guilt.

but my emotional state was pretty fragile. I went back and forth between being fascinated and scared. Fascinated by what was going on and my reactions to it, Scared because it felt all out of my control.

I started reading about the reproductive system. I had never been able to look at the pictures before.

Just the diagrams repelled me in a strong, inexplicable way. Like one time, a few years before, in a class I was taking on sex and self image, the teacher had us all draw a vagina. After about half a minute, I got indignant and stormed out of class, saying I didn't pay all that tuition for classes full of this kind of irrelevant garbage, which was true.

I was used to really tough, intellectual womens studies classes. But what I didn't say was that I couldn't draw a vagina because I had no idea what it actually looked like. What I didn't say was that I didn't know because to think of my body tangibly - I just couldn't do it. It was an irrational fear, or maybe it was perfectly rational. If I tried to think about anything real about that

part of my body, I got angry and protective and my mind shut down and my heart and lungs clenched up - like shock. That, I didn't explain.

When I was pregnant, I forced myself to look at the diagrams. Memorize the text instead of blocking it out. The eggs are formed in the ovaries, they go down the fallopian tubes... I only read about it when no one was around. I locked the door and was

jumpy and nervous, scared someone would catch me. I hid it like pornography.

It seemed almost cliché, but learning about my body and the changes going on in it, and knowing that it wasn't out of control, it made me feel like my body was strong and mine. It was a way I'd never felt before.

The abortion itself wasn't too bad. I had it done at a feminist health clinic and the women there took care of me the way it should be done. They held up a mirror, and that was the first time I'd seen those parts of me. They explained every touch and every second of the procedure. Now you'll feel the speculum, this is the local anesthetic, you'll feel some cramping now as she dilates the os, breathe deep. One woman

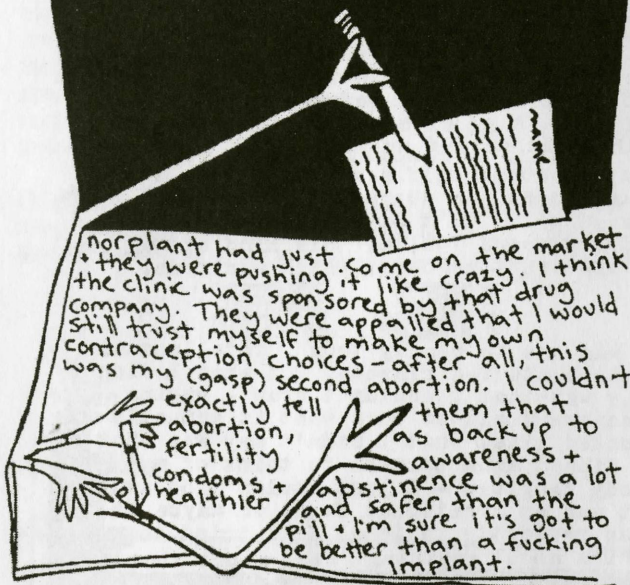
held my hand, talked to me and tried to help me relax. It was the first time I'd had a woman gynecologist and the first time anyone had bothered to explain what was going on. It was the first time I didn't feel alienated and

violated by what was being done. They demystified my body and gave it back to me.



## abortion #2

at the welfare office I had to write "unborn" in the name place and sign as its legal guardian.



the therapist was more freaked out than me. She couldn't believe I didn't intend to tell "the father". she wouldn't leave me alone so I finally told her I'd think about it (lie)

"hey Bill. Remember that night a couple months ago when you were over at my house + I was drunk + we fucked? I was pretty surprised since it had been a year since we'd done that kind of thing + I couldn't really stand to be around you. I was surprised too that you came inside me with no protection, since you knew full well that if I wasn't fertile I'd tell you + if I didn't say anything then it wasn't ok. well, guess what? now I have to deal with it + no, I'm not asking you for money. I don't even like to talk to you about the most boring things + I don't even like to see you around, especially now. but I'm told I should tell you about what's going on inside of me since society at large seems to think it's your fetus too. I disagree, but then my opinion doesn't count for much here."

## abortion #3

I think it's the waiting that's the worst. That's why #3 wasn't so bad. I pretty much just convinced myself I wasn't pregnant until I was 2 months along. I had one day of swearing and cursing and worry, got a test the next day and an abortion the next, and it was over.

I guess it wasn't really as easy as all that. There were things - like I wasn't sure if I should tell anyone because I wasn't sure I wanted to deal with their reactions. I figured I'd just go it alone - walk up to the clinic, past the protesters. Spit in the protesters faces. Then I remembered that I'm kind of anemic, and it is kind of nerve wracking, and I'm not always that strong. Abortions hurt, there's no doubt about it, but it only takes a few minutes. Some women get sedated and don't really remember it but I like to know what's going on. In the end I went along, but I had told my best friend, and

he made me hot chocolate and soup. At the clinic, in the recovery room, a couple women seemed freaked out, but most of them had this glow of relief.

What am I talking about this for? Because it seems like no one ever talks about it.

I read horror stories about abortion from the right wing, and horror stories about back alley abortions from before Roe vs Wade.

I read pro-choice articles in fanzines, but never about the actual experience.

And I think women should talk about it and write about it.

It's a common experience and a part of our lives, and I think it would be less loaded and scary if it was out in the open more.



# What My Testimony on the "Ag Crisis" in America would've been like If the rat bastards would've flown me out to D.C.

by Farmer P  
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*On a Monday evening in June of 1999 I was told I was going to be flown out to Washington D.C. to testify in front of the Senate Agriculture committee on the "Ag Crisis" the following Wednesday (10 days in the future). I got excited. I worked on my testimony for the better part of two days. I contacted friends in D.C. and told them I was coming to town. My wife pre-arranged to take school off so she could come with me. I faxed this "rough draft" off to the office in D.C. on Thursday night after they told me that it was a "sure thing" that I was going to testify. They called back on Friday morning (the day before we were supposed to leave) and told me that they didn't have "sufficient funds" to fly us out there, but they liked my testimony and still wanted to use it in their presentation that they gave to the members of the SAC. I guess I should be flattered that they wanted to use my writings, but I think they led me on, conned me into doing their homework for free, and then pulled the carrot away at the last minute. I'm mad as hell. I bet if I had the backing of some huge corporation or some "real" farm group they would've flown me out there, because then I'd have money to pad their campaign war chests with. Doesn't the fact that I'm a struggling young farmer with no ties to any groups give my testimony more credibility? I thought so. Oh well, it looks like I got jacked around by the government once again.*

*I thought about deleting this file, but then I thought to myself - "Why delete it when you worked so hard on it? Put it in Fresh Cow Pie. Maybe someone will enjoy reading about your situation. Maybe you can make a difference that way." So here it is. Please remember that this is a "rough draft" a "work in progress" so to speak, so it's not the world's best piece of writing.*

A little over a year ago, when my wife and I were visiting some friends in Chicago we spent an afternoon at the art museum. While walking along we noticed a group of children clustered around a particular painting. We walked over and discovered that they were huddled around a tour guide in front of "American Gothic." You know, the painting of the old man and woman with the pitchfork and gingham dress. Well, the tour guide asked the children what they thought the couple in the painting were. One of the children piped up and when called upon answered - "They're farmers." "Well, why do you think that?" asked the tour guide. "Cuz they're poor," replied the child.

That kid was right you know. Farmers are poor. Very poor. And there's fewer and fewer of us everyday. Isn't it sad that a child's idea of farmers is that of a poor tired old couple? Whatever happened to Old MacDonald? Probably the very same thing that's happening to thousands of farmers across America as I speak before you today - filing bankruptcy, selling the farm at an auction sale (which includes the house they've lived in all their lives, the land their grandfathers settled a century ago, and the equipment they worked insanely long hours to pay for), moving to town (more than likely outside the state they're from), and working a menial minimum wage job until they die because they never finished high school let alone college. Depressing isn't it? I suppose it really shouldn't be a big surprise to anyone that the leading cause of death among farmers and ranchers is suicide.

I'm 25 years old. I've worked on our family farm since I was big enough to see between the steering wheel and the dashboard. When I was a little kid I used to help my dad fill the drills with seed and fertilizer in the spring. In the summer I'd stand in the yard and hand my father tools while he fixed machinery. In the fall I'd ride around in the combine while we harvested grain. In the winter time, I'd carry buckets of feed for the cattle. Actually, I wasn't as big back then as I

am now, so I could only handle one bucket of feed. Most of all though, I'd spend hours and hours by his side in the tractor "riding the arm-rest". Eventually I got old enough and mature enough to be on my own, so one day Dad gave me my first "tractor driving" job - digging summer fallow. **I was the king of the world!** Finally, I was just like my Dad. For as long as I can remember that's what I've always wanted out of life - to be a cool farmer just like my Dad. I guess I'm pretty lucky because I've been able to fulfill that dream for five years now, but that dream has slowly turned into a nightmare I can't wake up from.

Five years ago I gave up the academic scholarships that I'd worked hard in high school to get, when I made the decision to drop out of college to come home and start farming my own land. I had the opportunity to rent 580 acres of land that was close to home, so I jumped on it. Looking back on that decision now, I'm not so sure it was such a smart idea. I knew I was going to have to put in long hours and that my profession was always in Mother Nature's hands, but it was my dream and I wanted to give it a shot. I had no idea that I was going to have to fight tooth and nail in order to survive.

When I decided to start farming our commodity prices were decent and the economic forecast for farming looked pretty good. As you all know, it's been on a downhill slide ever since then. I made the decision to come back home to North Dakota based on the idea that if I worked very hard and played my cards right, I'd be able to make an honest living off the land just like my father before me. I was wrong. I thought if I worked from sun up to sundown everyday I'd be able to provide a decent way of life for my family. I was wrong. I thought if I had the best farming practices and marketed my crops intelligently we'd be able to survive. I was wrong. I knew I'd never get rich farming, but I thought I'd at least be able to buy groceries and other necessities. I was wrong. I guess I should've stayed in school.

In the area I live in, there are NO young people left. Out of the twelve students I graduated from high school with in 1992, there are only one or two of us that actually stayed in North Dakota after graduation. One of those people works in town, and the other dude and I are struggling farmers. My best friend wanted to come home and farm just like me, but his father wouldn't let him. His Dad forced him to get a degree and discouraged him from coming back to North Dakota. I haven't seen him since we graduated seven years ago. I don't think he'll ever come back.

Within a twenty mile radius of my farm, there are two other farmers that are under the age of 30. The old-timers in the neighborhood think we're nuts for wanting to stay on the farm. I have no idea how many times I've been told to "Run away from here as fast as you can. Cut your losses while you're still young. Go back to school and get a town job. Etc. etc." I tell them that I want to "hang on as long as I can until prices get better", but they laugh and say that they've been waiting for prices to "get better" all their lives.

Whenever I see those two other young farmers, we don't talk about the weather or baseball. We don't have time for trivial stuff like that, our conversations always center around how much longer we're going to be able to keep farming and what we're going to do when we leave our farms. We've taken for granted the fact that eventually we're going to be forced out of business by these low commodity prices. The only question on our minds is "When?". For my wife and I that "when" might be this fall. If we can scrape things together we might be able to hang on for another year, but if prices don't rebound next year - we're done.

When January and February roll around every year, I start "pa-



per farming". I sit down and try to pencil out what crops I'm going to raise for the upcoming season. I try to figure out which crops will give me the most return on my investments. I have to take into consideration what my crop rotation demands of me, but most of all I try to pencil out which crops will help me pay my bills in the fall. This year NOTHING worked.

I tried everything I could to try and get my bottom line out of the red this year, but there are no crops I can raise that will cover my cost of production. I took our "cost of living" expenses out of the equation, and I still couldn't come up with a positive cash flow. What kind of businessman would start a business if he was guaranteed a failure? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that the end is near when your gross income won't even cover your cost of production.

When I went in to see my banker this spring about getting my operating loan for 1999, things weren't good. It wasn't a question of "How much money are you going to make this year?" It was more like - "How much money are you going to lose this year?" I was rather ashamed when the bank asked my father to co-sign for my operating loan this spring. That hasn't happened since my first year of farming. I have never defaulted on a loan, so it was embarrassing to know that I probably won't be able to make all my payments this fall. I thought to myself, "Why am I doing this? I'm not a dumb farmer. I'm fiscally responsible. I work hard. How come I can't make ends meet?"

I'm not going to sit here and pretend to have any answers. All I know is that while the stock market reaches record highs, we're struggling with record low prices for our commodities. Four years ago I sold hard red spring wheat for \$6 a bushel. On June 15, 1999, I sold wheat for \$2.97 a bushel. In the mean time all of our input costs are skyrocketing. My landlord keeps raising my cash rent year after year. Fertilizer and pesticide costs keep going up. Machinery and diesel fuel for that equipment is more expensive. People wonder why young people flee North Dakota faster than you can say "Boo" and why the average age of farmers is around 60. I'll tell you why - because you cannot make a living on the family farm anymore. With these low prices the farm can't even pay for itself.

Farming is a funny business. Unlike other businesses that sell a product, we cannot go to our local elevator men and tell them how much we want to get paid for our crops, we have to take what they'll give us. We're so desperate to pay our bills that we'll accept selling our commodities at a substantial loss. It's like you're drowning in a pool and you're sinking deeper and deeper hoping that eventually you'll hit the bottom so you can bob up for your last gasp of air. We all know though, that if we hit that proverbial bottom we'll never have the energy for that big bounce back to the surface.

Like most farmers, I'm fiercely independent. I don't like asking for help. I want to do everything my way. I want to be responsible for

myself and my family. The "do-it-yourself" work ethic is my lifeblood. It goes against our very nature to ask for hand outs. It's a horrible feeling when you have to beg your government for an emergency assistance bill year after year, but that's what it's come down because our prices are so low. Crop insurance is a cruel joke. It doesn't even cover our cost of production. The loan value on grain is too low to do anyone any good. I don't know what needs to be done to save our farms, but you're the ones we trusted to figure this stuff out when we elected you. It's time to start doing your jobs, or else we're not going to be able to keep doing ours.

It seems like the family farmer has been forgotten in this technologically enhanced world we live in today. The American public

has forgotten where the food in the grocery stores comes from. Food doesn't come from Monsanto, Dow, Cargill, or ADM - it comes from farmers. But the multi national corporations are the ones making the record profits - not us. They are getting rich off their indentured servants - the family farmer. If something doesn't change soon though, there isn't going to be any of us out there for them to exploit. Is that what the American public wants? A United States without any family farmers? If family farmers are forced off the land, and corporate farms are allowed to move into the countryside there's going to be big problems on the horizon. First of all, these corporate farms are going to have a very hard time finding folks out here that will work like dogs for scraps from the corporate dinner table. Secondly, does the American public really want their food source to be controlled by large multi-national corporations that ruin the environment and don't care about the little people? What will happen to the prices at the grocery stores when corporate farms are forced to pay their hired hands a decent wage? Don't people realize that every year there are fewer and fewer family farmers in this country because of the basic unprofitable nature of farming? I doubt it.

I farm because I love it. There is no greater way of life in the world. I love growing food for people. I love getting up every morning with the knowledge that if I don't get outside and get to work nobody is going to do it for me. I love farming with my Dad. I love living in a trailer house in the middle

of nowhere. I love struggling through the harsh North Dakota winters. I love being exhausted after a hard days work, because I know that I did the best job I possibly could that day. My wife I will be celebrating our third anniversary this upcoming July. Hopefully it won't be the last time we do so in North Dakota. Someone asked me the other day what I'll be doing in a year or two if I can't farm anymore. The first thing that popped into my head was the fact that we'll pack our bags and leave North Dakota faster than greased lightning. We don't want to leave our families and the places we grew up for the bright lights of a big city far far away, but it seems like we're being pushed in that direction. I guess all we can do is hold on hope.

## My Hero - My Dad





# Ya Ever Had A Faggot Kick Your Ass, You Fuck?

By Eric Boehme  
Kill For Love

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*We are all victims of this cultural mindset which tends to create false myths of perfection for all the men and women to fit in. Eric is a friend of mine. I met him at a Catharsis show here in Rome, that night we talked about hardcore and politics and I got the impression that he was a very bright person and that's true! Then Brian and him came to sleep at my place, Eric was just a hardcore kid like me and everyone else there, but when I read this column he wrote for my 'zine my mind went suddenly back to that night, what was changed? Nothing. He was still the same kid, though his sexual preference was different from mine, but for a split second my mind went back as if I was searching for something he did... I don't now, I felt so fuckin' guilty about that, that I really wanted to write it down. The enemy is inside of us and that's where we have to fight the most important war and reason and education are all the weapons we need. - Simone.*

You don't know me. Don't pretend to tell me what's best for me. No one told you until now? You thought I was straight? Well, listen. You're fucking hatred makes me sick. Your intolerance for queers isn't anything new.... I just didn't expect it from you. You tell me your fight for the animals, you tell me you want to make a better world, why don't you fucken start at home, in your own backyard. Why don't you look at the way you talk, the way you act? When you joke about faggots, you are fucken disrespecting me. You are threatening me, you fucker. Why don't you recognize that this is the same as racism, the same as sexism, the same as eating animals, all that shit you claim to be against? What makes you think you can legislate my life or my desire anyway? You couldn't even pick me out from the crowd. I look like every other fucken straight hardcore kid you **think** you know. Yeah, you hate fags but you don't even know one when he's talking to you face to face. You don't even know me when I'm in the pit, dancing hard and flexing like the rest of you, when I'm in the gym lifting weights, when I'm playing basketball or football against you, when I'm teaching your classes, putting on your shows, writing in your zines, or playing in your favorite hardcore band. You never knew. **And you never can know.**

Don't say anything. I don't want to hear it. Oh yeah, you would have never guessed... what, because my voice is deep, because I'm six foot two inches, two hundred pounds, and masculine? Because you've seen me with women, because I like, go out with, and even sleep with women? Because I fit every stereotype of what you think constitutes a straight guy? Because I look you straight in the eye and won't back down when you threaten me? Because I'm aggressive, opinionated and loud? Bring it on fucker... ya ever had a faggot kick your ass?

"You can't possibly be queer..."

I see the look on your face when I tell you. Why was it OK to talk with me before you knew? Why have things changed at all, why have I become someone different for you? Why don't you look me in the eye any more? Why do you need this vital piece of information for you to decide if you are going to talk to me or if you are going to yell at me, to tell me where I am wrong or unnatural or even try to fucken attack me? Oh yeah, even better, now you are so interested, like I'm a fucken museum piece... asking me all kinds of questions, trying to understand, to sympathize... because, yeah, of course, it must be so strange for you to think about me with other me.

To think that you thought I was straight, you thought I didn't like men because I'm so masculine, so like all the other straight guys you think you know. It must be strange. Have you ever thought about masculinity as just being this role, a fucken mask that I can put on and take off whenever I want. Yeah, it must be strange for you to think that I can play that masculine role just as comfortably and easily as the next guy? **But what about the next guy?** Don't you want to know. Does it threaten you not to know? Does it threaten you to think that the way you act, the way you carry yourself, the way you talk, the way you are when you are "being a man" is actually completely arbitrary, completely based upon a role that you are playing in society? Stop to think about it for a minute. Being a man, **performing** your masculinity... is that how you prove to everyone that you aren't queer? If so, I'm telling you that there are scores of us who are queer who perform the same role. Get used to it.

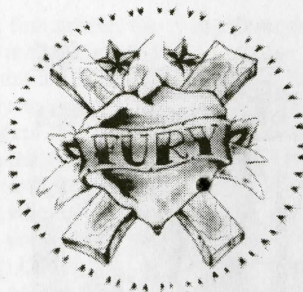
Ya think I wanna fuck you? Just cuz you're a man? Don't fucken flatter yourself. Just cuz I'm bisexual doesn't mean I'm interested in sleeping with you. Not every queer man wants to fuck every man he sees. I have more than enough respect for someone I find attractive to tell them straight up and verbally that I dig them. Are you scared of me because you are insecure with yourself? Because you think I'll try to touch you? Don't you think I have enough respect for anyone, man or woman, not to do that? Yet I wonder, do you only touch men when you are drunk, or in the pit, or on the basketball court? Why is it natural for men and women to touch but not for me to touch other men? I touch my friends that I care about because I'm not afraid of physical contact. Because I think physical contact connects us not just as sex partners but as human beings. How do you show someone that you care about them? Do you only touch someone when you are about to have sex with them? Don't be scared if you get to know me and I touch you... that only means that I care, not that I want to fuck you.

Yeah, on the outside, I'm the same as you. Yet you never know how much I'm different than you. I'm the one who cringes when you say shit about fags or "that's gay." I'm the one who feels that my life is fucken threatened when you joke about beating up fags. Have you ever been attacked and severely beaten for being who you are? Yeah? I have. Have you ever had things shouted at you while you were walking with your partner or lover mind your own fucken business? Have you ever not been able to tell your parents about someone that you were taking or interested in? Has your private life ever been legislated by the fucken government? Has anyone ever told you who you can have sex with? Huh? I am different than you... why the fuck can't you respect that? I'm different because my body was constructed differently than yours. I'm different because I accept the attraction I have to people, not just the ones that society tells me it's OK to have. I'm different because every one, every body, every

person around me represents a difference. You say that you respect the difference of race or sex or even species, yet you can't respect the sexual difference that I represent. Fuck you then.

I'm not different because I am a victim of your fucken threats, attacks, or hatred. Because I refuse to be intimidated by you, because I refuse to have my voice silenced. I'm different because of the chance that even your best male friend, the one you grew up with, that you

Kill For Love  
HARDCORE FANTASY



extinction  
shai hulud  
mainstrike

brian d./catharsis  
redemption  
columns/polities



played sports with, that you went to your first hardcore show and moshed in the pit with, that you listen to records with, that you play ball with, **maybe he is queer too** and he is afraid of telling you. I'm different because I am a fucken man. Yeah, and I like men too. Deal with it. I'm affirming my difference, fucken screaming it in your face.

You can never assume anything. And you have to fucken respect that. Maybe one day....

Eric Boehme / ATR zine / 118 Raritan Avenue, Highland Park  
NJ 08904 / eboeme@eden.rutgers.edu

## Why the Columbine Killers Did It—In Their Own Words

by Michael Jackman

A Reader's Guide To The Underground Press

PMB #2386

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As we all know by now, on April 20, at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, students Dylan Klebold, 18, and Eric Harris, 17, walked into their school lobbing bombs and firing weapons. When it was all over, many students were injured, 12 students and one teacher were slain, and the two shooters committed suicide.

Within hours, the media reacted with on-the-spot interviews with bleeding but photogenic students, knee-jerk statements from political demagogues, and commentary from panels of 'expert' pundits. In the ensuing weeks, talking heads on television and editorials in newspapers across the country pleaded theatrically for the root cause of the tragedy, accepting as likely suspects everything from lack of school prayer to the cultural glorification of violence, from the recently diagnosed "lack of civility" to the dark countercultural influence of popular music, from what is so facilely known as "hate" to the easy access to firearms at gun shows.

While media figures such as Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather solemnly confabulated for weeks with everyone from grief counselors to Hollywood actors in their search for answers, the actual suicide note left by Eric Harris has, to our knowledge, seen mainstream ink only once, in the **Rocky Mountain News** of Denver, CO. The note reads:

*By now, it's over. If you are reading this, my mission is complete. I have finished revolutionizing the neoeuphoric infliction of my internal terror. Your children who ridiculed me, who have treated me like I am not worth their time are dead. **THEY ARE FUCKING DEAD...***

*Surely you will try to blame it on the clothes I wear, the music I listen to, or the way I choose to present myself, but no. Do not hide behind my choices. You need to face the fact that this comes as a result of **YOUR CHOICES**.*

*Parents and teachers, you fucked up. You have taught these kids to be gears and sheep. To think and act like those who came before them, to not accept what is different. **YOU ARE IN THE WRONG.***

*I may have taken their lives and my own — but it was your doing. Teachers, parents, **LET THIS MASSACRE BE ON YOUR SHOULDERS UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE ...***

Piecing together quotes and testimony buried in the vast coverage afforded the massacre, a picture emerges of two individualistic students who refused to accept humiliation and abuse from the school's popular 'jocks.' Fellow student Jeni La Plante said that the jocks "would walk up to them and call them fags." "Everywhere they went, they were taunted and teased about how they dressed," said Eric's former girlfriend, "...you could tell he'd get upset by it." According to various reports, jocks at Columbine High — who had relative impunity in a school where they had racked up state athletic titles

— threw lit cigarettes at them, taunted them in the halls and cafeterias with epithets such as "faggot," "gay," "inbreed," "homo," and "pus-sy," and violently threw them against lockers. Classmate Erik Veik said the pair "wanted it stopped, and unfortunately they did [it]."

So, if one need not be at the helm of a multi-million dollar news organization to glean all this — that the shootings had more to do with the harassment of students and the quiet complicity of administrators than video games or Marilyn Manson — why is it that the media have been delighted to engage in this wild goose chase, suggesting that the real culprit is the Constitutional freedom afforded young people to associate with whom they like, listen to what they please, dress as they see fit, and express themselves freely?

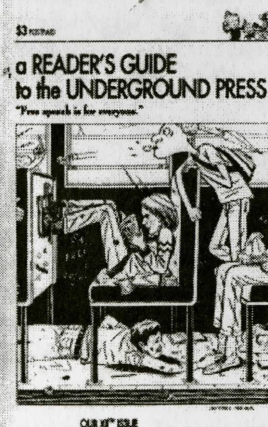
Despite solid documentation of a continuing drop in youth violence, we got the impression that youth culture is more violent than ever. Despite the fact that the jocks were obviously bashing those students who thought or dressed differently, we hear of further stigmatization of students who exhibit unusual styles like black finger-nail polish and trench coats.

Despite the sad fact that terrorized and dehumanized people often turn on those more vulnerable than them — which in the case of Eric and Dylan manifested itself in racism — we simply heard that they were agents of "hate."

Even though no similar gun-control hysteria has attended the countless occurrences of adult workers "going postal" in the workplace, we now hear strict calls for less access to firearms. And, perhaps most telling, television fraud Peter Jennings went on the hunt for America's so-called lost "civility," and found it on the sunny island of Singapore, *where nobody has any rights whatsoever!*

This disingenuous establishment scavenger hunt seeks to sidestep the fact that, like it or not, Eric and Dylan were products of the school they were forced to attend. A lone voice of reason in the congressional hearings inspired by the massacre was Professor Henry Jenkins, who has said, "Reality trumps media images every time. We can shut down a video game if it is ugly, hurtful, or displeasing, but many teens are required to return day after day to schools where they are ridiculed and taunted and sometimes physically abused by their classmates."

One thing is clear: in the aftermath, the establishment of media figures, politicians, administrators, and pundits has two conflicting goals. On one hand, they want to distance themselves from the reality that they *controlled* the circumstances that led to this tragedy. On the other hand, saying that they want to prevent future tragedies, they want *more control* over these schools and youth, and are using the emotional leverage of "our children" to push forward the same old nauseating agenda of state control and limiting freedom.





# Wacky, Weird and Probably Dangerous

## The Media Monopoly Reports On Zine Culture

by Hal Niedzviecki  
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Canada

My first gig as a professional writer was something of a revelation. It was the summer of 1995 and we had just managed to scrape the cash together to put out the premiere issue of Broken Pencil (an act of hubris that I'd rather forget). I was heading off to graduate school where I would, hopefully, hone both my beer drinking and creative abilities. Before I left I got a call from an editor at the then independently owned and still feisty London Free Press of London, Ontario (the newspaper has since been swallowed up by one of Canada's handful of media monopolies). He said he had seen BP and was intrigued. He asked me if I would consider writing an article on zines for their Focus Section. Sure, I said. He gave me a word count, a dollar amount, and a deadline and away I went, eventually producing a zine opus that was double the length requested and virulent in its opposition to the cultural hegemony that relegates independent creative action to the bottom of the barrel.

He liked it. It was published in its entirety, taking up almost two full pages of the paper and adorned with covers of zines, and interviews with zine creators and complete contact info for zine publishers discussed in the piece. Looking back, it was the best possible way to start off my 'career' as a journalist: I had written about 'underground' culture in an intelligent, considered way and my ideas had been taken seriously, presented on the front page of the Saturday Forum section of a well respected newspaper.

The experience taught me that you can present a meaningful discussion about independent culture within the confines of the mainstream press. But you shouldn't count on it happening. As I discovered writing that first article, the best way to get indie culture reported on in the mass market media is to do it yourself, and to try to take it out of the context of the Entertainment sections of daily newspapers. Of course, my experience with the Free Press could and should be considered an exception. It's rare to see an article on zines or underground culture in a daily paper in a section other than Arts and Entertainment. If, by some fluke, there is such an article, it's relegated to the part of the paper where art is understood as that thing you buy to pass the time when you're not making money. Leisure, they like to call it. Or better yet: Lifestyle. This product driven, lightweight approach often leaves a bad taste in the mouth of the indie creator (and it's not just 'cause we sometimes forget to brush our teeth). Whether it's superficial reporting, ignorance and poor research, or just plain blatant misrepresentation, the mainstream has a less than impressive track record in reporting on happenings in the underground - when it bothers at all.

Since that initial lesson in writing about the underground for the mainstream, I've been interviewed by more than twenty mainstream media representatives from tv, print and radio asking me about zines. When I get hold of the finished product, only rarely do I find that my spiel - and by now it is a spiel - is adequately represented. In most cases, my lengthy comments are whittled down to a sentence that

makes me sound like either a reactionary maniac or a hopeless visionary (I'm both and neither). The resulting articles pay lip-service to the idea of independent culture, but it's clear that their architects are, for the most part, just going through the motions. One of the most condescending approaches to my ideas on zines came from late night talk show host Pamela Wallin who appears nightly on CBC Newsworld. I went on the show with zinester Maggie MacDonald (who was in high school at the time producing the zine Saucy). Earlier in the month, I

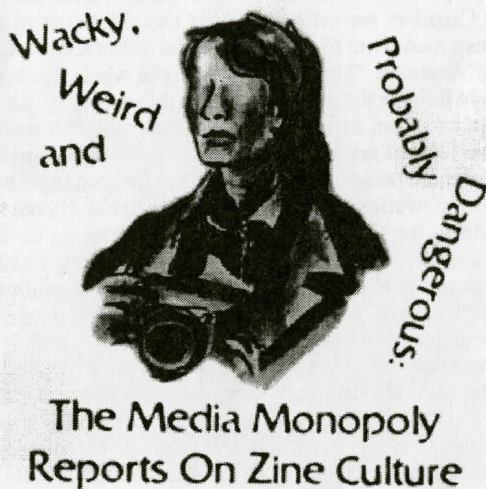
had submitted to several hours of pre-interviewing done by a producer who, presumably, prepared a lengthy brief on the subject of zines for Wallin. We were supposed to be on for the last fifteen minutes of the show, but, to the frustration of the producer who worked so hard on the zine segment, Wallin dragged out an interview with a mainstream author who had written yet another insightful book on relations between the sexes. When she finally condescended to speak to us, there was something like six minutes left of the hour long show. We were hustled onto the set and Wallin, who was clearly uncomfortable with the subject at hand, initiated the discussion by saying something along the lines of "Aren't zines just a fad?" There was barely time to answer the question before we cut to a commercial, the credits rolled and Wallin commented enthusiastically about Maggie's bright red (dyed) hair. My experience on the Pamela Wallin show is one reason why, in general, I prefer to supply the mainstream press with my own articles on zines and independent culture, than answer the rote questions of disinterested reporters who are just going

ing through the motions.

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"I'd say that mainstream articles have been almost uniformly inane, error-laden, superficial, treating zines as 'flavor of the month', wacky, faddish," reports Minneapolis based librarian and zine crusader Chris Dodge whose Zine-o-graphy of articles and essays on zines can be found on the web at <<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/7423/zineog2.html>>. According to Dodge, the articles will generally start off with a spurious, random, definition of zines, then move on to list some wacky titles and quote from a few youngsters in the newspaper's constituent region.

My own reading of articles on zines suggests that the articles will often include the following assumptions: 1) Zines are flash-in-the-pan, not a lasting phenomenon. From the St. Petersburg Times: "Zines are monetary sacrifices for their owners, and many publications go out of business after a few issues. A major problem is trying to sell subscriptions and ads with only a handful of unpaid staffers." From the Louisville Magazine: "Many of them would never survive as regular magazines." 2) Zines are all on fringe topics and bizarre obsessions and most of their creators are weird if not outright nutso. Nobody really takes zines seriously as anything but a hobby. From The Globe and Mail: "Since each of these publications is a reflection



By Hal Niedzviecki

My first gig as a professional writer was something of a revelation. It was the summer of 1995 and we had just managed to scrape the cash together to put out the premiere issue of Broken Pencil (an act of hubris that I'd rather forget). I was heading off to graduate school where I would, hopefully, hone both my beer drinking and creative abilities. Before I left I got a call from an editor at the then independently owned and still feisty London Free Press of London, Ontario (the newspaper has since been swallowed up by one of Canada's handful of media monopolies). He said he had seen BP and was intrigued. He asked me if I would consider writing an article on zines for their Focus Section. Sure, I said. He gave me a word count, a dollar amount, and a deadline and away I went, eventually producing a zine opus that was double the length requested and virulent in its opposition to the cultural hegemony that relegates independent creative action to the bottom of the barrel.

all drawings by David Lister

while the media work on covering: sexual report



of someone's private obsession, the diversity is not really surprising." From the Toronto Star: "On Saturday, *Dysfunctional Family* will be on display. As will Tranzine, aimed at transsexuals, transvestites and other 'transgendered' people, put together by Amanda Kelly, a male cross-dressing suburban postal worker." 3) Zines are put out by kids in their teens and twenties whose lack of traditional/established writing or publishing credentials suggests they are amateurs, writer/publisher wannabes. From the Arizona Daily Sun: "It takes years of hard work and dedication for people to earn a shot at being a magazine publisher. Now all it takes is a photocopier." From the Los Angeles Times: "Thanks to the increasing affordability of photocopying and desktop publishing equipment, practically anyone can be an ersatz Citizen Kane."

So the double whammy goes like this: Zines are outside of the normal spheres of pop culture, inaccessible to the general public, the products of revolutionaries who are challenging a social order, that, lets face it, keeps most of us pretty comfortable. At the same time, zines are mini-ads for corporate culture, as their amateur efforts serve to enhance the primacy of authentic, professional, mass entertainment.

I've noticed that Canadian newspapers seem to do a slightly better job than American ones when reporting on zines. Perhaps this is because Canadian reporters are more used to the idea that there is such a thing as monotone cultural hegemony perpetuated by the foreign invaders from South of the border. The Canadian mainstream has the option of making statements about zines sound more like nationalistic pride than the insane ramblings of libertarians. "The main goal is to promote independent Canadian thought through the alternative zine medium," goes an article in *The Standard* from St. Catharines, Ontario. "For some, it is simply a creative form of self-expression. The ability to rant on a favourite topic and share personal revelations without being censored or edited can be empowering in a society transfixed by experts," says another article in the *Globe Mail*. (One article every two years - it's practically a record!) Perhaps the longest, most in-depth article on zines I've encountered in Canada appeared in the *Ryerson Review of Journalism*. It actually described a good number of zines and presented various opinions on the importance or lack thereof of zines. But, of course, the *Ryerson Review* is a student publication and so, despite its glossy facade and relentlessly professional approach to feature writing, it doesn't really count as a serious attempt by the mainstream to grapple with zines.

It isn't much of a stretch to argue that zines are not exactly given kudos and respect from the mass media. In fact, as I've already suggested, when underground creators do encounter the media, the experience can be disappointing, to say the least. Montreal cartoonist Rick Trembles recounts in an issue of Montreal's *Fish Piss* his experience doing an interview with the local CBC television news about an animation project he was working on. Naturally, they weren't interested in his work as an artist, they were looking for weird projects that got grants from the Canada Council so they could disparage the idea of arts funding. When the reporter wanted to know what Trembles could tell people who thought the money he got would be better spent on hospitals, the cartoonist knew he was in trouble. Despite trying desperately to add context to the interview and, finally, trying to have his participation pulled, the segment aired after an evening of sensational promo ads stating "you may not like it, but your tax dollars are paying for it..." Naturally, Trembles's worst fears were confirmed. The show portrayed him as a pretentious pervert, quoting him out of context saying that his work was about "the sexual history of a character from masturbation on" and then sniggering.

Similarly, when the Toronto Star's Antonia Zerbisias attempted to comment on grant gobbling "alternative magazines" such as *Geist*, *Fuse* and *Border/Lines* she wrote, proudly, "most of the time I can't figure out what they're on about" then proceeded to trash the three mags, "cockamamie cultural magazines" and, by extension, all zines, announcing that "most of us will never buy these magazines."

This is, of course, a self-fulfilling prophecy since most of us will never buy anything that we don't know exists, or only know of in a negative context as obscure, fringe, weird, self indulgent and, for those of us lucky enough to have the government's money to spend, dependent on the public purse because nobody 'normal' would waste cash on it. But the prophecy of a weird, threatening indie culture also serves to patch up the deepening cracks in the cultural monotony. When Zer-

bisias argues that alternative magazines are outside the marketplace, she's saying that it is not normal to crave unfettered free expression any more than it is to devote time and energy and money to something that does not bring financial reward. It is not normal, unless you are a 'professional', to engage in creative acts not sanctioned by the mainstream in the form of remuneration.

The fact that there is a blank space where reporting on independent culture should be, is not without ramifications for cultural creators. The absence of true reportage on indie culture doings in the mass media is probably the main reason for our insecurities regarding our own fledgling, tentative, hopeful exercises in aesthetic expression. One wonders how many part-time zine makers, filmmakers, artists, and writers there might be if people were encouraged to create, not just pretend to participate. Ben Bagdikian comments in the preface to the fourth edition of his excellent book *The Media Monopoly* that "concentrated corporate control is somewhat discounted" because many people see it as purely an entertainment matter - the synergies the mass media occupy don't have to do with politics but with pop, which, in between high school slaughters and teen beatings, is generally considered to be unimportant. "But," Bagdikian writes, "entertainment does more than just entertain. Not only does it crystalize popular culture, reflecting and confirming what already exists, but by selective emphasis and de-emphasis, and by creating self serving images and celebrities of its own, it can also create its own version of popular culture. A popular culture, quickly and universally transmitted to the whole society, and uniformly designed for the quick and profitable selling of goods, has a profound effect on social values."

Ironically, this monotone projection of social values through the media monopoly's manufacturing of pop phenomenon is also our impetus for creating zines and exploring other mediums of indie culture expression. By not reporting on independent cultural endeavours while perpetuating an environment that insists on the primacy and possibility of individual action (the plot, it seems, of every movie, sitcom, song and political campaign), the mass media all but forces to create our own modes of communication.

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By now, we should all know the story of media monopolies and consolidated interests in North America. Canada has the highest concentration of newspaper ownership in the western world. We also have the privilege of being the gravy market for cultural imports from the US - almost all of them the products of monopolistic synergies that have seen book publishers, newspaper and magazine publishers, tv networks, movie studios, radio stations and websites consolidated into a few corporate interests. Not only does this US content occupy a large portion of our tvs, radios, movie screens and newsstands, we also have our own American farm team operations here - companies owned by multinational giants that have the name Canada tagged after them such as Polygram Canada or Random House Canada; these companies serve both as a conduit for US product, and producers of genuine for-profit Canadian cultural product (though the homegrown aspect is always optional as the good people of Little, Brown Canada found out when that company engaged in restructuring and closed the Canadian book publishing aspect of their operation). Anyway, suffice it to say that in Canada we get the double monopoly whammy with US corporate monopolies and their farm-teams merging with homegrown Canadian media monopolies to preside over almost every aspect of our culture from creation to commentary. This is a situation that the mainstream usually downplays - and ignores - both for obvious reasons and not so obvious ones.

Obviously, the corporate powers that own the media are not inclined to serious investigation of media monopolies since they themselves are media monopolies. Even the home-grown smaller Canadian monopolies that might resent the US monopolies know better than to speak up since the US monopolies, through their deep-pocketed cultural farm-teams, channel advertising dollars into their pockets. Similarly, no mass media outlet is going to be overly concerned with covering independent cultural endeavours when the bulk of their ads come from corporate cultural concerns that buy a lot more than a corner of the newspaper when they plunk down their cash.

Less obviously, the more 'media' morphs into a profit obsessed entertainment juggernaut, the more difficult it becomes to articulate critiques of the mass media monopoly that don't come off as either



elitist or hopelessly antediluvian. The main problem is that critiquing the entertainment hegemony is often confused with critiquing pop culture or television or video games or even newspapers. Arguments against monopolies that own movie studios and own newspapers that review movies and own tv shows that hype movies and own publishers that publish books based on movies and own websites where you can order the book based on the movie, often make the mistake of assuming that everything that comes out of the entertainment industry is bad, evil, rotten to the core. Not only is this not the case, but such a simplistic scenario fails to appreciate the way the distinction between indie/underground and corporate has been blurred in many ways, as monopolies extend their tentacles and people such as myself find themselves writing seriously in and for the 'mainstream' about the 'underground'.

Politically and stylistically, there are many cultural works coming out of the mainstream that evoke in a meaningful way attributes that might have once been the sole property of the underground. Similarly, a lot of work coming out of the underground employs primarily mainstream preconceptions in terms of aesthetics and politics. So it's often impossible for the average citizen to determine if a certain magazine, book, or CD has been amalgamated into the Borg-like world of the corporate media despite its 'indie' look and anti-authoritarian attitudes. Here we enter the murky terrain of the pseudo-hip, the co-optation of cool and the relentless forces of marketing, a boggy quicksand land that seems safe to enter, but sucks in all ye who dare to visit.

To avoid falling into that pit, I'll try to skirt around the crumbling edges and summarize: What I'm trying to say is that our perspectives and our mind-sets have long since been colonized by mass culture - we live in this culture, we breathe it, we dream its dreams, we are an integral part of it. Arguments against cultural monopolies often seem to put forward utopian solutions which articulate a move away from mass media consolidation, the idea being that we can form our own parallel structures and economies and pretend that the CNNs and Time/Warners of the world no longer effect our lives because we are ignoring them. This is certainly the ethos of d.i.y. punk culture - "I think the most radical thing punk has done is set up an independent network, completely outside of corporate or government control," Tim Yohannon, former publisher of Maximum Rock'n'Roll, told This Magazine in 1994. As flawed as the punk model of parallel structures for the creation and dispensation of cultural material may be, there is no denying its importance in fostering new generations who seek to make 'art' outside of the corporate model. And yet, as the many zines, punk songs and other indie creative works that focus on pop culture suggest, the entertainment universe is one that both fascinates and perplexes us. It includes us even as we are excluded from it in a meaningful way. An argument against the media monopoly is an argument against ourselves, against a truth internalized within us, one that shapes the way we understand our lives.

It is within this complex environment that we have to encounter the mass media's approach to independent/underground culture. A large part of what appears in Broken Pencil often has to do with our reactions to the dominant ideology as espoused in the corporate owned media and its entertainment products. When we write in our zines about rote employment, or our obsessions with certain bands, movies, and stars, or our night out drinking too much and throwing up outside of Burger King, to some extent we are almost always writing about the way we as individuals are forced to confront a hostile, unfriendly world that makes it seem like we are just pieces in the mar-

keting puzzle, quotas to be filled, profits to be made. The zine-maker's obsession with mass culture and its trappings comes from an innate need to assert ourselves as individuals without necessarily burning down the KFC or blowing up the Cineplex, but without wholeheartedly buying into the entertainment complex that invites us to eat rubber chicken while we "Defeat the Dark Side and Win!"

This point about our relationship to mass culture isn't just an aside. It's fundamental to the wrong-headed approach the mainstream press takes to the independent press. When the mainstream writes about zines, they write about them as if they are somehow outside of the entertainment continuum we live our lives in. They position zines as alternatives to a comfortable homogeneity, as quirky, as cute, or ridiculous but never as equal partners whose uncorrupted approach to pop is an effective challenge to the synergistic monopolies that serve up our culture like just another order of fries.

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You may have noticed that the stream of articles about zines in the mainstream press has pretty much dried up. "It's over," reports Dodge. "My hometown paper ran an article about lowazines in 1996. When it hits Dubuque, it's passé elsewhere." Zines were 'hot' in the

early to mid-nineties, often coupled with the resurgent profitability of 'alternative' culture as represented by grunge bands, riot grrls and an ensuing wave of pseudo punk bands. Zine reportage had one last gasp with the 1997 publication of two US zine anthologies - both by corporate interests that ensured wide review in the mainstream press, the tenor of the ensuing articles being basically the same as the general interest zine articles found in Life sections across North America. Will there be another spate of zine articles in a few years? I doubt it. The media is now obsessing on other cultural/technological innovations, in particular, the internet and its myriad of ezines, MP3, wearable computers, virtual reality, violent ultra-real video games etc. The hysterical tone of 'new media' articles coupled with the dismissive tone of past articles on zines shows the way media approaches cultural change rooted in technological innovations. Don't understand something? Spew vague generalizations and tap into the hype. Never, never state the obvious: that ever more affordable micro-technologies from radio transmitters to home computers to photocopiers, disaffection with

cultural monopolies, and an expanding highly educated cadre of unemployed young people, spells the end of the media as we know it even as the entertainment industry tightens the noose, intent on strangling the independent arts right out of existence before the rope rips out of the ceiling.

● It's not surprising that the media are a just a little wary of zines. If word gets out that you can set up your own magazine, newspaper, even radio station, what will happen to the cultural gate-keepers, those reporters who already are little more than ad copy hacks writing the same movie, book and record reviews and features week after week? Who needs them? Zines review movies just as well as they can, and they aren't limited to what's hot that weekend, what comes out of four or five Hollywood studios accompanied by a huge ad budget. True, many zines regurgitate rote reviews of lame Hollywood movies but many others cover the world of film and video in ways that completely destroy the mundane assumptions perpetuated by the mainstream film critic. Comparing the studied cleverness of the jaded film critic to the tone of the fascinated, enthused zine film buff is like comparing Drew Barrymore to indie film pixelvision great Sadie Benning. Profit versus passion. Glitz versus guts. Rote versus riot.

The mainstream media never mentions the fact that the zine covers the culture universe way better than the average daily or glossy





magazine can. We are not informed that the zine, far from representing a new wave of obscure and insignificant fringe endeavours, represents an explosion of cultural self-determination in part perpetuated by our media imbued obsession with the allure of fantasy/celebrity. They never tell us that, as more and more people become culturally active, zines will take on an ever more important role in chronicling cultural activity the mainstream can't or won't speak about.

Why the silence? The ideals of unfettered expression and creativity are an anathema to the contemporary mass media in which everything is about buying and selling - thus articles on Art and Entertainment and Life must invariably focus on product, not just any product, but whatever is fed to editors and reporters by the marketing machine through a bevy of couriers, press releases, publicists and advertisements - the underpinnings of a rapacious culture industry which successfully keeps reporting on independent cultural efforts (from films to zines to painting to websites) off the pages of the newspapers and magazines and tv shows most of us are exposed to everyday. In the media's current construction as primarily a vehicle for ads, there is neither the money nor the room for Arts reporting to expand its coverage. Thus, even if individual critics are willing and capable, the obsession of the corporate on maximizing profits by creating a homogenous unimpeded flow of culture product, makes it clear that there is no foreseeable way that the mass media in its current incarnation could ever open its doors to the full spectrum of independent arts.

As a result, independent culture primarily reports on itself, creating small industries of websites, magazines and zines that cover the territory as best they can. The more self-reporting spreads, the more likely it is that indie culture ideas will reach the point where they find an audience outside of the particular subculture they serve. One example of the way this works is the zine 'industry' itself. As cheap personal computers and the wide availability of photocopiers became the norm, zines proliferated and zines keeping track of zines sprouted like weeds out of the fertile soil of self publishing. Some of these zines even managed to attract the attention of people who were interested not so much in the hobby of zines, but in the content of zines. When we begin to stop looking at zines as a weird temporal phenomenon and start to consider the content of zines, their aesthetic, their unique pastiche of comics and collage and sitcom screenplays and music videos, then we have accepted the medium as legitimate. A profusion of zines gives people - already deeply involved with pop culture on a level never acknowledged by the Entertainment reporter - permission to pursue their cultural interests outside of the marketplace; the mere existence of zines affirms the process whereby otherwise 'normal' people - not artists, not professional creators and commentators - can re-evaluate their understanding of cultural participation and recognize the urge to be creators and commentators rather than buyers and bystanders. The pattern goes this way: The media fails miserably to tell us about zines and the indie culture doings. Zines report on indie culture doings and other zines, developing a legitimacy within a community of indie equals who aren't served by the mainstream's obsession with glamour, movie stars and profits. In rare cases, this legitimacy even leads to profitability and ensuing amalgamation into the corporate world - a move that either confirms or negates the legitimacy of zines, depend-

ing on who you talk to.

Of those zines singled out by the mainstream for their purported profitability and popularity, there is always the sense that they are considered useful in a kind of so-this-is-what-the-kids-are-into-these-days way. Zines tap into the zeitgeist. They aren't viewed as creative exercises in free expression that stand outside the monopolistic model, but as hip, happening, and completely useless sources of actual aesthetic experience or information. Broken Pencil recently got a letter from a division of the multinational marketing research group Angus Reid asking me to participate in something called the PopCulture Report. "As part of our research methodology we will be contacting experts in the major cultural purveying industries to conduct interviews focussing on perceptions of pop culture today in North America. We are particularly interested in cutting edge opinions. That's where

you come in." I'm so honoured have been selected as a conduit for information about the "cutting edge". The mainstream is happy to admit that zines and indie culture activities are interesting as a pop culture exercise, especially when their bottom line might be augmented in the process, but quick to point out that these things aren't - can't be - worthwhile on their own terms.

Why not? Because there has to be accountability, there has to be some kind of gate-keeping or there will be no way for the public to know what they should buy where. The Ryerson Review of Journalism piece on zines has a telling comment from media personality Evan Solomon talking about how zines corrupt the objective stance of the news and you can't trust them. "If there's no self regulating force that checks that the news source is held accountable," he is quoted in the article as saying, "then you're endangering your news source and the zine is held accountable to no one except the author." That is, within the confines of media monopoly we can be rest assured that what is being said is said honestly and in our best interests because it is, somehow, accountable to us, the customers. So, outside the info industries gathering size and

speed like tumbleweeds in the desert, there are only those whirling grains of sand that get in our eyes and blind us with their self-serving special interest whining; if it isn't product it isn't trustworthy - it lacks the accountability of product, with its customer service reps and managers and publicists and lawyers all situated to ensure that no words of boycott or dissent come between us and our pocketbooks. Of course, this is the naive assumption the media always relies on: the public believes them, trusts them because they have the standards and ethics and expertise that can be held accountable. Only, as news sources maximize profits by focussing on entertainment synergies, their machinations become more obvious, their so-called standards slip and the public becomes less inclined to take their word for it.

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Much of my approach to writing about indie culture for the mainstream comes out of my belief that you can't, in this day and age, inextricably separate corporate culture from indie culture. As I've already noted, the world of mass culture is our world, we belong to it and it belongs to us. How we encounter this world is, of course, what is at issue here. Most of us struggle to find a balance between healthy skepticism, jaded pessimism and gut enjoyment. One of the ways that we steady ourselves on the balance beam of pop is by articulating our own reactions, desires and needs as they relate to the often over-bearing world of entertainment for profit. This conflict between the participatory and the passive, between buying and selling, suggests a real challenge both to bogus exclusivity of the 'underground' and the forces of marketing that seek to





harness our creative urges by turning us not into creators but collectors. To be able to supply ourselves with our own perspective, we need to make the Hollywood vision of a world where we are all artists, critics, thinkers, and dreamers real. But when we actually try to step into this looking glass of reflected aspirations, we are branded as wacky, weird and probably dangerous.

So I plan to keep contributing to the mainstream press, and encourage other indie creators to do the same should they have the opportunity. Though we have no hope of changing the media's dependence on ads and, thus, their slavish reliance on Life sections comprised of filler promo for product available coast to coast at cookie-cutter malls, we can at least offer people glimpses of the possibility I believe indie culture suggests. So I'll keep trying to explain my take on indie culture (in a thousand words or less). Hell, I've even started a monthly column for the National Post on zines and small magazines. I find some small, probably deluded, satisfaction in writing about zines for the flagship newspaper of media baron Conrad Black who controls an unbelievable half of all the daily newspapers in this country. When I do my column for the Post, I like to think that, though I'm just another pawn in the media profit machine, at least I'm a pawn

who decides which square I want to occupy.

Have my articles in the Post and elsewhere inspired prospective creatives to take action? Letters, emails, even phone calls come at unexpected moments to remind me that the lonely battle against cultural monotony is not without its victories. After I was quoted in the St. Catharines paper, a woman from the Niagara region called me to tell me that for years she had been writing letters to the newspaper which they never ran. For years, she thought that the only voice she had was one filtered through mass media conglomerates. Seeing the article had inspired her to publish her responses to the mass media. She was going to start her own zine.

The lesson here is clear: the corporate media can print good articles that positively affect our understanding of the opportunities for free expression. Media monopolies can be used to put the truth about indie culture forward, a truth that challenges us to realize our potential as cultural interlocutors, our potential to evolve from our predetermined role as passive tv addicts to those who use a mass culture instilled belief in the power of art to manifest new realities that actively shape the world around us. Yeah, sure, the mass media could do all of that. If it let us. But why would it let us?

## Untitled

by Michelle Mae of THE MAKE UP

Monozine

PO BOX 598

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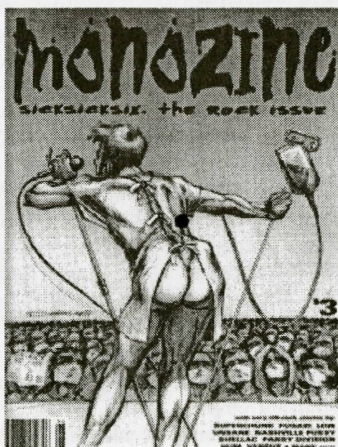
www.monozine.com

Me and my band had been on tour for about 3 weeks, and during that time, I decided to sell my car...a '68 Galaxy 500. I had kept it in my garage while I was on tour. I got home and put an ad in the paper, I spoke to a few interested buyers- finally a guy who says he'll probably buy it. I go out to the car the day he's going to come over. I go and get the battery -I couldn't keep the battery in the car because people would always steal it. First I notice that there are two mattresses leaning up against the garage door, like it was trying to block something. I think that's odd, but a lot of homeless people had slept in my garage and my car. I take the mattresses down, and there's this really horrific smell. I think "God, what could that be?" Then I think "Gee, why is my car full of flies?" There was also some blood and guts or something, on the ground- I don't know what it was, I was like "Oh, maybe someone had dropped their chicken dinner or something...and that's what's causing the flies." So my friend was with me, to look at my car. I put the battery in, I go to get in the car, and it's really wretched smelling...I get in, put the key in the ignition, go to put my foot down on the accelerator and I feel there's something there. I think "Oh my God, there's someone sleeping there!" So I run out, and all the sudden it hit me like a ton of bricks- "Oh...it's a dead person!" We just freaked out. We ran in the house, called the cops, they came and pulled the car out. The dead body was a woman...She was completely maggot-ridden. They determined it had actually been there the entire time I had been gone. It was really hard to determine what color she was. It was like a white, mealy, mushy horror movie head. One of the detectives got inside to investigate further, and determined that she was murdered, but wouldn't give out the information as to how. The whole process of getting the body out of the car took about 8 hours because they had to do all this finger printing, and at one point the police officer said. "Okay, we're going to have to ask you to leave now while we pull the body out." I went around the corner and a detective told me the reason was they didn't want you to see it because usually, when a body sits around for a long time, while picking it up, it usually doesn't really stay together. I kind of tried to sneak a

peek. At that point I wasn't freaked out yet, I was just really in shock and wanted to see it- which is totally grotesque. They were pulling the body out, and I HAD to stop looking, basically. The smell- when people die in a car, the smell never goes away...so I couldn't get rid of the car at all- and I finally gave it to a junkyard. I couldn't sell it...I had to call the guy. "Sorry...dead body in the car."

The funny thing about this...while the investigation was going on, various stories were floating around, like the postman had been complaining that the whole block had this horrible stench, and all the dogs had been barking and causing this huge ruckus. At one point, there was a police van in the alley where my garage was. This guy comes peaking around the corner of the van, acting suspicious...so suspicious, that he caught the attention of me, and my neighbors. I'm like "Oh, God...what's up with that?" He was really jumpy, like peaking around the corner, and jumping back...enough, that it caught a cop's attention. He subtly tried to walk up to question him, and he just ran. He looked REALLY sketchy...the most sketchy human being I'd ever seen ...my neighborhood is really horrible neighborhood to begin with... Since then I've seen that guy a couple of times in the neighborhood, and he always looks so frightening, like the most creepy, creepy dude...and for a while I didn't want to leave my house. I thought I would have to have therapy, to recover from this! Eventually I did recover This guy is really, really frightening looking and I'm sure he was the guy who did it. One time I saw him walking down the street with a woman, who looked like she'd been to hell and back. She looked like she'd been beaten up...she had finger marks on her neck and she looked so miserable. That was enough for me to believe that this guy knows, or had something to

do with it...I don't think they ever solved anything, and I don't think they cared. I tried contacting the detective for a while, and he never returned my calls. I think since she was a poor, black woman- perhaps even homeless, I don't think they even tried to find out anything. The way they were talking about it, they were like "Oh yeah, another body-bag deal." ...I live in that house, you know?





# Tuesday, September 15, 1998.

by Erin Greeno  
Not Far Enough  
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"Do you self-examine your breasts each month?" the doctor asked as she tidied up the pap smear paraphernalia on the nearby table. I mumbled yes. She look at me dubiously.

I don't know what compelled me to lie because I check my breasts for any abnormalities maybe twice, three times a year. Not enough by any means, but I didn't want the doctor to think I didn't care about my body's well-being. I am a health-conscious individual after all.

I couldn't date the last time I checked.

The doctor suggested she examine my breasts since it's good to have someone with a clearer idea of what they are looking for to conduct an annual examination. I agreed without hesitance, pulling up my t-shirt to expose my bra-less breasts. I noticed it was only ten to ten which impressed me since I had a lot to do that morning before going to my afternoon class. This appointment seemed like a waste of precious errand time.

She checked the right breast first and after kneading it thoroughly with her flatted fingertips, she looked me in the face and said, "everything's fine." I knew it.

The doctor then leant over me slightly to examine my left one. I watched her fingers' circulate movements, trailing counter-clockwise around the fleshy mound... and then she stopped slightly above the nipple. She frowned and continued to press around that location. I glanced down at my exposed chest and the faint outline of my midriff underneath the paper sheet covering my naked body. I looked pale under the sickly fluorescent lights. My body scared me.

She stepped away from me and the medial bed I was laying on and asked when I was expecting my next period. Confused as to why she asked, I bluntly answered "a week from Wednesday", while staring inquisitively at the doctors straight face. She reached for my left breast again and started gently prodding it. The motions frightened me so badly I couldn't look at what she was doing. Instead I just focused on her straight brown bob haircut and the necklace that caught the lighting so that it looked more expansive than it probably was. So I started guessing how much a doctor at Planned Parenthood made. I had no idea how much; why would I care. I didn't want to know what she was doing. But it was her job to tell me.

"There's a small lump in your left breast. It may be caused by the swelling from your oncoming menses. If that's the case, you don't need to worry if it still there after your period is ended, then we need to have another look at it."

I looked at her and then down at my breast. That small lump of flesh contained an even smaller abnormal lump. It didn't seem possible. She convinced me it was too early to tell. The doctor left the room to fill a prescription for me and so I could redress in privacy. Once she closed the door, I quickly pushed the equation of state t-shirt down to cover my small chest. The roughly spray-painted word cancer, outlined in red shone in the brightly-lit room.

No, I wouldn't think about that. It wasn't an option. I still had Solshenitsyn's cancer Ward in mind. The lump was not a big deal, right—I convinced myself. I hurriedly threw on my pants and shoes. I had things to do. I couldn't think about the lump. I wouldn't think about the lump.

The doctor came back in, passing me a prescription for Orthocept 21 on bright purple paper. She convinced me not to worry about the discovery she found and reminded me to keep a close eye and touch on my left breast's abnormality. I scurried out the door and went to the pharmacy.

At home, I immediately called my mother. Despite her complaints about my lifestyle (i.e. hardcore, vegetarianism), Mom and I have an unusually close relationship and at such times. I needed her sympathy and her severe rationality. She would hopefully soothe my frantic brain activity; however, I couldn't tell her. I felt the tears in my throat pul-

sating, rising, and I knew if I mentioned the lump, I would break down in an uncontrollable sob fit. Crying equaled defeat and I didn't know what was pulling me down. I told her everything was fine. My hand went to my breast for the first time since the appointment and I sought out the mysterious lump. When my fingers first rolled around the hard bump, the size of a Smartie, I couldn't focus on what Mom was telling me so I told her I had to go. It was real.

I roamed around the empty apartment for awhile, trying desperately to think of other things. I'd pick up a book and lay it back down on the coffee table. I'd tidy up the table and then put everything back down. I'd open the kitchen cupboards, pull out some pita bread and then toss it back in. Eventually, I grabbed a box of soda crackers and wandered upstairs. I had to write Mac and tell him. He could know. He needed to know.

The scribbles in the notebook revisited the events at Planned Parenthood earlier that morning, triggering the tears, triggering the headache. I broke down. I don't know for how long, but I just scrambled under the sheets, wishing Mac wasn't on that stupid tour.

Finally. Dry eye ducts. Composure. Reason. Nothing could be known for two weeks. And then I heard a knock at the door. I momentarily considered ignoring the visitors, who'd undoubtedly witness my swollen, red eyes, but the thought of human contact appealed to me. Comfort. Escape. At the door, I found Maggie, Colleen, and Meghan, who on their lunch break at school decided to finish this thought. I blankly listened as they discussed teachers and subjects while trying desperately to convey that superwoman ideal I try so hard to maintain.

After they left, I mentally decided not to tell anyone. I didn't need sympathy. My chest hurt from crying. I put my happy face on, went to school, and then later to work at Eastern Front like nothing was different.

Wednesday, September 16.

I woke up and touched my breast. I couldn't find the lump and this incredible surge of relief flooded my aching body, but my fingers continued to rub. Then I found it. Good morning.

People keep calling me. I hear their voices and I mumble things back, while mentally screaming about the lump in my breast.

Mac called really late from New Brunswick, New Jersey, to retrieve any messages for Equation of State. It was one of the few conversations we had while he was away when both of us were chipper. As soon as I heard his voice, I wanted to tell him about the lump, but the news could easily be an extra burden, that I didn't want him to carry around with him. Plus, he was too far away. We chatted for awhile when I realized that of all the people I n the world, Mac deserved to know.

I approached the topic very coolly in comparison to the emotional outbreaks the day before. The severity of the lump's discovery was still up in the air, so it was useless to frighten him with all the mental images of cancer and operations. Amazingly I managed to retell the story of my appointment without stumbling over my own fears and reservations. The carefree mood of before vanished and I could feel his discomfort, his uncertainties though the hundreds of kilometers of telephone wire. I paused to let him collect his thoughts before going on. Now that someone shared my confusion and pain, I had to play the role of the sensible protector. It felt good to be on the other side.

Thursday, September 17

After coming home from school today, there was a message on



the voicemail from Mac, somewhere in New York City. "just wanted to know if you are okay." That was all I needed.

Tuesday, September 21

Mac came home and all my concerns and worries poured out. I notice him looking at my hand holding on to my breast. Tomorrow I start my period.

Monday, September 28

My period has officially ended and the lump remains. What does that mean?

Tuesday, September 29

I woke up this morning with the heavy weight of another breast examination on my mind. I couldn't delay making an appointment; the longer I wait to call, the longer away my examination will be and the longer I won't know what the lump consists of. I had a hard time making the move to the telephone and the telephone book. If I went back to sleep I wouldn't have to think about the numerous possibilities of what could be wrong.

I first called the Women's Clinic, thinking that a medical centre with such a name would undoubtedly have breast examinations. But no, they only deal with birth control and prenatal care; however, they suggested I call the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Clinic, located at the Halifax Shopping Centre. Immediately I was put on hold and while listening to the overly loud muzak piano tinkling through the receiver, my stomach started to turn. What if I discovered something I didn't want to hear at the appointment. Maybe I should just hang up. Go back to sleep. Have a nice dream or something. Of course, a woman then answered. The woman at the screening clinic first asked for my date of birth. October 2, 1975. Too young, she replied. The clinic only screens women aged 40 and over. Too young. I have a fucking lump in my breast. If I'm old enough to have a lump, I should be old enough to have an examination.

I hear her spew off all this mumbo-jumbo shit about why, but I have a hard time focusing on her words. Then: "Is there a reason why you want an appointment?" the woman asked me. (By this time, I'm friggin screwed up because I don't know why they wouldn't check me out). I bluntly told her I had a lump in my breast (good reason?). She recommended me going to my family doctor for an examination. Unfortunately I don't have a family doctor. My doctor in Windsor left for bigger bucks in the United States and I never bothered finding anyone in the city. I had gone to one doctor my first year in Halifax who continued to push various drugs at me. The queen of free samples. I came home from the appointment with my pockets filled. She scared me. I told the woman at the breast screening clinic: okay or something and then I hung up on her.

Back to Planned Parenthood. The place where I discovered I had a lump. I left Planned Parenthood as my last option because I wanted to get another opinion. The father away from Planned Parenthood, the farther I felt from the seriousness of the issue. They had an opening this week.

"How about Friday?" Friday is my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. I'll be 23 years old with a lump in my left breast. I hung up and laid back down in bed. I started to cry. This time, for no reason. I just cried. Mac hugged me until I stopped and then we started making plans for a camping trip, following Friday's appointment.

Friday, October 2

Happy Birthday to me. Happy Birthday to me. I have benign tumor. Happy Birthday to me.

9:30 a.m. I'm young, she said, and asked me whether I smoked. No. Family history of breast cancer. No. When did you start your period? I pointed to the calendar laying on her cluttered desk. Are you positive? She asked. Yes. The day was etched in my brain. The receptionist scratched my comments on my chart and told me the doctor had one more patient to see before me. I could wait in the front room.

9:40 a.m. I scanned the stacks of pamphlets sharply arranged along the racks. The History of Birth Control. I picked I up and read it thoroughly. Male Sexual Health. I stashed it in my pocket. Everything You Need To Know about Breast Health. It tells me that women between 50 and 69 need to have an annual mammogram. Check for puckered nipples, discoloration, acute pain, and unusual lumps. If you discover any of the above symptoms, go see your doctor.

9:52 a.m. I started to lose patience. Where was the doctor? And airbrushed woman and Bill Clinton's face stared at me. I chose Bill Clinton. I wish I didn't.

9:55 a.m. The nurse led me into the same examination room. The same AIDS awareness poster hung on the wall. The same sad faces looked empty from the sterile white wall. The doctor still never came. I consider stealing non-latex gloves. I don't need them.

10:00 a.m. The same doctor who discovered the intrusive lump in my breast performed the second examination. This time, she went straight for it without idle conversation. Since the lump's size and position varied little from the first time she felt it, she diagnosed the lump as a benign tumor. I asked her how she could tell it wasn't cancerous and she explained that benign tumors move more freely than malignant ones and the lump in my breast was effortlessly floating around. Such a simple explanation didn't even convince her and so she faxed a request to the Queen Elizabeth II hospital for an ultrasound. The ultrasound will determine the exact characteristics of the tumor and then, they can proceed with eliminating it from my body.

Unfortunately as I have discovered over the past two weeks, younger women place at the bottom of the list when it comes to breast tumors. I have to wait, for who knows how long.

And then what? An operation seemed inevitable to me and even there at the examination room, I started mentally debating what form of drugs, if any, I would take to alleviate pain. Quite often, doctors insert a needle into a benign tumor to extract the fatty cells forming the hardened lump, but this procedure may be difficult for the flat-shaped tumor in my breast.

I left with the promising smiles of the doctor and the nurse withering in my memory.

So I didn't have cancer, they say, but the heavy knot laying stagnant in my chest for two weeks didn't lift. How could I believe what the doctor told me? She just fiddle around with my breast. She couldn't

see inside. I didn't want to wait any longer. I needed to know what was living inside my left breast.

Mac and I went camping later that afternoon. We spoke about the tumor twice.

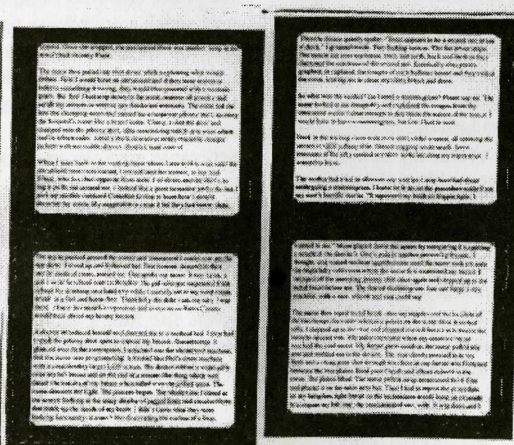
Sunday, October 4

Soaking in a bathtub after a cold, rigorous weekend in the woods, I rested my hand on my bare chest and remembered I had a tumor. I sunk deeper in the water.

Monday, October 5

I told my mom. The well-thought conversation I meant to have scrambled when I heard her concerned voice. I rushed through the details of the past two weeks while she continually cleared her throat and asked me to explain what the doctor actually said. I stumbled. I didn't want to say too much in fear that the reservoir of emotions which I tucked underneath my superwoman façade would explode. I wouldn't force my mother to hear my blubbering outpour over the phone. I just wanted a hug with silence. No t.v. moments.

Once I said everything she quietly questioned why I hadn't told





her sooner. I had earlier prepared myself for such a question, but the rationale I had reiterated over and over again seemed silly when I told her I didn't want her to worry. For the first time, I didn't run crying for Mommy, or for anyone, besides Mac. I don't want sympathy. I don't want prodding questions targeted in my direction when I can't even answer my own. So I remained silent. She told me she understood. I believed her—she's the most rational person I know—but she still sounded hurt.

When you release a secret you've kept for a long time, you're supposed to feel better. The lift-the-weight-off-your-shoulder feeling, or something. That's not the case.

Monday, October 12

I visited my family in Windsor for Thanksgiving weekend. Even though Mom knows, she only brought it up once or twice to remind me she wanted to hear the results of the ultrasounds. I almost forgot about it.

Dad drove me home today on his way to Newfoundland, where he will be working for the next couple of weeks. We hadn't even reached the exit to highway 101 when he confessed Mom confided in him. I knew she would since Mom and Dad are one entity, but his acknowledgement still shocked me.

And he started to tell me all the things I wanted to forget. When I was young, my Dad discovered he had melanoma, one of the deadliest forms of skin cancer. The doctors told him there was a 85 percent chance he's be dead in three years. He came to Halifax to have the cancerous area surgically removed and for nearly twenty years, he annually visits a specialist. No signs of cancer. He didn't die obviously.

Hearing him tell me own fight with cancer frightened me even though I have been reassured the tumor is not malignant. For a month I have convinced myself the lump was nothing to worry about, but Dad's sober tone trashed all my mental encouragement.

And I had so many photos to process before my appointment.

Tomorrow will be judgement day.

Tuesday, October 13.

Surprisingly enough, I woke up this morning, more concerned about the assignments and redo assignments I had to pass in to my photography class than the foreign tests I would undergo at the Dickson Building. I trudged across the street school, bright and early in hopes I could squeeze all the printing before 12:30. By 10 a.m. I had one print finished and two rolls of film developed. Right on track until I reached on of my redo assignments. No matter what I did, it just didn't look right. I started to glance at my watch more furtively as time started to pass more quickly. The difficult print threatened my composure and instead of thinking about photography, I started thinking about the tests. An ultrasound and a mammogram. I had no sweet clue what they meant. My mom had tried to explain the procedures of both, but I wouldn't listen. Too much to think about. By noon, I grew too antsy to stay in the darkroom. The sounds coming from the radio and the irritating whispers of my colleagues drove me batty, so I packed my bag and left for the hospital, hoping the tests would go by smoothly so I could return to the darkroom.

Across the street and down Summer Street, I walked alone, deeply wishing Mac didn't have to start his new job the same day I had to go through these tests. If only I had someone to talk to. (Shaheera was in class.) While Mac was tossing around salad and pasta, I would expose my breasts to the medical world to poke and prod like pounds of meat, isolated from my body. My disdain for conventional medicine and continued trying to sway me from going through with the tests, but I couldn't find any herbal remedies to remove tumors, only to prevent. It was too late for that and so I marched on. My stomach rumbled partly due to apprehension and partly due to hunger.

It took me less time to arrive at the hospital than I had anticipated. The nurse at planned Parenthood had given me directions to go to the second floor of the George Dickson Building and follow the signs pointing to ultrasound. I walked through the front doors, surprised to see a Tim Hortons kiosk directly in front of me. For a millisecond, I consider getting an orange pekoe tea to calm my raging nerves, but

the idea immediately seemed stupid. I likely didn't have the time to consume the steamy hot beverage plus I would be supporting a chain I detested. So I swung towards the elevators and press the uppointing arrow.

The door opened and I entered. Once the door shut I realized it was going in the opposite direction than I wanted to go and I found myself at the arcade. People entered and I went back up to the main level and then to the second. The ultrasound department shared an admittance lobby with other x-rays, which inevitably was packed. I approached the front desk to grab a number and then sit down, but an elder couple managed to push me aside and snatch the next number from me. Defeated, I took the next number, 62, and sat down, placing my book bag on my lap. I was the only one there with a bookbag. Everyone looked so old around me. For fifteen minutes I listened to the fellow patients whine about their arthritis, their chest pains, and any other ailment they might have and I wondered whether I really needed to be there. Couldn't I go on living in ignorance?

The secretary eventually called my number and I approached the desk, my medical card in hand. Two dead plants rested on the large beige filing cabinets behind her. Someone should really toss them out, I thought while the nurse scanned my file. "Oh, you're here for an ultrasound, Miss Green." "Greeno," I replied, "and yes." The pushy old people looked as they limped past me and down the hall. "And a mammogram?"

"That's what they tell me." And more people looked. "Well, just go down that hall to the left and the receptionist will tell you where to go."

I walked down the hall and entered into another department, painted pink (how cute). Mammo-graphy, it was called. I approached an empty desk and scanned the room in search for the receptionist. No one, so I sat down in what looked to be another lobby and picked up Canadian Living. Ooh, what my luck, meatless yummys page 53. Once I finished glancing over the bean salad and omelet recipes, a woman popped her head into the waiting area and asked if she could help me. "Yes." The woman recognized my name from the chart she was holding and directed me to a very cold room that hosted a strange metal apparatus larger than me. She politely asked me if she could check my breast for the lump. I gave her permission, after first tossing around the idea of bluntly saying no. I lifted my shirt and she started to rub my left breast in circular motions. I directed her to the lump, but she continued to feel around. Once she stopped, she announced there was another lump in the ten o'clock vicinity. Fuck.

The nurse then pulled my shirt down while explaining what would follow. First I would have an ultrasound and if they have reason to believe something is wrong, they would then proceed with a mammogram. But first I had to strip down to the waist, remove all jewelry and scrub my armpits to remove any deodorant remnants. The nurse led me into the changing room and passed me a turquoise johnny shirt, sporting the hospital's name like a brand name. Classy. I shut the door and changed into the johnny shirt, after scrutinizing which arm went where and in which order. Johnny shirts nowadays eerily resemble straight jackets with moveable sleeves. Doctors want control.

When I went back to the waiting room where I was told to wait until the ultrasound room was vacant, I noticed another woman, in her mid-fifties, who had her shirt opposite from mine. I sit down and the shirt's so big it puffs out around me. I looked like a giant turquoise jabba the hut. I pick up another outdated Canadian Living to learn how I should decorate my room. My suggestion is clean it by they had better ideas.

The nurse peeked around the corner and announced that I could now get the test done. I stood up and followed her. Two women, donned in their sterile medical coats, passed me. One spoke my name. It was Lynn, a girl I went to school with in Windsor. The girl who got suspended from school for drinking on a band trip while I suavely sat in my hotel room, drunk as a fart and home free. Thankfully she didn't ask me why I was there. I knew her mouth's reputation and everyone in Hants County would hear about my lumpy breasts.

A doctor introduced herself and directed me to a medical bed. I then had to pull the johnny shirt open to expose my breasts. Goosebumps. I glanced over to the contraption, I assumed was the ultrasound machine, that the nurse was programming. It looked like Phil's



drum machine with a considerably larger LCD screen. The doctor rubbed a warm jelly over my left breast and on the end of a mouse-like thing which will detect the insides of my breast when rolled over the jellied areas. The nurse dimmed the light the process began. The whole time I stared at the screen looking at the crazy display of jagged lines and circular blobs that made up the inside of my boob. I didn't know what they were looking for exactly; it was like discovering the outline of a fetus.

Then the doctor quietly spoke: "There appears to be a second one at ten o'clock." I groaned inside. Two fucking tumors. The fun never stops. The mouse ran over my breast, back and forth as they discussed the existence of the second one. Eventually, they photographed, or captured, the images of each bulbous tumor and they exited the room, leaving me to clean my slimy breast and dress.

So what was the verdict? Do I need a mammogram? Please say no. The nurse looked at me sheepishly and explained the images from the ultrasound weren't clear enough to determine the nature of the tumor. I would have to have a mammogram, but first I had to wait.

Back in the waiting room with even more older women, all sporting the attractive QE11 johnny shirt. Breasts sagging underneath. Some remnants of the jelly spotted my shirt, authenticating my experience. I wanted to leave.

The mother had tried to alleviate any worries I may have had about undergoing a mammogram. I knew little about the procedure aside from my aunt's horrific stories. "It squeezed my boob so friggin tight, I wanted to die." Mom played down the agony by comparing it to getting a needle at the dentist's. One's pain is another person's pleasure. I thought, and waited without apprehension until the nurse took me into the frightfully cold room where the nurse first examined my breast. I stripped off the annoying johnny shirt once again and stepped up to the metal beast before me. The feared mammogram. Just one large x-ray machine, with a vice, a boob rest you could say.

The nurse then taped metal beads onto my nipples and the location of the two lumps for easier reference points on the x-ray film. It looked silly. I stepped up to the vice and plopped my left breast in between the loosely-spaced vice. My pulse increased when my sensitive breast touched the cold metal. My breast grew numb as the nurse pulled my arm and molded me to the device. The vice slowly

pressed in to my flesh and a sharp pain shot through my chest as my breast was flattened between the two plates. Hold your breath and a buzz echoed in the room. The plates lifted. The nurse pulled away an encased 8x10 film and placed it on the table near her. Then I had to repeat the procedure on my lumpless right breast so the technicians would have an example to compare my left one, the contaminated one, with. It was done and I went back to school with reddened breasts.

Friday, October 23

For over a week, the test results never came. The hospital would send it to Planned Parenthood and they would call me, which they never did. No news is good news right or is this another example of young girl gets last priority.

My mom called and pressured me to make the first move. I telephoned Planned Parenthood and spoke to a woman unfamiliar with my case. She put me on hold while she searched for any reports. Five minutes later, she returned with the report, she said, in her hand. Immediately, she confessed she couldn't make out the report's terminology, but it appeared as though there was nothing to get anxious about. The lumps weren't actually tumors, they were fatty tissues that required no attention.

Her answer didn't cut it. I needed to know more, so I arranged to meet the Planned Parenthood doctor in one week's time. Despite any absolute certainty, I was relieved. I wanted this episode in my life and over and it looked like it soon would.

Friday October 30

Yet another early morning trip across the street to Planned Parenthood. After a delayed wait, "my planned parenthood doctor" met with me in the same room where my lump was originally discovered a month and a half ago.

She confirmed all was well. No surgery required. No medication. Nothing. After many questions on my part, she looked at me and announced, "There is nothing you can do. You just have fatty breasts." Who would have thought that little tits greeno would have fatty breasts.

## Commodifying Counter-Culture

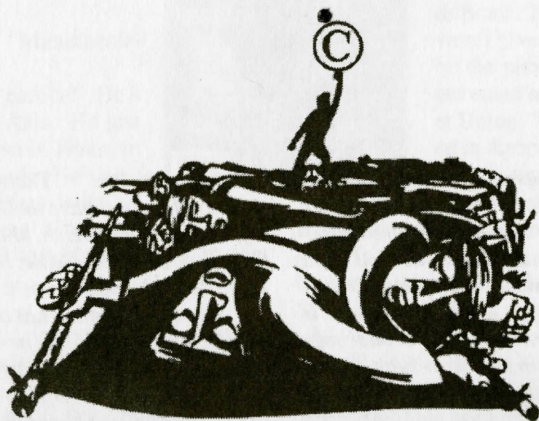
By Al Burian  
Commodification  
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The plus side to having a coherently articulated dominant ideology is, it provides the opportunity to formulate a counter-argument, which is, on various levels, what began to happen in the 50s and exploded into a multitude of "counter-cultural" value systems in the 1960s. This both-ered the humans who still clung to the established value system, and thus created a fair amount of societal friction. Institutionally, however things remained pretty unaffected, because the industrial infra-structure which had been built up in World War Two to build tanks under the ideological blanket of wartime ("beat the Axis!") and which had then shifted seamlessly into production of dishwashers and televisions under the blanket ideology of the new American utopia ("buy a house in

the suburbs! We won! You deserve it!), continued to expand its markets as new sub-cultural markets appeared. People were uptight in the

50s because they erroneously assumed that the American "way of life" somehow intimately intertwined economic prosperity with ideological cohesiveness, but the ideology, it turned out, was actually completely secondary.

Capitalism, after all, isn't a value system, it's an economic system, and one of it's main features, in fact is that it seems endlessly capable of adopting almost any cultural value system as a sub-set of it's larger framework. As long as product is generated, commodities moved, anything else goes. You can vehemently condemn the status quo, articulate the sentiment as brashly and confrontationally as you can possibly conceive of, but the modes of ar-





tication inevitably express themselves in the form of commodities—if I want to join your anti-establishment clique, what books do I need? What foods should I buy? What uniform designates me as a member? Where do I get my ID card laminated? Do you guys have an LP out yet?

A neat little trick: this commodification neutralizes any potentially social-subversive content from the dialogue, because the exact way in which dissent is framed and articulated supports the core principle of industry, which is to produce accouterments. If you have a movement based on rejecting the knick-knacks associated with a movement, that's a pretty motionless movement. It's like trying to construct a philosophy of life without using words. You'll probably end up grunting and gesturing a lot, probably pee and fight, maybe climb a tree or something. That's cool and all, but see, that's not a philosophy, that's just acting like a monkey.

So, we have this weird situation now where, on the surface, the "counter-cultural" idea has won this apparent victory, in that it's increasingly more acceptable to define yourself according to whatever niche you like, and the Montana survivalists make fun of the hippie communarians who look down on the suit-and-tie Wall Street people, who are mildly annoyed by the skateboarders, who are going to rumble later this afternoon with the pot heads, who are trying to avoid the cops, who are way more busy fucking with the hip-hop kids, who grudgingly accept that the lesbian couple down the street now because they watched that episode of "Ellen." Everyone, in fact, has their own culturally validating sit-com, or at least a glossy trade magazine, or better yet a web site, and the Normal Rockwell people are just one more sub-set of that, and we make fun of them at the mall buying their Norma Rockwell prints, since we're there to get an Andy Warhol poster (one of those big soup cans- industry as art! Get it?), and that's a lot cooler, but hey, don't worry, the print shop at the mall has both, so everyone's happy, essentially.

What actually happens though, when you each the conversational margins of what is discussible within the new elastic paradigm, is not that you lose your job or that some authority figure decrees your statement "wrong;" what happens now is that people treat you like you have a speech impediment. Your tongue is suddenly two or three times its normal size and you are convulsively trying to gurgle out something coherent, nervous stutter setting in as you note the condescending, confused looks you're receiving, the squinty little half-smiles which signify that the listeners really, really *want* to know what the

fuck you're talking about, they'd like to nod and go, "yeah, man, totally right on, dude," but they just can't, because they can't understand your garbled and incomprehensible syllabic spasms. By speaking in opposition to "the culture" you are clearly, by definition, being "counter-cultural," and people really *want* to be into that, they want to be "extreme," they want to "triple-size it" they want their life with "wild sauce" and all that, but since the values of the counter-cultural transgression and multi-consumer-culturalism are pretty much the dominant ones in our society, that act of rebellion makes no sense. It's

like the people who co-opted the Nike logo to use as a revolutionary symbol, printing T-shirts which said something like "class war just do it." But it's too late: Nike already stole the "just do it" concept from you in the first place, indelibly associating free will and spontaneity with overpriced footwear produced by malnourished children in sweatshops.

The counter-cultural ideal, articulated in opposition to the square culture of post-war America, whatever its particular manifestations, boiled down to an overall package of personal liberation, that anyone should be able to do, and by extension, "be" anything they wanted to. The conglomeration of beatniks,

black panthers, Maoists, Trotskyists, Anarchists, Feminists, free-lovers, junkies, etc. etc. all espoused, in their proliferation as a free-form ameba of general "subversive thought," the general counter-cultural ideal of "more options," with their own specific shock-value addendums to prove what radical thinkers they really were. "more options," it turns out, is perfectly in line with capitalism, obviously, and the counter-cultural argument, it turns out, boils down to "ABC and NBC are not enough. They do no express my totality. I need cable." The counter-culture won; it is now the culture. We now all have cable. Hey, the more channels, the more chances of catching some "subversive shit," right?

The question, then, clearly becomes how you react to this, if, in fact, you are uncool with the way things seem to be going at this point in human history, which is that self-determination of our lives has been replaced by self-determination of lifestyle, and meanwhile, increasingly complex technological-industrial complexes harvest resources in ever-increasingly inefficient ways in order to continue frenziedly pumping out lifestyle-accessorizing products which allow you, at best, to express your "individuality" only in the most general and herd-like ways, like being into "South Park" and thinking that people who like "the Simpsons" are *so* two seasons ago. How do you argue against the world-historical victory of "more options?"



## Interview with David Barsamian of Alternative Radio

by Scott Long  
Skyscraper Magazine  
PO Box 4432  
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*Alternative Radio is a public radio program, founded and hosted by David Barsamian of Boulder, Colorado. It is presented locally on 88.5 KGNU FM in Boulder, and on more than one hundred twenty-five other stations in the United States and Canada, as well as to over one hundred other countries, via short-wave. Completely free to the stations via satellite, the only funding for Alternative Radio is provided by listeners purchasing tapes or transcripts of broadcasts. There are no corporate grants or underwriting. This results in programs that present "perspectives and analyses on the environment, media, U.S. foreign policy, racism, economic and trade issues, and*

*indigenous rights." There are only two staff. Some of the many speakers featured have included, but are not limited to: Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Michael Parenti, Angela Davis, Edward Said, Cornel West, Bobby Seale, Helen Caldicott, Winona LaDuke, Kwame Ture, Ralph Nader, Urvashi Vaid, Holly Sklar, and Howard Zinn.*

*David Barsamian has also published several books of interviews with Noam Chomsky, the newest of which is titled The Common Good, and will soon also be releasing a book with Howard Zinn called The Future of History. This interview was conducted by Scott Long in February, 1999, at David Barsamian's home in Boulder.*



S: I'm talking with David Barsamian, the producer of Alternative Radio, and one of the staff at KGNU.

D: No, I'm [actually] a volunteer. I was on the staff as the news and public affairs director from 1987 through 1991. I've been affiliated with KGNU as a volunteer since it started back in 1978, which is when I moved to Boulder. It's one of the best community radio stations of its kind. It's a model success story, and communities around the country would do well to emulate it.

S: Yeah, I recently got turned on to KGNU by coming to Boulder and just flipping through the radio dial. It's amazing to me. I mean the fact that it's basically just a collective of people that are so interested in getting the news and alternative programming out.

D: And diverse music, you know, indies ordinarily, not Casey Kasem's top 40. It's not chart stuff. It's not driven by the corporate culture, as such. But most of the electronic media, like the print media, is a vast desert. It's a wasteland. It's chewing gum for the mind. There's no "there" there. It's a poor substitute for what citizens of a democracy need, which is a wide spectrum of opinion. And I'm not saying what I put out is the grail. I don't say that at all. I don't think it is, but it certainly deserves to be heard. A real democracy, a functioning democracy, allows a thousand opinions to bloom. You know, a million perspectives to flower. You have a range from A to Z. But in the current configuration, which is totally driven by corporate interests and bottom line considerations and ideology, the range of opinion is from A to B, maybe. On a good day, you'll get a B.

S: Yeah, and how often is it that B is really just an illusion?

D: Well, yeah. We'll get someone like Ross Perot, or Pat Buchanan, who seem to be saying something different. But once you strip away the veneer that envelops all the media, electronic and print, you come straight up against propaganda. That's the only term to describe it. The genius of the American propaganda system is that it's kind of seamless. There's no one with a truncheon beating you over the head. "Scott, listen to this, you're going to read this book. I'm gonna tie you. I'm gonna put a rope around you. You're gonna read this book. You're gonna repeat it back to me when you finish." You know, those kinds of things. It's much more subtle than that. As is shown in the film "Manufacturing Consent" [a documentary/biography about Noam Chomsky and his theories on media. You must see this film, it's a form of intellectual self-defense] and the book by that same title. The system here is like what George Orwell said. You have a dog in the circus that does a somersault when he's whipped. Now, the really well trained dog does the somersault without even the presence of the master and the whip. Because he knows, he's internalized the propaganda that this is his function. So that's largely what is the function... you have to ask yourself a couple of questions: "What are the communication needs of a democratic society?", and once you address that, "Is the current system serving those needs?" So, I think the communication needs of a democratic society should present a huge range of diverse opinion from A to Z, as I said earlier. Is this system providing that? Decidedly no, and that really can't be contested. I don't think this is a left-right issue. I think this is an issue about democracy and freedom of expression. It's a First Amendment issue. No one is going to say that radical voices are available easily to most Americans. It's very difficult. You yourself said that you stumbled upon a film about Noam Chomsky.

S: We're talking about the documentary "Manufacturing Consent."

D: Why hadn't you heard of Chomsky earlier? He's very well known in Canada, Europe, and Asia. He just came back from New Zealand. He's known in Japan, in Germany, Spain, where he drew huge crowds. He's recognized as the foremost critic, the dissident voice of America. Or as Bono calls him, from U2, the "rebel without a pause."

S: You pointed out that you got involved with KGNU in 1978, but Alternative Radio didn't come out until...

D: 1986.

S: How did that develop? What caused you to go "I want to produce a segment that will get this information, these views from A to Z, out there?"

D: Well, it's a classic case of thinking locally and then acting nationally, and globally, and internationally. I honed my chops at KGNU. I

learned my skills: announcing, use of voice, mic technique, editing. All of these things I learned over a period of years. I made mistakes; I wasn't trained. Part of the genius of KGNU is that it's pretty much on the job training. You learn as you go along. I noticed, starting in the early Eighties, lots of people were asking me, just locally in Boulder, for copies of my program. I was very flattered "Great, you like the show? I'll make you a copy." I'd give it to them for no charge. And then it occurred to me as this expanded, as the demand kept increasing, I thought maybe there's a national audience for the kind of radical stuff I was doing in Boulder. So in 1986, I put up my first programs on satellite. That's how I distribute. I produce the programs in Boulder, and I distribute them nationally via satellite. So I'm able to reach hundreds of stations at once. And since then, well, that was eighteen years ago.

S: Is it difficult to find stations that are willing to carry the program?

D: There are tremendous ideological obstacles to getting Alternative Radio broadcast. That's because most of the gatekeepers that control public broadcasting in the United States are extremely timid. They're milquetoasts. They're afraid of their own shadow. They're not risk-takers. They go against the founding principles of public broadcasting which stated very clearly that the purpose of public radio and public TV in the United States should be to present a wide variety of perspectives. And particularly to give voice to those whose voices may not otherwise be heard. That's almost a direct quote. Now, what they've done over the last, say, twenty-five years of public radio and TV in the United States, is they've homogenized it. They've become very streamlined, very successful, very corporate friendly. They don't take risks, and the station managers and program directors reflect this timidity. They're not interested, generally speaking, in stretching the intellectual, or political, or cultural boundaries of their listeners. They want to give them Bob Edwards in the morning, and Robert Siegel and Noah Adams in the afternoon. Morning Edition, All Things Considered, and then some classical music in between the two. This is very unfortunate. So the biggest obstacle is ideological, because it can't be financial, because one of the things I did very consciously from the beginning was to not charge for the programs. I did not want to give these stations, and I already knew what their political stance was, the opportunity to say something like "Well, you know we admire your work, but our budget doesn't allow, things are a little tight . . .". So I just pulled that rug out from under them. Look, the program is for free, can you take it or not take it.

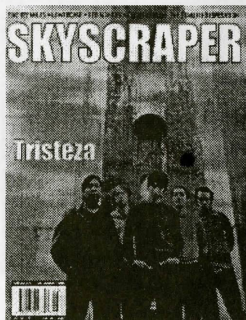
S: Exactly. So by removing the economic argument against dissemination of the information, it comes strictly down to philosophical and ideological issues.

D: Primarily, yeah. In some cases, it's formatting. You know where they can say, "We're an all music station. We don't do political programming." But it's mostly ideological. You know, for example, in the past year Alternative Radio is being broadcast in all major cities in Australia. It's also being broadcast, and this is since the 1980s, in all major cities in Canada. In this case, I have to physically make the dubs here and send them to the stations in those countries. Do they know something we don't know? Are their station directors and program directors more sensitive to alternative views and perspectives? I don't know. But in the United States it's very difficult. Take KUT in your hometown of Austin. They won't give me the time of day. I can't even get anyone on the phone. I can't get letters responded to, I can't get email and faxes responded to, it's like the old Soviet Union. They're not interested. They're not interested in diverse opinion which might ruffle the feathers of the university regents [of the University of Texas at Austin] or the political hacks down the street at the

state house, or their corporate sponsors, like Archer-Daniels-Midland [ADM], Exxon, Mobil, and any other corporations. So there you have a particular example.

S: Yeah, that's a very concrete example. What we're talking about is a University of Texas owned radio station in Austin, Texas. It's specifically funded by the state.

D: Right, and also listeners become members, and they have corporate underwriting. S: And they don't want to lose that corporate underwriting. That's more important to them, perhaps, than...





D: Well, it's hard to get into the mind of these managers, because you can't talk to them.

S: No response.

D: Yeah, as I said it's like the Soviet Union of old. You're a non-person. It's not even like "We're not interested. Go take a hike. Get lost." It's like no response.

S: That's disturbing.

D: That's one way you deal with dissidents. Ignore them.

S: I wonder if there's a parallel situation with the new radio station at the University of Colorado at Boulder, 1190 AM.

D: They're doing all music.

S: Yeah. I wonder if there was an attempt to put some information on there, how that would go. That would be an interesting experiment.

D: Well, the programming should be determined by community interests and needs. S: And see, I would argue that the students of CU have a need to hear dissenting views that I think, in the ideal state, part of the purpose of higher education is to look at different views of situations. But this is the ideal state, as opposed to what's practiced.

D: Well, the educational system is part of the problem. It can not be isolated, just like the media can not be isolated. These are parts of the whole. The function of the educational system is to produce obedient students, people who will follow orders, who will become executives in companies and managers and professionals, and become cogs in the machine of corporate capitalism. Here and there, you might get a rebel, a dissident, someone who asks questions, and they get thrown out. They get Ds. They have "disciplinary problems," they have "adjustment problems." They can't make it through the system, and the system weeds them out. So they may wind up driving cabs, or busses, or working at Dot's Diner.

S: Right, which is why I found interesting what Chomsky said about himself during his public school years, that he basically knew that it was a bunch of bull, but to get where he wanted to go, he had to play the system for a while. But even now, I find it... I assume he's tired.

D: Yes.

S: But, still, by making a conscious choice to voice his dissent, he marched down a certain path that there's no turning back from.

D: Yeah. He's in a unique situation because he's at a private technical university. It's a scientific university. In science, you don't encounter this ideological bullshit you get at the University of Colorado or any public institution. Or I would say, non-scientific institution. Because, there in the sciences, you just can't have theories, you've got to come up with evidence. It's not like, you know, "all guys with red hair who wear glasses have IQ's of 150." Okay, that's your theory. Now, what's the evidence for that? You've got to produce something.

S: Dissent is part of the process. You're going to be subject to critique.

D: But in the ideological institutions, particularly the humanities, the so-called political "science" departments, which is a total... If ever there was a misnomer, that is it. What is scientific about political science? They should call it the division of propaganda and ideology. Or the journalism department should be called the division of propaganda, and political science should be called the department of ideology. That would be closer to the truth. Naming things by their proper names is very powerful, and strips them of their gloss and veneer. This patina of respectability they have. So, the ideological components at these schools are dominant. It's not true at the scientific one. There, if you say something, you've got to back it up. You have to cross check it, and produce the evidence. Here you can say anything, you can say "All Muslims are fanatics." "All Palestinians are terrorists." You don't have to back that up with anything. "The Soviet Union was the evil empire." "The Sandinistas in Nicaragua were criminals." Anything that is ideologically accepted does not require evidence, because it fits into the popular culture. Like breathing. No one has to tell you to inhale, and then to exhale. You do it. It's a natural thing.

S: And the goal is to get people to consume this information in such an automated way, without questioning it.

D: Obedience is important, and also the particular characteristic about

United States society at the end of the twentieth century is the level of its de-politicization. It's a highly de-politicized society, where people don't care about public issues. It's "me too." It's "looking out for number one." "Shop until you drop." Now this did not come about as a result of some genetic encoding in Americans. This is a direct result of propaganda. This is an outcome that has been directed. Turn people into consumers. Isolate them. "Go to your mall. Stay in front of your TV. Stay in front of your computer. Don't interact. Don't get involved with other people." And particularly, "don't care about your society, the common good, only look out for yourself, you're number one." This ideology, I submit, takes the capitalist ethic to a very barbaric extreme. And it does isolate people. You see, also, in terms of how the society is de-politicized, in the record low voter turnouts.

S: The ones who do vote are the ones who are inherently benefiting from the status quo, for the most part. The ones who would benefit the most from turning out and voting are the ones who either don't or, even if they do, what are their options?

D: Yeah. Well, the Nazis perfected something called the big lie technique. If you repeat a monstrous lie often enough, it starts seeping into the aquifer. People drink the water, and they regurgitate and replicate the lie. In this case, in the U.S. case, the big lie is that there are two political parties, and that they are distinct. They are very different from each other. I think that's a big lie, and I think that it can be demonstrated to be lie, the Clinton impeachment hearings not withstanding. That was kind of a squabble within the ruling class, because an extreme right wing faction of one of the two business parties hijacked that whole process, and ran it. Great people from Texas, particularly, played a lead role - Dick Armey, Tom Delay (who's really on "de-lay"), Livingston, Gingrich, mostly right wing southerners. Extreme right wing fanatics. Bob Barr from Georgia. These guys are way over the top and beyond. Livingston from Louisiana, Phil Gramm, on and on. Bailey-Hutchison. So what you find now is the political parties are, in the words of that great political scientist Lewis Carroll, Twiddly-Dum and Twiddly-Dee. Most people understand that, and don't vote. They're not given a reason to vote. Both the Democrats and Republicans, largely speaking, with a few exceptions here and there, represent the interests of the corporate ruling class. Big business. Who are they? It's not a secret. Get *Fortune* magazine, get *Forbes*. Read the *Wall Street Journal*, and find out who the owners and managers of the country are. This is not quantum physics. You don't have to learn the ablativ case in Sanskrit to figure this out. It's pretty straightforward. But all of this information is hidden from the American public.

S: Yeah, I was going to say that one of the things that I found amazing about Chomsky's analysis, once I became familiar with it, is how simple, but elegant, his analysis is. This is common sense. He doesn't hide behind a lot of archaic, esoteric terms. He says these are the facts, and in a real democracy this is not what would be occurring. So

I guess one of the things that I was curious about is how did you encounter Chomsky? How did your relationship with Chomsky develop?

D: It started in a very innocuous way. I wrote him a letter, and to my amazement, he responded. I was stunned. I didn't think someone of that stature, who is incredibly busy, would reply. Because that had been my experience with others. So we started exchanging letters, and that was in the late 1970s. We did our first interview in 1984. I met him in Boulder in 1986, for the first time. Since then, we've produced a series of radio programs, a series of magazine articles based on the interviews, and a very successful, quite astonishingly successful, set of books. Interview books that have

reached large audiences all over the world - they have been translated into many, many languages. I mean, hardly a month goes by that I don't get some foreign version of a Chomsky book that I did. For example, there are Spanish, French, Japanese, Serbian, and Italian versions. There's a wide readership around the world. He is recognized as the premier critic of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, outside the United States. Inside the United States, he's barely visible, for very good reason. In fact, his marginalization is rational, if you want to adopt the lenses of the owners and managers of the media and the country. Why would you prop up or give a lot of attention to





someone who is stripping your armor away? That's not in your class interest, in your base class interest. So within that framework, it's perfectly rational. I'm not saying it's right, but in that framework, they are protecting their interests.

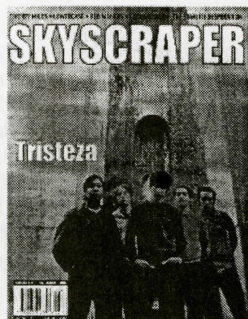
S: If you look in the terms of a class war, and you adopt the positions of the elite, of course they're going to take those actions. I think encountering Chomsky, for me, was like an eye opener to that mode of viewing the world. I was curious, were you pursuing these kinds of analyses on your own, before you encountered Chomsky?

D: Yeah. My politics have always been pretty radical. I've always been a skeptic. It probably has to do with my heritage, which is Armenian. My parents were survivors of the first genocide of the twentieth century. In 1915, the Turks conducted an extensive campaign of genocide against the Armenians. We lost everything. We lost our lands, we were deported, we never got any compensation, nothing - and no one knew about it. It's largely fallen down the memory hole.

S: I have to confess I never even heard of it.

D: That's shocking, but not shocking. It was, in fact, the precursor to the holocaust. Hitler knew about it. Germany was allied with Turkey in World War I. There was no punishment of the Turkish genocidists. Hitler commented, just before he launched World War II, "Who today speaks of the extermination of the Armenians?" Because he knew nothing happened to the Turks, he thought, "I can get away with this." So when I was growing up in New York in the 1950s, I was invisible. I grew up biculturally. We spoke Armenian at home. Armenians are Orthodox Christians, so that also set me apart from the other kids. We had our own food, our own holidays and traditions. When I said "Armenian," people were like "what? Is that Bohemian [as I was called] or Albanian." No one had a clue what that was. So, I found myself always trying to explain and educate people. So I think, in terms of my politics, what happened to the Armenians in 1915 was a perfect example of people being caught in the hurricane, in a cyclone, not of their doing, not of their making, and never knowing why it happened. They didn't have the means at their disposal. They lacked information. They didn't know the plans that the Turks were going to exterminate them, and to create a southeastern Turkey, to conduct an enormous campaign, which is called today "ethnic cleansing." I was determined to make sure that it didn't happen to me, even in the New World, in the United States. So I'd say my politics are very much influenced by that. ¶ I went to public schools in New York. I went to college for a year. That's the one blemish on my resume. I wish I hadn't gone at all. I hated it. I hated school in general. Primarily because I felt imprisoned. I didn't feel that I was being trained. I didn't feel my mind was being trained. I felt like I wasn't getting enough nutrition. Maybe some of the other students were, but I didn't feel that the level of nutrition was sufficient for my needs. I dropped out of school. I was involved in some of the first anti-war demonstrations in 1964, in San Francisco. And also the civil rights movement in 1963-1964 in San Francisco. And then I went to Asia, and I was there for five years. That was an eye opening experience, because to view the United States from the third world, one gets an entirely different, and radical, perspective. Not from Europe, but from India, which was just coming out of colonialism. It was just coming out from the yoke, having severed the yoke of imperialism just eighteen or nineteen years before I got there. People had a vivid memory of what it meant to be colonized. ¶ After five years in India, I came back to the States. I studied music, the sitar. I learned the raga system, which is the ancient Indian musical system, and came back to the States. I got involved in a variety of things, teaching English, working for the Indian government, and then I moved to Boulder in 1978. Then things sort of took off. My current career was launched.

S: Let's talk about the new book with Chomsky, *The Common Good*. D: It's number seven on the *Village Voice* best seller list, number nine on the *Boston Globe* list, which, if you think about it for a minute, is absolutely amazing. There's no advertising. There's no way to find out about this book. There have been no reviews. There's no publicity about it. So I think, again, that's tribute to Chomsky's drawing power, and also word of mouth. People just say, "hey, did you hear about this book? The new Chomsky book," etc.



S: I found that in my own personal experience there are certain gateways to alternative sources of information, and if you didn't know about them, it was like it didn't exist. So whether that was through the punk rock scene, or through the left movement, it didn't really matter where you were coming from. When you encountered one of these specific organizations, like AK Press, or Jello Biafra's Alternative Tentacles label, you don't even know about these things unless somebody tells you. So the fact that it's selling so well is amazing to me.

D: Yeah, and now there are CD's, which reach young people, a youth audience, that know about Tower Records and HMV and small independent stores. They don't listen to public radio. That's not part of their media menu. Public radio is dull. I don't blame them. It's largely dull, where it's Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, and Bob Edwards. You can't get much duller than old Bob in the morning. That's like listening to an undertaker read the news and do interviews. So the idea with the compact discs is to get to another audience that ordinarily do not use the radio. It's working. It's getting out there. And then you've got groups like Pearl Jam, U2, R.E.M., Kronos Quartet, they're all into Chomsky. He's like an icon. Sonny Rollins, who's coming to town in March, he listens to Chomsky all the time. This great tenor sax genius is into it. A lot of people are. But they know it's hard to get any kind of electronic umbilical cord going in the country to link up all these isolated folds, because the corporations control everything - the big media. Sure Jello Biafra can exist, AK Press can exist, Alternative Radio can exist, *Z Magazine* can be published, etc. But it doesn't have that kind of national coverage.

S: Does it seem to you that there are more or less outlets for these alternative views than in the past? What I'm thinking of is the current controversy with Pacifica Radio. I saw a bulletin from Znet that Pacifica Radio may or may not be having this power struggle going on as to what kind of information they're going to be putting out. Do you have any insight into that situation?

D: I think it's so complex that it would take me hours to explain, and I'm not going to do it. It would just confuse your readers. Pacifica is beset by internal problems that would require months of explanation. I don't want to go into it.

S: Fine. Avoiding that topic specifically, do you see a growth of self-published zines?

D: I've seen growth. It's clear that there's been an explosion of zines, newsletters, and web sites. People are fed up with the corporate controlled media. It's like what Scoop Nisker used to say, "If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own." People don't like the media. They don't like the news, and they're going out and doing their own. So there are a lot of so-called "pirate" radio broadcasters, micro radio, and zine publishers and the like. These are all democratic expressions. They're also expressions of frustration with the existing system, which as I said earlier gives you a range of opinion from A to B, on a good day. On a bad day, it's A to A. So that's very healthy, and that shows that the democratic instincts and impulses are alive in the populace, even though the educational system and the propaganda system have worked very hard to beat it out of them. You know, "Be a good consumer. Shop until you drop. Go to the mall. Get a car or an SUV. Think about objects. Think about your material life. You are what you own. There is no common good." This ideology is just reversing the classic union slogan of the early 1900s, which was "An injury to one is an injury to all." So that if my brother, if my comrade, my co-worker is suffering, I feel that. It has an impact on me. Now that has been transformed into "An injury to one

is an injury to one. You're on your own." It's this kind of savage indifferent capitalism.

S: It seems to be a divide and conquer strategy of the elite: If we can keep everyone distracted with just meeting their own needs, and never communicating about the system as a whole.

D: Right, and then give them a steady diet of diversion, in which sports plays a big part, as well as escapist entertainment and scandals. Monica Lewinsky. O.J. Simpson. Jon Benet Ramsey. Lorena Bobbitt. Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan. Michael Jordan. Michael Jackson and on and on and on... It's an awesome propaganda system. Jo-



seph Goebbels was considered an evil genius of propaganda. If he were alive today, he would be awestruck at the American system, which in a sense, seems to be not there.

S: It's invisible.

D: They were hands on. The Nazis were hands on. "You don't do this... to the death camp." There was no subtlety there. "Here's the truncheon. Do what I say, or you get your head split.

S: It's sort of a shift from overt censorship to covert censorship. We're not going to just beat you over the head, send you to the death camp, and ban and burn everything; we're going to just not present it at all, and get you to not even think about it at all.

D: And then there's the corporate media and ideological system, which hide behind the shibboleth of "We're just giving the people what they want. The people decide. No one forces them to watch the O.J. Simpson trial or Monica Lewinsky's oral sex scandal or Jon Benet Ramsey or what's happening with John Elway, will he retire or won't he retire? Can the Broncos go for a three-peat? We're just giving the public what they want. Well, that's a crock of crap. Because there's no evidence. The supply is creating the demand. The demand is not creating the supply. Here is the supply, and let's generate a demand. It's like how now people are totally into 3.2 [% alcohol] beer. They don't know, because they're not offered beer that has a much higher alcohol content. So they think "Oh, beer, 3.2, that's what you get. Coors light, that's beer." And everyone drinks it, not knowing that there are many other types of beer. So the supply creates demand.

S: One of the things that I would like to kind of wrap up with would be what can people do, perhaps approaching it within Boulder and C.U.? What are things you think people can do? And how about things on a larger scale?

D: Well in Boulder we're particularly blessed by having progressive organizations and institutions here. That's not the case in large parts of the United States. For example, there's a wonderful progressive bookstore here, Left Hand Books. You want to know what you can do? It's closed half the time because it's volunteer run and they can't find volunteers to staff the store. When I came to Boulder in 1978,

the store had just opened. I spent a lot of time in there just volunteering. It was a very enriching experience for me. I got to read a lot of magazines and books. On the hill is the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, a remarkable institution. People can get involved, volunteer there, do interns. They can do the same at KGNU, one of the best community radio stations in the country. They can volunteer at Alternative Radio. I'm looking for people to help me all the time with transcribing, recording, office work, and a whole milieu of tasks. So there are four examples right there of what people can do. There's

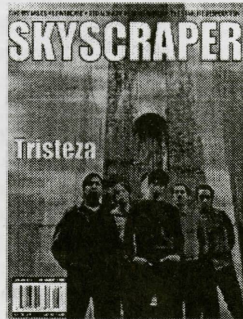
an organization run here by Jeff Milchin, called Epicenter. He's trying to fight and roll back corporate domination through organization of minds and organization in Boulder. They can get involved with that group. In Denver, there's a tremendous organization called Rocky Mountain Media Watch that very much needs volunteers and interns to get involved with them. There are lots of things to do. To say that there's nothing out there is, I think, avoiding the issue.

S: Yeah that's very important to me. What I'm trying to do with my contribution to this zine is to point out to people that it's not hopeless.

D: Well if you think it's hopeless, then you guarantee the outcome.

S: Exactly. And I see a lot of people buying into the "slacker/Generation X" stereotype that there's nothing we can do anyway, so why try? And I would like to help people see that there are plenty of things that you can do.

D: Well, I think Alternative Radio is a model. I started with no talent to speak of, no training, no resources, no capital - and I was able to build this. The program is now broadcast over one hundred stations in the United States or in Canada. Australia, South Africa, it's on short-wave to one hundred countries. This is not some achievement that others can not replicate, maybe in different ways. It can be done. There are openings here. I'm not saying the political culture is monolithic. There are openings, and you need to find those openings and drive wedges through them to make them wider, so that there will be one hundred "Alternative Radios." So one day Alternative Radio will not be alternative. It will be radio. There'll be nothing alternative about it. It will be what people hear.



## Slaves to Fashion or "The Attack of the Walking Billboards"

by Andy Rant

Question Everything, Challenge Everything

Ed. Larry Nocella

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Imagine you're in a B movie from the 1950s. All around you are thousands of billboards. They are not sitting still, politely brainwashing passers-by from above as they are supposed to, but milling about, following you into elevators and subways. No escape. You are in the land of the walking billboards.

No need to imagine.

Everywhere I go I am amazed and disgusted by the vast number of people who are actually willing to pay for the privilege of serving as living billboards for gigantic multinational corporations. Day after day, the billboards walk past me by the hundreds, by the thousands and to every one I am filled with the urge to scream, HOW MUCH IS NIKE PAYING YOU TO ADVERTISE FOR THEM? (Insert 'Adidas' or 'Tommy Hilfiger' if you prefer. Voluntary advertising for them is equally stupid.)

Of course I know the answer. The walking billboard is paid nothing. In fact, the billboards actually pay Nike to wear its symbol and name emblazoned across their chests (or on hats, shoes, pants, whatever.) If I were writing a textbook on stupidity (and I may, someday, for I have no shortage of references) this would certainly warrant a chapter

unto itself.

I do not mean to offend and insult. I know that fostering ideological revolution is not achieved by attacking those whose minds we wish to change. Bearing all this in mind, please don't react negatively when I say that if you are wearing the name of a large and fabulously wealthy corporation across your chest, and you have paid them for this arrangement rather than the other way around, well you, my friend, are a Class-A sucker.

Don't people have anything more to say? I mean, here it is, an opportunity to tell the world anything at all. That space across our backs or on our heads is like our own private little piece of the mass media. We can use it to deliver any message we want to. It boggles my mind that people are so empty and vapid and devoid of any personality of their own that they have nothing more to say to the world than, "I support this giant multinational corporation, and I'm willing to pay to advertise for them!"

Me, I often use this space to expound upon things which I actually care about, rather than to deliver unpaid advertisements for giant corporations. Apparently this labels me as some sort of obsessive freak.



Billboards cost advertisers big bucks, yet throughout the world millions of suckers (sorry, truth hurts) actually pay Nike to walk around with that ridiculous swoosh across their backs. How is it that all these people have missed the essential point of advertising? That the advertisers pay to have others market their product for them, not the other way around? Is this such a complex concept? If these people opened a restaurant, would they pay people to eat there?

Just in case you don't know (and you'd have to be living under a rock not to, but I'm making no assumptions... mass media is so unpleasant that I can see the attraction of such a home) Nike is infamous for its exploitation of Third World workers, paying pennies per day for labor that would earn dozens of times as much in the US. On November 8, 1997, some of its more severe atrocities made the front page of the New York Times. The report detailed an array of abuse, including exposure to carcinogenic chemicals at dozens to hundreds of times levels allowable by either U.S. or Vietnamese standards. How does Nike feel about working people to death in order to turn over a buck?

Just do it!!!

According to an AP report of Friday, March 28, 1997, teenage girls in Vietnamese Nike plants earn a whopping 20 cents an hour to make shoes which sell in the U.S. for \$180.00. A little quick math reveals that they'd have to work 900 hours to buy the shoes they make. A standard 40 hour work week would thus require 22 weeks to earn this kind of dough. So these people could buy two pairs of sneakers in a year, if they dispensed with the unnecessary luxuries of food, housing, and any other clothing.

So, Nike does not seem to be willing to pay workers any kind of fair wages, but does manage to find enough money in the cushions of its giant couch to support an enormous multi-million dollar advertising budget. Despite the masses of confused fools who have gotten the basic business of advertising backwards and are paying Nike to do it for them, Nike actually spends millions of dollars to a select few who are not quite so stupid, and who also know how to throw a ball. Nike defends this lopsided situation, paying millions for advertising while operating production plants where desperate individuals slave over these products for next to nothing, by saying that it is in the interest of maintaining competitiveness. In other words it is committed to excluding from the marketplace any and all clothing manufacturers with a shred of decency who place any type of principles whatsoever above profit.

To witness this callous attitude recounted firsthand, see Filmmaker Michael Moore's "The Big One." You can watch Nike executive Phil Knight shamelessly attempting to defend all this horrible stuff. Bring a barf bag. You might need it.

According to an AP report posted at 7:29 a.m. November 14, 1997, the Green Bay Packers (apparently some sort of professional sporting team, from what I've heard) superstar Reggie White blasted Nike for its labor practices, specifically regarding its heavy promotion to poor African-American youths while providing virtually no jobs here in the U.S. Mr. White is actually under contract with Nike, and says that despite the labor practices, of which he does not approve, they "still make the best shoes."

Maybe Nike makes good shoes. Maybe they are better than other shoes. I am, admittedly, ignorant about shoe-quality issues. On the other hand, I cannot for a second comprehend why people wear those stupid jackets, shirts, and caps. There is no way in hell that I am going to believe that Nike caps are any better than any other cap on the face of the Earth, or that Nike T-shirts are somehow higher in quality. Why then do people wear them? Why do people smear that stupid logo all over their bodies? I'll tell you why: Somehow, some way, these people got the notion that it is "cool" to be a walking billboard.

Can you say "sucker?"

Again, I'm sorry to be so harsh. If I may quote Neil Young for a moment (and who will stop me? By the time you read this, I've already quoted him, turned my computer off and gone to bed!): "There is nothing like a friend who'll tell you when you're pissing in the wind." So

please, remember, I've been a Class A sucker myself in the past, and in the final analysis, I've been grateful to those who have pointed it out.

Let us broach a subject which is generally ignored (except by esteemed social critic, Mr. White, above, who displayed integrity uncharacteristic of modern superstar athletes in condemning Nike) but is appallingly obvious to any marginally observant individual: The inner-city African-American community in the US is inundated with corporate advertising aimed at subverting and twisting value systems to the advantage of corporate America. Anyone who has lived or worked in the American inner-city can attest to this.

Inner-city African-Americans are especially subjected to bombardments from advertisers that say in essence, "Your value as a human being is entirely determined by the products you buy and especially the clothes you wear. If you aren't wearing corporate logos all over your body, you are worthless."

This is exactly the message that Michael Jordan and other African superstar athletes are telling impoverished black kids throughout America. A stroll through any destitute inner-city neighborhood will reveal that this message is overwhelmingly heard and obeyed.

It's no secret that an examination of the distribution of wealth in the US will reveal that African descended people are disproportionately poor and underprivileged. (Hmmm... race and class struggle... probably enough there to merit at least one essay of its own...) As a result, they are targeted even more heavily by corporate advertising equating their value and self-worth with the clothes they buy. People who are oppressed are even more sensitive to aggressive advertising lying to them about what constitutes "success."

The irony is that shareholders in Nike (and virtually every other huge mega-corporation) are mostly white and wealthy. Whitey is laughing all the way to the bank. That ridiculous check mark on the backs of African-Americans may as well be a tally answering the question: Suckered by whitey? Check!

I should mention that I do not support the blanket description and characterization of people based upon the color of their skin, and specifically am not trying to convey the notion that all white people are bad. When I say 'whitey' I refer to those predominantly white individuals who have perpetuated the on-going exploitation of African-descended people from the days of slavery up through today.

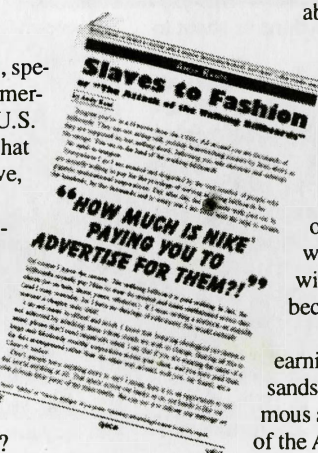
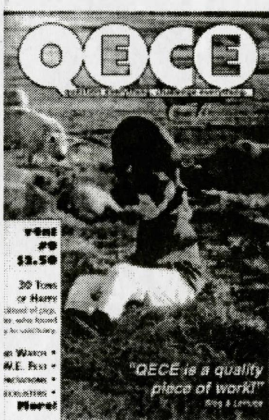
PLEASE NOTE: Walking billboards come in all shapes, sizes and colors, and unfortunately, there is no shortage of any variety. However, the particularly insidious nature of the race-specific advertising strategies of NIKE and other corporations warrants special attention.

There is a great documentary called "Crumb." Just so you know, 95% of all documentaries are better than about 99% of all Hollywood block-busters, but that isn't the current point. Anyway, there is one scene where Crumb laments the omnipresence of corporate America. "Everyone's a fucking billboard," he says. The camera pans around to show the walking billboards, and sure enough corporate logos abound. It's pathetic.

What do you call someone who works for someone else without getting paid? A slave, right? Well walking around with corporate logos on one's body without getting paid is voluntary slavery. It's worse, because the slaves pay the slave-master.

And the money paid is going to a company that is earning incredible profits by essentially enslaving thousands of people, exploiting their desperation to its own enormous advantage and relying upon the ignorance and apathy of the American consumer to turn a blind eye.

Another irony, or so it seems to me: African people were carted over to North America to serve as slaves and the largest industry for which they were enslaved was the harvesting of cotton from which clothing was made. It has been almost 150 years since the Emancipation Proclamation, and yet it seems that now we have more slaves to fashion than we ever had before.





# An Education in Relative Sacrifices

Claire Cocco,  
OFF-line,  
ed. Clair Cocco and Vincent Romano  
35 Barker Ave. #4G  
White Plains, NY 10601.

Why did he sit on the tracks while a train rolled over him, taking his two legs with it? "To express truth in the most honest way I know. I'm not ever sure what it accomplishes." The train was carrying arms to the contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s. The speaker was Vietnam vet Brian Willson. He expressed this profundity during a lecture in September. I was listening to it on cassette during an eighteen hour van ride to Fort Benning, Georgia. I was considering putting myself at risk by illegally entering the gates of the School of the Americas.

Brian Willson has taken many actions to witness against war and oppression in his life since Vietnam, where he awakened to the immorality of war. As he stated in the above quote, he's never quite sure what will come of his actions, but he knows he has to reveal the truth where he sees it. As I questioned myself on the long ride to Georgia ("What is my getting arrested going to accomplish, anyway? Just my getting in trouble, right? Can't we just pass a law to close the school?"), I thought deeply of Brian's message and his courage.

I suppose a simple metaphor for the idea behind civil disobedience could be the following scenario: you see a child in danger of being run over by a careless driver, and you jaywalk across the street to help save the child, even when others on the street do not see or seem to care. You've broken the law by jaywalking and put yourself at considerable risk of bodily harm, but you do it because it is clearly the right thing to do. Certain laws — like jaywalking — become irrelevant in cases where harm is done or about to be done.

The School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia trains Latin American soldiers. Many of the soldiers and high-ranking officers of Latin American armies who have been main motivators behind repressive dictatorships (Manuel Noriega, for example) are SOA graduates. There are many notorious examples that I could cite; I'll name the most famous. In 1986 four U.S. Maryknoll nuns were raped and killed by a death squad in El Salvador. Three of the five officers responsible were SOA graduates. In 1990 a U.S. Congressional Task Force discovered that officers responsible for the deaths of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador were trained by the SOA. This prompted a Maryknoll priest here in the U.S. — Fr. Roy Bourgeois — and others to stand vigil outside the gates of the SOA and commit civil disobedience eight years ago. In 1996, declassified U.S. Army manuals revealed that the SOA taught torture as a tactic in a training manual.

Why is the U.S. interested in training Latin American militaries in such blatantly undemocratic and repressive methods? Supporters of the SOA claim that the school teaches democracy to Latin American soldiers and is blocking communism. First of all, this claim is racist, assuming that the people south of our national border are so

inferior that they can't figure out human rights, participatory democracy, free speech, etc. for themselves and that they need their military to enforce democracy, a military that needs to be instructed by the righteous U.S.

Well, others have figured out before me that the real reason the U.S. welcomes the Latin American militaries and teaches them repressive tactics is that this will keep movements for the rights of the

people down, and thus maintain a "favorable investment climate" for U.S. investors and corporations. After all, The Gap wouldn't want its employees in El Salvador to start getting the idea that they have a right to a living wage — such an idea seems pretty communist!

I chose to break one law — crossing the property line into the SOA — because the U.S. government and the soldiers it trains are breaking so many other laws, including the moral laws that are not necessarily written in the books. I was nervous then, and I am still scared to think of where practicing civil disobedience may lead me. But it was an amazing feeling to stand on Sunday, November 22 with over 2,300 others who were carrying white crosses, prepared to

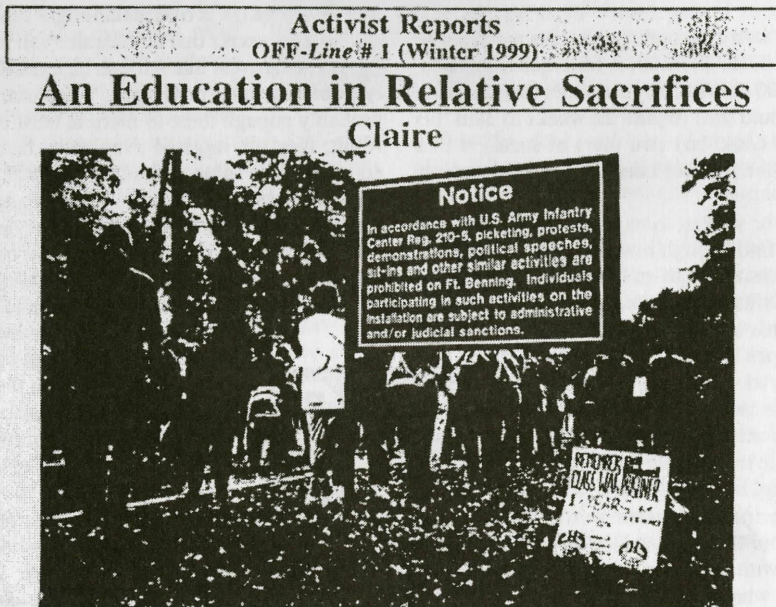
risk arrest as well. I considered myself taking part in a real funeral service to honor those in Latin America who probably never had a funeral service after their murders or disappearances.

It was even more incredible to realize that we had overwhelmed the base police and security (who were always polite to me, and in some cases surprisingly young) and were being released in a city park! We were free to go anywhere except inside the base for the rest of the day. After a few chaotic moments, we re-organized ourselves into rows of four, as we had done when we entered the base. This time we did not walk in virtual silence, but sang joyous songs through a residential section of Columbus, receiving many friendly waves and a few shaking heads.

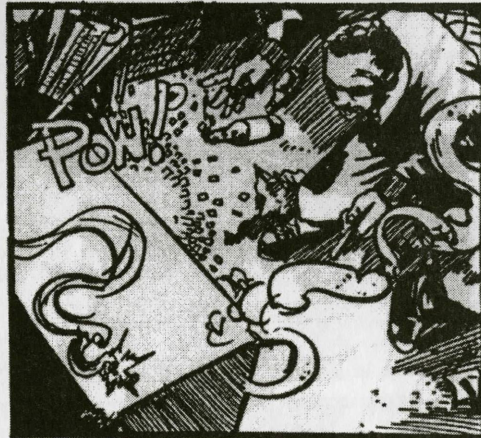
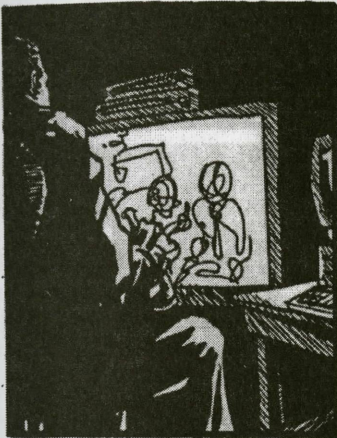
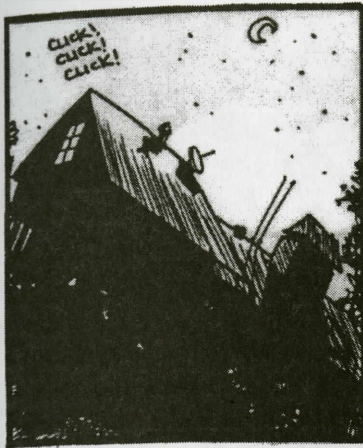
I was overwhelmed by the response we received by the approximately five thousand other people waiting outside the Fort Benning gates. People applauded and cheered with huge smiles. I felt a great sense of having accomplished something for the good. I can only expect that this many numbers will pressure the US government to finally close the SOA. (The House of Representatives voted this fall to close it, and it lost by eight votes.)

A note of caution, however. Even if the SOA is closed, it is but a symbolic victory, and our government representatives should not feel that they are off the hook. For there are about one hundred other military bases in the U.S. that train foreign soldiers in the tactics of terror. The U.S. has to change its entire policy regarding control of other countries for its own greedy purposes.

The sacrifice I committed to make in crossing the line at Fort Benning was put into perspective by the name of the Salvadoran written on my white cross. It read, "Michaela, age one."



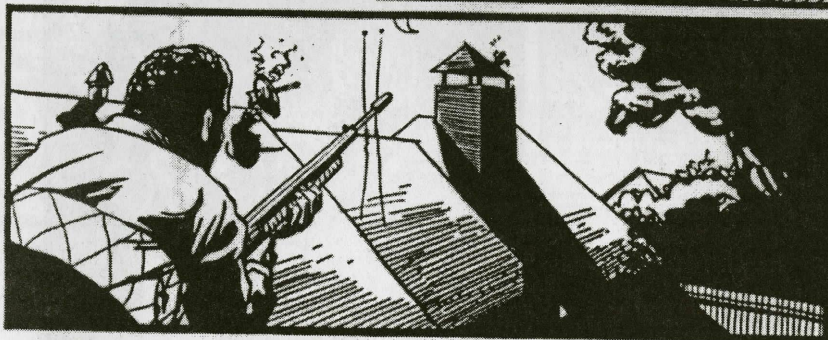




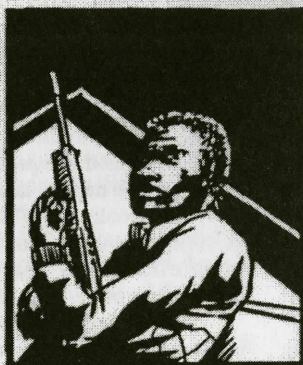
## Satellite

by Nate Powell  
Wonderful Broken Thing  
7205 Geronimo  
N. Little Rock, AR 72116









X N° 10/99



# Good Housekeeping

Diane Payne

Snowbound

Ed. Alan Mäkinen

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Chicago, IL 60657

"Are you sure the woman's last name is Brasher?" I asked my caseworker.

"Yep."

"It can't be. They have at least five kids. Why do they need a cleaning girl?"

"Maybe that's why. You should be glad we found work for you."

"I'd rather clean the city parks. Why can't I have one of those jobs?"

"Those are for boys. You clean houses."

I was thirteen and our town had just started a program called Community Action House to help poor kids find jobs. Tired of picking blueberries, I enrolled with hopes of finding a good job. But those fields were looking good after I found out I had to clean Paul Brasher's house. He was one grade ahead of me, and everyone knew him. Paul not only looked like a model, he acted like one. I never dared speak to him in the hallway at school, but all of us girls talked about him.

"Ma, do I really need to make money?" I asked after returning home from the interview.

"If you want new school clothes, you do."

"But I have to clean Paul Brasher's house."

"Who's he?"

"Only the cutest boy in the entire school. I'll pick blueberries instead."

"Oh, no you don't. All you do out there is flirt with boys and hitchhike to the beach. You need to work."

"But, Ma, how would you like to be scrubbing a boy's toilet?"

"I'd be proud to have a job. You'll develop character. He ain't gonna look down on you. Do a good job cleaning and he may even like you."

"Oh, yeah, boys go crazy over girls pushing mops. Everybody will find out about this."

"Well, I won't tell nobody."

"I know you. Soon as I leave the house, you'll be calling your sisters telling them I got a job cleaning a rich family's house. You'll all be blabbering in Dutch about how much money I'll be making. One dollar and sixty-five cents an hour. That's less than minimum wage."

"You ain't old enough to get those jobs yet. Be glad you got this. All you do is complain."

"I gotta ride my bike all the way out to Lake Macatawa to get to their house."

"You can use the exercise."

"Ma, what do you think I'll be doing out there all day? Watching TV?"

There was nothing left to say. The next day I was to begin my character-building lessons. I would never tell my friends about this job. Some of them had even danced with Paul, and they talked about it for weeks afterwards. Now I'd be dancing with his mop and telling no one.

The next morning, riding my bike past all the fancy houses, I wondered what'd it be like to live so close to the beach that you could actually smell the water from your bedroom window. I imagined myself sitting on the patio watching the boats head towards the channel, ready to go full-throttle on Lake Michigan.

But then I came up to the Brasher's street and watched the house numbers instead. All the homes were large. Next to the rest, theirs didn't stand out. Deep down I was hoping it would have at least been one of the old mansions, but it was just a big house for a large family.

"Good, you're here. What time is it?" Mrs. Brasher greeted me at the door. "Five minutes early. I like that. I've fired others, lots of

them, just for being late. I've had some stupid girls. Their mothers haven't taught them anything about cleaning houses. Follow me. You can start in this small bathroom. My lazy kids are still sleeping. They think they're too good to clean a bathroom." Then she repeated herself, only much louder this time round. "My lazy kids are upstairs in bed thinking they're too good to clean the house."

I said nothing, just took the toilet bowl cleaner and started on my first task, hoping I'd finish cleaning the house before the kids got up. Mrs. Brasher went to the kitchen and kept talking to herself, or so I hoped, because I didn't know what she was talking about. Since I never responded, she probably thought I was stupid, and I was hoping this would be my last day because she'd fire me.

"This looks good," she said. "I don't care about those damn kids of mine. Turn the vacuum on and do the floors down here. That ought to wake them up. Look at the clock. It's almost eight. Bet your mother doesn't let you sleep in, does she?"

Without answering, I just turned the vacuum on and started pushing it around the living room. There were family portraits plastered on the walls. I looked at the pictures of Paul when he was young, all the way until he was fourteen. One son must have been in Vietnam because there was one of him in uniform. I didn't think rich kids had to go to Nam. I wondered how he ended up there.

"Are you getting behind the furniture?" she screamed over the loud vacuum.

"You want me to move everything?" I yelled back.

"Can't you turn that damn thing off when you speak to me?"

I turned it off and she pointed out which furniture I was expected to move. "One day we'll give this place a good cleaning."

Their house wasn't even that dirty. I wouldn't have wasted my money on a cleaning girl until the house really needed a cleaning. I picked up their fancy knick-knacks and dusted carefully. Mrs. Brasher was slamming things into the kitchen cupboards, cursing her children, even though they were upstairs in bed.

"Those damn kids. We've waited long enough. Go to the room on the right and just start cleaning Jessica's room. She's the youngest and will be the easiest to wake. You tell her to get up. Take this dust mop up there and do their floors. Go on the porch and shake the rugs out."

"You just want me to wake her? She doesn't know me."

"That's what I said to do. She'll figure out who you are."

As I was walking up the stairs, she called me back. "Take these underwear up to the boys."

"Now?" I asked.

"Yes, now. I'm paying you to work now. Just hand these to them. Those lazy boys of mine can at least put their own underwear away." Then she raised her voice again, and yelled up the stairs, "Can't you lazy boys at least put your underwear away?"

"You want me to go in their room while they're sleeping?"

"I'm paying you to work. Get up there!"

As I walked up the stairs, she started screaming again. "You lazy kids better get up! The cleaning girl's on her way!"

Everything was worse than I had expected. Both Paul and his younger brother Peter were awake and looking at me when I handed Peter the underwear, but we said nothing. I quickly left their room and found Jessica's room. She was just getting up. Without exchanging words, she walked past me and went downstairs. The boys were still in their room so I dusted slowly, dreading facing them again.

"Pull those sheets off her bed," Mrs. Brasher screamed.

I hadn't heard her climb the stairs and was startled by her presence. "Put these clean ones on." Then she went to get her sons out of bed.



"Don't you know how to make a bed?" she asked. "You need to tuck the corners under. In the army, they made you do it like this. If a quarter didn't bounce, you had to do it all over."

"I never heard of that," I admitted.

"Your mother hasn't taught you how to make a bed?"

"Well, not like this."

"Then you don't know how to make a bed."

"She wasn't ever in the army."

"Don't be stupid. I wasn't either!"

"I saw a picture of someone in uniform downstairs," I said, hoping to find out how a rich boy got stuck in Nam.

"No wonder it took you so long to vacuum. Don't be nosy while you're here. One picture is of my husband when he was in World War Two. The other one is of my oldest son who's in Vietnam. He'll be coming home this summer to get married. You'll have a lot of cleaning to do then."

I wondered what kind of boy received a leave to get married, and couldn't wait to ask my neighbors about this. The Green's even enrolled their sons in college to keep them out, but one son still got drafted. Maybe if Terry got married, he'd be able to come back.

Paul and Peter went down the stairs and I heard their mother yelling, "It's about time you lazy boys got up! Hurry up and eat breakfast! I'm not waiting all day to feed you. I'm paying that girl to clean your room and you two just stay on your beds!"

I know Paul recognized me from school. If he was anything like my brother, he expected girls to clean his room, even if they weren't family. I just wanted to get out of their house, so I pulled off the sheets and tried to put the clean ones on with the corners tucked.

After cleaning their rooms, I went on the upstairs porch, which had a worthless view since it didn't face Lake Michigan, and started shaking out the rugs. Paul and two of his friends from our school were shooting baskets. I saw them pointing at me, but no one waved. We knew each other, but not in these terms. Instead of developing those character-building skills, I was quickly losing face.

"This isn't how you tuck in those corners!" Mrs. Brasher screamed at me while I was on the porch.

I walked over to the bed and received another corner-tucking lesson. Why couldn't she just fire me and put me out of my misery? Then she walked on the patio and yelled to Paul's friends, "I have to hire a girl to make Paul's bed. I bet you make your own, don't you, Ryan?"

"Will you stop?" Paul screamed back.

I think she wanted to humiliate both me and her kids, but I may have been the only one feeling humiliated. They were used to her.

Finally, I was finished, and she handed me ten dollars. Mrs. Brasher wanted me to clean twice a week. I didn't make ten bucks in an

entire week picking berries, so I told her I'd return, but was hoping my caseworker would find me another job.

Riding my bike home, I watched the houses deteriorate the closer I came to my street. When I reached our block, neighbors shouted out greetings, making me feel human again, restoring my lost character. They didn't even know I had lost it.

"How was the job?" Mom asked.

"Ten bucks," I said, offering nothing else. She could tell I was angry and let it be.

I went upstairs and practiced making my bed with the corners tucked.

"What are you doing?"

"Ma, this is how they make them in the army, and this is how Mrs. Brasher wants them made."

"That's nonsense. What's wrong with the way I taught you to make beds?"

"She said you ain't taught me right."

"Oh, those people think they know everything. You tuck it in like that and get hot feet at night, how you gonna free those blankets so you can cool off?"

"If a quarter don't bounce on the bed, it ain't made right."

"Those high-falutin people don't know everything. She think I keep a dirty house?"

"She said I knew how to clean the bathroom."

"She probably thinks I ain't taught you nothing bout cleaning."

"It's character-building, Ma. Remember?"

Nothing more was said. The next day I'd ride my bike to the beach and pretend this job didn't exist. I knew cleaning this house would involve more than my character being built. This job made Mom look at her spotless house with a more critical eye. Wouldn't be long and she'd be asking me to show her how Mrs. Brasher made the beds.

And one rainy day, Mrs. Brasher would offer to bring me home. Then she'd try to find an excuse to see what our house looked like inside. Maybe she'd ask to use our phone, or say she wanted to meet my mother; somehow she'd get inside. And, then, my mother would receive her lesson in character-building, a lesson she had been taught too many times before. And Mrs.

Brasher could tell her friends that she was not only helping a poor kid by hiring me to clean her house, but she was also teaching me to clean my own mother's house. Mrs. Brasher would believe she was the one performing the community service, the one developing character. But, I knew, by the end of the summer, I'd master those character-building lessons, and my housekeeping days would finally be over. And I can't explain it, but I knew those lessons would remain with me for a long time.

## De/Colonization in an American Nation at Home: A Manifesto of Possibility

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*The following manifesto was conceived in a bunker in northwest Ohio during the cold gray months of a midwestern winter. The author(s) originally distributed it to forty people under the guise of praxis issue number 2.5 in 1998, but they have decided to reprint it here so that more people will be exposed to the ideas presented within.*

Ours is a history of domination and power. As Westerners, we enjoy the spoils reserved for the victors. Those spoils are the souls of those defeated, killed and erased from our consciousness to alleviate any mild discomfort that may result from a revelation of the truth. Such mild discomfort is often a symptom of insufficient colonization of the American mind. The treatment for the symptoms, accurately

reflecting traditional Western treatment of the human body, is seclusion; quarantine on the basis of insanity. When the colonizing machine fails to properly dominate the mind of one of the imperial subjects, that mind is left to wander around in search of common ground; in search of a reference point where it can connect to the reality of another mind. Without making that connection, the mind is left to think about the world in the realm of the unthinkable. Without proper training from imperial institutions, the mind knows not what it is and is not allowed to think. Ideas that come to the fore — a realization that unfairness is not a human characteristic or that inequity is a necessary by-product of human existence — are unable to find connecting reference points to other minds who have slipped through the in-

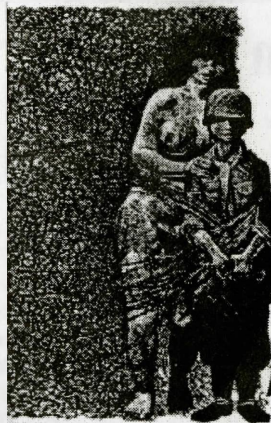


doctrination process. The mind is left to process information through a frame of reference that, according to imperial institutions, does not exist; to think the unthinkable.

But before the mood becomes too grim (which it ultimately must before we can begin to rebuild a more vibrant, just society) we must clarify what we do, and why we are here. You see, we are your sister; working a temp job across town to pay rent and a part time job in the evenings to buy food. We are your brother, blaming the "niggers" for taking all the jobs with Affirmative Action. We are your neighbor, a lesbian chicana working through the impossible intricacies of what it means to be an "anomaly" in America during the last quarter of the "progressive" 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are the teachers, faced with the enormous task of educating an entire generation of children without support from their families or government. We are the farmers who perennially plant crops that will be undersold by large corporations that bought out our neighbors. We are the local business owners who don't know if the new discount mart will shut her business down for good. We are the workers, making products that we can't afford. We are the students, pursuing an education that will ill-prepare us to enter the world we have created. We are you, frustrated with an intangible feeling of want in the midst of a society that repeatedly reassures you that you *can* have everything you want.

We come to you with the following words to assure you that you are not alone. Your disaffection with the status quo doesn't match the poll results. "Nine out of ten Americans are glad to be one," reads the anchor on the six o'clock news. We are here to assure you that the polls lie, and there are more of us than you think. Our alienation may manifest itself in a multitude of ways, some silly, some ugly, but the truth behind the actions is that many of us are upset with a society that fails to deliver what it promises. Many of us lash out in violence, resign ourselves to addictions, recoil from society, or just simply exist; all reactions to a lost hope that our society has the ability to simply take care of the basic needs of the people and allow them to live in relative autonomy in every other way. We will address these issues soon enough, but first it is important to reconsider exactly how we got to this location where we are standing right now — as we write this, as you read it.

Many of us prefer to think of America as unique. In fact, most of what we are told as subjects of American educational institutions supports this groupthink. Our ancestors fled a monarchy that ruled with the same sort of unfairness that we equate with a dictator today. Our ancestors were heroes establishing a precedent for freedom and democracy that our country keeps polished in a glass display case so visitors cannot smell the death upon which these lies are founded. Columbus murdered thousands of "Indians" because their lack of subordination impaired his chances to pillage the land of its resources. His work set the tone for hundreds of years of individual and government policy that swiftly eliminated Native Americans and "justified" claiming their land as U.S. property. Millions of Africans were taken from their homeland in chains, grouped together like livestock and shipped to the United States to be sold as labor. Those who were not killed in transit from inhumane living conditions often committed suicide as a form of resistance to American imperialism. Over 110,000 Japanese Americans were sent to camps in and around the Rocky Mountains because they represented a threat to a nation fighting a war to retain the basis on which it was founded. "Othered" to the utmost extent, Japanese Americans were told to renounce any affiliation with their ancestral culture to the extent that many abandoned Buddhism and adopted Christianity out of fear for their lives. The U.S. government continues to support, in both covert and not-so-covert ways, the murder of innocent people and the domination of indigenous cultures throughout the world through its complicity with multinational corporations and the propping up of dictators in countries where it is most profitable for Western markets. These are not half-truths. These incidents are not craftily created through the skillful manipulation of statistics.



Lives were devalued and exterminated. The barbarism continues even today.

But now is not the time for a history lesson. There will be plenty of time to regain the past through a new vision for the future. (In fact, much of our past is abundant with examples of the sort of cooperative vision for the future that we advocate; some successful, some not, but all trying to correct that which has gone wrong in "modern" societies). It would seem from looking at the atrocities in our young country's closet that we are among the most abhorrent creatures on the face of the earth. The institutions we depend on for our livelihood are the very same institutions that are murderers of the kind far worse than any we could conjure from the pages of the world history. How do we wake each day knowing that we are accomplice to some of the most horrifying crimes history has known? Why do some feel compelled to work in opposition to the machine of colonialism while some feel at home assuming their seats in first class? How do we begin to dismantle the machine that operates so quickly that it is never seen, so quietly that even the cries of its victims are silenced, and so efficiently that all challengers are either absorbed into its ranks or eliminated from the equation. Deep within these queries to the machine of colonialism lie the keys to its success and the poison which will surely kill it.

The key to recognizing and dealing with the complications of American colonization comes from the ability to not blame individuals. Columbus, while perhaps a right bastard, was working under the paradigms of much larger institutions than those resulting from his own frustrations with the Arawak tribe. Does this excuse his actions? No. Does it help us to break down the root of such violence into a more manageable form? Probably. The chief executive officer of a multinational corporation does not have any predisposed genetic condition that causes him to relish the fact that his business exploits workers for the sake of profit. In fact, he has most definitely developed a sound logical argument that justifies his actions in his own mind. Does this make his actions right? Of course not. Does it call into question the perspectives and contexts in which certain decisions are imbedded and help us understand the dominant rhetoric being used to justify the unfair treatment of the workers of the world? Yes. And it becomes much easier for us to expose the infrastructure that supports allegiance to a relative notion of success by any means necessary. The exposure of this infrastructure as a key target in the decolonization process.

Perhaps another, more localized, example would better illustrate the fact that institutions, not individuals, are the main issue behind American colonialism. "Uncle Frank," who is generally a pleasant fellow, is often talking about how we just need to keep the races separate and how he is going to set up his own town where those "niggers" and "spics" aren't allowed to live. But his racism isn't justified logically. Most of the arguments that he makes are based on evaluations of arbitrary categories that he has been taught to apply to people who aren't like him. Consequently, he makes similar snap judgements when he is talking about people he considers "trailer trash" or "girls that dress like sluts." His evaluations of traits that are different from him are a result of a life lived in the midst of a complex web of influence ranging from education, to mass media and his life experiences. In the realm of experiences, we might mention that Frank's friend was mugged by a group of young African Americans while on his way home from work one evening. He gets to talking with this buddy and they come to the conclusion that all African Americans are inherently evil. Their

decision isn't grounded solely in this incident, but also includes the institutional influence of the mass media incarnate in news, movies and television that subtly (or not so subtly) explain how this is the way all "those people are." The analysis, while flawed, makes complete sense to Uncle Frank and his pal. It's how they make sense of the complicated world that they live in. They were never encouraged to develop their innate ability to think critically about the world. Their generalized conclusions are part and parcel of a dominant mindset



that pits people against each other; that cherishes the acquisition and maintenance of power acquired through the isolation and polarization of the very people who have the potential to threaten its status.

Let's turn our attention, for a moment, to the boys in this scenario. Their desire to mug Uncle Frank's friend was not borne out of an innate desire to inflict pain on another human being. They, too, were acting on the paradigm of power, but their actions reflect the frustration of being denied the opportunity to attain such spoils that they perceive others being offered everyday. But the illusion of those opportunities are as real as Uncle Frank's belief that everyone has equal access to them. If we inquire even further, Uncle Frank has his own doubts about how available certain opportunities for success are to him and the people who are like him. He, like us, is continuously bombarded with notions of independence and liberty that are apparently only attainable through money and power. It is no wonder that each of these actors seek the most immediate routes to such attainment. Unfortunately, the immediate routes often end with random acts of violence and ultimately reinforce a tradition of opposition and domination.

It is an excruciating task at times, but it is crucial for us to realize that the root of such incomprehensible hatred and violence is not a fact of human nature. People are not inherently predisposed toward hating certain types of skin color, or bestowing a greater importance on a specific gender. Even more important is the realization that competition is not a basic human instinct. So many of our institutions are founded on the idea that humans will compete with each other for control of the resources, but there are plenty of cultures, even within our own United States, that prove cooperation has much more of a positive effect on the whole of society. However, encouragement of the latter rarely finds its way into major institutions, because to do so would call into question the very existence of such arbitrary ruling systems. To suggest that people can, and quite often will (if given the right opportunity), work together to take care of themselves and others without the imposition of authoritarian means would demolish the individualist notions on which our country is founded and begin the reconsideration of a more just society where the notion of control is as irrelevant as the idea of force.

Let's think about the ways in which we are taught to establish and maintain control over our surroundings. To do so demands that we recall the American exceptionalism that we mentioned earlier since our history, although rooted in capitalist traditions, is not the only way cultures effectively operate in the world. In other words, our notion of exceptionalism as Americans only holds true if we compare it to other non-western cultures, but loses its validity when we realize that our society is only the most recent in a long tradition of oppressive Western notions of progress and civilization. We are taught to feel it is only right that men are deemed the more worthy of the sexes in the race for the spoils. Every aspect of our culture rewards masculinity and punishes its deviants. Females are paid less in equal jobs, respected less in those same jobs (unless they assume "masculine" characteristics), and traits that are deemed "feminine" are often viewed as antithetical to what it means to be American. We have been taught that differences between cultures are something that should be evaluated and placed on a hierarchical scale to be used to advance or oppress certain groups of people. We don't feel it is necessary to outline this socialization any further. We are also taught that it is human nature and a god-given right to conquer the animals that inhabit the same land as us. By using "conquer" we are not referring to the interdependency between animals and human animals that is a more complementary relationship for many indigenous cultures. Instead, we use this term to reflect the utter domination of animals with complete disregard for their livelihood and the environment they live in. We are taught, essentially, that an animal's fate is predetermined to cater to human whimsy disguised as needs. So, how do these "lessons" we have been presented with serve to control Americans while also providing them with a false sense of self-determinism?

We believe, as we have been discussing, that the colonization of American people as we know it begins first with the colonization of the mind. From here, it is incredibly simple for Americans to act physically on deeply-ingrained ideas of domination and control. A bit different from the colonial situations in Africa or other "third world" countries, the colonization of American subjects stems from subjugation

of the brain rather than the body. While colonial regimes marched into many countries and began ruling with an iron fist, the American situation depends on the colonization of the mind so that the subjects do not think they are being controlled. Resistance never enters the public consciousness because it would think "resistance to what?" We are so lulled into complacency that we are often able to see revolutionary acts in mass consumerism. In other words, freedom and liberty are on sale everyday for the right price. A wise purchase of a liberating soft drink here, the free will to choose to read this magazine here, or the power to determine which television shows we want to watch all provide sanctity from stepping back to examine the true agency of our actions.

We begin to tread uneasy waters here when we discuss the issue of agency of individuals. No person likes to consider the possibility that his or her actions are a result of anything other than his or her desire to engage them. However, such contemplation is crucial to the process of decolonization. The recognition that one may not be entirely in control of their actions combined with a critical attention to the institutions that may be manufacturing our consent are the fertile seeds of dissent. Just as one person speaks out to mention that the emperor is wearing no clothes, so too, can the rest of us make the same liberating proclamation. And that, dear friends, is why we are addressing you today.

As of the moment you read this brief commentary on the *real* state of the union, you will recognize that the emperors of the American Empire are, in fact, naked. As you read these words, you will also realize that there is not simply one person speaking out, but actually an entire nation of individuals hungry for a more caring society where lines of race, class and gender are as fluid as the blood that flows through our bodies; blood that will no longer be spilled to reify arbitrary categories that have served to separate us and turn us against each other.

But how? How does our new-found consciousness begin to topple the dynasty into which we have been until now subsumed? How do we become revolutionaries when our mouths need fed, when our bodies need shelter? No amount of revolutionary fervor can deny the fact that when the emotions have died down, there are still fundamental human needs that tended to, and our cooperation with the current system almost assures those needs will be met. But you notice we said "almost." Here lies another tool of the imperialist machine that keeps us pacified, just long enough for us to become hungry again. We work. We eat. We sleep. All for the attainment of a goal that is forever one step out of reach. The reality: the carrot is a mirage, and we, quite ashamedly, are often the asses. Unfortunately the mirage of the carrot acquires far more realism than many alternatives offered by progressive movements in our recent history.

The reasons for this are not based in any inadequacies of various progressive ideas (of which we will concede there are plenty). Instead, it is the ability of the metropole, our illustrious empire, to either consume or eliminate the dissenting voices that erupt from the crowd. Returning to our example of the observant onlooker who declares that the crowd is being duped and the emperor is wearing no clothes, we can extend the metaphor to see how the colonizing machine deals with the interruption. For example, as the onlooker shouts the revelatory news, members of the royal party shout in agreement, "You're right, he isn't wearing any clothes! My, how observant of you. Let all of us revel in this joyous moment of revolution and then quickly resume with our business as usual. As a matter of fact, let us declare December the eighth "Official Revolutionary Ideas" day and all of us may use this day to indulge in the keen critical mode of consciousness you have developed." "Even better," continues the Prince "Let us make banners, and garments and books about this enlightening day so that we may continue your legacy in years of purchase, even after you have died." So the story of the co-opted revolution carries on. The people are able to feel as much a revolutionary as our nameless observer without actually taking the chances or doing the work he or she has done to disassemble the machine. Fortunately for our observer, he has not suffered the consequences that lie at the other end of the spectrum. For her disruption he will be implicated in a long tradition of crimes against the emperor. For her lack of deference, he will be eliminated from the history of her people; forever lost as an example of someone who spoke out against the colonization of



his people's.

The story need not end in despair; as it surely begins. We can learn from our brothers and sisters who are finding their way out of the darkness of colonization as we speak. The process of decolonization may well be under way by your simply reading this message. The consciousness has been aroused. Elusive sources of discomfort are beginning to reveal their roots, and you suddenly feel capable of realizing the creative visions for a more just society. Traditionally, it has been the intellectual elite who have told the masses what is best for them. Traditionally, this approach has proven inadequate in creating amidst the rubble of revolution the sort of society we envision. A more desirable revolution will be rooted in a groundswell of experiences, beliefs, loves, laughter and talents of you, of us all. In fact, the revolution we are envisioning is in fact under way. This revolution has created an amazing array of vibrant noncompliance among people like you, like us, who are no longer content going through the motions. We are not calling you out to the mountains to regain some sort of pride of whiteness that has been lost throughout the years as some of the more ugly manifestations of frustration have suggested. What, then, do we propose? A large grass roots lobbying campaign for the federal government to address our "platform" issues? Such tactics have obviously proven inadequate to instigate the type of social change we are envisioning. Do we want the institutions of government and capitalism abolished tomorrow? The utopic grins from many of us realize that this sort of development on such a sudden timescale is not realistic or maybe even desirable.

We do, however, fully realize that the possibility of radical social change does not occur without the people wanting it. As it stands right now, the colonial machine is running full force to keep the people of America from connecting with each other to realize that each of us has serious doubts about the way our society works right now to privilege and maintain structures of domination and power. We can see how actualization of this disaffection would serve the needs of a, dare we say, revolution. We are not talking about coercive measures to serve the needs of *our* revolution, but rather a re-education through example and outreach showing that dissatisfaction with the paths of our (and our neighbors') lives need not be the last stage before turning toward self-destruction or the destruction of other lives.

Where does this re-education occur? How do we prove to others that self-pity need not be a response to frustration? Where do we begin to let people know that racism is not an organic response to an inorganic creation; the latter being capitalism and its related despots. Where do we begin to dismantle years of indoctrination that has told us, through rather arbitrary means, that the differences between men and women should assume evaluative traits and thus placed on a hierarchy ranging from best to worst; with almost all female traits falling to the bottom. Where do we begin to redistribute hundreds of years worth of wealth that has gravitated, not coincidentally, into the hands of those who have managed to accumulate the most power; or vice versa. Where do we prove to people that they are, despite years of cultural indoctrination, brilliant individuals with an array of talents and loves that need not be wasted as fodder for an imperialist machine?

The answer to each of these questions is everywhere. Just as every aspect of our daily lives reflects the injustices of an American society, so too can it reflect the ways in which those injustices may be reversed.

Through individual and collective projects connections can begin to be made between those whom never knew there were others thinking similar thoughts. We liken these sort of connections to the what happened after the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in which people all over the world were finally able to think about themselves relationally to others in the world that they had no idea existed. The newspaper and novel revolutionized the way people thought about themselves. The same has been with each new addition to the technological advancement. The radio, telephone, television, and now the internet have all caused major paradigm shifts in the way that humans think

about themselves individually and collectively. Not all results are positive, however, and mass media obviously has proven itself susceptible to corruption.

However, we believe that it is through the creation and distribution of alternative media that the decolonization process may be successful. Our society has become incredibly saturated by the media, and this, dear friends, is the antidote to imperialism; the built-in self destruct button of the colonization process. We should clarify that media, in the sense that we are using it, can mean everything from a scrawled note to a student, to a micro-power radio station serving a community to the infiltration of major network television program to deliver an international message of unity in dissent.

By encouraging the active engagement of various forms of media, we hope to instigate discussion of issues that have heretofore been erased from the national dialogue courtesy of colonial mandate. We have mentioned the issues above, and they need not be repeated here. What does deserve explication are some of the ways in which we can deal with these issues. So far, alternative media have enjoyed a relatively exclusive position in our society. By exclusive, we don't mean created and consumed by those in power, because there is ample evidence that people have been able to take control of media and use it for progressive purposes. Instead, we are referring to the power of colonial oppression to marginalize cultural creations that contradict imperial protocol. The marginalization of such creations occurs for primarily two reasons. The first being that many alternative projects find themselves in the peculiar position of only being able to define themselves in relation to the mainstream. In other words, we end up with the familiar predicament characterized by responses like "Yeah, we know what you're against, but what are you for?" The answer is hard to come by when we try to define ourselves in terms of the dominant prescriptions. The second related problem is the exclusivity of certain radical projects. Many seem overly-concerned with recruiting into their ranks only those who are already considered "radicals." By overlooking the majority of those in this country who are equally fraught with disaffection, we end up alienating ourselves from the already-alienated. The result is people and groups who place heavy emphasis on ideologic solidarity at the cost of massive mobilization. In other words, ideological posturing serves to alienate the very people who would otherwise be allies in widespread mobilization against oppression. One solution to this problem is addressed in the second basic tenet of our revolutionary program.

We also see another antidote to the colonization process imbedded in the institution of education. Teachers staff the floodgate of information that students are able to gain access to. They decide what will and will not be covered in classrooms; what is and isn't appropriate to discuss in school. Obviously, teachers do not act as entirely autonomous entities, and we should most definitely acknowledge the fact that they work within the overarching domination of the imperial regime. Which leads us to our final metaphor and perhaps the true essence behind the systematic deconstruction of colonialism in the United States: education as empowerment.

We mentioned earlier that the media we create and consume holds great leverage in the process of developing the consciousness of individuals. We are able to think critically about what we see, read, and hear. But we aren't *encouraged* to do so, and this is the role that independently-produced media will play. It is important to note that the media we have outlined resemble, not accidentally, what we envision responsible educational institutions will look like. Ultimately the goal for both is to educate and empower. We hope to use media to influence education and education to influence the media; a revolutionary cycle of empowerment. No longer will students be required to read and regurgitate "great books" but they will instead be encouraged to seek out the literature that most suits their intellectual needs. Whether that literature is embodied in a zine, the bible or a revolutionary tract from the jungle, students will work with texts that challenge



praxis  
issue number three



and empower. The empowerment of students does not stop simply by letting them choose the books for the syllabus. Such token gestures, while serving an important need, do not serve the ultimate purpose of actualizing individuals' potential to make vernacular sense of the world they inhabit. Instead, the process needs to be taken a step further to invite students to create culture for themselves. The creation of independent culture (be it music, literature or any other form which colonial indoctrination does not today allow us to articulate) will be the death of American colonization. We realize, as we have noted before, that this is occurring as we speak. In many ways, our talk of a cultural revolution that will overthrow political and cultural imperialism is merely a reinforcement of the work of those around us who are engaged in these very same acts. What we think makes our vision unique is the massive scale in which students across the country will begin to realize themselves in league with millions

of others like them, and work against the institutionalized alienation that works only to oppress us all; to open up the collective consciousness so that it is no longer possible to think the unthinkable.

*(Note: The authors wholeheartedly stand behind the ideas and beliefs presented in the piece you have just read. However, the rhetoric used to present the ideas reflects the authors' desires to work within the communicative model of the manifesto that often employs reductive logic, colorful language, exaggerations and a sense of urgency in order to move the masses to action. We could discuss at length the assumptions that this form of communication makes about the intelligence of the general populace, but the authors would rather you enjoy this manifesto as a piece of art containing an extremely urgent message. If you didn't, the authors request you read the piece once more with this context in mind.)*

## The Grow Your Own Manifesto

by Libby Chenault  
Grow Your Own  
2110 Humboldt St  
Bellingham, WA 98225

grow your own meat. grow your own shoes. grow your own books. grow your own magic elixir. grow your own thoughts. grow your own music. grow your own neighbors. grow your own history. grow your own herstory. grow your own lettuce. grow your own transportation.

Reliance on automobiles dramatically shapes our lives. We live in the fast lane, rushing about because of cars. Our towns are no longer fit for pedestrians, and pedestrians are no longer fit. Local business is sacrificed in a strip mall world. Our health deteriorates as we forget how to walk and pedal. If oil companies were not subsidized by our tax dollars, we would not be able to afford this lifestyle. The costs to the environment, unseen people who live near oil fields and the very fabric of our social structure are greater than you pay at the pump. Cars isolate and insulate us from the world around us.

grow your own culture. grow your own style. grow your own bean sprouts. grow your own wine. grow your own gods. grow your own beef. grow your own adventure. grow your own tradition. grow your own entertainment. grow your own dances. grow your own carrots. grow your own children.

While you cannot hide your child from the slickest fads of pop culture's influence, you do have the opportunity to model your values and dreams. Give a child the revolutionary gifts of time and honesty. Be present with small ones as they learn more from our actions than our lectures. Be influential in the life of a child who did not come from your womb or seed. Let your child be shaped by people you trust and respect. Make sure they are well fed, warm, and know they are loved so they can grow in all their own ways. Remember they have as much to teach us, so dance like a chicken and make a magic wish.

grow your own bridges. grow your own tunnels. grow your own facial hair. grow your own partnerships. grow your own sailing ships. grow your own parsnips. grow your own childhood. grow your own colors. grow your own drum. grow your own poetry.

Let your language and thoughts express delight and rage with passion. Exist beyond cliches. Revel in rhythm, make time for rhyme. Eat poetry for breakfast. Write your own version of the world, carve it in your desk, chalk it on the street, e-mail it to your boss. Recite good poetry often; sing it like a pop song. Live a poem every day.

grow your own life. grow your own dreams. grow your own language. grow your own electricity. grow your own constellation. grow your

own fibers. grow your own imagination. grow your own kale. grow your own medicine. grow your own family. grow your own economy.

Imagine knowing who grew or produced every material in your life. Each object would have a story," this type writer was scavenged at the dump, these boots were traded for an old backgammon set, my

mother's secretary knit these bloomers, "etc. Consider what you value and pay (or don't pay) accordingly. Remember there are costs beyond dollars and cents: time, natural resources, education/training, social implications, aesthetics. Acquire goods outside the global economic system: beg, barter, or steal. Consider communal tools. Examine your relationship to money and power. Believe the universe will provide. Do not accept financial vigor as a sign of health.

grow your own reality. grow your own joy. grow your own cup. grow your own sorrow. grow your own tomorrow. grow your own logic. grow your own beauty. grow your own underwear. grow your own tomatoes. grow your own simplicity.

Do not let corporate financed think tanks decide what you need to own to be happy, successful, or cool. My simplicity will be different than your simplicity and no judgement shall pass between us. One woman simplifies her life by eating in a

restaurant every night, no cooking, no grocery shopping, no dishes. Another woman simplifies her life by growing her food from seed to plate, making watering and weeding and preparing her lifestyle. Evaluate your life and see where you can live a more authentic life, a life uncluttered by corporate expectations. Schedule your priorities; don't prioritize your schedule. Time is yours to play with.

grow your own sofa. grow your own banjo. grow your own source of income. grow your own images. grow your own voice. grow your own resistance. grow your own art. grow your own shadow. grow your own party. grow your own casserole. grow your own media.

While the media cannot tell us what to think, they do decide what we think about. If the news makes you feel depressed, hopeless, helpless, vulnerable, stop reading/watching/listening to it. Tell your own story. Talk to your neighbor to see what's going on. Support independent local publications. Use public access television stations. Go outside for a weather report. Live your own soap opera.

grow your own education. grow your own holidays. grow your own role models. grow your own zucchini. grow your own homes. grow your own drugs. grow your own squash. grow your own love. grow

grow your own.

#8

written summer 1999  
looking for america  
photos of beautiful people



\$2



your own flavors. grow your own government.

Prepare yourself without external government. Take responsibility for your thoughts and actions, follow a higher law. Resist taxes that finance wars, injustice, and subsidize corporate rule. Make a difference in your local community. Pledge allegiance to your bioregion. Don't let voting pacify you, it is not enough. Communicate your dreams to those who represent you. Study the process of con-

sensus. Do not believe we have reached the most efficient or effective form of government, we are still experimenting.

grow your own broccoli. grow your own beer. grow your own water. grow your own soil. grow your own interdependence. grow your own sandwich spreads. grow your own apple. grow your own myths. grow your own fish. grow your own manifesto.

## Welcome to Berryville

by Robert Bell  
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Berryville, Arkansas – unless you know me and have listened as I speak of it w/ a distaste on the verge of a wish for outright destruction, you've probably never heard of it. Located in northwest Arkansas, about ten miles from the Missouri border and nestled cozily in the Ozark mountains, it's pretty much your standard, "Small Town in the South."

The town has a population of somewhere around four thousand, of which maybe a full one-third work at either of the two economic pillars of the community: Tyson Foods or Wal-Mart. I've done time at the Breast De-bone of the former, and the food court of the latter.

There's a movie theater, a good local pizza parlor, a downtown square w/ a park, fountains and store fronts. There's Berryville Drug- a pharmacy w/ an old fashioned soda fountain, and a bad-ass thrift store- two of the town's good points. There's also lots of rednecks- about 1200 of the town's bad points, roaring up and down highway 62 in their pickups, stopping only to chit-chat at the car wash or stomp the asses of anyone who might have looked at their boots wrong.

There's a public swimming pool to which I rode my bike every single day for several childhood summers until I began to resemble one of the extras from the cast of "Flipper". There's an old-school corner store that sells all manner of candy, chips, sodas, 50 cent baloney sandwiches, and won't sell cigarettes to anyone who looks a day under five. Up the street is the Tyson Foods plant of earlier mention where every day, at 6:00, 3:00, 4:00 and 1:00, workers stumble groggily in and out at the mercy of the shift changes. Further up the street is the school where... well, more on that one later.

Anyway, you get the idea. It would be really easy, and even more predictable for me to just sum it up as being a festering shithole, a completely worthless, culturally devoid wasteland where rednecks are rampant beasts, destroying everything in their hi-beamed paths. Like Road-warrior, but w/ less mohawks, more trucks and guns. And in a lot of ways, that's kinda how it is. But there is a different side to it. A familiar side. Home. Family. Knowing every nook and cranny, every street corner and alley, every building, and ever face. I have tried to deny the existence of this other side for a long time now. But it's there whether I admit it to myself or not.

I came up w/ an analogy that fits it all quite well. The way I feel about Berryville is the way a neglected child might feel toward s their abusive alcoholic parents. You hate them for the way they are. The way they beat you down, body and spirit, and told you that you were worthless. But you also realize that they inadvertently made you a stronger person. You grow up, learning along the way how to deal w/ them and all of their shortcomings. Then you tell them to fuck off and you leave them behind. Finally, you realize that there's no point in wasting your energy in hating them, because for better or worse, you wouldn't be the same person if they hadn't raised you. And you accept that.

But this isn't meant to be some sort of sob story or pity party in

fanzine format. Just a release of some of the things that have bent and broken and molded me into the person typing this. I am who I am, for a large part, because of my environment. So here it is, and hopefully it

won't sound too bitter. Because I like who I am, and after all, to quote that most brilliant of running social commentaries, the Simpsons (and doesn't everything eventually come back to the Simpsons?) "It's just a bunch of stuff that happened."

I grew up on a farm. About three miles outside of Berryville, (or "town" as everyone in the area refers to it) down State Highway 221 south which, up until last year, was dirt, you'll see a red brick house up on a hill. In winters past, you could've watched as I trudged up that hill, knee deep in snow, sled behind me, or in summers, as I chased the cattle w/ a stick, my

dog leading the way, and my little brother in tow.

My parents have 300 acres of land surrounding that red brick house. Some field, some forest, and even a little bit along the Osage Creek. But all of it home to countless battles, explorations, and trapings-across by my brother, me, our dog, and whatever friends happened to be visiting. It's also host to several barns, sheds, and abandoned houses about which I would make up ludicrous, and completely untrue scary stories about to frighten those visiting friends.

Soil, hay, stagnant water, manure, cedar, old wooden structures, dead animals- all of these smells bring life on the farm strongly into focus. Stirring and intensifying those memories. I wish I could have appreciated it more at the time, but you know what they say about hindsight. I feel lucky to have grown up out there and even luckier to still have it as a place of refuge now.

Thanks mom and dad.

Besides, of course, school, one of the ever present and defining institutions of my childhood was church. First Baptist Church of Berryville, to be precise. I was pretty much forced to go, and in the heavy metal years of my early teendom more than ever, hated it w/ a certain amount of intensity. Well, mostly hated it.

Some things weren't too bad. I would wear my Megadeath t-shirts to Sunday school and LIFE meetings as much as was possible. I'm not sure what the acronym stands for, but basically LIFE was a Wednesday night program for the teenagers of the church. Theoretically, it would prepare us to meet the world having become, through intensive programming, well-adjusted, upstanding Christian citizens. Judging from where and how most of the attendees have ended up (and don't think that I'm not including myself on this one) I would say that the endeavor was a resounding failure.

But as bad as that may sound, it really wasn't too intolerable. In fact, sometimes it was fun. I got to play volleyball and hang out w/ my friends for an hour, then daydream and nod my head in the right places for an hour. Once, we even got to go on a week-long trip to Florida to





Enter a conniving, weaselly jerk we'll call "Bro. Claude". What w/ his big plastic grin and monumental ego, I despised and distrusted him from the get-go. He had a manner of acting and speaking that reeked of insincerity, coupled w/ a sweaty handshake that left the victim feeling like they'd just been covered in a thin layer of conservative, southern-Baptist goo. He was kind of like the slimer of bible-thumping holy rollers, which left me setting in the pew, wishing that I'd had one of those guns from Ghostbusters w/ which to blast him back to hell. But, on the positive side, he had a cute daughter who was probably about my age. Secretly, I'd always wondered if she was the stereotypical "Bad Preachers daughter" and might one day yank me in the broom closet or sumthin'. But in yet another instance of TV and movies misleading me, it never happened. I think she was forced into an arrange marriage w/ some guy from out of town.

For instance, take my friend Jesse. A pretty normal kid who liked heavy metal and riding bikes. One day, he walked into the church to get a drink of water wearing some band T-shirt that stated on the back in rather large capital letters: FUCK MORE, BITCH LESS. When “Bro. Claude” saw this, he flipped out and screamed at Jesse, “How dare you wear that shirt in the house of the Lord!?” I saw Jesse shortly after this took place and asked him why his shirt was on inside-out. He explained what had happened and said, “Well, I started talking to him, and you know, he’s not such a bad guy. I think I might start going to church there.” AAAHHH!!! NOOOO!!! DAMN YOU APES!!! I MEAN, BAPTISTS!!! What the hell could happen to make a normal, healthy teen-metalhead want to go to church? The Martian-Baptist Mind meld, that’s what! Apparently Bro. Claude had more than a few tricks up his cheap poly-cotton blend sleeve.

Another major juncture came when “Bro. Claude” shut down the Daycare program the church housed on weekdays. Many working mothers in the town depended on the child care provided by the church and were pretty pissed when they showed up one Monday morning only to

But perhaps the most fucked up think of all is that because there are so few members left, their tithes alone can't support the church. So, "Bro. Claude" was taken to dipping into funds reserved for church expansion and renovation to pay the bills. This is money people have left behind in their wills, which was supposed to go towards building a new gymnasium, among other things. But I guess those funds are running out because he's sold all of the playground equipment. But maybe that's just because there aren't any kids left to play on it anyway.

On my first day of school in Berryville, at the beginning of recess, I grabbed one of the bouncy, red all-purpose playground balls and ran out onto the playground. Being the new kid, I was determined to make some friends by starting up a game of kickball. All was going well. I was excited! I was running really fast! I was going to score! But instead, I slipped in some mud and busted my newcomer ass. Everybody seemed to think it was the funniest thing since Garbage Pail Kids. I was humiliated! I was in pain! I slunk off to get some paper towels and wipe off all the mud...

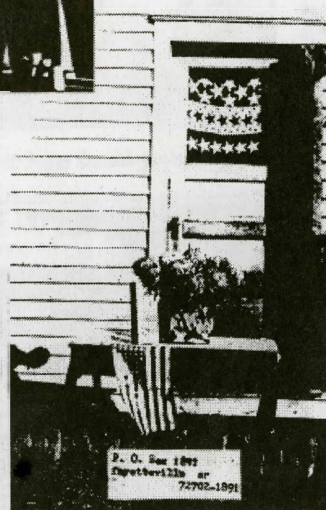
"I'm better than you." He repeated

"Everything. I'm better than

Once, however, he threatened to beat me up after school because I told someone that I thought he was an asshole.

"Fine." I said, not caring.

The next year went fine as well, but it was the year after than when the shit hit the fan. Fifth grade. Mrs. Ham. I can't express to you in words what an abusive, conniving, and vindictive basketcase she was, and probably still is. She fucked w/ me from day one, and went to great





lengths to belittle and humiliate me and two other kids at every opportunity. Most all of the others were treated like little angles. She is the person to whom I give credit for planting, watering, and giving sunlight to the seed that grew into my hatred of authority.

The first few weeks weren't really too bad. She mainly ignored me, but made the occasional snide remark or slight. I guess the first really shitting thing she did was accost me for having trouble getting the door to shut one day. The handle was broken and I struggled w/ it for a few seconds before she announced to the class that by the time one was in the fifth grade, one should know how to shut a door. She decided to demonstrate, and took longer than I had. I said quietly to some friends that by the time one is in one's thirties, one should know how to shut a door. We all giggled while she glared at us.

It was mainly shit like that, to some degree, every day. Another time, she antagonized me for my open taste for Heavy Metal. "If you keep listening to that junk, you're gonna start using drugs and the devil's gonna take your soul." She was fond of trying to scare us w/ religious crap. "No way!" I said, "My soul's not going anywhere, and I'll never use drugs. They're for idiots!"

I am somewhat of an idiot most of the time, therefore, I did end up using drugs some, but metal had nothing to do w/ it. We argued for a few more minutes about the merits versus the drawbacks of metal, and she finished it off by telling me that it didn't really matter too much, because I probably wouldn't amount to anything anyway.

Unfortunately, it wasn't just me that she fucked w/, Scott and Jesse fell victim to her personality flaws as well. Scott was a class clown type, so of course she hated him, but Jesse really didn't do anything to deserve it. Apparently, she was very sensitive to people's facial expressions. One day she walked into class after lunch and tore into both of them.

"What on earth is wrong w/ you two/ Every time I walk into the room, Scott, you get this pained look on your face. And you, Jesse, you just sit there all the time w/ this completely blank look on your face. You never smile or look happy, just this blank expression. Are you stupid or something?"

I had never paid much attention to either of their facial expressions, but could totally sympathize and understand why they would feel that way. Suffering and boredom were two constants in her class for the three of us.

Another time Scott cracked a joke and the whole class laughed. She sent him out to the hall and while he was gone, told the rest of us to ignore him. "I don't care what he says or does, we're all going to pretend he's not here. If he tries to talk to you, don't listen or say anything back. Just completely ignore him." Later that day, I got in trouble for talking to him.

The grand finale of my nine month grudge match w/ Satan herself came on the second to last day of school. We were all playing kickball, and this kid Gene was tearing down part of the fence. So I walked over and told her about it. She yelled at me to go sit down and not be a tattletale. It pissed me off because that was exactly the kind of shit she loved to punish the whole class for. I tried to prevent that from happening, and got chewed out for it. I sat down next to Jesse, muttering half to myself, "Man, what a bitch, I'll be glad when this stupid year is finally over." But I guess she didn't hate tattletales when it came to stuff about

her. Because she listened when Jesse tattled on me.

Later that afternoon, she was sitting in class when she called me out to the hall.

"I want to know what you said about me today at recess," she said.

"Nothing," I lied.

"No. I know what you said. Now say it to me."

"I said that I'd be glad when this year was over." I said, staring at the ground.

"And..."

"And that I hated you."

"Is that it?"

"Yeah."

"You're lying to me. What else did you say?"

"Nothing."

"Okay. If you won't admit it, then maybe this will help. She opened the door and addressed the class, "Class, I want everyone to come get a drink and walk in single file by Mr. Bell here until he tells me what I want to hear. Now," she said, "What did you call me today?"

"Nothing." I said, ears burning, tears welling up as my somber classmates marched by.

"Stop lying to me! What did you call me?"

"A bitch." I mumbled after some time.

"What?"

"A bitch!" I stated, louder than before.

"Okay. Go back inside everyone." She said. I started to go inside and she said, "No. Not you. Stay there." When everyone was back in, she shut the door and said, "Now, I'm not gonna give you swats for this, because it is the end of the year and I don't feel like it. But you are to

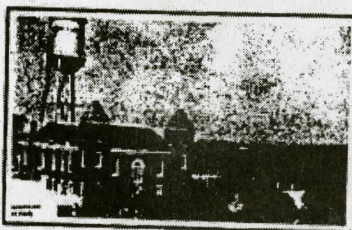
stay inside next recess and make a written apology stating what you did and how you will never do it again."

When the second recess bell rang, I did stay in and write out an apology. She read it and told me to write a better one. To sound more sorry. I wrote another one, kissing her ass more. She still wasn't satisfied, so I wrote a third, really laying it on thick and sounding completely pathetic. She was pleased w/ that one and told me to go to the office and get a pink slip. I did, and on my way back read, at the top, CORPORAL PUNISHMENT FORM. I thought that this was odd considering she had told me she wasn't going to give me swats. But she had lied, and she did. Five of them, out in the hall, while another teacher read my humiliating written apology and chuckled softly, once.

So you can imagine my surprise when I saw her tonight, here in Fayetteville. I walked outside of a restaurant where I'd been sitting, drinking coffee, thinking about what I was going to write about school and, specifically, her, when she passed by, right in front of my face. I walked behind her towards the UA campus for half a block. We briefly made eye contact, but I could tell she didn't recognize me- the ten year old kid she had fucked w/ so much, humiliated, belittled, hit w/ a big wooden board while I grabbed my ankles

and bit my lip. She didn't recognize that little kid following her, all grown up, tall and bearded and w/ a strong hatred for authority which she helped establish.

## Welcome to Berryville...



Where History blends with Progress!



## BERRYVILLE, ARKANSAS

Berryville, Arkansas is located in the picturesque Ozark Mountains of Northwest Arkansas. It is the county seat of Carroll County and has a population of 3230. The county population is 19,500 with a trade territory of approximately 30,000.

Berryville was founded in 1850 by Blackburn Henderson Berry of Alabama. During the Civil War, the town, except for a few houses, was burned by both sides. At one time Union soldiers camped on the square.

### Climate

|                                            |          |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| Elevation.....                             | 1246 ft. |
| Avg. Rainfall per year.....                | 45.3     |
| Mean daily max temp.....                   | 71°      |
| Mean daily min. temp.....                  | 46°      |
| Normal humidity (Mean daily Noontime)..... | 53%      |
| Normal humidity (mean daily midnight)..... | 77%      |
| Ave. number of days over 90.....           | 73       |
| Ave. number of days under 32.....          | 91       |



## BERRYVILLE DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

Berryville is a great place to spend a leisurely morning or delightful afternoon peking around the various shops or exploring the museums and other historic places. The Downtown Berryville Square is home to many unique businesses. Must see sites are: the Berryville Drug, with it's old-fashioned soda fountain; and Carr's Dry Goods store has a 1940s feel and unique floor arrangement.

"Hey waiter, how's about we take the tax here for vacation?"  
"Well, Clyde, I think I'd rather choke to death in a giant pillar of my own vomit and excrement."  
"Okay then."



# The Terrible 1: The Story of Bill

By Taj  
PO Box 49860  
Austin, TX 78764

*"Fuck," he said. "Hey, I'm sorry, the machine won't take this. It's too beat to work." He handed the dirty crumpled piece of paper back to his friend.*

*The other man looked down at the dollar and muttered, "man, this things been through hell." He didn't know the half of it.*

Joe and I have had this idea to write a story from the perspective of a dollar bill for a few years. It's an idea with endless potential. Money infiltrates every aspect of our lives, and any story you've ever listened to or lived could easily have been witnessed or overheard by money (if not in some way influenced or to blame). I've actually written probably a solid 100 pages of the story or so, but every so often I get frustrated with its lack of direction and I just throw them all away. Joe's been a way a lot this summer, and this issue of the zine kind of fell into my hands and ended up being my responsibility. Hopefully all of you (and Joe) will forgive me for taking this issue over.

Thanks for all the help, take care,  
Taj and Terrible One

## Chapter 1 Fresh and Pure

The first memories that Bill had were those of a young dollar freshly printed at the United States Mint in Cleveland, Ohio. He was one of millions of other newly printed dollar bills whirling through a production plant conveyor belt. He and his brothers could easily be confused for duplicates, except for the all-important serial number branded largely in two places on their face. That was the only way to tell them apart. The mint filled all their heads with the ideals of America. They read the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Deceleration of Independence. They pledged their Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and they cried when they thought of the brave men and women who had died for this flag. Their tears turned to those of joy when they realized that because of these war hero's sacrifices they were now in the greatest country on earth. This was a place where with hard, honest work any man could accomplish anything he wanted. A place where equality was the rule and even a poor man could someday be the President. They learned to hate Communism and Socialism, and they proudly loved the USA's Democracy. This was a country that was free and proud. This was a country that was right and strong. This was the home of the brave.

When Bill's time came he was very frightened to leave the safety of the mint and his brothers, and enter the real world, but he knew that he had to. He was a servant to the greatest country in the world, God's own country, The U.S.A.. As he was driven away from the mint he shook with fear and anticipation. To calm himself he repeated these words over and over, "In God We Trust, In God We Trust..."

## Chapter 2 The Most Honest Man In the World

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1986

What would you do if you found a million dollars? Well, David M. Snook from East Cleveland, Ohio may be one of the only people in the world who never thought twice about bringing the money straight to the police. It was an icy, snowy morning when Mr. Snook left his

house on his daily commute to work. Traffic was moving slowly, and there were a record number of fender benders this morning. David saw what looked like a large canvas bag off to the side of the snow covered road. "I thought maybe it might be a bag of mail, or maybe laundry, but never money," he said at Monday night's press conference. The bag that had over one million dollars in freshly printed one, five, and twenty-dollar bills had fallen from a Federal Reserve delivery

truck on a routine delivery to Cleveland's downtown banks. "When Mr. Snook realized what he had found he immediately knew something was wrong. He followed car tire tracks that led off the side of the road into a large ditch. It was there that he found the delivery truck upturned. Police say that the driver lost control due to the icy road conditions, hit a tree, and then rolled down a large ditch. The driver, twenty-year veteran, Marcus Willey, was pronounced dead on arrival at the Cambridge Medical Center three hours later. David immediately called the police and presented them with the large bag of money when they arrived. Police were astonished when he offered up the huge bag of cash. "Anyone else would have taken the money and run. We could all learn a lot from this man. He's practically a hero," said Sheriff Russ Davidson.

"...Or at least that's what the newspaper said." Bill paused for a minute, and looked around at the young dollars around him. Most of them had

been in the same truck as him, but he was one of the few that had a good vantage point to see what was happening. He was also probably one of the only ones who had the chance luck of being stacked on top of a newspaper that contained the story of the crashed armored truck. He went on speaking, "I remember being able to see out of the top of the bag I was in, and seeing a car cut the delivery driver off. We skidded from one side of the road to the other. There was huge crash and then we were tumbling like the inside of a dryer. When everything was still and quiet I heard the low moaning of the driver who was trapped under the steering wheel. When our hero, Mr. David M. Snook arrived on the scene he grabbed the bag of money that sat next to me and turned to go back up the hill. The driver gasped and begged for help. Only then did David even think to look in the driver's seat. The look on his face was a hundred times more gray and cold than the morning air. The front end of the delivery truck was a mangled accordion, and the truck lay upside down in a huge snow bank. The driver's arms were pinned under the steering wheel and blood dripped from his mouth into his eye and down his forehead. As David reached his hand out the driver thanked him, and when David's hand clamped over the driver's mouth and nose the driver's eyes cursed him. "What in the world are you doing!" the driver's eyes screamed. He flinched and shook for a minute, but his battered body gave up easily. By the time David had the bag of money to the top of the hill he was shaking with nervousness. He scooped a huge pile of us off the top and hid us in his car's trunk. When the police arrived we could hear him give his accident report. We all chanted at the top of our lungs that he was lying, but no one could hear us, have you not noticed how no one ever





hears us..."

### Chapter 3 The Counting

What had witnessed depressed and shook Bill. How could this kind of thing happen in the great United States? How could any American be so evil, and not be punished? He thought about this for a while, and then comforted himself with the thought that he was now safely in the hands of the police. Here at least was a good and honorable group of Americans. Here was a team of men and women who were willing to give their lives for the good of the country.

Bill found himself in the hands of a young police officer. The captain had set up a team of four police officers to count the money recovered from the crashed armored truck. There was no way to know how much money there was because when the police officers finally arrived there was cash blowing all over the highway. They spent hours picking up the littered money and now they needed an official count.

After many hours the officers had completed the task. They called the captain in and gave him the total. The captain said no, the total was not one million two hundred thousand and sixty four, the total is one million sixty-four. He handed two thousand dollars to each officer, and counted himself out one hundred ninety two thousand. He calmly but authoritatively walked out of the room. The officers looked around at one another, and no one spoke. Finally, with a shrug, one of the officers stuffed the pile of money that had been handed to him into his pocket. One by one the officers followed suit. The officer in



front of Bill was the last to pocket his money. He stared at the pile and Bill, who was on top, stared right back.

"This is un-American," Bill said to the officer (though the officer did not hear him). "You are an officer of the law. You are responsible for upholding the laws of this country! You need to leave this room and tell the Chief of Police! This is outrageous and unbelievable." The officer hesitated for a long while. He looked around at the other officers. They were more experienced than he was. All of their eyes were focused on him with an angry intensity. "Don't be an idiot," their eyes said. "Take the money and shut up." He looked at the pile again... it would be nice. His car needed new tires, and money was tight this month. He looked back up at the officers and their eyes were even more menacing. Now they told him he had better take the money or something bad would happen. One of the older officers spoke up: "Listen Mark, Captain Henry gives you a present, you had better take it if you know what I mean." He paused and eyed the young officer, "Do you know what I mean?" He asked with a

tone that could only lead the young officer to believe that he didn't want to find out what he meant. Bill saw the young officer swallow and nod his head yes, and then watched his hand reach down. It grew bigger and bigger until it reached right to Bill and picked him and the rest of the stack he sat on top of and folded the wad in half.

As the officer drove home from work that night Bill sat inside the breast pocket of his jacket thinking in a near panic. What was happening? Had the world gone mad? None of this made any sense to him. How could this be happening? How could this be happening in America?

*to be continued....*

## Reevaluating Control: The Relationship Between School Policy and School Violence

by Jeffrey Kidder

Slave

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*This article was originally written as a research paper for a sociology of education class. It later received the Joseph Himes Award from the North Carolina Sociology Association, making it the best undergraduate sociology paper in the state. Printing this article in Slave is not meant to bore you with academic dribble, nor is mentioning its acclaim an attempt at stroking egos.*

*A lot of our readers are teenagers in high school, and a few of our readers are even parents with young children. The transformation from schools to prisons is a very real and personal threat for these people. A bunch of sociology professors discussing a paper does very little to actually change anything, and students efforts are usually stonewalled. I know when I was in high school I was constantly scolded for my radical ideas and the "reliability" of my sources was always in question. Printing this paper, a paper with official credentials, will hopefully provide people with a little ammunition against the forces working against them.*

School violence is one of the most challenging issues facing education in America today. There is a lot of disagreement among educators, politicians, parents, and students about how much violence is actually present in schools, why the violence exists, and even more disagreement about how to prevent it. However, everyone does agree that when violence is present it seriously impedes the learning pro-

cess. As the issues of school violence are discussed the debate focuses primarily on how violence influences school policy. People want to know how school policy should be altered and adapted to react to violence. Rarely in this debate is the notion that school policy might influence violence mentioned. Despite its lack of popularity, it is crucial that this idea be explored. There is considerable evidence that school policies which emphasizes authoritarian methods of controlling students can actually promote violence.

### Violence in Schools

Starting in the 1950's crime became a national issue in American schools (9). Violence in urban schools was seriously addressed in 1978 (10). The Safe School Study conducted by the National Institute of Education that year found that one third of assaults and robberies against youths in cities happened at school. Today the fact that violence exists in schools is taken as a given. 72% of the American public considers drugs and violence<sup>1</sup> the biggest problem facing schools. The same research showed that 47% of teachers considered drugs and violence the biggest problem in schools<sup>2</sup> (funding, class size, and low academic standards were the most cited problems) (9). 25% of students worry about becoming the victim of a violent crime while at school and nearly three times that number (71%) are aware of violence at their school (8). In all, the National Crime Victimization Sur-



vey estimates that 2.7 million violent crimes occur at or near schools (8).

Students at larger schools (600 or more students) are more likely to know of or have witnessed violent crime. School size has little effect on students perceived safety, though. Middle school students are most likely to know of, witness, worry about, or be the victim of violent crime. Race, ethnicity, and the racial composition of schools had little impact on students perceptions of school violence. The gender of students also has no substantial effect on their perception of school violence, except that males are more likely to be the victims of violent crime (14% to 9%) (8). Overall 40% of robberies and 36% of violent crime (14% to 9%) (8). Overall 40% of robberies and 36% of assaults on teenagers happen at or near schools. Also, each month approximately 5,200 teachers are physically assaulted in addition to the 100,000 teachers who receive threats of physical violence (9). Despite societal notions, research shows that violence is present in all schools-urban, suburban, and rural, affluent and poor.

When studying violence in schools it is imperative to keep the issue of violence in perspective. Despite the picture that the statistics above may paint in the reader's mind, most school are, in fact, still "safe havens" (7). While conflicts frequently occur in schools they seldom result in serious injury (Johnson & Johnson 1996). The National Crime Survey finds that most violence at schools is the result of "scuffles, threats, and disagreements rather than calculated assaults... The overall picture of school violence may be one of teasing, bullying, and horseplay that gets out of hand" (5). The Joint Commission on Integrity in the Public Schools, when studying select New York City schools, found that virtually all violence and drug offenses attributed to students happened off school grounds or were committed by non-students (5). While 25% of students worry about being the victims of violence, and that is a shame, it is easy to forget that 75% don't worry about being the victims of violence. Research and statistics tend to report only the negative<sup>3</sup>.

Just how much of a threat violence poses to schools is debatable, and the wave of fear gripping this nation about violence in schools is largely unfounded. The fact that only 47% of teachers, people who work on the "front lines" everyday, consider drugs and violence the biggest problem facing schools, compared to 72% of the American public illustrates this quite clearly. Regardless, the wave of fear exists. While most violence in schools is not serious, at times it can be very serious. Also while conflict in itself is not a bad thing, the harmful violent behavior that can erupt from it is (5). With these three points in mind, studying school policies on violence is crucial.

#### School Responses to Violence

An understanding of the development of institutionalized education is necessary before looking at current policies about school violence. Public schools were started at the beginning of the 19th century. These first schools were the product of the overcrowding and unemployment of the Industrial Revolution. "For the authorities, the growing delinquency among out-of-work young people showed a clear need for increased supervision and discipline. So new monitorial schools were set up ostensibly to educate but in fact to train children in the factory disciplines of their parents" (1). The focus of the schools were "the indoctrination of the virtues of obedience and uniformity"-in other words, control (1). To achieve this end, schools were modeled after asylums (7). While the rhetoric behind education has changed in modern times, the formula of control has remained virtually untouched.

In the wake of the violence occurring in America's schools and the even bigger wake of political and public concern over violence, schools have turned to increasingly hard-nosed tactics. Schools, especially those in urban areas, are much more like prisons than places

of learning.

The fundamental response to escalations of violence, in hard dollars, is an expansion of the number of security guards and their technological apparatus. ...The techno-response is seen as normal, as natural, as the only possible solution. Thus, the police-state counteraction becomes entrenched in the normal architectural setting of the school as space is arranged to accommodate metal detectors and the auxiliary technologies they spawn. Funds are appropriated for more and better trained guards, metal detectors, X-ray scanning machines, electromagnetic door locks, alarm systems, emergency telephones, and other security equipment (3).

Teachers are becoming removed from the disciplinary process. Semi-autonomous security forces and the police are becoming the dominant means of maintaining order in schools (3). As the police have increased their presence in schools so has the propensity for schools to treat student misconduct as criminal offenses to be handled by law enforcement agencies and the courts<sup>4</sup> (7).

It would be unfair to claim that all responses to school violence were met with a show of greater force by the school system. Conflict resolution programs have become popular. They educate students in nonviolent ways to settle disputes. Curriculums have also been developed that stress ways youths can avoid violent situations. Counseling programs have also become more popular in recent years. Unfortunately, the success of any of these strategies, both punitive and non-punitive have had limited success (7). Even more unfortunate is that the current political climate strongly favors repressive control tactics over preventive strategies.

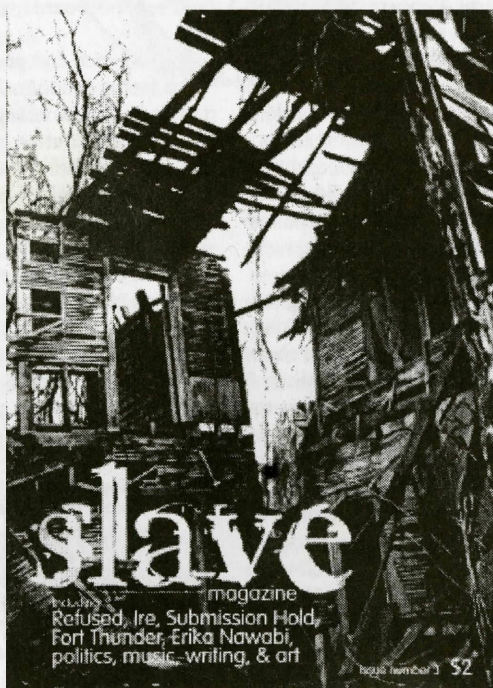
#### Violence and School Policies

Despite their goals of reducing violence, control oriented policies have, in many ways, exacerbated the problem. To understand this we must look at two basic principles. First, people commit crimes when they don't feel that they are part of the community which they are violating. This is why crime rates are higher in large cities compared to small towns. People in small towns feel like part of the town and therefore choose not to commit crimes against it. In larger

cities, though, people do not feel this sense of community. Life for the city dweller is one of alienation and isolation-feelings that breed crime<sup>5</sup>. The point is not that people cannot interact in large groups, but that a sense of community is essential. Second, people "behave" when they see that it is in their interest, which is a concept that ties into the first point. If people are not coerced, but instead choose the activities they would like to do, whether it be their occupation, education, or hobbies, people will enjoy doing them. When people realize that working together is more enjoyable and productive than fighting amongst each other they are more likely to cooperate. Therefore people need to feel that what they are doing with their time is worthwhile.

Schools rarely address these two very important principles. In fact, schools generally operate against them. The prevailing structure of American schools is a highly stratified system (administrators, security personnel, and teachers at the top and students at the

bottom) in which students are coerced with fear not to misbehave. This structure is blatantly obvious when principals prowl the halls with baseball bats and students are late for classes because they had to wait to be scanned for weapons (7). Being treated this way, like criminals, makes students feel alienated and prevents any hope of building a sense of community in the school. In turn, this alienation can lead to violence in schools (2). Inherent in the prevailing school





structure is also a curriculum that is irrelevant and taught in a coercive way (6, 2, 4). In other words, what students are taught and how it is presented does not appear to be in their interests, and therefore school seems meaningless. As with alienation, this feeling of meaninglessness can lead to violent behavior.

## Alternative Policies

If what is described above leads to violence in schools, then the question must be asked, "what is the solution?" First, it must be accepted that schools will never be utopias. As long as there is crime in society there will be crime in schools. It should also be understood that violence in schools is multifaceted, and no single issue can resolve the multitude of factors which contribute to violence in schools. That understood, school policies could be changed to help prevent violence in schools. To do this the structure of schools should be reversed.

First, the stratification present in schools should be reduced and students should be empowered. The most crucial step in this process is creating what has been called a constructivist classroom (4). A constructivist classroom involves letting the students, not the teachers, control the classroom. This does not mean that students run wild, but, in fact, the very opposite. Teachers point students in the right direction and cultivate their natural desire to learn. A constructivist classroom allows students to explore what interests them, therefore making the curriculum relevant and encouraging students to learn. For example, with younger children instead of just learning the abstract concept of numbers (even if it's cloaked in some game like counting sheep) letting children understand numbers in a real life context, such as dividing boxes of cookies among students at snack time, makes learning seem relevant and worthwhile (4). With older children discussing history within a context that allows current issues to be discussed makes learning not about rote memorization, but about practical knowledge worth having (6).

An integral part of the constructivist classroom is giving students autonomy. Rules are not handed down to students, but are made by the students themselves. Once again, this does not mean that chaos reigns, but in fact quite the opposite. Students and teachers discuss rules and come to a consensus about what needs to be done so the class can run smoothly. Creating rules and regulations in this way makes school rules, which most students now see as arbitrary, relevant and necessary. It has been shown that children who are allowed autonomy in their actions will behave themselves without supervision (4). Children who are kept in line with fear and coercion, on the other hand, will no longer behave when the fear and coercion are removed, such as when the teacher leaves the room (4).

While the constructivist classroom is stressed, because class is where most students spend their time at school, in fact a constructivist school is what is necessary. Little rooms filled with freedom cannot be surrounded by halls where security guards with distrust prevail and metal detectors compliment every entrance to the school. Creating a sense of community in the classroom must be met with non-alienation policies throughout the rest of the school.

The urban schools that I know that feel safe to those who spend their time there don't have metal detectors and armed security guards, and their principals don't carry baseball bats. What these schools do

have is a strong sense of community and collective responsibility. Such schools are seen by students as sacred territory, too special to be spoiled by crime and violence, and too important to risk one's being excluded. Such schools are few, but their existence serves as a tangible proof that there are alternatives to chaotic schools plagued by violence, and controlled institutions that aim at producing docile bodies (7).

## When developing the constructivist school it is crucial that two points are remembered. First, it is essential that the constructivist model be applied to children when they begin school. If coercion and fear are lifted after years of being the primary means of social control of course kids will run wild for a while. Therefore autonomy must be granted to students from the beginning.

Second, a constructivist school is an all or nothing proposition. If students are to be self-governing and interested in learning freedom must be a consistent factor. Selectively applying these ideas will only confuse both students and teachers. It is also important when forming a constructivist school that the constructivist principles go beyond just the teachers-students relationship. An egalitarian atmosphere needs to be developed between teachers and administrators, administrators and schools boards, and so on (4, 6).

Violence and people's perceptions of violence are serious problems facing schools. While everyone agrees violence is bad and counterproductive to learning the common American approach does not work. Current strategies involving authoritarian control techniques are not the solution because they fail to address the causes of violent behavior and only increase student alienation and their sense of meaninglessness. "By the year 2000," the National Education Goals has stated, "every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" [emphasis added]. For years we've been increasing the number of security guards, police, and their technological apparatus in our schools, and despite all our hopes, violence has increased. Perhaps our educational goals should instead be to create a learning environment that will be discipline.

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# Reevaluating Control:

## The Relationship Between School

This article was originally written for a national symposium on the topic of school violence, held at the University of California, San Diego, in 1995. It was revised for this issue. The author is a professor of education at the University of California, San Diego, and is also a member of the National Education Goals Panel.

Violence in schools is one of the most challenging issues facing education in America today. There is a lot of disagreement among educators, politicians, parents, and the public about how to prevent it. However, everyone does agree that violence in schools is a real problem. The issue is not whether violence exists in schools, but how to deal with it. The National Education Goals Panel has identified violence in schools as one of the most serious threats to the future of our nation. It is time to reevaluate our current policies and practices and to develop new strategies to prevent violence in schools.

Violence in schools is a complex issue that has many causes. It is not just a problem of urban schools, but a problem that exists in all schools. There are many factors that contribute to violence in schools, including poverty, social inequality, and a lack of community support. It is important to understand the causes of violence in schools in order to develop effective prevention strategies. This article will explore the relationship between school structure and violence, and will discuss some of the challenges that educators face in preventing violence in schools.

The National Education Goals Panel has identified violence in schools as one of the most serious threats to the future of our nation. It is time to reevaluate our current policies and practices and to develop new strategies to prevent violence in schools.

## Violence in Schools

Starting in the 1980s, crime became a central issue in American schools. Violence in schools was a new phenomenon, and it was a problem that affected all schools. The National Education Goals Panel has identified violence in schools as one of the most serious threats to the future of our nation. It is time to reevaluate our current policies and practices and to develop new strategies to prevent violence in schools.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1 I do not make the claim that drugs and violence are synonymous or dependent on each other, but often they are lumped together in surveys and research as well as in many people's minds.

2 It is interesting to note the huge difference between the general public and teachers views pervasiveness of school violence. The role of the media

becomes quite notable in this example.

3 For example, no one turns on the TV to hear a special report on the tens of millions of students who were not shot at school today.

4 In my senior year of high school for example, the first year "resource officers" were present at Manteo High, a student was arrested (taken out of school in handcuffs, the whole deal) for "harassment"-following the vice principal around for several hours begging to have his "un-excused" absence be excused so he could make up a test he had missed. While inappropriate behavior, educators of even the very recent past would never have advocated arresting a student for such an offense.

5 While it is not the main thrust of the point being made, this explains one way in which some schools promote violence-they are just too big and the students feel alienated and isolated.

## Stories From The Milkcrate

(excerpts) by Michael Jackman

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New York, NY 10163

*"There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwelling, with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built."*

- Henry David Thoreau  
 Walden

AT THE BEGINNING of summer, I broke up with my girlfriend - with whom I had been living for three years - and found myself looking for a new place to live. On my meager budget, lodging in Manhattan - where studio apartments routinely rent for \$800 or more - was out of the question. I took the L train to Williamsburg to check the crude fliers wallpapered on the Bedford Avenue storefronts, hoping to find a lead. New York is probably one of the most difficult places to find affordable housing, and as I jotted down notes in my spiral notebook, more than a few passers-by stopped to take notes as well, and their competition set me ill at ease. Anxiously, I walked with long strides to the telephone booth to start calling around.

A gruff, young voice answered my first call. I inquired about the space, for which the rent was \$450.

"Did you read all of the flier?" the voice rudely interrupted.

"Yes, it mentioned that some money should be put into construction."

"Yeah, we're asking for \$1,600 for first month's rent, the security deposit, and the initial construction."

"Well, it does sound possible, but I'd like to have a look today if it's okay."

It turned out that I was just two blocks away, so I walked over to have a look. It was an old industrial garage in a semi-industrial neighborhood. The door was answered by a young, chubby, curly-haired man who introduced himself as Jacob. He invited me in and I got an eyeful of the space. It was very rough. Though the walls had been painted white, the lack of illumination, save for a dusty shaft of light from a skylight, gave the space an ancient ambience. Years of grime caked the thick wooden rafters above, and a few strands of rusted conduit ran along the ceiling into the darkness beyond. To my left sat a battered room that had probably been used as an office when the garage was still in business. Walking in further, I was some stairs that led up to a level above it, which Jacob informed me was the bathroom. Further in, a few couches sat off to the left, centered around a makeshift table, forming an apocalyptic-looking living room. To the



right stood a few shanties that had been nailed together out of discarded theatrical flats, serving as temporary bedrooms. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I realized that the space stretched back for a hundred feet, ending in a brick wall with a dirty and broken window perched near the top.

As Jacob filled me in on the place, it only grew less attractive. I would be living in one of the ugly shanties along the wall, and I would be required to put a lot of time and money into the construction of real rooms. I sifted it through my mind, considering the cheat rent, the inevitable accumulation of building skills, and the proximity of the subway. The other roommates arrived, and I was pleased to find that they were very nice. Annie, a rocker who had lived there since April, was very kind and knew a lot about music. Greg, who had lived there slightly longer, was a soft-spoken but intense immigrant from Spokane. I had many questions to ask, and they were earnest and helpful. I thought it over for a week and wound up taking the space without looking at any others.

I brought over a load of my things and set up a room on the concrete floor in one of the shanties. I didn't have a bed - or any furniture to speak of - so I laid down a battered tarp and set a thick comforter and pillow on top of it: my Spartan quarters.

I met with Jacob and walked down to the beer festival in front of the Brooklyn Brewery. Jacob, in the middle of a conversation with some of his friends, pulled me aside. He informed me - rather glibly, I thought - that he was unable to get Annie, whom he felt had not been doing a fair share of the work, to leave the space. Since he couldn't kick her out, he had decided to shut down the space. This meant I would have to leave!

"So you just decided now?" I asked.

"Yeah, I've been thinking about it for a few days and I just came to that conclusion."

"That's terrible!"

"Yeah, well, you're welcome to stay until the end of the month."

"Damn straight I am!" I thought, "I've paid you all the money I have!"

He just wandered back into conversation with him chums and I stood there like a doddering fool, overcome with frustration, anxiety, rage, and utter confusion. All the dread of shelter seeking roared again in my head! I waited out the week in my shanty, wondering what I would do.

As the month drew to a close, Greg approached me and told me that he would be taking over the space from Jacob. He encouraged me to stay, since he had found two other boarders, John and Clay, who knew a great deal about building, of which I was almost entirely



ignorant.

More interesting still, he gave me some intelligence about Jacob that surprised me.

You see, Jacob had been living in this space since February, routinely seeking people to move in and help build the place, since he was in charge. Since he was unemployed, he saw himself fit to manage the construction process in his free time. About five people had moved through the place, leaving in disgust at Jacob's temper tantrums, control freaking, and general selfishness. For instance, Jacob charged me \$450 in rent to live there with my quarter share, when the rent was actually \$1,600. This was his way of being paid to "manage" the place. So, he only paid \$250 in actual rent. And nothing ever really got accomplished in a competent manner, unless Jacob left everybody alone to work without being ordered about. While he was "in charge" of the space, he would harass tenants – rousting one tenant out of bed at three in the morning to scream about ten dollars – and make life miserable. He would insult and howl at Annie for not working hard enough. He even threw out the mail of previous partners in the project.

I was grateful that I had been spared a similar fate and took the broad view of things. Jacob, who was evidently bad news, would be on his way and real progress would begin.

That night, after I finished work and came back to the space, Jacob sat on the couch in his underwear. He smiled at me and began to apologize for eating the food I had left in the icebox.

"That's no problem, Jacob."

He listened to his stereo restlessly and changed the CD a few times. Finally, he got my attention a second time.

"Michael, I know you were smoking pot the other night. Do you have any more of that left? I'd really like to smoke some pot."

Without hesitation I rose and rolled a joint from what I had stashed in my shanty. We smoked for a while and he dragged deeply on the joint, carelessly Bogarting it, letting the dregs of my stash burn away, absently drifting into silent reverie. I managed to get a few hits.

After blowing smoke, Jacob turned to me and asked, "Isn't it strange that when somebody else has something, you can't ask for it? And when you have something, you can't give it to anybody else?"

In light of the fact that Jacob had freely taken my food and smoked my joint, I found it odd that he would ask such a question. I slowly realized that he would never give me anything I asked of him, and if I gave him anything that he asked of me, he would think I was a sh-muck for complying. I felt sorry for him.

He moved out a few days after John and Clay moved in. It was only when Greg got all the bills in his name that we realized that Jacob had collected money for electricity and gas, yet had never paid a single bill, and we were saddled with months of penalties and overdue bills. He never did pay us back, which was an especial hardship for us.

Shortly after Jacob left, *real* progress began on the space. So far, the progress has been rolling along for six months. Now I am feeling very positive about the living situation, and I can confidently call this space home at this time. When I started out, however, I had my doubts and my hopes.

For years I've been reading books about homesteading. It has been a far-off dream about furrowed fields, browsing goats, the raising of a home, and deep breaths of fresh air in the morning. Of course, I live in New York, which is about as far as you can get from the farm. This led me to wonder if I had been taking the romantic view of homesteading, since that life is at a safe enough distance to muse about comfortably. How do I really feel about making my own home, using what I create with my own labor, and learning something new from my endeavors? I'm delighted to report that it was not all unrealistic romanticism.

When I first moved into the garage, I was concerned about my ability to work with other people. I had had only one close friend for the last three years, and I had serious difficulties looking people in the

eye, let alone forming working relationships. Also, we were looking at a space with no kitchen, no heat, no real rooms, and just a few couches and electrical outlets. It would be a big job to just get the rudiments of a habitation up and running.

As far as our lack of furniture has gone, we are lucky indeed to live in Williamsburg, which is a virtual dumping ground for all sorts of furnishings and building materials. We have found no less than two easy chairs, five doors, four hardback chairs, three tables, and a structural steel stairway. We are resourcefully and judiciously utilizing found materials in our designs.

During our work here, people have advised me to concern myself with following the building code. I have been urged to employ the techniques approved by municipal law, and some people worry for our safety. I am of the opinion that we are bound to build the

safest place that we can, since we have to live in it. After all, contractors follow code because they are forced to, since they want to get the job done as quickly as possible, with the most profit. Our landlord would definitely hire the cheapest contractors he could. We, on the other hand, work deliberately and carefully, with safety at a premium. Why, if only you could have seen the work that was done by legitimate contractors that we uncovered! It doesn't begin to measure up to what we're doing. The walls were built of cheap board that fell apart easily. The electrical work was slapped together with the utmost carelessness. I can say that code was absolutely not followed by these contractors. I found exposed wiring, armored cable used ex-

ternally, junction boxes that would flare blue sparks when jostled, and every junction box lacked the non-conductive connector bushing required by law. The cement work in the rear had heaved up during some frost, most probably because it had not been poured below the frost line. I could go on and on cataloging these flagrant violations of – not just the code – common sense!

The concrete at the rear of the building that had heaved needed to be repaired. Cement is pretty expensive stuff, so I decided to spend a few hours breaking up the heaved cement with a simple hammer. We were able to use these small rocks as filler, which cheapened the job considerably. When I was done, after having employed the stress of a hard day on the job as the fuel for an angry bout of rock smashing, I looked at the pile of rubble and felt very proud. Here was work that paid off in great savings, and when we souped it together and filled it in, we wrote our names confidently in the wet cement.

Next, we ripped apart some of the walls in the upstairs bathroom. This was invigorating work, offering vivid memories of my teen career in vandalism. Kicking and smashing at the beams, we rent the walls that closed in the toilet stall. Much to our surprise, we found an old dildo that one of the lackluster contractors had stuffed into the walls as a gag of some kind. My low opinion of these mediocre workers found a way to sink even lower at this sight.

We then began setting up the rooms in the main area of the space. One thing I've learned about this process of home building is that the frames go up very quickly. Raising the frame for a room or a house is a rapid process that gives you the illusion that the rest of the job will be completed in short order. Truth be told, the proper analogy to raising a frame would be stretching a canvas. It's just when you've set up some rough walls when you have to fill them in with wiring, insulation, drywall, tape, primer, paint, to reinforce the ceiling with rafters, stringers, plywood, fixtures, and so forth. The weekend that we set up the frames I imagined that the whole job would soon be done.

I began to learn more and more as the job went on. I learned what wood would bear a certain load. I learned a lot of terminology, such as carriage bolts, borer bits, variable speed drills, masonry bits, two by fours, four by fours, self-drilling metal screws and much more. Right now my mind is full of a boatload of construction terms that had never previously sailed into port. Perhaps the greatest leap for me has been my study of electricity, of which I wound up in charge.





Shortly after work began on this space, I bought a few books about home repair. John and Clay knew all about carpentry, and Greg knew all about laying gas pipe. I searched through the books in search of something that could become my domain. I settled on electricity. Two months into the job, I decided to become our master electrician.

We heard this apocryphal story that the people who used to occupy this space had been growing pot. I'm not sure where they grew it – if they did – but the new lines of conduit with fresh wire spreading all over the space had been hacked off at the service panel up front. The only live circuit was the old rusty strip of conduit and armored cable that stretched all the way to the back. We wound up running all the power off this one 15-amp circuit breaker, to the point where the lights would dim when we turned on our sole coffee maker. I've spent the last few months backwiring all the new rooms, running extension cords to my embryonic grids to make the outlets in the rooms work. I've had some satisfying detective work trying to find what wires run from the service panel to the rear of the space. There are wires, hidden by a hundred feet of snaking conduit, on which I've used a continuity tester to find out where they terminate. I have snaked armored cable through the walls of the rooms and conduit along the walls, installing switches, outlets, dimmers, and junction boxes. I have mathematically determined the maximum load on each circuit and wired accordingly. It has been an exhilarating experience to come to a job with no skills whatsoever, and through common sense and research make a very professional go of it. My roommates' congratulations on my work goad me on further. In this regard, I am very happy.

Two months into the job, I already felt an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. We had built three rooms on two levels, installed a basic kitchen, repaired the floor, installed a basic electrical system, connected the gas and power, arranged for the trash to be hauled away, furnished a common space with mostly found furniture, and pooled our resources successfully to solve problems. In Jacob's absence, the rent has become equitable and realistic, a mere \$320 per month, a pittance by Manhattan standards. Even with the building costs factored in, it comes to a happy \$430 per month.

As September rolled around, the weather began to get distinctly colder. We endured cold snaps in the low fifties, and started shopping around for a furnace of some kind. Duct, which would spread hot air from a furnace to the extreme corners of the space, is very expensive material. A gas blower, which simply blows hot air through the space, was the cheaper alternative. Clay's father, who had a spare Modine gas blower, let us know that if we were able to drive out to Cleveland and pick up the unit, it was ours. We quickly arranged to borrow a friend's van and made the fifteen-hour drive to pick it up. Borrowing a hoist from our neighbor, we raised the blower up to the ceiling. While the 200-pound blower hung from the ceiling, John got up on the roof and bolted it into angle irons from above. The next week, we got on the roof and cut through the ceiling with a skillsaw and set up the exhaust duct. Now, real exhaust duct that will go through a roof must be what is called double-wall duct. The inside duct gets very, very hot. It is surrounded by outer duct that will not get as hot. The kind of double-wall duct that we needed would have cost us about \$90! Instead, we made our own double wall duct for about \$15. I am especially proud of this, because it was my own idea. I am slowly aware that even in an area where I don't quite know what's going on, if people explain the problem clearly enough to me, I can be the answer man!

I found the right kind of flashing and spent an exhausting night nailing and tarring the stack and flashing into the roof by flashlight. My good friend stopped by and we had a brief conversation while he yelled up to the roof. He left just after a few minutes, but I felt so proud that he had happened to stop by and see my hands blackened by roofing cement, doing some important job. I suppose morale really is half the battle.

After running gas pipe and electricity to the blower, we connect-

ed it to a thermostat and started it up. Though the powerful heater was rated at 250,000 Btu's, it became apparent that we had to solve our insulation problems. Concrete, of which the floor was made, is a certain thief of heat in the cold winter months. Also, the beastly roll-down, metal garage door at the front, which had acted as a vast radiator of heat on the sunny southern side during the summer, now let the whistling wintry winds poke right through. Clay and John came up with the excellent idea of building a large wooden platform over the uneven concrete in the front, and sealing off the front area with an insulated wall. The deck slowly took over the front of the space, and as it enlarged we moved the oven, kitchen sink, living room, and writing desk onto it. Using a wide variety of found tile, we decorated the kitchen floor with an eclectic and colorful pastiche. Finally, we raised a wall to bar the cold air from entering our warm sanctum. With that ugly garage door out of view, our space is looking all the more luxurious.

I'll admit that when we started out I wondered if our landlord would have any problems with our construction work. Happily, our landlord seems to be part of the old-school Brooklyn mafia. His name is Nunzio, and his only concern was that we use his waste hauling company. Once, when some utility people were working on the water main outside, he let in a city worker. This city official started off with a list of shocked questions upon seeing that work was being done on the space, such as, "Where is the building permit? Who is the contractor? Is this up to code?" Nunzio quietly led him outside and we never heard anything come of it. I'm convinced that having a landlord like Nunzio is slightly preferable to having a legitimate landlord. After all, what are realtors, brokers, and landlords but their own mafia, and with a lot more power? A mafia is a mafia, but I'll take the local elements, which at least live in the neighborhood, if I must have one or the other.

So, it's been six months and the work is not finished. I often think that it will never be finished, that we will always find something that we want to add, discard, or tweak. Still, I'm surprised at how well we are getting along. I've never been involved in a collective effort like this before. Though we have sometimes quibbled contentiously about how we ought to build things, we generally find agreement quickly. Our decisions are made by informal meetings, usually when we all happen to be home at the same time. As we sit drinking beer in the living room or making coffee in the morning, talk inevitably turns to building plans. Scenarios are often hatched in an entertaining manner, with innovative ideas cropping up, stranger ideas being passed over but not ridiculed. Sometimes we toss out ridiculous ideas just for fun, like toy trains running all over the space, or astro-turf on the bathroom ceiling. Thrown together as we are, we make excellent brainstormers.

Another exciting facet of this endeavor, especially for me, is that this space is a laboratory for people working out from under the specter of coercion. My roommates are not card-carrying anarchists, yet we manage the collective process without forming camps and plotting against each other. This is how I imagined anarchy: at worst a contest of wills or a clash of character. This is not all-out chaos and warfare. We have open ears and minds, trying to settle on the best ideas. I am more convinced than ever that the human condition is peaceful, flexible, and cooperative.

Just think! A few short months ago I lay on a concrete floor with no bed, no furniture, no heat, no real walls, and now I have a furnished room. My labor – so often traded for mere scrip – is being put towards something that I can use. *There's* a feeling that I couldn't have talked about before. Our friends

drop by and marvel at this place, filling me with pride. I seem to have broken out of my shell and am learning not just building skills but how to work with others and feel comfortable. We have further to go, but we have come a long way already. My ideas about homesteading were not just romantic musings after all. Bit by bit, we – formerly strangers – are making a real home.





# The Machine Question

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*I've been curious about Luddism for awhile, both because of my interest in popular movements and my own anti-technology feelings. I guess that can sound strange from someone who surrounds herself with so much technology (computers, email, TV, etc) - especially when you consider most people's picture of Luddism consists of the Amish or neo-primitives who seek to live with no technology at all. That is, if people have a conception of Luddism to begin with.*

*Anyway, my ideas have been fed by some of my reading lately - some of it I came upon accidentally. In Marge Piercy's book, *Woman On The Edge of Time*, for example, she illustrates a fictional society which advocates the responsible use of technology - they use it to do the jobs that are dangerous or undesirable, but not to do everything. Last year I also read "Four Arguments of the Elimination of Television" by Jerry Mander, who I've discovered is somewhat of a neo-Luddite himself. Then, I started seeking out information and read a book or two and a ton of essays, by, among others, Kirkpatrick Sale and Neil Postman.*

## PART ONE:

Who the Luddites were and why they are relevant.

The Luddites were a small and short-lived, but important, popular movement that had its heyday almost 200 years ago. We see the residuals today when someone uses the term "Luddite" as derogatory slang to mean a person who is anti-technology. There is even a not-so-well known movement of Neo-Luddites, which is gaining strength now more than ever. So what's the deal? What's the origin of the term Luddite, and why is it important even today? Here's the sort version.

In the 1800's, right before the start of the Industrial Revolution, England had a primarily textile-based economy. One particular area in England, including Nottinghamshire (home to the much fabled Robin Hood), was dominated by textile manufacturing as a way of life, meaning a large percentage of the population were employed as skilled weavers. These were small, close-knit communities where everyone knew each other and their business. This was a time before the advent of factories, before big business, and before any kind of real class-consciousness.

Now, into this semi-peaceful scene entered the new, large frames (i.e., the machines that weavers worked on) and steam engines. These machines could do the work of many weavers, and the material they turned out was not near as good quality. It also meant that the value of skilled labor dropped drastically. Skilled, experienced workmen who demanded a high wage were no longer needed to run these machines, and the factories eventually filled with women and children who would work in worse conditions for less pay.

This move to a factory system meant a move from a moral system (where owners knew and cared for the men that worked for them) to an immoral/unethical one. Where business owners were once responsible to the community, this began the move to the more distant worker/owner relationship.

The new machines and factories, in addition to the recent Enclosure Acts which sectioned off public lands for private use and the decrease in foreign trade because of England's war efforts at the time (i.e. a decline in demand for their finely crafted products) meant that all of the sudden, large amounts of people were being put out of work at an unprecedented level. This wasn't a time of unemployment compensation or any kind of social aid from the government, either.

So, around 1811, things were getting pretty desperate. The weavers realized that their livelihoods were seriously jeopardized, and a few men got together and decide to do something about it. They met secretly at night, marched to one of the new factories that had devas-

tated the community by putting a large number of its residents out of work, and they smashed the frames.

What followed was about a year and a half of vandalism - direct action against the new owners of the frames. Sometimes there were just threats, sometimes there was frame breaking or attacks on factories, and eventually assassination attempts, rioting, and arson. This could be considered vigilantism - but a sympathetic view interprets this was a "take action or starve" kind of situation. The Luddites attributed their acts to (and signed their letters from) a fictional "Ned Ludd" or "King Ludd" - hence the name "Luddism". The Luddites were not an organized group and did not have any hierarchy or leaders, so this truly can be called a popular movement - one which began from the people and without the help of any kind of elite politico vanguard. These men (and women) were not necessarily politically inclined; they acted because their livelihoods were threatened.

What was at issue here was "The machine question", as it was called during the time. When new technology is introduced, who decides its use or its implications? When it effects the entire community, why does the community not have a say in its application? The Luddites are usually interpreted as being anti-technology or against progress, but really, they were *for* the responsible use of technology. Instead of being *against* all technology, they were against technological innovation that is bad for the majority of people in the community or has overwhelming negative aspects, usually while benefiting a small number of businessmen who already have a lot of money. The weavers of this time had nothing against other recent inventions, such as the carding engine and the spinning jack, which aided human labor instead of replacing it.

I suppose it could be said that the final blow against labor came from the government. Touting a "laissez faire stance", the government maintained that it did not want to meddle in the concerns of industry, and that the market should regulate itself without intervention - the "invisible hand" of pioneering economist Adam Smith. This idea came to be interpreted in a way that only helped industry and hurt labor. The laws that had previously protected the workers, like those requiring apprenticeships, were done away with, and new laws, like those prohibiting "combinations" or unions were passed. So by taking this stance, the government didn't afford workers any power to address grievances or otherwise confront owners/employers.

Tensions escalated in 1812. The government, intervening on the side of industry with the justification that they were simply "maintaining order" as opposed to "protecting business interests", began a serious crackdown, moving troops into the area and creating a "state of warfare". As Luddite activity escalated, so did their repression. Actions like the taking or administering of the Luddite oath, or smashing a frame, first were punishable by deportation to Australia, and later become capital crimes. It reached the point where the ratio of military men to the public was 1 in 70 people. The sheriff had no qualms about using spies, informants, and rewards to bring in Luddites, and the fact that the reward money essentially went uncollected is testimony to the strong community ties and the sympathies that the Luddites roused in the general population.

At the point where the Luddite revolt could have turned to mass insurrection, the government hanged eight men convicted of Luddite activities, transported 13 to Australia for different sentences, and imprisoned more. This is also the point where Sale notes that, at the height of the Luddites' impact, where the movement poised at the line between resistance and revolution, the "movement" was unable to successfully articulate both the possibilities and the means to get there. This same thing, he notes, happened in later radical movements, where those involved splinter into factions and cannot maintain any cohe-



siveness (or effectiveness).

Even though Luddism was not a successful movement, it is important to realize that all of the things the original Luddites feared or opposed eventually came to pass. They were justified in their actions. Not only were these fears realized, they have become the basis for the world economy today. The destruction of community (or, a community based on mutual aid, tradition, etc), the deskilling of workers, the lack of personal and moral responsibility on the part of business, the role of government on the side of business - these are all issues which have been, and continue to be, at the heart of political debate. The basic question that comes out of this movement is who decides issues surrounding technology? The community who it effects or the person who stands to gain, monetarily, from it? Or the government, which has proven that it sides with business?

This short summary cannot begin to do the movement any justice. Kirkpatrick Sale's book, *Rebels Against The Future*, digs up primary documentation and eyewitness accounts that do a good job at arousing my sympathies. I respect the Luddites because this was a popular movement. This was born out of frustration and anger, by people who these issues were directly affecting - instead of being a grand plan schemed in a back room by a group of "radicals." There was no vanguard or leadership.

A lot of common struggles and ideas began in this era, such as the formation of class-consciousness and the widening of the gap between the business class and everyone else. The beginnings of industrialism created a permanent breach between any obligations or responsibilities that worker and owner had to each other, and most importantly the role of business. It has come to pass that what is good for business is good for the country.

An economy based on industrialism and the idea of capitalism, has a simple philosophy regarding the introduction of new technology and the displacement of workers. This theory says that capitalists, or owners, introduce new technology and though this puts people out of work. The money that the capitalists make will allow them to expand or to introduce even newer technology that will absorb these displaced workers.

This wasn't any solace to the Luddites and workers of this era, because even though this kind of regeneration of jobs would eventually take place, it left many generations of the "working class" in pretty much destitute poverty. Sale argues that in modern times, especially during the 1980s and the "Second Industrial Revolution" (the printed age, and then the computer age, beginning in the early 70s), many of these displaced workers were absorbed into government and civil positions, swelling the size, budget, and debt of governments to unforeseen heights. This means that industry never absorbed those workers they displaced. Even now, we are (and have been) experiencing a rapid move toward a service-based economy - where most of the new jobs created lack security, benefits, and real chances for upward mobility. Industrialism hasn't rebounded to take care of the people that new technology is replacing.

While this is extreme, there are some criticisms of Luddism which need to be mentioned. More than anything, you'll notice that the Luddites were not successful. Though they may have slightly delayed the implementation of the factory and machine based systems in their industries, they made no real lasting impressions on industry itself, beyond becoming instead an enduring, romanticized myth like the story of Robin Hood and his friends. But, much like Robin Hood, the Luddites have made a lasting impression on the psyche of the industrialized world - more like a thorn in the side of the giant called business.

## PART TWO:

How long before a computer can do your job? Modern offshoots of

"the machine question."

Modern Luddites, while identifying with the struggles of the 19th century movement, realize that this same revolution in the workplace is taking place today. In the last two decades, the threat of job loss to automation or computerization is a bigger issue than ever. The oft quoted statistics - that adjusting for inflation, real wages have declined or stagnated, that the average CEO makes over 100 times what the average worker makes, that the top few percent of people control the vast majority of the wealth - these are all just the tell-tale signs that some kind of change is (and has been) taking place which has widespread effects among the population. These are signs that we, as young, politicized, active people need to be paying attention to the world going on around us.

However, most of the people who are reading this article and young people in general aren't concerned about labor issues. Maybe you're "political" and you've written off current affairs to deal with the ephemeral world of ideology and utopianism. Maybe you're one of the few who comes from a privileged background and because of your access to technology, you have the know-how to compete in the technology-based job market (for the time being).

Why does this matter to you? Because it is important to note that the general trends of downsizing (read Michael Moore) and the move to service-based industry mean our economy is moving even more toward an unskilled labor market. This means that it's likely that you'll be overqualified for your next job, if you can find one, and that you'll be easily replaceable. You'll work longer hours for less pay and benefits - the same gripes of all the previous generations. Your bosses won't need to invest anything in you because they can get someone else at a moment's notice. That temp job that gives you flexibility and good scheduling lacks security, benefits, upward mobility, and any kind of advanced training. Maybe that's OK with you now, but when you have children or when you want to buy a house, you'll understand. All the hard-won victories of the eight-hour day, overtime pay and benefits are eroding.

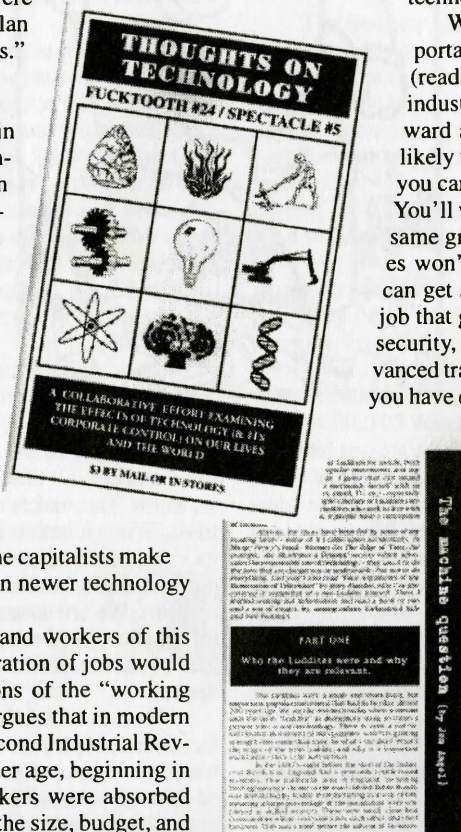
We need to remember that we're not kids, in the economic sense, forever. As we grow older, we don't necessarily grow out of our punk/hardcore/youth culture roots, but like a lot of people we seek security and we make changes in our lives. We become less able to depend on parents and friends, or our youth, for financial security. Think of how many of your friends have gotten married, had babies, or bought a house in the last year. That's going to be you one day, if it's not one of the other million reasons to save money and have security. If the only jobs available to you are high paying (sic) service jobs (or unreliable "punk rock" jobs

at labels, stores, or distros), how do you expect to survive, even with the punk "it's okay to be poor and dumpster dive" minimalist attitude?

Labor is an issue that effects us, as well as our parents, and we need to start paying attention to it now, before we get even further into economic crisis. We can't wait until the last minute. Equally as important, a neo-Luddite critique of technology should not just stop at labor. Here are a few other large (enormous?) issues that beg us to be concerned about technology and its continued expansion into every aspect of our lives.

## Class Issues and Technology

*Wired*, the mouthpiece for the hip computer elite, would have us believe that if you don't have that cell phone and laptop computer, you are going to be left in the dust. And because the people who read magazines like *Wired*, and those who create the advertising we see on television and billboards are very pro-technology, we are inundated





with images of people who use all of the latest computer gadgets. In reality, this is hardly the case, but we are creating a world that is off limits to those who do not have this access. The one simple example that most of us can identify with is TV. If you don't have cable, in most areas that means you don't get any TV at all - or only one or two channels. This means that if you can't afford the cable bill, you miss out on sitcoms and dumb comedies, but also news, documentaries, election coverage - and other kinds of information that much of our society *only* gets from TV. The question, from Neil Postman, is to whom will this technology give greater power and freedom, and whose power and freedom will be reduced?

Technology affects class issues in other ways as well. Our newest, hi-tech high-speed communications and computers allow corporations to excel at becoming multinationals. These large entities control more money and people than most of the world's countries. They are increasingly becoming too large and powerful to be subject to the laws of any country. (NAFTA anyone?). And they can, because of technology. More than that, all new technology comes from one source: the corporation. And the only reason a corporation introduces new technology is because it believes it can make a profit. Once they introduce this technology, they create advertising that tells us that we need this new technology in our lives, despite the fact that people have been living, quite successfully, for millennia without Palm Pilots, three-way calling, and GPS car tracking systems.

In addition, we are at a time where some technologies are relatively cheap and these create the illusion of affluence, or of prosperity. Families with cable TV, CD Players, cordless phones, and new (ish) cars believe that because they can afford these luxuries that they are part of the prosperous middle class, when in reality these are just inexpensive token technologies which most people purchase on credit in the first place. Because we can afford these things and we're not in "desperate poverty", we become less aware of class issues. It's the old idea that people have to be personally affected negatively to care about larger issues and that unacceptable conditions breed popular unrest. But if we can still afford our big screen TVs and around-the-clock satellite sports coverage, what is there to be worried about?

Even within punk, we have this technological hierarchy as well. Slick, computer-generated zines win out over the sloppy cut and paste standard because that's what distributors and advertisers look for. The *Punk Planet* look-a-likes win out because they get the money, which allows them to be financially stable and viable. The problem here is that those zines require access to computers (and the ability to use them) - that is a class issue. This is symptomatic of the class issues we just kind of look past - even in our own scene.

### Community, Culture, and Technology.

Being the culture critic that I am, this is my favorite topic. Technology affects community indirectly every day, through its effects on economics and business, as discussed above, and through the way media uses technology to inundate us with advertising images that tell us how we should be, and who we should be with. We even have the Saturn car company telling us that we can substitute car ownership for real community ties.

But some technologies, like television and the internet, have a very direct effect on communities. Watching television is a passive action where you sit and stare, feeling lulled into a trance-like stupor. The more time people spend watching television, the less time they spend interacting with other human beings. The TV cannot talk back, can't respond to your criticisms, and isn't a real companion. Instead of knowing our neighbors we are content to sit inside, learning about the outside world through a box. Jerry Mander calls this a kind of "mediation of experience", in that we live vicariously through televi-

sion and movies instead of having those experiences ourselves. Seeing a photo of or a documentary about the Grand Canyon or the Eiffel Tower isn't the same as being there and seeing it ourselves.

This is an even further breakdown of the moral fiber of our communities. How can communities band together, or neighbors help each other out, when no one is outside of their house or car long enough to even know what the issues are? You can think about this in your own life, about how many people do you socialize with or have some kind of meaningful interaction with outside of your household or workplace? Do you know your neighbors' names? Or - do you subscribe to any magazines? Have you read any books lately?

The internet is a whole separate issue. It has its very positive side, in that it allows people to build "virtual" communities that stretch between cities and states, and which aren't limited to geographic area. This is important for individuals who are isolated because of their sexuality, their political beliefs, or other aspects of their lives which have isolated them from the surrounding communities. The internet is an interactive device that allows these kinds of communities to exist.

It also is a way to allow information to travel faster and be distributed better. That is, if the information is useful. Most internet users are familiar with "spam" - unwanted emails that are usually selling some get-rich-quick scheme, but what about the web itself? There is a lot of good information out there, but it is often difficult to find what you want and skip the things you could care less about - and, as many people have already pointed out, it's quickly on its way to becoming the best home-shopping network that corporations could have hoped for. Is that the extent of its application? The internet (and the rest of today's electronic media) gives us *too much* information, information that is unstructured and doesn't effect us directly, or isn't connected to other things we know. This makes information "un-meaningful", and reduces it to trivia. When it has no impact on our lives, information begins to lose its value. And, in an extension of that - think about how so much of our world now *makes no sense to us*, which is beyond our comprehension. We are in an age where we are drowning in the flood of information, yet even within this age of enlightenment, virtually any idea of substance must be watered down or simplified for consumption.

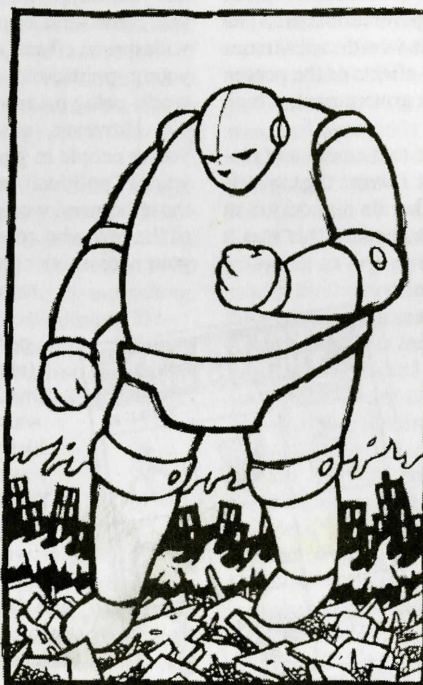
The downside of the internet, from a community perspective, is that even though you are having interaction with real human beings, it is a kind of mutation of the idea. Only so much can be communicated through written words on a screen, and we leave out all the emotion, nuance, and body language that help shape the way we communicate. And despite the interaction the internet promises, it still remains that you use the internet while sitting at home, alone. We are creating more and more technologies that are keeping us separate from other people. Is that really something we should be striving for?

The history of industrialism can be seen partially as the domination of man over the natural environment. This goes back to the beginning, and to the Luddite era, with governmental actions like "The Enclosure Acts." These sectioned off private land for public use and would eventually amount to a dramatic deforestation of England.

### Ecology and Technology

The history of industrialism can be seen partially as the domination of man over the natural environment. This goes back to the beginning, and to the Luddite era, with governmental actions like "The Enclosure Acts." These sectioned off private land for public use and would eventually amount to a dramatic deforestation of England.

I don't really feel like I need to expound much in this section because it seems like the catch-words of environmental destruction are household vocabulary: acid rain, global warming, the greenhouse effect, pollution, etc. Then there are specific incidents like DDT, thalidomide, dioxin - chemicals which harm the environment and our bodies. Think about nuclear power. Safe and efficient, unless there's a Three Mile Island or a Chernobyl. Why are we producing power that has such serious consequences? Why don't we spend our time



art by Brian Kibbe. p. 101 2/28/98 Providence, RI 02906



and effort coming up with something safer? Beyond the destruction that we cause, consider that we live in a world that is almost completely artificial and manmade. We are increasingly disconnected from anything that is natural, uncontrolled, or undominated.

## Health and Technology

We live longer today than at any other time in our history, but we are also sicker. It's as if we are creating new hazards for ourselves all the time. We don't even need to go as far as nuclear weapons or chemical/biological warfare to find new threats to our health that we are springing up every day. We are hearing more and more about antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria, which come from overuse of common medicines and antibiotics as a fix-all. Are stress-related illnesses, that are now common, partly connected to both our work as well as our now passive (as opposed to active) lives? We spend all day sitting at desks under fluorescent lights, staring at computers, and then we go home and sit on the couch in front of the glowing idiot tube. Both because of the way technology has affected our work places and how it has taken control over our entertainment, as well as the effect it has had on the community.

Technology in medicine saves lives but we're really just fixing the diseases and problems we create through our unhealthy lives and environments, through our culture of convenience that feeds us on fast food, prepared/ packaged/ preserved food, and things which we know are bad for us but we consume anyway. Have you read, for example, the warnings on the little saccharin packets on your table at Denny's? Why, when we read "this product causes cancer in lab animals," do we think it's a good idea to put it in our coffee? We spend all this time and money giving people face lifts and penis implants, yet there are thousands (more than that) people in the US without adequate healthcare, without access to abortions or prenatal care, and a million other inequities.

There are many other biotechnology issues which need to be brought up, and Brob and Theo are going to discuss some of them in another part of this zine.

## Conclusion

All of these things happen because we make technology that harms. We make technology simply *because we can* and not because we need it or it's good for us. We are put in the position of fixing problems we create instead of making things that don't create problems. We go by, day by day, not really thinking about it, creating a tacit acceptance for the unimpeded growth of unneeded - and possibly detrimental - technological innovation. We think that new, faster machines are the answers to life when we haven't even begun to ask the right questions. What about a technology that puts humans first? Ahead of business, ahead of progress, and ahead of science?

The purpose for bringing up all of these things is simply to point out the far-reaching effects technology has on our lives and our culture. I want to shed a little bit of a negative light on the cult of technology that typically remains unscrutinized, and in the next few pages I'll talk about what we should do once we wake up to the crazy things going on around us.

## The Machine Question

### PART THREE

Neo-Luddism: The theoretical implications and the need to develop a new perspective.

Those are some extreme examples of how technology directly affects us. But we have yet to really delve into the theoretical questions surrounding technology. I believe the following quote is quite succinct - taken from a speech made by Neil Postman:

"I believe you will have to concede that what ails us, what causes us the most misery and pain - at both cultural and personal levels - has nothing to do with the sort of information made accessible by computers. The computer and its information cannot answer any of the fundamental questions that we need to address to make our lives more meaningful and humane. The computer cannot provide an organizing moral framework. It cannot tell us what questions are worth asking. It cannot provide a means of understanding why we are here or why we fight each other or why decency eludes us so often, especially when we need it the most. The computer is, in a sense, a magnificent toy that distracts us from facing what we most need to confront - spiritual emptiness, knowledge of us, usable conceptions of the past and the future. Does one blame the computer for this? Of course not. It is, after all, only a machine. But it is presented to us, with trumpets blaring... as the technological messiah."

What do these machines do except increase the supply of information? We are getting the message that more information, more efficiently uncovered and "user friendly", will be the solutions to our problems. Postman believes that this is a colossal (and dangerous) waste of human talent and effort.

The first step is to develop a critical eye toward technology and its overuse in our society. Beyond questioning the new innovations we hear about in the news and in the workplace, we need to first recognize the role of technologies in our lives, and evaluate our own uses of technologies (hell, I now have a desktop computer and a laptop). How much is enough? How do we resist a sort of technological materialism that our society pushes? And what expectations are we placing on technology? Most importantly - what are the questions we need to deal with?

We do this by going through our lives and deciding what is necessary and what is not. Some people, for example, think that it is not necessary to have a TV and advocate getting rid of them altogether. But as a first step, maybe we should think about whether we really need a television in every room of our home? And of the televisions we do decide to keep, do we use it to watch Jerry Springer and Beverly Hills 90210? What are we gaining from the television that we do watch?

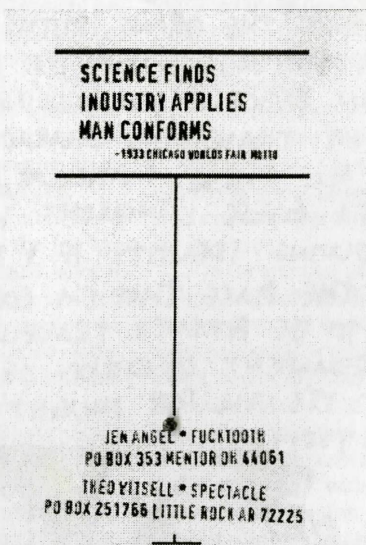
Other questions you might ask yourself include: How often do I need to buy a new car? When can I ride my bike (or walk or take the bus) as opposed to using the car that I do have? Do I own the top of the line stereo/computer/VCR/DVD just because I can, or do I own one that is simply adequate for my needs? Do I buy new items to replace something broken or just because I want something new or more modern? Who makes the products I am buying, and what are their costs to the environment? Do I need to buy a food processor, or can I use the one my roommate already has?

This is not about minimalism or about reducing our consumption to monk-like levels. There's nothing wrong with doing or buying things that you enjoy, as long as you consider the costs of these things. When you discover that a particular thing you like to do or buy has high costs to the environment, for example, you can begin by investigating alternatives or simply by doing those things in moderation.

I don't really have the answers and the more I read about neo-Luddite theory and the responsible technology movement, the

more I realize that I had only seen the tip of the iceberg. I found a few books at first and figured that there was no writing on the topic, and then right when I was finishing up this article (of course), I discovered a whole shitload of new writing and resources to be explored. It all goes to show that awareness is being raised and more resources are becoming available - that's a good first step.

So, beyond consciousness raising, you can begin educating yourself. We've included a "Recommended Reading" section elsewhere





in this zine to get you started.

The last step is organizing and direct action. This can be issue-based, around specific areas into which technology has intruded too far, or it can be general. It can be as simple as having conversations with coworkers and friends, like we are doing here, or as complex as Earth First! and their direct action on behalf of the environment - they are attacking the machines that are doing the harm, just like the Luddites did.

We need to take a new perspective, a new personal and social perspective that recognizes first, that all technology is political. For

every advantage a new technology offers, there's always a disadvantage. It is more important to ask, What will new technology undo? as opposed to what it will do. It is important to question, "who will benefit?" and "who will suffer?" as well as asking, "What existing technology does this innovation replace?" And most important, "What problem is this new technology the solution for?"

Then, we need to concentrate on making technology that is responsible and good, that has few, if any, harmful consequences to people and to all aspects of our communities. We need to make the technology that we do accept into our lives meaningful.

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## Squarehouse

by Yvette  
Scenery  
PO Box 14223  
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SQUAREHOUSE - IT'S FUNNY, THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT HOME WHEN YOU'RE NOT THERE. IT BECOMES ALMOST A FIGURE OF SPEECH. ESPECIALLY AFTER ONLY ALMOST TWO WEEKS. IT'S THIS SYMBOL OF BASKALLY ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING, MY NEWEST TEXT, THE PROVERBIAL BASE OF EVERY OTHER CONVERSATION. IT'S MY NEW USED BOOK AND MY EYES KEEP PLAYING TRICKS WITH THE TITLE AND THE WORDS... A NEW STORY EVERY TIME I BLINK. KIND OF FRUSTRATING TO KEEP CUTTING OFF AT THE DENICMENT, ALWAYS BEFORE THE GRAND TRUTHS LEARNED AT THE CLIMAX, BUT SUTTING ENOUGH FOR MY WAYWARD ATTENTION SPAN. BASKALLY, I'M SEEING IT AS A FOIL CHARACTER TO MY TRAVELLING CHARACTER. I FEEL MYSELF (CHANGING IN ALL THESE PARTICULAR, RAD WAYS (YES, SO SOON), BUT I GUESS I WOULDN'T HAVE THAT IDEA OF MY EVOLVING IDENTITY IF I DIDN'T HAVE THIS NOTION OF THE PLACE THAT I'M COMING FROM AND RETURNING TO. TO BE FOREVER TRAVELLING COULD TECHNICALLY BE A PERMANENT CONDITION OF A CERTAIN TYPE OF GROWTH, BUT IT'S ALL FOR NAUGHT UNLESS IT'S FOR SOMETHING.

... YVETTE.





# Labor Organizing In The Skin Trade

## Tales of a Peepshow Prole

by Miss Mary Ann, interview by Keffo

Temp Slave!

PO Box 8284

Madison, WI 53708-8284

"Two, Four, Six, Eight, Don't Come Here to Masturbate," sounds a little like something the Moral Majority might have chanted back in the '80s, but this catchy slogan was actually a battle cry for fair treatment on the job. A few confused bystanders assumed my co-workers and I were anti-porn zealots protesting our favorite sleaze merchant. Not exactly—the sex business was our bread and butter. We were strippers picketing for better working conditions at the nude theater that employed us, organizing what would later become the only strippers union in the country. Our boss had just fired a dancer. The company claimed she was fired for "disrupting other employees," but we knew the real reason was her union activism. The dancer, "Summer," was a single Mom with a three year old to support.

Relations with management had been rocky ever since we started talking union, but Summer's termination sparked an all out war. It was Saturday, the union office was closed, and we couldn't get a hold of our union rep. We were on our own. Less than 24 hours after Summer was fired, and dozens of phone calls later, close to half of the staff of dancers, cashiers and janitors showed up at work on their day off to protest. With picket signs and leaflets in hand, we poured into the manager's office and demanded Summer's job back. The manager told us to get out. Our picket line went up immediately.

I dance at the Lusty Lady in San Francisco. The place isn't a strip club with a stage and a staff of lapdancers working the audience. It's a peepshow—a mirrored box of naked women, writhing and undulating behind glass for masturbating voyeurs. The customers are separated from one another in individual, broom closet-sized booths, and watch the dancers through crotch-level windows. A quarter buys a customer a 15-second glimpse of female flesh before the window's shutter closes; most manage to ejaculate before they've spent five bucks. Budget masturbators can complete the task at hand for as little as 75 cents by jerking away in the dark, only depositing another quarter when their mental snapshot of us has completely dissipated.

The reporters flocking to cover our organizing drive often had a difficult time understanding what we do as "work," but the job has always been defined in MY mind by the repetitive manual labor it demands. Punch a clock, spot an open window, make eye contact, pout, wink, swivel your hips a little, put a stiletto-clad foot up on the window sill to reveal an eye-full of your tow most marketable orifices, fondle your tits, smack your ass, stroke whatever pubic hair you haven't shaved off, repeat those ten steps until the customer comes, then move on to the next window, repeat the process until your shift's over, punch out. Some call it the fast food of the sex industry; we produce assembly-line orgasms.

Three of the peepshow's thirteen windows were made of one way glass: the customers could see us, but we couldn't see them. For years, the Lusty Lady attracted amateur pornographers she'd set up shop behind the one-way windows. They videotaped and photographed us with alarming regularity, usually without our knowledge, and always without our consent or compensation. We only discovered how widespread the problem was because absent-minded cameramen would occasionally forget to cover the telltale, red "on" light before they started filming. Whenever a dancer looked down and noticed a red light in the window she was dancing for, her impulse was usually to break through the glass and destroy the film. But she'd always resist, fighting the wave of fury and nausea that would inevitably hit her, and call security instead. More often than not though, it would be too

late, the guy would get away. Where would that stolen image resurface? Who would see it? How many others were making money off it?

We complained to theater management repeatedly, and asked the company to remove the one-way glass to make it easier for us to spot the video cameras. Management refused and told us to "get another job" if we didn't like it. Despite the company's no camera policy, management insisted that unpaid porn stardom was an occupational hazard we had to accept. We disagreed, and turned to the Exotic Dancers Alliance (EDA), a San Francisco sex worker advocacy group set up by the original plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit against the Mitchell Brothers' O'Farrell Theater. The EDA put us in touch with Local 790 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and convinced the local's initially reluctant organizing staff to take the risk on us, despite disapproval from union higher-ups.

As soon as we announced our plans to unionize, management removed the one-ways, but also refused to recognize the union, and hired a law firm infamous for busting unions. Though the one-ways were gone, other problems at work were still festering: management played favorites, the company's disciplinary policy was rewritten and inconsistently applied, dancers had their pay permanently cut in half for missing a staff meeting or calling in sick, were suspended for not "having fun" and were fired for even more ambiguous reasons. The female managers who enforced these draconian policies always did so with a smile, insisting we worked at "the best" strip joint in town because we got free hot chocolate and weren't required to suck the boss' dick in exchange for employment.

The company's "sex positive, dancer friendly" reputation was for the most part a hollow marketing ploy. We had virtually no recourse if we were treated unfairly, and anyone who complained was quickly labeled "disruptive" or "disrespectful." We knew a union contract could temper these injustices and hold the company accountable for its actions.

In the summer of 1996 we decided to go through with a National Labor Relations Board union election. If we won the election, the company would be legally obligated to contract with us. Management prepared for the vote by running an anti-union propaganda campaign. Managers held a series of mandatory group meetings, excluded the organizers, and told the workers the union would impose exorbitant dues (in reality, about \$4 a week), union officials would "force" us to strike (workers always VOTE on whether to strike), or fine us for "disagreeing" with them (one of many straight out lies). The company told us a union would destroy the Lusty Lady "family" (fine with us—in that family, we were the kids and management the parents), and union reps would "bargain away" the rights and benefits we did have during the contract negotiations (in reality, other dancers were at the bargaining table negotiating the contract with management, and the workers all VOTE on the final agreement—no secret, back room deals between union reps and management). Management put two key organizers on "final warning" for bogus infractions, and spread rumors that they were "harassing" and "intimidating" other dancers. Despite the lies, deceptive leaflets, threats, harassment of union activists and scripted tear filled pleas to give the company a second chance, we stuck it out and won the election 57 to 15. We named our SEIU chapter the Exotic Dancers Union.





We spent the months following the election attempting to negotiate a contract with the company. But instead of working out an agreement with us, company lawyers spent most of the bargaining sessions engaged in performance art that rivaled our own in caliber and affection. Like a stripper who waits until the end of the song to wiggle out of her panties, the lawyers kept their client paying by teasing us with lengthy diatribes, each bargaining sessions invective more scathing than the last, the union's planned demise just around the corner. They were paid by the hour, and their time wasting strategies were impressive. For example, they spent days insisting that dancers were "sexually harassing" each other by using the "scurrilous, offensive and derogatory term PUSSY" in the workplace. (Despite the word's "scurrilous" qualities, one lawyer in particular delighted in repeating this term as often as possible.) Never mind that our workplace is a smut palace, the lawyers repeatedly ignored our efforts to discuss things like sick pay and grievance rights, and flooded us with contract proposals outlawing foul-mouthed hussies instead.

Although the lawyers turned out to be far better whores than we could ever aspire to be, attorney-Customer comparisons were also inevitable and hard to avoid. At the end of one particularly tedious bargaining session, the star of the company's legal team even copped to the similarity. "An attorney is but a condom," he bragged, "protecting the prick who's screwing someone else." That line was the first and last piece of honesty we got from this guy. After getting paid to watch middle-aged men in power suits masturbate to us every day at work, our tolerance for all the rhetorical circle jerking we had to endure FOR FREE at the bargaining table quickly began to wane. As the lawyers bargaining session rants wore on, we'd begin to imagine them with their ties flung over their shoulders, the way we were accustomed to seeing their peers in the peep booths at work. (This fashion trend guards against the embarrassing possibility of returning to the office with a semen-splattered tie.)

No sooner had we resolved the "pussy" issue, company lawyers began insisting management needed the right to fire any dancer who'd been with the company for more than a year and a half. Since customers need "variety," they reasoned, termination of long-term dancers was a "legitimate business need." In this industry, seniority is a liability; strip joints WANT a higher turnover. This was a temp job, a short term assignment, the duration of which was determined by a byzantine and arcane set of constantly changing criteria that managers could use to justify firing dancers who got too "old" or too uppity. One dancer's "sultry stare" was another's "scornful glare." One month our run-of-the-mill pelvic grinding would be "interactive and fun," the managers would tell us, but the next month they'd call it "repetitive and boring." Countless trees died needlessly to sustain the Lusty Lady's almost fetishistic obsession with documenting our "job performance" in an extensive collection of personnel files they maintained on us. It was a damn PEEPSHOW for chrissakes, not a psychotropic drug study, or a Broadway production for that matter! Management knew we'd never agree to contract language that would codify the company's right to fire us at will—"legitimate business need" or not—but they were trying to wear us down, and make us give up.

We didn't give up, and a few months into this routine, we staged a job action to protest the slow pace at the bargaining table. The Lusty Lady is the only place in town any 18 year old kid (or 40 year old executive) can watch live, gyrating, three dimensional, Hustler-style beaver shots, inches from his face, for half the price of a doughnut. (No, we don't hustle "peeps" for quarters; we're paid by the hour to perform for whoever's watching.) The two-bit pussy show is the Lusty Lady's signature commodity, and on "No Pink" the goods weren't for sale. We continued to dance nude, but kept our legs demurely closed. The marquis outside still said XXX, but the show we put on was probably somewhere between PG-13 and R. Almost every dancer who worked that day took part in the action, and frantic managers responded to our new-found modesty by firing Summer.

The attempt to intimidate and divide us backfired. We retaliated

by picketing the theater for the next two days and management fired back with a lock out. They closed the show, and the dancers scheduled to work lost two days pay, but we stuck together and kept the picket line going. Most customer steered clear of the commotion, some were supportive, a few mistook us for anti-porn Christians, but only a handful braved a tongue lashing from the crowd and crossed our picket line. Apparently deluded by their legal counsel into the thinking the union was "all talk," managers were stunned that we actually had the balls (and solidarity) to walk the walk. After a two day stalemate, the company caved in, rehired Summer, and finally began to cooperate at the bargaining table. Management quit talking about the "need" to fire long-term dancers, and offered us a raise instead.

Ultimately, management didn't agree to all our demands; there was talk of a strike, but we eventually ratified a first contract in April 1997, and a second in April 1998. There's still a sizable gap between profits for the company and wages for the workers, but we won rights, job security, sick pay, automatic raises, and a guarantee the one way windows won't return from a company that probably never intended on reaching a contract at all, in an industry infamous for regarding its workforce as disposable.

## SIX EASY QUESTIONS FOR MISS MARY ANN

1)KEFFO: I recall how incredulous the media was reporting on the organizing effort. What was the attention like?

MISS MARY ANN: The print media tended to take us more seriously than TV did. TV journalists and cameramen seemed to have no moral qualms about filming dancers on their way to work without their consent, and were generally more salacious and titillated in their approach to the story. After we saw what the TV news did to our story, and how they edited our words, we never talked to them again, didn't return their calls or invite them to press conferences. That "where are they gonna put the union label" joke between blow dried anchor people got really old, really fast. MOST of the media, print and electronic, seemed to miss key points about why we organized. Reporters often just assumed it was about money, which wasn't the issue at all. Our struggle was more about favoritism, job security, rights, and control over our working conditions, over the clandestine videotaping, for example, but the money issue would constantly surface in almost all the coverage. The stereotype is that strippers are all money hungry gold diggers who can't make an honest living and the focus on money in the media was probably influenced by this misconception.

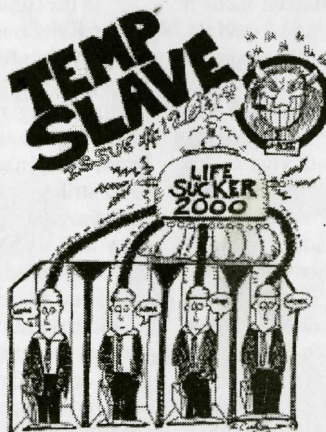
2)K: Why do you think bosses are so stupid that they will shoot themselves in the foot and waste money fighting the inevitable?

MMA: Power is priceless, and bosses will spend lots of money to hold onto it. The Lusty Lady spent far more money on legal fees and union busting consultants than our contract proposals were asking the company to spend on increased benefits for the workers. For example, the one benefit we fought for in both contracts, but still haven't won is health insurance for dancers. The company says it's not going to pay for health insurance for us because we only work part time, but it paid more in legal fees to fight the union than a year's worth of health coverage for every dancer. The general manager in charge during the organizing drive has since resigned and the new one admits that the company's "vote no" propaganda campaign was indeed a waste of money, and he fired the union busting law firm the company hired to fight us.

3)K: Did you receive any support from other San Francisco unions?

MMA: We did receive some support from other chapters of the SEIU 790 during our picket. I

remember a few health care aides walked our picket line, and we showed up at some of their demos when they were trying to win union recognition from their employer. We also had a lot of support from the community. A lot of local businesses in North Beach supported us. Even both of the fairly conservative SF daily newspapers ran





editorials endorsing us.

4)K: What's your perception about the kind of people who go to peep shows?

MMA: All kinds of men go to peep shows. All races, classes, professions, every demographic category is represented here. Women come in sometimes, usually with a husband or boyfriend, sometimes they have sex in the booths, other times the women are repulsed or embarrassed, and it's clear their boyfriends dragged them there. (When we see a woman is uncomfortable, we usually encourage her to dump the guy she's with since he obviously doesn't care about her feelings.) Guys come in for a panoply of reasons, some just want pussy, others want some kind of human interaction. Most are in deep denial about the commercial aspect of the exchange, they want to believe that we "like" them and enjoy getting them off, regardless of whether or not we're paid, and this is the illusion we are selling. This is also why customer

support of our union isn't as strong as customer support of UPS workers was during their strike. Peep show customers don't want to have to think of the dancers as workers, they'd rather believe that we dance naked as a hobby, that it gets us off to get them off. This isn't always the case though, there are customers who accept the commercial nature of the encounter, and we definitely do get customer support, but it's a barrier we've had to deal with, that other workers who unionize haven't. Altruism is generally not one of the customers best qualities, it's been more effective to appeal to their self interest, i.e., THEIR favorite dancer might get fired because of an unfair disciplinary policy, the show will be "hotter" if the dancers' working conditions are good, they won't be hustled so hard at lapdancing places if the dancers weren't under high pressure to meet dance or drink sales quotas, etc.

5)K: Have you ever had any discussions with anti-porn feminists about what you do for a living?

M: Yes, and the discussion just didn't go anywhere. You really can't have a discussion with someone you don't share any fundamental beliefs with. If they don't buy the premise all your points are based on, they'll never buy your whole argument. It's not worth it. The

way I see it is EVERYONE who sells their labor to someone is a whore, not just sex workers. ALL workers are exploited, not just sex workers. Sure, sex work involves perhaps different kinds of exploitation, but that exploitation comes from the sexual nature of the work, a woman who makes a decent living as a stripper, who has paid sick days, job security, and some control over her working conditions is

far less exploited than someone making \$6 an hour at McDonalds with no job security, no benefits, no power. Even if you say sex work is inherently more exploitive, wouldn't you support a union, or any efforts to make conditions less exploitive? That's what I really don't understand, people who say they're against the sex industry because it harms women, but then won't support legalized prostitution or unionization or a stronger labor code, or any measures that would give the workers more power.

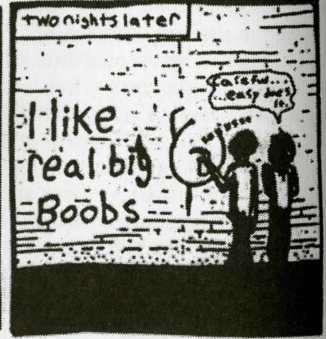
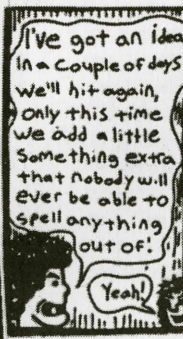
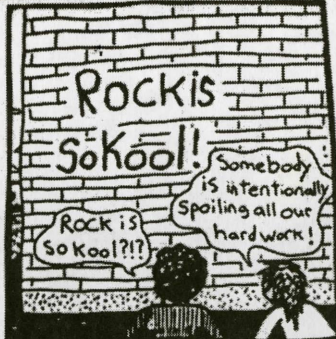
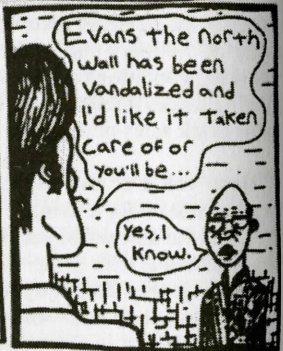
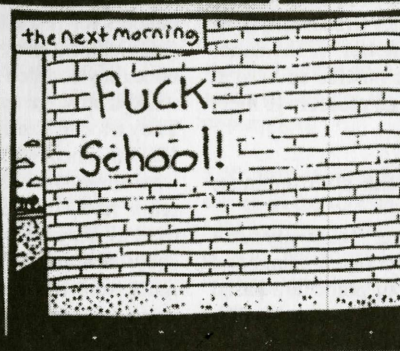
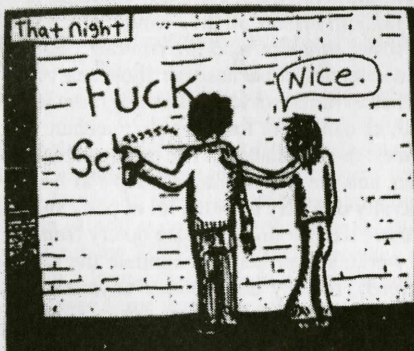
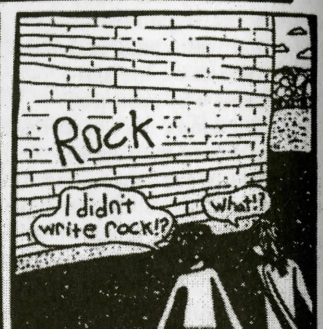
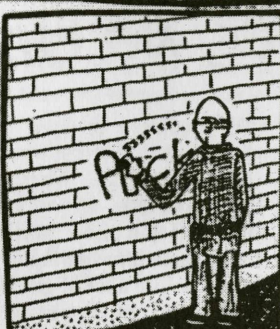
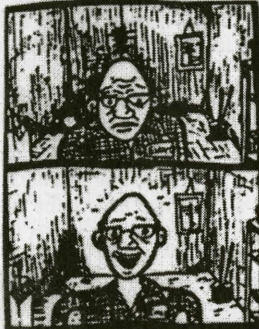
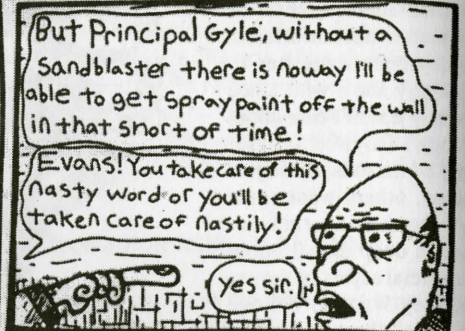
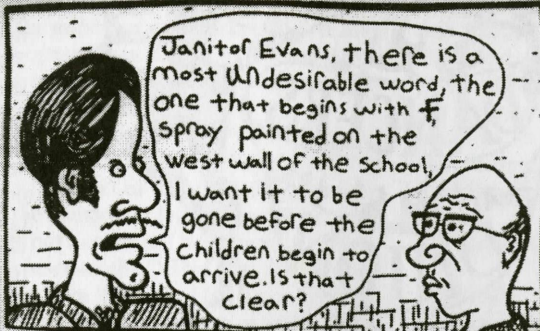
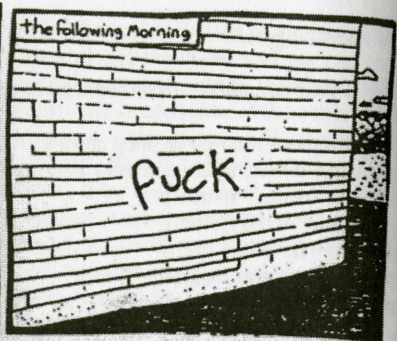
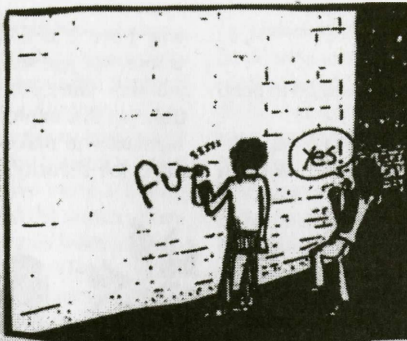
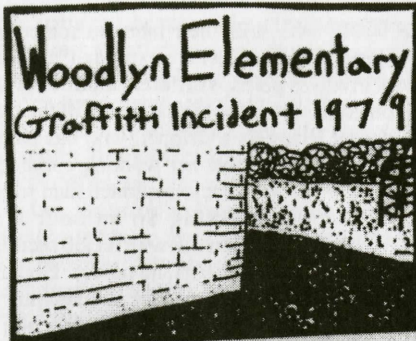
6)K: What is the status of the union now and what is the long term outlook for the union at the Lusty Lady?

MMA: We ratified our second contract in April and union support is as strong as ever. About 90 percent of the workers belong to the union and the turn over rate is fairly high. We have to make an effort to tell new hires about the bad old days, so they understand why it's important to join the union and keep it alive. The management has finally begun to accept the union and quit fighting it. Right after we ratified our first contract, we had to file a lot of grievances because the company refused to accept that the contract was the law, that the managers had lost some power. After the first contract went into effect, the company could no longer fire dancers for just any random reason, so they would pick on people in technical, nit-picky ways, to get around the contract. For example, once they counted a dancer as late because her show lace broke as she walked on stage and had to run down to the dressing room and change. They tried to fire another dancer for forgetting to punch in. We had to file grievances to contest those injustices. The management has turned over some since then, and the new managers aren't as hostile to the union now, and generally don't try to pull a lot of petty shit like they used to, they know there will be an immediate outcry from the union shop stewards (the workers who helped negotiate the contract and make sure it's enforced), so they don't bother anymore. I see the union lasting as long as the Lusty Lady does.

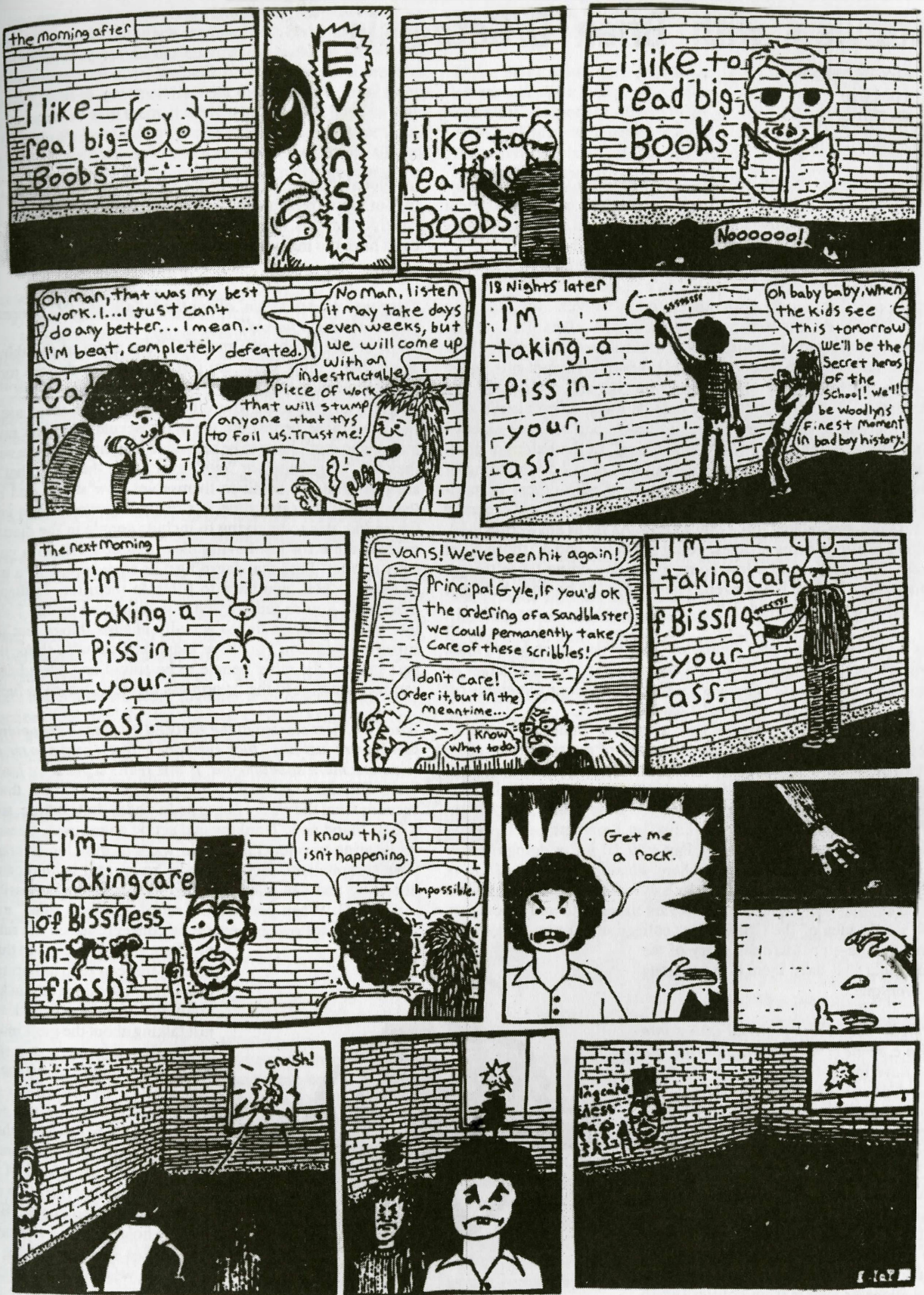


**NO JUSTICE, NO PIECE!**











# Interview with Brian D/Catharsis

by Simone Marini  
Kill For Love  
Via R. Battistini 32,  
00151 Rome, Italy

*You're into a lot of different projects (Catharsis, CrimethInc., Inside Front, Harbinger). Is there any connection between all these things? What's the goal you wanna reach with 'em? How much time a day do you spend on your h.c. related projects?*

All these different projects are connected, they're all different ways of trying to reach my life's goals: to challenge myself, to create and support community with others, to have adventures and bring down all the useless man-made obstacles to adventure that our society has created in the process of those adventures. As for how much time I spend on hardcore things every day: I'm not sure where to draw the line in my life about what is hardcore-related and what isn't.... I don't work for any outside force, I don't serve anyone or anything, so all my time is my own, and to some extent I think of myself and my life as "belonging" to the hardcore community: if there's anything good about me, or if I do anything or think anything worthwhile, I try to share it with others in hardcore. So even if I am reading a book or taking a long walk, maybe that is hardcore-related too. I don't know. As far as answering mail, writing music, writing articles, going to shows, and all those other things. I'd say I spend a few hours every day doing those things, sometimes 12 or 15 hours even. There's a lot to be done here and I'm never nearly finished...

*You've a name to be a very "political" individual, what do you think people expect from you? Don't you ever feel any kind of pressure or responsibility, because of people looking up at you or something? It seems some people always need a leader.*

I just try to be myself. If people want to call me "political" for thinking about what the effects and implications of my actions are, OK, but I just think of it as trying not to be a fool. Hopefully people don't look up to me, hopefully they look to me for inspiration and ideas, just as I look to everyone else for these things, but I don't think too many people actually think that I am better or more important than they are in any way. Part of what we're doing is to try to break down that kind of stupid hero worship mentality. If I have attained any kind of status in anyone's eyes, I try to ignore it, so that it is clear that such things are irrelevant to real life and revolution. The whole idea of the CrimethInc. collective is to emphasize the ideas and de-emphasize the glory of the individual that have them. Ideas belong to everyone....

*Bringin' social and political issues into the h.c. scene is very important to me, but you have to do it the right way. What do you think is the best way to do it?*

You have to show people how these things are important to their personal lives. Otherwise only the ones who are "looking for a cause" will be interested. "Political"/social issues are important to everyone because they affect everyone, but (especially in the USA), the Left tends to concentrate on single issues or faraway things, not the content of our everyday lives, which really alienates people from politics (when politics should be the place where they can FIGHT their alienation from the rest of their lives!). We try to bring up the question of how people live on a day to day basis, what their lives are like and what they are missing. Once they start thinking they could make changes in simple things like that, in which they can really see the effects of their efforts firsthand, they can start to draw their own conclusions about how this fits into the need

for global change. For example, in my case, I started out just looking for more freedom and adventure in my own life, but I soon discovered that this was tied to everyone else's freedom too: and you can't have too many adventures in a world where everyone else is in chains.

*Once we've been talkin' about the failure of "P.C." mentality, why do you think it's fucked?*

Well, people might call me "P.C." for some of the things I think about, but I think those are just the people who are too afraid to have to question themselves. People might call you "PC" if, for example, you told them you didn't like to hear them use the word fag... but those people are the heterosexual, obedient middle class males who don't have to be reminded that the rest of the world thinks they are "disgusting" or "evil" every time they hear that word, and are just afraid to admit to themselves how stupid and insensitive they are. At the same time, it's really important when you address issues like this to be trying to include people in the discussion, not exclude them for just having ideas that don't fit with your "politically correct" laws that doesn't get us anywhere. If you want others to listen to you, you have to listen to them too. Perhaps the "PC mentality" you're talking about is displayed by the kids who get into political issues not to actually change things, but just to feel superior to others. For those kids, they actually think it's in their best interest for other people to be stupid and prejudiced, so they can feel superior to the "worthless masses", which is fucked.

*When h.c. first started in the early 80's it wasn't very political, most bands were just like "fuck everyone". But it seems to me that it was somehow more spontaneous, is this really a price we have to pay?*

Well, CRASS was very spontaneous AND political that was just because what they were doing hadn't been done before, so of course it feels brand new. Thinking and acting consciously doesn't have to be a boring trap leaving the old ways of thinking (hierarchy, state power, capitalism, racism, gender roles, etc) behind can be really liberating and can make you feel like anything is possible, if you really do it. When you make a set of "political rules" everyone is supposed to follow, and everyone concentrates on the rules instead

of where such new ways of thinking can take us, that can keep us boring. Just emphasizing how things are fucked up gets really predictable so I think rather than just talking about the meat industry, global exploitation, etc... we should talk about those things but also be exploring new worlds: exploring our sexuality, making brand new kinds of art and music, thinking in new ways... the hardcore scene has some very reactionary people in it now who are afraid of this stuff, because they're not ready for everything to stop being predictable. But I think they are holding us back from recapturing the free spirit that punk can have, and I think we can have that without sacrificing our political perspectives, of course! We just have to be ready to be

creative in more ways than just writing record reviews and e-chunk metal songs....

*What can be done to take hc from becomin' another juvenile subculture? Should we allow the media to put their filthy hands on something we hold so dear?*





No, of course we should never compromise with the mass media at all. People say we will not reach anyone if we don't use it... I say what we need to do is put all our energy into building up our own means of communicating, so we will finally have an alternative, and no longer need to compromise with the motherfuckers! Every time we compromise with them, the day when we will have an alternative is farther off. Imagine how much closer to that day we would be if the Clash, Rage Against The Machine, etc. had all put all their energy into expanding the DIY network... it's a pretty good network already, and once it is bigger and better organized there won't be any reason for bands or anyone else to feel like they should work with the mainstream media or corporations. No compromise with the forces of alienation and misery!

*Is it possible to live without supporting the system at all?*

Well, the "system" isn't just a board of rich men, it's the entire way our society interacts, and of course everyone has their place in it, even anarchist rebels, terrorists, etc. The question is not how to escape from it, but how you can act to destabilize and change it... that's a relevant question whether you are a jobless squatter, a teacher, or an executive, but I think we all know that there are some social roles in which you can make a lot more real change than others... and being closer to the "top of the pyramid" of our hierarchical society doesn't usually give you more of that REAL power, I think.

*The Dead Kennedy's said: "Every theory has its holes when real life steps in", what's your political stand? What would be the best, more human way of political organization?*

I think that quote is absolutely right. I don't believe in giving up and accepting defeat or compromise, but we also have to remember that nothing is perfect, that you will always be a bit hypo-critical in some way, and that this is OK. As for my "theory", I guess it is anarchism that our lives should be organized cooperatively, without authorities or coercion of any kind. That's how we organize our band and CrimethInc., that's how we work together with others when we do political actions like Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass, and Food Not Bombs, that's how we arrange our love affairs and friendships (though I don't try to see a difference between those any more), and that free, generous, cooperative system works so much better for us than the force and violence of hierarchy that I think there's no reason to accept the fucking myth of power any longer. Try sharing, caring, and supporting each other, instead of competing and hating and fighting each other all the time and you'll see what I mean.

*You say you're trying to live without supporting the system (no home, no job). Is it really possible to do it; tell us how you spend your average day.*

As I said before, there's no way to actually LEAVE the system, the question is how to get enough freedom within it to have the time to fight it, and at the same time how to not give your resources to your enemies to use against you. I don't give them my labor or my money: that way they have nothing from me to use to keep things going, and since I don't have to earn money to give them, I have all the free time I need to write, create, live, talk with others, steal copies from corporations, etc... It's not easy but I love my life, especially when I hear others complain about having no freedom or joy in their lives. I don't really have "average days", because life like this changes so much! I travel a lot, sleep at various houses (a few of us still have apartments or houses that are shared, others sometimes live in building without paying rent until they are kicked out...), eat food that we get for free (we eat a lot of food that is good food but goes to waste. Food Not Bombs collects it from the stores, or from the trash behind them...), write letters, etc, steal copies when we need them, walk around discussing things with my friends... when I need to travel, we'll all go in one car (for example, the Catharsis van, when it works), or I'll walk, or ride my bike (which I got in trade for a couple of records!) once I rode my bike about 100 kilometers, from one town I was staying in to another. Life like this

is unpredictable, but exciting, and I have all my time and energy to work on what I believe in.

*If you don't have a job or a house you always have to depend on others and there's no real independence.*

I think it's important to talk about the idea of "independence". We ALWAYS have to depend on others, anyway no man is an island, as the writer once said, and we all need teach other to survive and be happy. The question is HOW we are interacting and depending on each other, NOT whether or not we are. The American John Wayne movie ideal of the "self-made man" who doesn't need anyone else is a myth spread to keep people ashamed to work together... once they're taught that if they can't fend for themselves without any help, they are failures, they will never admit to being victims, never even admit to themselves that they are being oppressed, because they think it is something to be ashamed of. The working class in the USA has no solidarity because they all think the most important thing is this mythical "independence." They're dependent on the corporations they work for to survive, and are getting cheated in the process, trying to make it seem like they are self-sufficient. Anyway, as for the question of whether those of us who don't work or pay for things feel like WE are unfairly dependent on others who have to do the work to feed and house us, no. I don't think that is the case. We all have different things to share with each other, and we all help each other in different ways. That's what a gift economy is: instead of an exchange system, where every social contribution is measure and some people are considered more important than other people, we understand in our community that all of us are equally important to each other, and we all try to help each other and provide for each other according to our own abilities. The people who do pay rent at houses I have stayed at believe in what I am doing, and in return I try to do everything I can for them too. It is just a question of each person understanding how many resources he has to work with compared to his companions, and sharing with the ones who have less. And for this to work, of course, there can be no laziness or selfishness... but we are all doing this because we really believe in it, so that is rarely a problem.



*What about love, isn't it somehow a compromise with another person? What's your experience?*

In the perfect human relationship (whether it be love or friendship, and as I said before I don't like to draw that distinction any more) each person helps the other to be more than he would be alone. People have to tell each other what they need from each other to make this possible, and they have to want to give to each

other rather than just taking (and that means appreciating others for who they truly are, and accepting what they need, not trying to force any external standards upon them). I don't see this as a compromise, for both are gaining without giving up any part of themselves. When you must give up a part of yourself to be in a relationship, that is a harmful relationship. Like I said I believe our relationships should enable us to be greater, more free, more creative and beautiful, to have more adventures and experiences, not less in any way. Too often we trap each other, made insecure by our loveless society, and try to hold other locked and chained to us, not letting them be and do what they really want... we have to create broader, more loving communities, so that people will have many others to love and support them, not just one that they will eventually smother and choke in desperation. The Western ideal is now that we each be locked a part from the others with a husband or wife and maybe kids, in a house that "protects" us from the rest of humanity, and we've seen that this kind of separation isn't always good for people. I think that rather than accepting that relationships are "compromises", we must figure out how to make them more liberating, more enabling, so we can help each other be more rather than being afraid of each other



and trying to trap each other.

*What does the name "Kill For Love" make you think of? Would you kill for love?*

As I'm sure you intend it, it makes me think of the contradictions of life, and especially the contradictions you encounter when you resolve to be true to yourself in such a false, twisted up world! Yes, I would kill or even die for love. What should I live or die for, if not love? Everything that is good about me, everything that I do that is beautiful and worthy, I do out of love, you know just as Che Guevara once said. And if that is what motivates me, if that is the most important thing in my life (instead of bullshit like "duty", obedience, apathy, inertia, fear), then I should be prepared to do anything for it if I have to, shouldn't I?

*America showed once again its military power and reaffirmed its role of world domination with another war in Europe, do you think something changed with the fall of the Socialist "evil empire"?*

Now the USA is the only remaining model of power and "success" in the world, and the rest of the world is scrambling to imitate it (the European Union, for example). This is a fucking nightmare and we have to fight it however we can. The entire USA looks almost exactly the same now, with the same companies and advertisements and TV shows and movies and corporate-created mass-produced culture everywhere... soon the whole world will be like that, if we're not careful, and then we won't even be able to imagine another way of life besides the miserable servitude and competitions/ecological destruction/human and animal oppression that capitalism enforces on us. You in Europe right now are at the centre of the war between the forces that want to standardize and conquer the whole planet and the resistance that remains. Please fight back...

*Tell us about your last US Tour. Any funny stories?*

The tour went quite well: like any band, when we started out we didn't know how to get along with each other, but part of anarchism is learning how to make small groups work, and now we function quite well as a band. That made this tour a lot easier than earlier ones for us, for obvious reasons. I could tell you some of the of the usual standard Catharsis crazy stories (for example, there's one that involves Hepatitis, police, sex, and a stabbing not the stabbing from the last tour, but a new one), but that would take too long I think...

*In the last Inside Front there's written "CrimethInc. Leninist Collective." But in the last page it says "Anarchy, once you tried it nothing compares". Isn't that a little contradictory?*

Glad you asked about that! Of course we are more interested in anarchist ways of living and thinking, though we try not to use that label much (labels are a bad thing in general, I think it's important not to limit yourself to any dogma). The "Leninist" thing was a joke between my friend and I because the article he wrote was about how we have to make hardcore fests more political, which I thought sounded just like Lenin saying he knew what was right for the masses even if they didn't know. I was making fun of him and called him a Leninist, that's how that got into Inside Front, as a joke. Our way of thinking, of course, is that we have to create a situation in which everyone can trust each other to know what they want... I don't think we're there yet, unfortunately, but I think the solution is not to do the thinking for other people but to try to push them to think for

themselves however we can.

*Tell us about your last album what do the lyrics deal with?*

The new Catharsis album, "Passion", was supposed to be different from "Samasara" in that it would have more than just misery and hope on it. We wanted to express more emotions than that, maybe even to express joy a bit, because I think that too many records by political/punk bands just end up expressing the same simple predictable emotions as well as ideas. But life got hard for us again this last year, just as it was hard for us when we were recording "Samasara". So there's more desperation in this record, unfortunately, as well as the idealism we wanted to put into it. Hopefully one day

we'll be able to make the joyful record that we wanted to feel that we can only make "brutal", miserable records is to deny ourselves the best parts of life, and that's not revolutionary at all. As for the specific subjects of the lyrics: besides the first song, which is about passion and the way it can raise you up and destroy you (have you ever pursued a dream, chased it until it crashed and left you staring into the fire?), there is a song about the idea of a "justice system", punishment, how wrong it is to think you can judge human being and cage them... there is a song about our former guitarist, who was eat-

en up by despair and gave up on everything in favor of hatred and negativity... there is an instrumental written about my closest friend, the most passionate person I've ever know, who disappeared from my life as he followed his adventures into a black hole from which there was no turning back. There are other songs, but I will let them speak for themselves.

*You often speak of the people in hc bands as "artist", this word has a positive meaning 'cause an artist is someone who creates, but also a negative meaning if you intend it as a rock-star so far from his audience.*

We DO NOT believe in art as a job that some people can do and others can't. Everyone must be able to create. The social role we have for the artist, as a person that creates at the expense of others who finance his existence by working jobs that do not let them create, is bullshit. I feel ambivalent about art itself. On the one hand, we want to create, of course, but only if doing so will enable others to be able to create as well. And I do think that our creativity should not be safely used just to make representations of the world (things like paintings and songs that we can SELL, and thus keep the wheels of capitalism turning, even if we think we're fighting against it), but instead to actually CHANGE the world only then we can benefit as we should. Playing music is a strange thing for us, because we are risking wasting our efforts just keeping people entertained (perhaps if there was no music to dance or mosh to for relief, people would get so frustrated with the rest of their miserable lives that they would finally DO something) but we think we might be able to make music that would drive people to ask for more, not just settle for what they get, so we're willing to give it a try. Plus, we enjoy it, which counts for something, I think.

*In "Inside Front", there's a lot of writings about "situationism" or other political movements. Don't you think that's hard to understand for the average punk kid? Don't you think there is a risk of creating*



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Like I said, I believe our relationships should enable us to be greater, more free, more creative and beautiful, to have more adventures and experiences, not less in any way. Too often we trap each other, made insecure by our loveless society, and try to hold other locked and chained to us, not letting them be and do what they really want... we have to create broader, more loving communities, so that people will have many others to love and support them, not just one that they will eventually smother and choke in desperation.

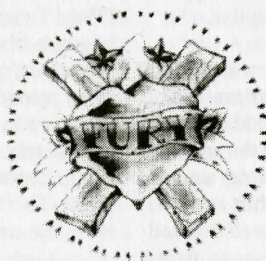


and elite?

An elite is a group of people that excludes others. Elites exist NOT because most people are stupid, but because they deliberately set themselves apart from others. Inside Front exists to combat elitism, by trying to share information and ideas with EVERYONE in punk rock. People are NOT stupid, they can handle complicated ideas and theories if you treat them like they can and don't talk down to them. The idea that it is elitist to speak intelligently or about complicated things is ITSELF an elitist idea, for it supposes that most people actually are dumb. I've had this conversation with a friend of mine from Rome before, who thinks that it is more important to present simple ideas in case people won't understand more complicated ones. I think we should present

our ideas simply, but not just present simple ideas because I think anyone can learn to understand things, if you don't exclude them, intellectual elite by making ideas accessible to everyone, and that means not assuming anyone is too stupid for any ideas. Plenty of people have read Inside Front weren't familiar with the things we wrote about in it before, and have learned about them from the 'zine, I think.

*Kill For Love*



extinction  
shai hulud  
mainstrike

brian d./catharsis  
redemption  
columns/politics

#### *Last Comments.*

This is the place where I say "thanks for the interview", so... thanks for the interview! If anyone has any questions, or wants to communicate with us or be involved in our projects, contact us at: Crime-thInc. Anti-Elitist Elite (another joke, ha!), 2695 Rangewood Drive, Atlanta, GA 30345 USA

## Spirit In The Smokies

by Charles Currier  
Slave

PO Box 10093  
Greensboro NC 27404

Much has changed in western North Carolina's Smokey Mountains since I left here in early 1985. Downtown Asheville has become bustling and vibrant again with locally owned businesses and lively street festivals. The number of fanny-pack humping summer sightseers has tripled with the invention of the rubber sport sandal. The home of author Thomas Wolfe has been historically restored and a lot more people call me a cock sucking faggot out of the windows of passing car when I'm walking home from work late at night. Most striking is the number of spiritual groups, or healing groups, or healing spiritual groups that don't fit down the common protestant Christian type of hole. If you don't mind listening I'll tell you that my own journey has been a long and winding path. But I feel ready to explore now; to open up.

So I examined some of my spiritual healing options up here in the mountains. I tried to focus on the ones with silly-sounding names like Dance for the Body and Soul and Circle of the Wildly Inclusive God. This is only a sample and there's plenty more where these came from. The Sacred Mystery School for Women, for instance, doesn't let boys in and those people who walk around town in those red, white and black color-coded Star Trek tunics base their sect too far away from the bus route. Doubtless, many will try to wedge the people with whom I have shared fellowship under the roof of the "New Age" yurt. The truth is more diverse. They don't all just sit around all day channeling woodland spirits

and felling Power Crystals you know. They laugh and shed tears, and dream dreams like anyone else and if that's not alright with you kemosabe, maybe you'd better hitch the next rum carton to Red China.

Something deep inside myself was eager to see off duty bank tellers juggling live copperheads, and fatted calves quivering under the ceremonial dagger. Nothing like this happened at the Circle of the Wildly Inclusive God. These friendly, mostly middle aged persons wanted nothing more than for me to make a nametag and help share their crackers, cream cheese and juice. I turned down the refreshments which was a mistake since I ended up in a rush getting ready for work later and accidentally dropped my breakfast bar down the toilet. I had an okay time at the service except that Vivarin I popped to chase off last night's hangover made it hard to sit still during the Soul Time meditation. After chanting the words from the Calling of the Circle a man in paisley trousers led us in "If I had a Hammer" on the Casio keyboard. Of course I didn't remember many of the words from back at summer camp but I pulled an old Methodist trick; moving my lips and humming at the same time much like the beat-boxing style of late '80's rapper Doug E. Fresh. A woman then told us the story of a Prince and a woodcutter, the moral of which was: "Look to your own personal gifts instead of those of others", or something like that. Today's theme was the "Spirituality of work" and



the group sparked up a lively discussion of their own jobs as child care worker, mother, and massage therapist. In line with today's theme I left the circle to practice The Spirituality of Work while scrubbing off sticky plates and silverware for the rest of the evening. I exited the YIM Community Center to find a balmy early Autumn day outside. Making my way home I took deep breaths, considered the worth of each small pebble, and gave out big smiles to the skanky hookers at the corner of Broadway and Bourdieu. They asked for a donation. I gave them a dollar.

The interior of the Lighten Up Wellness Center was a dead ringer for a dentist office waiting room. Luckily, I was rearing to meditate this time and by the time everyone had slipped off their sandals and dimmed the lights I was relaxed almost to the snoring stage. I was stirred again to consciousness by whirring sounds coming from the VCR as a man in a tie-dye-looking shirt cranked up a video entitled Happiness is Your True Nature. A well dressed white lady who had changed her name to Gangaji spoke to us gently and meaningfully about "Letting go" and "dying to self" while sitting atop a stage strangely like the one featured on the Montel William's television show. Several men in khaki shorts asked her questions concerning the false nature of the material world, nodding along as Gangaji doled out her mystical responses. At the video's end Gangaji bowed and everyone one in the room put their hands together and bowed in direction of the television set. So I guess this is kinda like Buddhism for people who aren't quite ready to donate their Jet ski to Goodwill. It seems like if you really abandoned all desire and worldly, sensory concerns you'd just sit around naked all day in a puddle of your own poop until you starved to death, but y'know, like, whatever. The technical name for this belief system is "Advaita". I highly recommend it to anyone who gets a big kick out of being bored to tears. They asked for a donation too.

The Jubilee! answering machine listed a number of Sunday morning events including communion around 8:30, a service at 11:15 and something called "Nurture Time" at 9:45. Most Jubilee! persons are rather ordinary liberal Jesus jumpers but you wouldn't know it from their "celebrations". After I'd slept through "Nurture time" and arrived at the "third celebration" fifteen minutes late a woman was standing at a makeshift altar in the middle of the room holding-up a bowl full of a fragrant smoldering substance as an invitation to the "spirit of the East" to bestow it's blessing. The ceiling was decorated with what looked like X-mas tinsel and there was a cabinet door-sized painting on the wall which showed a gigantic cross, a doubled-over naked person and a shirtless youth in baggy shorts. Another unclear piece of art decorated the front of a pamphlet a woman had handed me at the door. It showed a long-haired shirtless man with outstretched arms, a shirtless woman with her hands folded and a completely nude man seated underwater facing a bubble blowing fish. I felt confused, like back when I used to sit around trying to figure out what my Mom's Fleetwood Mac album covers were supposed to mean. Twenty minutes or so into the service a woman asked us to turn to the person next to us and hold their hand and say, "I am here for you." Nobody turned to me. After a minute or two I guess I got a little upset and turned to the guy next to me, clenching his bicep, "I just want you to know that I'm here for you." He was startled, "Uh, yes, we're here for you too," he said.

Another woman gave a sermon that began with a story about two canoe trips she had taken. One canoe trip went fine. The weather was great and everybody had fun. The other canoe trip was kinda shitty and the boat turned over and some guy lost his eyeglasses. Of the quotes I jotted down I think this one sums the sermon up best, "We're not all in our own canoe. We're all in the

same boat together." I tried to listen but I mostly ended up listening to the chorus of mewling, gurgling infants coming from every direction. What's the matter Moonbeam, no Planned Parenthood on your cul-de-sac? Late in the service a full-sized adult walked into the room in a Panda suit. The Panda began hugging onlookers. Later I would re-read the pamphlet to discover that this was "Peter Panda the Care Bear", one of the many characters in Jubilee's Fall Fun Fest along with "Hospitality Pineapple", and the "Play Time Playmates". Completely harmless of course. But I began harboring an uneasy feeling which was driven home by this chant at the end that reminded me of that Children of the Corn movie for no clear reason. I felt like an outlander who had learned too much, and I left quickly after the celebration with a completely unnatural feeling that someone might offer me some funny tasting Kool Aid. But no one did of course. It was all in my mind. There's really nothing sinister at all about Jubilee! Don't worry so much. Everything is fine. They wanted a donation.

Whether you're a cubicle-ridden programmer with encroaching carpal tunnel syndrome, or a Chinese factory worker; hand with blisters from sewing Nikes for eleven hours a day in the dark, chances are you could use a little healing. Personally I was hoping to get something done about this crick in my back from lifting overfilled bustrays over the heads of high-chair bound toddlers four days a week. The Dance for the Body and Soul flyer promised that those in attendance would, "...explore the dynamic practice of the Roth Five Rhythms...a spiritual practice where we 'sweat our prayers'...as the most profoundly human way to connect with the inner core of our beings..." So before I started into these goofy new age aerobics I said a little prayer for my sore lumbar muscles to be cleansed in the tides of Mr. Roth's healing movement. I'm still waiting around, but I'll let you know when I get the results in. They didn't ask for a donation.

For thousands of years humankind has sought to explain why bad things happen to good people. The ancient Sumerians had their Epic of Gilgamesh. The folks down at First Baptist could always refer to the Book of Job. Still though many questions of this sort linger. Why do bees sting babies? For what reason do hurricanes sink refugee boats? Why did the goddamn Saab have to break down and leave little Kevin stranded at soccer practice for the second time this month? The religion known as Eckankar may be able to help.

Eckankar devotees don't always talk like the guys behind the counter down at the Exxon station though; so here is a brief glossary of common terms I have learned from reading some of their free brochures.

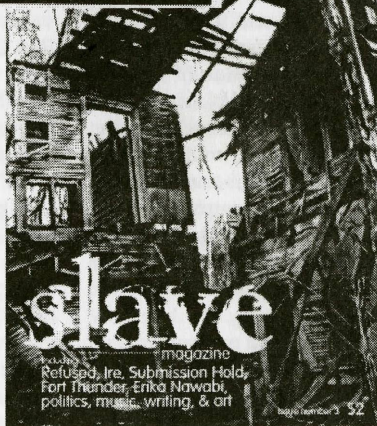
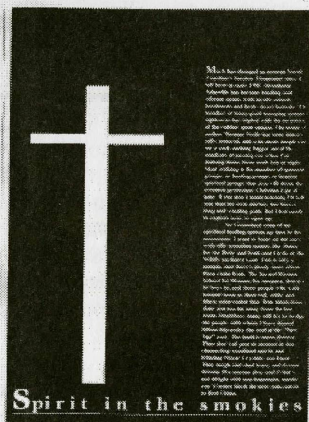
**ECK:** The Divine or Holy Spirit; the Audible Life Stream.

**Soul Travel:** A natural way to expand the consciousness, to experience the natural viewpoint of yourself as Soul through spiritual exercises.

**Hu:** An ancient name for God.

**Mahanta:** The inner form of the living ECK master who guides the spiritual student on the inner planes.

If that doesn't clear things up for you I should also mention the "singing of the Hu" at the start of the Eckankar service I attended. I thought this was something metaphorical rather than literal until the room around me erupted like an out of control basement dehumidifier with the sacred sound of Hu. "Heeeeyooooo!!", sang a woman to my right with a thick north-





eastern accent. "Heeouuugghhh!", wheezed an older man a few seats in front of me

After about ten minutes of this a lingo ridden discussion "spiritual exercise" kicked off. Three out of four walls in the place had photos of "Sri Harold Klemp," the "Living ECK Master," and "Spiritual Leader" of Eckankar as well as the dorkiest looking white man to fill the role of guru since Bob Dobbs of Church of the Subgenius fame. You would have to duck behind a desk to get a moment's solace from the Eck Master's rendered leer. To my left was a photo of Sri Harold and to my right there was a pyramid arrangement of important-looking religious leaders in history with Sri Harold's portrait at the topmost point. At the front of the room was a covered night table picture of the bust of Harold in a small personal stand-up frame like a portrait of somebody's nephew on their desk at work. After the service I noticed an arrangement of books authored by the Living ECK Master for sale on the subjects of Karma and Dream Interpretation. Before I could get a closer look I was set upon by a husky Eckankar devotee who talked my ear off about "invisible realities" and a bunch of other crap I don't remember. Around his neck was a gold disco medallion with the word "HU" engraved into the metal. You can give them a donation if it makes you feel better about your karma.

Some guy dressed like a waiter at an Indian restaurant leads us in a neo-Buddhist square dance. I kept getting "partnered" with various women over 40 as well as the only terrified-looking ten year old kid in the room. Bummer. As I chanted and dos-si-doed along I felt a little secure with at the fact that this particular Dance for Universal Peace was a constructive step toward ending tribal ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, Burmese slave labor, and government-sponsored peasant slaughter in southern Mexico. Later on, though, this lady in ninja slippers told me that the "universal peace" begins on the individual level. I told her it wasn't working too well and she suggested that I might need to relax a little. So I'll definitely have a couple of beers before ever doing anything like that again. They wanted five bucks at the door.

Before the guy with the ponytail could get on with the business of allowing spirits and angels to speak through his body the entire discussion was hijacked for forty minutes by an over zealous UFO goon. He had asked me if I'd seen a UFO before I could take a seat. Hoping to win favor from the channeling regulars I responded with a completely phony story about seeing a cylindrical object descending on my Grandma's house at the age of ten. He said that I might have been in a semiconscious "alpha state" as many youngsters often are and therefore more receptive to cylindrical shaped objects orbiting my Grandma's Greensboro suburb. He also said that UFO's can choose who they appear to and travel through alternate dimensions. When other newcomers entered the channeling room he polled them too, and added that coincidence doesn't exist in the universe and conventional military weapons may not be powerful enough to destroy UFO's. After about half an hour he took his third suggestion to shut the

fuck up and the channeling began like many other Smoky Mountain spiritual events with everybody shutting their eyes and meditating again. The first being channeled was "Lenonda," a presence described as an "angel" closely related to the inhabitants of the Pleidian starsystem. "Archangel Michael" was next and then (I'm not making this up) Jesus of Nazareth spoke to us about the fall of American civilization. All entities who joined us Wednesday evening had useful tidbits of information to share with those who had gathered. Archangel Michael discussed the "clearing out of the Astral Plane." "The government has lost control of their creative nature," commented Lenonda. "Remember that your heart is as vast as the creator's heart," added Jesus.

I felt funny. I was amazed but also kind of drowsy. Was it the guy in Umbro shorts asking the being Lenonda hopeful questions like he was in the School Guidance Counselor's office? Was it that same generic Boris and Natasha Eastern Block accent that all of the channeled characters used when articulating their wise words? I looked around the room. I had once again found myself among lonely-looking middle-aged men in ponytails and lonely-looking middle aged women in sport clogs. These were seekers whose quest for meaning and order in the universe had led them to the opposite of religious fundamentalism which was, I guess, the idea that every theological or metaphysical idea is, you know, kind of OK and stuff in its own way. Big among the places I visited was a Unitarian mush of the world's spirituality's where Christ and Muhammad and Shiva the Destroyer all pal around together waiting to give believers cosmic pats on the back for breeding more maladjusted humans like a pack of drunken Spaniel dogs. Go write your term paper on it if you want. As for me I'm going to need a four figure grant before I ever try to sit through another two hour channeling event without making fart sounds with my left armpit. Someone else will be left to research the timeless burning questions: "What is the one true religion?", "Is late stage loneliness the common thread between communion services, channelings, and bingo parlors alike?" and "How can I get out of here without ending up on some other sick freaks mailing list?"

Back at the channeling Lenonda, had returned for a Q and A session and the UFO Goon's gums were still beating the air at an even keel. He wanted to know all about the meteorite space rock "moldovite" and it's possible value in channeling. He wanted Lenonda to describe the "splits in reality" he had mentioned earlier. During one of Lenonda's responses, the disembodied being mentioned the existence of "Many God's with a small 'g'." This provoked one of the first responses from a mustached newcomer in the back who insisted that there was in fact only one God. I saw my way out. Aiming the finger of condemnation at the mustached man I shouted, "There are too many different Gods! There's a whole bunch of Gods out there! I don't have to listen to this!" I let the door slam behind me, crossing the many dimensions in space that separated me from the back exit of number 12 Wall street. I didn't stay long enough for them to ask me for money but tapes of Theo Salvucci talking cost seven bucks.



# My New Retro Haircut

by Cullen  
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I sported the vagrant look for too long. After a long look in the mirror I decided that I was in dire need of a change, so I immediately shaved off my beard and made an appointment for a haircut. I was nervous about the haircut because it's been awhile since I've felt the buzzing tickle of clippers on my neck. I was so nervous, in fact, that I actually had nightmares about it the night before. I dreamt that the barber kicked me out of the shop with an unfinished haircut because he had another appointment. In my dream I told him that he'd better finish my goddam hair or else I would gouge his fucking eyes out with his own shears. He ignored me so I started tipping jars of liquid soaked combs, smashing mirrors, and throwing the clippers against the wall until the floor became a carpet of plastic, metal and electronic components. Just as I lunged toward the scissors to fulfill my promise, the alarm clock buzzed.

My appointment was at 1:00 but I got there a few minutes early. The first site of the hypnotic spinning barber's pole eased my nervousness - who can resist its soothing power? As I walked into the shop, I spotted a sign that said "be back at 1:00" so I went outside and sat on the curb. During my wait, an old, decrepit man came by walking his bicycle along side him. I nodded at him and he replied by grunting some sort of greeting that was drowned out by the loud clicking of his bike shoes striking the cement. He set his bike against the building and went inside the barbershop. My eyes followed him and I noticed that Hal, the barber, was back from lunch. Walking into the shop, I caught the tail end of their short conversation. Hal was in the process of telling the old guy that haircuts were by appointment only. Thankfully, I had made mine a week before. The old guy didn't seem to mind, I'm sure that he was just there for a little conversation and a small break from his regular loneliness; the haircut was a purely secondary thing. Slowly, he crept out the door. Through the window, I watched him grab his rickety bike and walk on...

I stripped off my collared shirt to reveal a tattered white t-shirt, and sat in the padded blue barber's chair. Hal draped a smock over me and prepared his tools: A shears, a black comb, and an electric clippers. While he did that, he asked me how I wanted my hair cut. I wasn't prepared for this question because it's been years since anybody except myself has touched my hair. I pondered his question and looked into the mirror, "I guess a little off the sides and back...and keep the top longish." He nodded, pumped the pedal on the chair until my head was at the right level, and went to work. I could feel the coolness of the air blowing on my scalp as the freshly cut hair fell on my shoulders. My back was facing the mirror so I couldn't judge the progress of the ensuing haircut, but so far it felt wonder-

ful.

In the meantime he started trying to make conversation with me by asking the usual bullshit. Do I go to the college? What's my major? What am I going to do when I graduate? etc. etc. I tuned the small talk out and was, instead, mesmerized by the built in ashtray on the arm of the blue chair. It was empty of ashes and probably hadn't been in use for years. The ashtray was just a remnant of something that once served a useful function, like the human appendix, but, as the years moved forward, everything around it evolved and the function became outdated. Outdated and essentially useless. The empty ashtray made me curious about what it's like to be a barber; a

profession that is slowly seeing its last legs severed. Will my children ever have the experience of sitting in a barber shop chair surrounded by a bunch of senile old men jabbering small talk? The kind of talk that gives the barbershop its ambiance. "So..." I asked, "is there a sudden interest in barbershops that you cut hair by appointment only?"

"No sir, I had a few guys retire," He informed me matter-of-factly, "I've been trying to hire somebody since July, but there just isn't anybody out there that wants to be a barber."

Hal then went on to explain the historic significance of barbers. Informing me that at one time they were responsible for delivering babies and giving prescriptions. "Yessiree," He muttered as he let out a long breath; a breath that stank of defeat and disappointment, "A lot has changed since those days. Getting a license to cut hair isn't as easy as it used to be. Now, instead of just knowing how to cut and shave, you have to know how to give perms and dye and all that other useless crap. Besides nobody wants to be a barber anymore, there's more money in being a 'stylist'."

God, if I had any desire to cut hair, I'd be more than willing to be the cultural martyr. The hero that saves this tradition from the clutches of progress. I understand that sometimes sacrifices have to be made if we're to move forward, but that doesn't make it any easier to watch the slow fizzle of this once respectable profession.

So Hal and I sat there - suddenly I didn't seem to mind his attempts at small talk. It seemed sweet, so instead of ignoring him, I just played along, even inventing small talk of my own. I figured that if I wasn't willing to be a barber, it's at least my duty to play the role of jabbering old man.

When he was finished, he swept the hair off my neck and swung me around. I gazed at my new self in the mirror. Terrific! My hair looked absolutely terrific. Very clean cut. Very fifties-like. He even kept my sideburns the same length. I smiled as he undid my smock. I gave him a ten dollar bill and he thanked me for my business. I slipped out the door with a new haircut and a head full of ashes.





# Interview with Kate Becker

By Dan Halligan  
Ten Things Jesus Wants You To Know  
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*Kate Becker has run the Old Firehouse in Redmond, Washington for the past 6 years. During her time there she has helped countless teens and countless bands through youth programs and providing Eastside kids with a steady diet of all-ages shows. Kate is also about the coolest person I've ever met, she's positive, enthusiastic, cute, has a big heart, and doesn't shy away from huge projects like taking on Seattle's Teen Dance Ordinance. Along with being one of the more inspirational people to come out of the Seattle punk community this decade, Kate's proof positive that we can find or create jobs that are beneficial for society and fun to do.*

10: Kate, can you give us a brief history of the Old Firehouse and when shows started there?

K: The shows started almost exactly 6 years ago, I came to work there in Redmond about 6 months before that. I had just moved to Seattle and saw this ad for someone to come start programs for non-traditional youth on the Eastside. It looked interesting, I pursued it, and we ended up starting shows out there back when it was the YMCA. The director of the Y was really cool and let us do shows on the weekends, and we eventually got the building when the Y moved out. The Firehouse has been open as a teen center about 4 years.

10: Were you pretty much the central person that started doing shows there?

K: I decided I wanted to do shows at the Firehouse, which was then the Y, and I found some kids that were in bands and they worked with me.

10: How do you think it's developed over the years, what kind of impact has it had on the Eastside and the teen community there?

K: It has been amazing! The very first show we did 6 years ago, 324 kids showed up, it was incredible! And all these kids, who are now not really kids anymore, they've helped for years to develop the show scene on the Eastside. And now it's really different, 'cuz the kids on the Eastside have grown up with a venue in their town, it's not really as special. Before there was a huge community of young band members and people that would help out with everything, but now that people have grown up with it already existing, it's something that is taken for granted, instead of something they should get really excited about and help out with. But you know, the Firehouse is 5 days a week a full blown teen center and one night a week an all-ages venue, so there is a lot of stuff that goes on there besides the shows. And for a lot of kids the teen center is there second home, they come there every day after school, and they leave at 9pm or 11pm when we close, they are there every day.

10: Are the parents in Redmond then supportive of the Firehouse?

K: Most are silent, the kids either get there on their own or their parents drop them off. I have to think either their parents are supportive or don't care, because some of those kids are there almost every day.

10: What do you do during the week with the teens?

K: It's a recreation center, we try to have fun stuff for kids, it's very art and music focused for kids, we have art stuff going on all the time. We have a full court basketball court, we have pool tables, ping pong tables, video games, a computer room, just a lot of stuff and kids can choose what they want to get involved with. Last year more than 26,000 kids came to the Old Firehouse.

10: Awesome! It seems like these days there are less and less things for kids to do afterschool, it's almost like society expects kids to go home and sit in front of a TV and not talk to anyone. We are always passing laws and harassing kids for hanging out on street corners or sitting on sidewalks, because we don't want to see the kids on public streets. Yet we are not supporting youth centers, all ages venues, or other places where kids can go.

K: Absolutely, I think society as a whole has become afraid of teenagers, and specifically of large groups of teenagers gathering. Adults in our society are inherently afraid of this and it's ridiculous, I work with large groups of teenagers every day and they are very, very, very peaceful.

10: Maybe that's because you actually talk to them.

K: (Laughs) Well, maybe other people should try it.

10: It's the same thing with all-ages shows. People are going out of their way to provide entertainment for teenagers and give them a place to go that's fun, safe, and entertaining, yet the adult community doesn't seem to like that. They pass laws and close down clubs that are there for the kids. I don't know what they expect the kids to do.

K: Nor do I, it makes absolutely no sense to me. Look at the Rockcandy, hundreds of kids are there most nights of the week, those kids would not be easily drawn to many other things but live music. The Rockcandy provides a great service to the City of Seattle by providing a space for kids most nights of the week.

10: Yet at a show like the Subhumans, there were probably 5 cop cars patrolling heavily, when there were no fights, no problems with drugs, just 1000 kids hanging out having fun. It's just a bunch of weird looking kids hanging out.

K: Exactly, I see it all the time, hundreds and hundreds of kids together and there aren't any problems, they aren't doing anything wrong, it just makes the powers that be nervous even if they aren't doing anything wrong.

10: Do you think that when you leave, that the shows will still go on and the whole process that you essentially started will continue?

K: I think it will. I left for 4 months and went to Europe and the people that stayed at the Firehouse did a great job while I was gone, it's given me a sense of freedom, that now I can go elsewhere and things will maintain without me there.



photo by Diona Mavis



10: All your focus has been with Eastside teens, yet you live in Seattle, do you ever feel like you would want to get more involved in doing something similar here in the city?

K: Very very much so, that's why I have been doing all this work on the Teen Dance Ordinance. I lived on the Eastside for a short time and I never want to live there again. It was really hellish, I wouldn't live anywhere but Seattle while working on the Eastside.

10: What was so hellish about it?

K: Besides the fact that it is a really sterile culture deprived area, everywhere I went I ran into kids that knew me, parents that knew me, and political people that knew me. I couldn't go to the grocery store at 1 o'clock in the morning without running into someone that knew me, I just needed more anonymity in my life.

10: Sure, I can understand that. Since you mentioned the Teen Dance Ordinance, let's talk about that, there is another renewed push to change it, what's going on?

K: Yes! There have been a bunch of people who have come back to the table, some of which who were involved years ago when you and a lot of other people were, some of those same people are back working on it, as well as new people. We've met with all 9 of the Seattle city council members, but it's kind of in a discombobulated state right now, because of the 9, they want to go in about 4 different directions. We are working with them to try and move forward though, and I really believe this time something is going to change, we are really going to make some progress on the TDO. It's been a long process, and it's going to continue to be a long process, it will be at least another 4 to 6 months until we see radical changes. But there are some Seattle City Council members who have been very supportive in perhaps even abolishing, or suspending or changing the Teen Dance Ordinance, and then there are some who are really stuck on it. Some are parents of teenage children and some are just conservative and misinformed.

10: What can the average person in the community that is a fan of live music do to get involved now to help change happen?

K: Well, Framework Productions, which is a non-profit started by my friends Cari and Cindy, started when I was in Europe, they have done some really great work and there are a lot of kids involved with that. But Framework and the TDO group are splitting ways, they will support each other, but Framework cannot continue to do work against the TDO if for no other reason than they are about to become a non-profit, and non-profit organizations are not allowed to lobby politically. So it's going back to something like AAMO (All Ages Music Organization) was, going back to more of a community music group working on this. But then, there are a lot of things people can do, they are opening up a process and people can apply to community board that will study the TDO for a few months. We really want articulate people that are educated about the TDO on that board to study all the issues involved, work with cops and firefighters who are probably going to have different perspectives, and whatever comes out of that group some member of the City Council will then enact as the new rules that govern shows in the City of Seattle. There is also probably going to be a community forum at some point where the community at large comes to talk with the City Council about the Teen Dance Ordinance.

10: Do you think there are people out there in the general public that actually support the current Teen Dance Ordinance? I would think the general public doesn't know or care about it.

K: Some of the Seattle City Council members actually had never even read the ordinance, so I think there are probably many people, in fact most of the masses, that aren't aware of the TDO, how it affects shows or kids in this town.

10: So the opportunity presents itself now to show the TDO to the general public as something that is pretty oppressive and has a negative effect on both the live music community and the youth of Seattle.

K: Absolutely! The TDO is one of the most outdated laws ever, it was enacted in the 20's to keep sailors from preying on young women when they came to town. Then it was revised in 1986 in a campaign

led by Norm Rice after the whole deal with the Monastery. There were things going on there that people needed to pay attention to, but the TDO was kind of a total over-reaction to that. And some people have even thought that there is some connection between child pornography and drug dealing and all-ages shows, which is ridiculous, and there is not another promoter around that is doing anything like what the guy at the Monastery was. So it's an outdated law, and to the best of my knowledge, it's never been enforced on anyone. I have been looking for someone that has been found in violation of the TDO and haven't been able to find anyone, instead it's used to menace promoters and to harass promoters. They will come in and say "You are in violation of the TDO... but see this wiring over here, we think you need to re-do this and it will cost \$3000". But no one has been arrested for violating the ordinance, because if they do, there are ACLU lawyers that will come to our defense. Back when AAMO was working on it, that was the place we got to, we needed someone to get arrested to be a test case, because then we would get some help, but to the best of my knowledge that hasn't happened.

10: Since no one has been arrested as violating the Teen Dance Ordinance, do you really think it's that oppressive?

K: I think it's severely oppressive because of the way it's used to intimidate promoters and control what they are allowed to do in their venues. They tell them they are in violation of the TDO, but then try to cite them for things like occupancy, or the way doors open, or electrical wiring, or security, they say these rules exist, but then don't actually cite them. They are used to control people and make them cooperate.

10: Are you recommending that people write the City Council members? Or show up to the group meetings and apply to be on this committee?

K: Both those things, plus attending the general forum when it happens, and also educating people about the TDO. Yes, writing letters to the City Council is an excellent idea if you are familiar with the TDO and the issues involved, some people have just kinda heard of it, but haven't actually read the ordinance, so they're not really in a good position to debate with someone that has. If you have read the ordinance and understand it, please do write them.

10: Who are the council members that need to be "educated"?

K: (Laughs) It depends. Richard McCiver was awesome, and Richard Conlin and Tina Podlodowski had been really supportive. Some other people were more neutral, they weren't familiar with the ordinance, but in agreement that a 12 year old law that hasn't been revised, probably needs to be looked at. Nick Licata and Sue Donaldson both have concerns about the age restrictions and abolishing them in the TDO, which is my biggest concern with the ordinance. It says if you are under 15 you must be accompanied by a parent to be at a teen dance or all-ages show, and if you are over 20 you are not allowed on the premises or you are committing a misdemeanor crime and so is the person allowing you to remain there.

10: That's obviously going on, from any given show to church dance, there are people under 15 to people, like me, that are a little bit over 20.

K: (Laughs) Yeah.

10: So, when you are not championing teen rights and working with teens over in Redmond, if you ever have free time that is, what do you do for fun?

K: Hang out on "the Hill", Capital Hill that is. (I had been giving Kate a hard time for acting like a hipster and calling it "the Hill".) I live on Capital Hill so I can go out at night and walk to clubs and go all over.

10: Well, since you see so many live shows as part of your job, does it make it harder to go to shows on your free time?

K: It's pretty much my favorite thing to do, I go to a lot of shows besides the ones I am involved in.

10: Do you go to shows in bars?

K: All the time. Of course I love all-ages shows, but there is lots of fun to be had at bar shows, they are different, but I love them equally



as well.

10: Me too. So how did you get into social work and working with kids?

K: I was a really fucked up kid, I got kicked out of all 3 highschools that were in range of my parents home. When I was 16 and had been kicked out of all the schools, I didn't know really what to do, so I enrolled in college. When I was having a hard time with my family, the people they were sending me to for help were really not that helpful, they had no clue what they were doing. It sounds kinda hokey, but at that time I decided when I was older I was going to be more effective at helping kids. I got lucky, after I got out of school, I got a job with a program working with teenage boys that I really loved and stayed there for a few years. Then I went back East and started a program for girls that was very different from the residential treatment programs, then I came out here and started the Firehouse.

10: Damn, you've done a lot.

K: I'm lucky, because I have such a fun job. Few of my friends love their work as much as I love mine, I don't get bored, there are always kids around and there is always something new going down.

10: I think there are a lot of people like me that work a crappy job to make money and then with our free time work on our punk rock projects or trying to be politically active in what's going on in our community, and here you get to do that as part of your job.

K: Yeah, I am very truly lucky.

10: Is there you want to say to people?

K: It's incredible that the music community has supported an all-ages venue like the Firehouse for 6 years and the TDO resistance needs your support.

*The Old Firehouse is located in downtown Redmond about 25 minutes East of Seattle. To find out about upcoming shows, call their hotline at 425-556-2370.*

# Hey, baby!

Just like I snuck a call from his mother's phone to the Courthouse so we could elope last year, I snuck a call from his mother's house to Planned Parenthood. I needed an appointment. When the voice on the other end of the phone asked what service I wanted an appointment for, I mumbled, "a pregnancy test," so no one in the next room could hear me.

Ernesto said he could just look at me and tell I was pregnant. I told him to shut up his wishful thinking because my period was late only because we'd been whirlwind traveling all month & that hitchhiking & train hopping & nasty food eating & sleeping in precarious spots would make any girl's cycle irregular. I attributed my extra sore and bloated boobs to some sort of extremely wild PMS. I was shushin' him & rationalizing my body's behavior because I didn't want my hopes built up. In the privacy of my own head, I was prayin' for a lil' one to be grabbin' hold in there.

I peed in the cup & gave it to the nurse. She said the test takes about four minutes to fully develop & that she'd be back that soon to give me the results. She came back in less than a minute flat with a positive result. That second pink line showin' up said I was pregnant for sure!

Ernesto & I could barely find the door, let alone open it to let ourselves out of the clinic. We could barely get the car's door opened & the key in the ignition, let alone drive the thing. I reparked & we had to walk. And walk and walk. I wanted to start eating right away.

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## Hey Baby!

by Jessica Mills  
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Years ago, I decided that giving birth to and having a child in my life was an experience I wanted to have. I have never been able to intellectually rationalize that decision, though. It certainly doesn't fit in easily with my lifestyle, or my financial reality, or other things, but my body and emotions took over.

Still, finding out I was pregnant didn't truncate our couple months whirlwind of traveling with little direction. I still hiked the Appalachian trail for four days, although it was 100 degrees HOT & food & water were not in ideal quantities. And after that, we were able to make our way up to and all around PEI and Nova Scotia for a couple weeks of beach hopping. Some may think that having to dash into woods to seek nighttime sleep shelter is roughing it, but we had a tent, sleeping bags, a cook stove, and beautiful beaches with birds, rocks, jellyfish, cliffs, whales, seals, and sometimes even no other people!

When we finally made it home, the first place I went the very same afternoon was to The Birth Center to get myself hooked up with a midwife. They signed me up and gave me a free tour, but I still had to wait a week and a half for my initial prenatal exam. Ooh, I was anxious to hear that everything was OK in there. What if it's twins? What about that cramp I had two weeks ago? What about those beers I drank before I knew I was pregnant? The cigarettes? The joints of BC green?

When I told my mom the news, she squealed with excitement. "I'm so ready!" You see, I'm an only child. My dad, I think, was in shock. He always joked that I wasn't even allowed to date until I was thirty. My grandmother thought it was a false alarm and a month after I told her said, "Oh, you really are

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pregnant?" This is going to make her a great-grandmother. I could have sworn she had a tear in her eye.

At my first appointment, I heard the heartbeat and felt deeply in love, quicker than the beats themselves at 165 beats per minute strong. My midwife thought I was farther along than I thought I was and she scheduled me an ultrasound so we could find out for sure. Another week and a half wait. Meanwhile, possibilities of why she might think I'm 16 weeks along instead of 12 swirled in my head and made me incredibly anxious for reassuring news. Did I have a fibroid tumor? Was that period three months ago really not a period and instead was me miscarrying a twin?

The appointment was yesterday & I was right on time at 4:30. The Doctor's office lobby was full of other women, some of whom had a few young'uns with them. The first hour of waiting, the kids were calm.

The second hour of waiting, they started to wiggle and annoy each other, including the moms. I started to question whether I wanted that in my life.

The third hour, the kids were giving each other dares and one little third grade boy named Justin was crash landing a dollar bill airplane, cheering, "It's JFK!" Ernesto told him that if it was really JFK, he'd be flying on a \$100,000 bill. Justin did this about 50 or a million times before his mom threatened to tear him up. So then, he flew the same airplane a couple hundred more times saying it was George Washington instead.

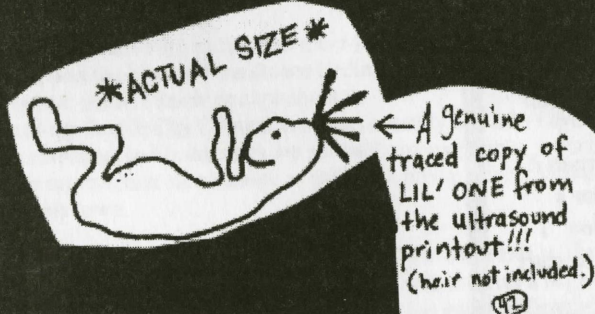
By the fourth hour of waiting, Ernesto had read his entire book and I, all the zines I brought. I even looked at a lame ass mainstream Pregnancy mag that wanted me to spend "an affordable couple grand" on a dream nursery. And here I thought I

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was getting space ready enough for the baby by selling my drum set.

Finally, the doctor poked his head into the lobby and started taking patients. He had been called to the hospital for an emergency. I had missed band practice already when I was just getting prepped for the ultrasound. The machine had a super gross, porno looking dildo probe thing hanging from it & I prayed it wasn't going inside of me. I was already freakin' enough because the doctor was male.

He finally came in & was really cool instantly, excitedly wanting to see all my tattoos. He quickly got to work on me, sans the creepy probe. Whew! A little jelly stuff on my tummy & a smooth thin plastic wand rubbed over it was all he needed to have a picture of my 6dmm lil' one on the screen with an immediate expected due date (February 29 making it a leap frog baby), probable date of conception, an estimated 12 weeks and 3 days along, assurance of no fibroid tumors, and confirmation that I was not carrying twins. Ernesto did a little dance of relief in the corner of the room.

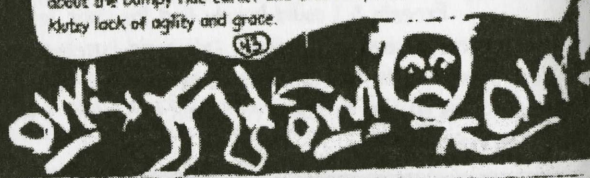


Riding my bike home today in a super smiling mood, I guess the white newness of the newly repaved curb blinded me & I didn't see its elevation correctly. There I went flying over my handlebars, after they wrecked themselves in my stomach, of course. Before I even chin-planted on the road, I was well aware of the constricting pain in my gut & my lack of ability to take a good breath. All tangled with my foot caught in the foot strap, I was trapped. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see several cars stopped at the red light next to me with their windows up as to hold in their air conditioning. If the people inside weren't laughing at me, then they were just plain staring. Not a window cracked. A nice older woman came over from the car wash to help me. I definitely needed it.

I was more rattled and scared than hurt and I nearly made it all the way home before bursting into tears. I took one step inside the front door, whimpering and totally scuffed from chin to knees and Ernesto jumped up to see what had happened to me. I immediately started crying harder & he was super sweet to me until I calmed down. That was probably only the second time he's ever seen me cry, so he knew it wasn't just because I was scraped up.

I decided an out of character bubble bath was what I needed & there I sat among the Miss Piggy Pink Banana Bubbles reading my "What to Expect When You're Expecting" book for at least an hour. I talked to my tummy and told the lil' one sorry about the bumpy ride earlier and that I hoped it wouldn't inherit my klutzy lack of agility and grace.

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**Socio-Economic Change in Chicago and Our Personal Political Roles, A Conversation Between Kim and Eric.**

By Eric Boehme and Kim Nolan  
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Eric: We've both lived in this city for a long time and I'm wondering what you think about changes in the demographics of the neighborhoods in which we live. We talk about gentrification all the time, but what does that really mean? I mean, everywhere I go around the U.S., in the larger cities, I see rich white people moving back into the urban core, cuz it is cool, cuz it is close to the bars and restaurants and I see that the "white flight" of the 60s and 70s is reversed so now they are moving into neighborhoods and forcing the people out who have lived in these neighborhoods for years. What do you think our role is as white kidz moving into these neighborhoods? I mean, we are obviously looking for cheaper rent and in many cases we share a similar class background or affiliation with most of the people already living there, but how do you think we contribute to gentrification? I mean, it's not happening quite as fast in Logan Square where I lived as in Wicker Park where you lived.

K: Yeah, definitely Wicker Park has gone up. A real steep rent, lots of places for consumption and "entertainment." I think that is different from the Logan Square area though. Logan Square is about living space and Wicker Park is about the combination of cool commercial space next to living space.

E: So you are saying that the difference in the changes that occurred in Wicker Park and Logan Square neighborhoods was that people in Logan Square moved there to find lower rents rather than in Wicker Park where people started opening storefronts, you know, like bars and restaurants?

Kim: The thing that I think about it is this: people moving into Wicker Park was all about commercial space. I mean, to really gentrify a neighborhood you've got to have commercial space where you have develop all of the service type industries that upwardly mobile people like to have access to.

Have you ever read any of the stuff that Mike Davis writes about. . .  
Eric: His stuff on Los Angeles?

Kim: No, his stuff about Fishermans Wharf and the development that surrounded that. He talks about how cities will often designate an area a "historical district" to promote development. Wicker Park is exactly one of these "historical districts." Logan Square is pretty "historical" too, but it is not officially designated a historical district like Wicker Park. It is not subject to the same kinds of subsidies for construction and land development as Wicker Park. Gentrification once it hits, claims something as a historical district as the first step. You have a way to advertise the neighborhood and you get different tax shelters and tax breaks which you don't get if it is people just deciding to move.

Eric: What about around here, the near Southside, 18th and Pilsen area? I know this area is under a lot of controversy for being gentrified as well. But I'm wondering who owns the property here? Do a lot of upper middle class families own property?

Kim: Yeah some. Like my neighbor, Mario Salamanca, the guy who lives downstairs. He owns this building and the one next door. His wife is a beautician and they own both properties and he sits on the board of the historical museum. Theyve been here for thirty years.

They own those buildings, they rent them out. My boyfriend is down here. They have a couple of buildings, you know like a hundred cars and four kids in college. I mean they are richer than my family is.

E: So how much is gentrification a class issue vs. a race issue? I mean, gentrifiers are always thought of as white, but does that really account for what is going on?

**Kim:** (Laughs) Oh fuck. . . I guess, yeah, I would like to think it is all race.

Eric: Yeah?

Kim: Yeah, definitely. Well, think of it this way. In Wicker Park, it was historically a Hispanic neighborhood. Then Polish people as well, depending on where you are over on that side of Western, but west of Western and Division is all Puerto Rican. The white people first came in as artists. You know, like Urbus Orbis ten years ago. Yeah, no matter what the Autonomous Zone wants to say, about all the projects they do around gentrification, they were the first white people there. Artists started to make the neighborhood trendy, slowly bars and restaurants began to develop, and then suddenly rents started going sky high and all of the people who used to live there have to move.

**Eric:** Is it an economic question or a cultural question when you talk about the changes that come about when white kids, artists, whatever, move

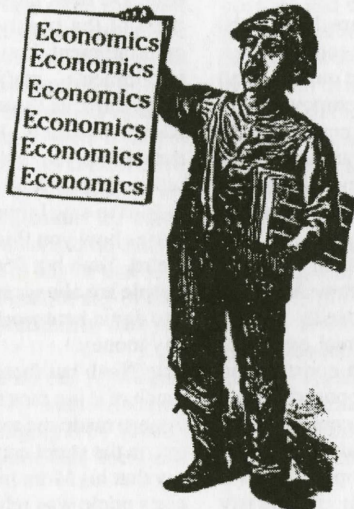
into a neighborhood? I mean, the economics of Wicker Park are such that the big manufacturing factories over on Milwaukee all got shut down, either from the changes in our national economy, the introduction of NAFTA and the change from industrial to service industries here, but also locally, not unconnected, cuz there just isnt the kind of industry that there used to be here in Chicago. But isnt gentrification a cultural process too?

Kim: I dont know if you can talk about it just in terms of gentrification as it happens. . . I think that you have to look at it as a process where it happens. Wicker Park is different than Logan Square cuz I think that now the boundaries of where it is “safe” to live have headed North. So that is definitely a cultural thing. I mean, white kidz dont think that they will be killed by “gangs” or whatever anymore in Wicker Park. Which is why you find kids now living in Humboldt Park or you find people living in Logan Square and it is more housing than commercial. Wicker Park is the commercial center where people got pushed out of housing, even white kids looking for cheap rent. The boundaries of where it is OK to live have been pushed so people live in Logan Square, because Logan Square is like the peripheral area of Wicker Park. But I dont think you can compare them because the gentrification in Logan Square is different from what happened in Wicker Park which is different from what is happening now here in Pilsen.

Eric: What is the situation here now? I mean one of my white friends reacted quite strongly when I suggested that he might be part of this process here in Pilsen.

Kim: Well, yeah, nobody wants to be part of that. . .

Eric: Yeah, I mean, I fully admit that when I was first living in Logan Square I thought about my role as a so-called white gentrifier . I also thought about the fact that a great deal of people I came into contact with are white, sorta middle class college, post-college people and I









munities. Were both involved with people who have more money to spend on luxury items and entertainment than we do, people who live more than we do by purchasing commodities. Is it enough to put your money into enterprises run within the neighborhood, essentially supporting the growth of petty bourgeois capitalism, like small shop owners or people within the community? Or do you start to talk about how class is constructed in this country and how many people cant hit it at all these hot clubs or whatever cuz they are so poor? Black, white and brown. . .

Kim: Well, is this a lesser of two evils kind of argument? I think it is a different kind of argument to say that you should keep your money where you live. Like for me, I live in a place where I shouldnt be, its not my neighborhood.

Eric: What is your neighborhood?

Kim: Where white people live.

Eric: Why? Just because of your skin color? You speak Spanish, your friends, your boyfriend are all Hispanic.

Kim: Well, it doesnt HAVE to make a difference for me. I could still do all of that shit, you know agitate on the behalf of Cuba or whatever, from my white house. It makes a difference. I know better. I know the kind of pressure people here are under in the face of all that stuff that is going on East of Halsted. There is a definite undercurrent here that they are going to be pushed out. This is why it is both cultural and economic. As a white person, being here and knowing that I have to make a decision to be the "good white person," that speaks Spanish and knows that white people shouldnt live in Pilsen while trying to understand my neighbors through living here. Or should I be the same white person that can do all of that stuff and live in a place where I am not personally effecting those processes of gentrification? Im pretty mobile, I can afford a bus pass, I dont have to live here to do all that stuff. The reason I live here now is not connected to any of that stuff but I know what my responsibility is if I care at all about any of this. The responsibility is to not live in Pilsen, a responsibility that you should take on.

Eric: Yeah, I think it is our responsibility to take up our privileges, especially our white privilege. But to take it up by acknowledging that it exists instead of just ignoring it. Acknowledging it by saying, yeah Im white and not just assuming it like everyone else does, and

then start to deconstruct what all that means.

Kim: Yeah, there was this idea when white artists first started moving here or up in Wicker Park that these different cultures could exist side by side, that people in the community could take responsibility for the community, as a community. But white people dont really do that. Anywhere. All the white people moving into the south loop into those condos. . .well, someone lived there before they did but they just dont think about that, theyre white so everything is assumed already. Totally taking over and not acknowledging those that lived there before. It doesnt have to be like that. But Puerto Rican people that live on Division street know all about white people in America. They have to fucken live in it. But you dont know anything about Puerto Ricans. So why dont they take the time and figure it out. They just dont it. They are just the invading army. Why not take the time to let people know that the time you spend in the community is giving back, not taking from the community?

Eric: A friend of mine named Ben, who lived on Ashland and Division told me this story about the kind of visible change he noticed in Wicker Park as it became gentrified. He talked about how ten years ago, the life of the community occurred on the streets, on the front porches and stoops of families and how people would always walk past each other, say hello and everyone knew everyone else. He said he saw that as the white yuppies moved in, everything social started to happen in the fenced in, enclosed backyards of their condos. That rather than the public community of front-porches, Wicker Park had become a private community of enclosed backyards or bars and restaurants that someone could only access through social connections or money. I guess for me living in Logan Square I could see that with my roommates my last year. They always drove where I walked around or rode my bike. I got to know faces and names, old people and kids, and gossip and events in the neighborhood just by trying to be visible and around in the community of front-porches and stoops. They didnt know anyone. I dont really know if that fights gentrification at all on say, an economic level, or whether socially, it just dispels some of the myths that we each have about each others different cultures, but it made me feel a part of the community. Ultimately, I think my neighbors came to think of me as part of the community too.

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## Violence In Our Minds The Age-Old Debate Still Lingers

by Mike Albers  
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Jesus h fucking christ. I thought this tired old debate was long relegated to the annals of history and old Earth First! Journals. Just when it seemed there were more important things to do, like freeing political prisoners, saving the remnants of our wild lands from the corporate chopping block, or getting that new Amebix tattoo, our privileged little niche has once again found it necessary to exhume the festering corpse of the violence vs. nonviolence debate.

Don't get me wrong, nothing tickles my little white ass more than seeing people involved in some good natured ideological squabbles; questioning, discussing, and revising ideas, generally keeping the debate lively and the analysis fresh and functional. But this issue possesses a magnetism far more powerful than anything short of religion. It ignites passions. It inflames egos and ideologies. It touches the very soul of values and belief systems. In discussing this issue, people on all margins of the debate retreat to the comfortable little alcoves of stolid fundamentalism and allow emotional and reactionary mindsets to dominate, literally tearing apart movements, commu-

nities, and friendships. Even intimate relationships [(s) had a nice body, but his/her political analysis sucked]. And it's a fucking sad reflection of the fact that those of us up here in the North, who are concerned about the state of the world and all its inhabitants, have enough free time and disattachment from real struggle to worry ourselves with ideological puritanism and non-topical bickering.

If you are serious and dedicated to your struggle, be it preserving the last shreds of wilderness, freeing political prisoners, or fighting for good vegan skate shoes or cruelty free, nonfascist black metal, you will do whatever is necessary, efficient, and effective to actualize your goals. If there is a certain line you will not cross in fighting for what you think is good, just, or morally obligatory, then you obviously have something higher on your list of priorities than your stated and goal and might consider pursuing that with greater vigor. Unfortunately for those of us involved in the hobby activism of the North, there are those that consider means more important than ends and can therefore draw moralistic lines in the sand as to what is tactically



acceptable and what is not. And these are the shortsighted, morally blinded people that keep digging up the carcass of the violence vs. nonviolence debate.

... environmental movement, that deliver scathing diatribes against violence or physical exertion against anything, be it a person, a dog, or a feller/buncher (one of those dandy Dr. Suess-esque machines that cuts tees, limbs them, and stacks them in a neat row for the quick and easy transformation into TV guides and dumb punkzines) and proclaim such actions as universally reprehensible. "Violence is never appropriate," they tell me. "We must be better than them and not play their game of hate. Violence only begets further violence." Fuck them and the crystal worshipping politically correct woo bullshit they rode in on. If they were really concerned about ending violence and not merely being puritan moralists or had taken their dreadlocked heads out of their kind organic asses long enough to gain a shred of historical perspective, they would realize that, although a most unsavory choice, violence is often the only effective recourse to violence.

If you don't believe me, take a gander at the history of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, or almost anywhere in Eastern Europe. In El Salvador, for example, the people tried marching in the streets, using art and music as tools for education and resistance and holding solemn candlelight vigils. They prayed and changed, wrote zines and essays, and used the sacred ballot box. But when it came down to it, the only thing that ended the brutal violence of the Salvadoran death squads and military was a good old fashioned, tried and true, Biblically approved dose of raw, unadulterated violence.

I triple dog dare any of you to go down to El Salvador and tell the Salvadoran people that they were morally wrong to use the means they did in defending themselves. I fucking dare you. By establishing a moral principle (from the comfort of your nice suburban living room) that uniformly condemns the use of violence as an immoral act, you are essentially asserting that people have no moral right to defend themselves or their children from the vicious, murderous hands of death squads, paramilitary brigades, or any number of other evils.

I'll come out from around the bush and say it right now. Violence against sentient beings (which is the only way I will use the term, opting in stead to use 'vandalism' or property destruction to define physical acts against inanimate objects) fucking sucks. I hate the fear drenched adrenaline that accompanies getting your ass kicked by six homies on the street, or watching your friend get his face smashed in by skinheads. I abhor the nausea that surges every time I walk through the muddy, scarred remains of what had been a forest only weeks earlier. It tears me apart every time I get letters from prison penpals telling me about being brutally raped with tool handles, detergent bottles, and other prisoners' penises on a daily basis. But let's face it. Here comes a time when chanting inane slogans and doing repetitive CD (civil disobedience) demos is no longer an effective means of resistance. Sometimes, when the government is torturing and massacring your children by the thousands, that point comes much sooner than in the North where your goals lie in the distance, far away from immediate, personal concerns for survival. But like it or not, violence exists, has existed, and more than likely will continue to exist whether or not we utilize it in our lifetimes.

I believe in violence. Violence is as much an empirical truth as Ponderosa Pines, sunsets, or pimples. Ignoring it and denying its existence does not make it go away, but in fact only permits it to grow and thrive unchecked and untempered by any serious resistance. Now before you go lumping me with the ranks of One Life Crew and Nazi skinheads in the crew of macho, violent fucks you love to hate, hear me out. Simple recognizing violence as a very real, exceedingly present force by no means signifies a love for it. In fact, as far as tactics go, at least in the present situation in the North, it is the absolute last tactic I would recommend in the current environmental or social justice strug-

gles. However, unlike the vast majority of my pacifist colleagues, my hesitance to use violence as a contemporary tactic stems not so much from a love for humanity as from the sobering realization that as of now, on this continent, in those particular struggles, violence is not an effective tactic... for the most part. I can just imagine the horrific backlash against ecology, conservation, and nature in general if the entire Earth First! Movement pulled together into armed bands and began an all out war against the corporate timber and mining industries. Not only would the modicum of popular support that environmentalism enjoys quickly disintegrate, but the powers of industry would most certainly pull out the patriotic reaction card and motivate a large scale anti-environmental campaign that, considering their financial, social, and political power, would inevitably destroy 100 years of progress for the conservation/environmental movement. To make a long hypothesis short, we shoot, they clearcut and strip mine everything.

On the other hand, there are definite situations in which violent acts stand as damn effective tools to use. For example, let's just say there was one man, a greedy ass, rich man, that had somehow bribed his way into a permit to mine a pristine river in Southern Oregon. And let's just say that this is a unique ecosystem that exists nowhere else in the entire universe. It is home to one of the last remaining steelhead runs in the world, the home of the rare, carnivorous *Darlingtonia* species, and has tons of other endangered and threatened species (like otters, frogs, salamanders, osprey and black bear). The movement of the heavy equipment necessary to strip 300,000 tons of ore out of this fragile ecosystem, as well as the mining itself, would

destroy the entire river and all the multitudes of billions of critters that rely on it for survival. And let's just say that this one man also had enough political clout that he bought his way into a go ahead from the county to construct a nickel smelter that will pump thousands of pounds of heavy metal into the air of the valley. And let's just say that these heavy metals have been proven by the EPA to be a primary cause of Leukemia and other cancers in children. Breakdown/One man is going to destroy an entire ecosystem, slaughter more than a billion critters and drive several species into extinction, destroy a community and kill a whole bunch of children. And let's just say that his man has no heirs and that this whole ecocidal project will die with him. What would be more violent, sitting around chanting and praying while this bastard irreparably destroys the world and kills countless life forms or sending a single bullet into his head and stopping the whole thing with but one shithead's life? (By the way, this exact situation is happening at a place called Rough and Ready Cr  ek, near Cave Junction Oregon. Your help is needed!).

Although a good half of my colleagues would rather watch the entire Earth burn and all of its inhabitants die (as long as it was done peacefully), than life a fist or rifle towards another human, the latter clearly minimizes violence while simultaneously preserving literally billions of lives.

As much as I try and be understanding and respectful towards people's individual convictions, I wonder how these Pacifist disciples can sit around whining about the altering of billboards or sabotage of logging/mining equipment as being violence while strip mines and clearcut are going down all around them. Every time I hear one of these peach for brains '60s throwbacks get up during a meeting and try to redirect the "flow of the meeting because it is getting too intense" I want to drag them by their soft hands and show them what exactly a clearcut looks like. You think its violent that people raise their voices during a meeting? Comes see what happens to a mountain when they build roads all over god's creation, cut down all the trees, drag them out by huge tractors, and leave huge piles of bleeding limbs, mudslides, and habitat destruction behind? You think it's violent when punk whip-poor-wills spike roads and glue locks? Maybe



If there is a certain line you will not cross in fighting for what you think is good, just, or morally obligatory, then you obviously have something higher on your list of priorities then your stated and goal and might consider pursuing that with greater vigor.



you should ask the animals that were forced out of their homes or crushed by heavy machinery about violence. Maybe you should ask the Spotted Owl, the Grizzly Bear, the Gray Wolf, or the elusive Lynx about the violence of watching your entire fucking species murdered and confined to smaller and smaller areas, looking extinction right in the eye.

We need to reframe the entire violence vs. non-violence debate. We need to stop pretending that we can be neutral parties in this world and take the hippie pacifists' rhetoric and throw it back in their fucking faces. We need to think holistically and realize that since all life on this ball of disintegrating hydrogen IS interconnected, we are not being benevolent or vanguardist in trying to save the forests and wolves, but acting in self defense of the tedious systems that support all of our lives. And dammit, if someone comes after me with a chainsaw or bulldozer, I'm going to shoot them, no questions asked. There is not time in our planetary struggle to sit back and comfort ourselves with anthropocentric fantasies about having the time or space to choose in this situation. We are up against a wall with life or death as our only option. And guess what? In defending our lives, there will be moments when violence is the only tactic that can save our asses.

In fact, let's take this a step further. Let's talk revolution. The passivist Left has completely altered the reality of the situation behind armed revolution. "You can't win..." they tell us. "They have way more guns than you and will blow you out of the water..." This perforated theory has two main problems with it. Number one, it assumes that the playing field would be a level Continental battlefield ala the Napoleonic Wars, where tow forces walked within plain sight of each other and shot. Nothing could be further from the truth. When, in recent memory, has an insurgency been waged in such a manner? Every armed insurgency since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century has been fought by guerrilla forces against a larger established army. These forces NEVER fought the enemy out in the open, opting rather to use surprise and concealment to their advantage. If guerrilla war didn't exist or wasn't effective against forces several thousand times larger than it, we would still be eating crumpets for tea, Vietnam would be a French colony or American protectorate, and Cuba would still be a big resort for industrialists.

Secondly, the Leftist claim also rests on the assumption that the government really does have more guns than us. But guess what? They don't. Much to the dismay of fascists and liberals alike, we live in the best armed society in the world. Period. There are enough privately owned guns in the United States for each person to have at least one. And magnified by the fact that if a war were really waged against the American population by the American government there will be mass desertions and mass embezzlement of arms; we will have FAR more guns and people than the government could muster out of its domestic well.

But the Leftists are partially right. "Armed revolution is impossible in the United States at this point in time..." The requisite conditions do not exist." They are right insofar as a "Leftist" revolution is concerned. Leftist revolution is impossible and the requisite conditions for it do not exist (Lest the American people suddenly decide they don't really like their freedom, their economy, or lives and are willing to surrender it to a know-it-all vanguard of communists). But drop the Leftist bullshit and you will see that armed revolution is not only a potential, it is an inevitability. ARMED REVOLUTION IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE AND THE EWQUISTE CONDITIONS ARE ON FIRE RIGHT BEFORE US. Come out and hang out with some of my coworkers or listen to Rush Limbaugh if you don't believe me. The vast majority of Americans feel that the united States government has stepped way out of its place and stuck its fascist phallus into all aspects of daily life. From government regulation of the economy to prayer in school to tax extortion, the American public is as embittered, if not more pissed, than any community I saw in Chiapas. The fissures of revolutionary potential are widening by the day under the relentless pressure of "advances" such as the dissolution of the Second Amendment, the destruction of the American economy by the forces of neoliberalism, and extreme distrust of the bipartisan system. The pressure is mounting and it is just a matter of time before the concrete wall of institutional power comes crashing down.

The Second American Revolution will be vastly different than any revolution of this century. Rather than being a drastic change of

leadership as in Chile or Nicaragua, this revolution will be marked by a forceful return to the traditional values and sentiments held dear by the vast bulk of the American population. It will not be led by Leninist poets in berets or pipesmoking Maoists in ski masks, but by populist demagogues ala Billy Graham, Rush Limbaugh, and Patrick Buchanan. It will not feature highbrow academic rhetoric or antiquated Marxist Theory, but the down to Earth politics of talk radio. It will be televised and will be on the internet. It will not feature primitivist anarchists waving black flags, nor a bunch of naked people dancing in the middle of a highway during a Reclaim The Streets action. It will feature the bitter faced scowls of underemployed workers and legions of pickup trucks full of armed citizens. It will be vengeful, it will be bloody.

Armed Revolution in this nation-state will follow the well greased mold of its predecessors in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. It will rise from the fertile soil of political and economic discontent and spread like weeds throughout the nation. Small guerrilla forces will begin hitting strategic locations with acts of premeditated violence. The Government will overreact with its national security state and unleash a whole series of abuses on its population adding further compost to the soil of discontent. The military will more than likely fracture off into one or more distinct elements separate from the institutional powers of the executive administration. All hell will break loose as marital law is declared. Mass looting and starvation will hover in urban centers while rural population digs itself in. Eventually, after the revolution washing machine runs through several bloody cycles, the results will discern themselves. Photos of Bill Clinton and Dan Glickman being dragged behind old American 4x4s and piles of burning bodies from Los Angeles and New York will flood the media. Old scores will be settled, old injustices righted. There can be no revolution without bloodshed. The whole "Once government oppression stops and industrial collapse happens, we will all get along and eat vegan ice cream together in our collectively run infoshops" theory held by the vast bulk of "anarchists" today is an ideological delusion of massive proportions. It has no basis whatsoever in reality and seems to be a willful neglect of the evidence of events after states do indeed fail. Take a gander at Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or the ex-Soviet monolith to see what happens when governments suddenly cease to exist. Instant war. People losing limbs to hatchets and machetes. Ethnic warfare. Burned out homes and businesses. Warlords. Ape camps. Bodies in ditches. Turf wars. The transitional period between the fall of an existing institutional government and whatever comes next is ugly. It is incredibly violent. And guess what, when it happens here your PC rhetoric and rainbow bumper sticker ain't gonna save your ass as that crowd of looters comes up from the ghetto or when that pickup full of good ol' boys blasts into your yuppie neighborhood. If you are REALLY a proponent of revolution, if you EALY want the US government to collapse, you will be armed and ready to return violence or you are suicidal. There is no middle ground. Either you have the means to defend yourself, your stuff, and you're your community, or you perish (or end up in servitude to a warlord).

The basic crux of the violence vs. non-violence debate that has been ignored both by pacifist ideologues and macho "revolutionaries" with Destroy records and black flags is the fact that violence is neither good nor bad, it just is. It exists and will continue to do so, irregardless of prayers, punk rhetoric or any other impotent means. People will do whatever they must in defense of their lives, their communities, and their livelihoods. For some, violence is not a viable option in their struggle. For others, it is their own option. As safe Northerners, it is our obligation to support the struggles of others while doing all we can to prevent circumstances from pushing us against the proverbial wall where the only way out is shooting. Spending five minutes voting or several weeks lobbying against the rise of liberal fascism is far better than watching your friends and family get killed, raped, and dismembered further down the line. Stay on your toes. Keep your eyes open and in perpetual motion to the changing world around you. Take nothing for granted and accept nothing at face value. Do what you can when you can. And most certainly, do not fall for the comfortable niches of ideological puritanism and isolate yourself in a tactical ghetto far removed from real or effective action. And don't forget to buy those guns in advance. The forces of fascism are already yanking them away as fast as they can.



# Dream of Owning An Independent Store?

By Willona Sloan  
Scorpion  
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*A few months ago, I contacted Edith to ask her to distro Scorpion through Mind Over Matter Distro. On her catalog, she had printed a sort of goodbye to the store that she had run with her husband in Albuquerque. I wanted to interview Edith about her experiences with running an alternative space because that was the fantasy that I had been turning over in my own mind recently. The fact that the store didn't last for many years does not diminish its success or its value as a community resource and worthwhile adventure.*

*Edith introduced me to Chloe Eudaly of Reading Frenzy because RF is an independent store that continues to provide an underground space for music, zines, and independent culture in the Portland area.*

*Talking with Edith and Chloe opened my eyes to realities, problems, and expenses I had never considered. I learned a great deal in these interviews and I would like to thank both ladies for the experience. Interview by Willona Sloan*

## The Idea

When you conceive of the idea to open a store, to go into business for yourself and risk everything, how do you convince yourself that this is really something that you can feasibly accomplish? We all have dreams but how do you turn those ideas into and work-frustrated day-dreams into reality? Edith and her husband decided that they'd had enough of punching the clock at somebody else's shitty job.

*Edith:* My husband, Bob, and I got the idea to start Mind Over Matter a few months after we moved to Albuquerque. We were unable to find underground/indie printed and recorded matter that we had been accustomed to having easy access to in the other places we lived. We thought about it a great deal and began doing research—looking for storefronts, finding out about rents, contacting distros, etc. Deciding when to do it was very difficult, we wavered back and forth as to when and finally we just decided to take the plunge. One of the main factors that made us take the plunge was the shitty job situation I was experiencing. I was making minimum wage and we figured there is more potential for making a decent salary by having your own business than working for someone else. We didn't have much of a plan. We had big goals, dreams, ideals, some experience and read some books about opening your own business and trade related information. Our plan was as naive and inexperienced as we were.

*Chloe experienced a similar frustration and set out on her own:*

The name of the store is Reading Frenzy, we call it an "independent press emporium." It opened September 1, 1994. My original idea was due to the culmination of many factors — once I had resigned myself to the fact that I was going to have to spend most of my life working I began searching for meaningful work. Since I didn't have a formal education or a trade my immediate options were limited, but my interests were multitudinous. I tried various occupations for several years with little satisfaction. Printed matter had been the cornerstone of my existence since I was young and since discovering Fact-sheet Five at the age of 18 the underground/alternative/independent press had become a mainstay in my media diet. I worked at a couple of bookstores and had hoped to help develop small press sections but I was frustrated by the limitations placed on me. I realized no one in Portland was doing the independent/alternative press justice and decided it was a worthy pursuit.

I never felt ready — sometimes I still don't! I had been rolling the idea around in my head for about two years when I came across a very cheap, small space in a decent location that I just couldn't pass up. Also, for the first ten months I had a business partner who was much more daring and impulsive than I was and she pretty much pushed me over the final hurdle — unfortunately, we didn't work

well together after the initial excitement wore off.

My business training came from eight years of helping other people with theirs. I would suggest taking advantage of some of the resources and workshops that your local SBA probably provides. Also, get help setting up a simple bookkeeping system and budgets. The American Bookseller Association publishes a book called A MANUAL ON BOOKSELLING that I found very helpful.

We had a very basic business plan and partnership agreement. We both had part-time jobs outside of the store and we agreed not to take any money out of the store for several months — we just invested everything we made in more inventory.

## Start-Up Costs

*The biggest fear I have of starting my own business is just that: starting. Initial start-up costs can be daunting and part of the major deterrent for bright-eyed idealists who would be entrepreneurs. Chloe and Edith both had some money saved up to assist in tackling the initial mound of bills but the costs are many.*

*Edith:*

Our initial money came from savings we had. I was able to save what I thought was a large chunk of money from a well-paying job in San Francisco. Unfortunately, I cannot remember our exact start up costs but it was approximately \$15,000. The first year our rent was \$600 a month and we had to come up with first, last, and a deposit. We had to pay large multi-year deposits on all the utilities, phone—\$65, credit card and debit card machine—\$25 per month plus percentage 3% on all credit card transactions a 25¢ charge per debit card transactions. An alarm which cost \$350 for installation and \$30 a month. We built all our fixtures so that saved us a lot of money but hundreds of dollars we spent buying wood, stain, varnish, paint, making a crude sign, and advertising. Merchandise was of course the biggest cost. I remember placing large orders for a couple thousand dollars thinking it was going to be a lot of stuff but it didn't amount to much. We carried books, comics, zines, cds, vinyl. The average of each item varied but we spent as much as we could on inventory. The most surprising costs were the inventory as one does not realize how much one needs to buy to fill up a store and make it look like there is a selection. Also, signs are very expensive: up to and exceeding a \$1,000 to get professional signs made.

*Chloe:*

We used our personal savings. We each put in \$2000 dollars. We had to remodel the space, buy fixtures, and supplies. As far as inventory went we were very fortunate. Since I had worked at other bookstores I had already established connections with a few distributors. I wrote to all of them explaining our mission and how we were going about making it work. Almost all of them extended generous terms, which means we had at least 30 days to pay our bills instead of paying up front. I don't think this would happen today since many publishers and distributors have gone under or hit hard times.

I can't think of any initial surprises. Reading Frenzy has been much more successful than I ever imagined, but it is still a huge struggle to get all of my work done, keep my creditors happy and have some semblance of a social life. If I had known in advance how hard this was going to be I very well may not have done it. While it's important to know what your getting into sometimes looking at the big picture is a bad idea because when all you can see is the mountain it's hard to find the path.

## Buying Stock

*Both of the stores sell independent products such as zines, records,*



and paraphernalia. Determining what to stock and how much is a complicated process.

At Mind Over Matter, Edith and her husband stocked a variety of items and also created a space for more than just consuming merchandise:

We sold music on independent labels, mostly punk but also noise, experimental, pop on CD and vinyl. We also carried zines, comics, and books. As time went by we also carried patches, pins, t-shirts, and videos. We had free shows, opened our space to anarchist meetings, organized a D.I.Y. Fest and a big zine show at a community art space. We tried to offer our space to more than just selling and consumption.

Initially, we purchased inventory we were familiar with, liked, or that was recommended by the salespeople we were ordering from. As time went by we listened to what our customers were expressing interest in and special ordering and bought according to their interest. Since we were on an intimate level with many of the customers we could order specifically for them.

Not long after we were open we were approached by a member of a local band to have a show at the store with his band and 2 other bands. They charged a dollar and it was on a weekend night and the store was packed with people. It was a disaster: fights, damaged walls, alcohol, and lots of trouble—more than we had bargained for. We decided we wouldn't do anymore but we eventually gave in and had a few more with little or no admission fee. We went through phases of having shows and deciding not to have them. Eventually they became free with the emphasis that they were in-store performances so people wouldn't act like they were at a show. This really helped. People were asked to donate to the bands and buy their merchandise. We would buy as many records as we could, try to give the band some money or buy them gas. We had some amazing bands play and I often enjoyed the more intimate performance at the store better than the show later that night. The more in-stores we did the less problems we had. There was little monetary commitment as the band knew it was a free event.

Determining how much for of each item to purchase was the most difficult part. The magazine industry has a standard which can be translated to zines so I would order a minimum of 5 as people would almost never buy the last zine or magazine. Zines were also dependent on each issue—some months we could 35 copies of MRR and other months we could only sell 15. You would buy a large quantity of a specific record by a band people were crazy for and it would flop and then you would buy less of another release and sell out immediately. There were other releases we could never buy enough of and were constant sellers. We could never stock enough Los Crudos which I think were the biggest selling band in our store. The second band would be Scared of Chaka which was a local band. We just did the best we could as we had no real formula.

Chloe also create a resource for the community that extends beyond the sale of popular items:

Reading Frenzy stocks over 1000 magazines, zines, comics, and books. We also sell stationery, t-shirts, posters, toys and trinkets. We usually put on 2 or 3 events every month, including a monthly art exhibit/reception, plus, readings, signings, screenings, etc.

I have three main considerations when choosing new titles — Is it independently produced? Is it widely available? Is it worth the paper it's printed on? There are a number of publishers who I have so much faith in I automatically take their new titles. besides that I rely heavily on my distributors - Left Bank, AK, Last Gasp, Desert Moon - to keep me informed and well stocked. I receive a lot of samples in the mail, but I only order a small percentage of them — small, direct orders are time consuming and not very profitable — the longer I do this the more I care about such things — it serves no one for

me to waste my time and money when I can barely keep up with what's in demand. I also read a lot of review publications and follow up on titles that intrigue me.

Buying stock is something that just takes time to figure out. You need to have well-stocked shelves, but you don't want to have too much money tied up in inventory. I think there is some magic equation that involves sales, inventory and overhead but I have not discovered it yet. I do not really have trouble working with distributors.

#### Distros vs. Direct

There is a lot of debate concerning the art of dealing with distributors. Dealing directly with bands, labels, and zinesters has its advantages; however, the fact remains that working with distros is a practical and yet often confusing part of running a business.

Edith explains some of the problems that Mind Over Matter encountered trying to figure out the distribution game:

Distributors.... The record industry is COD. No credit. The salespeople were friendly but we weren't a big account but we got pretty good service as were usually the only store in town that were buying from some of these distributors. The bigger the distro the more mess ups there would be and it would always be on a release date that people were hounding you for a record that they forgot to ship or sent somewhere else or didn't get out on time. Mordam was the biggest distributor and the one that had the most mishaps. Revolver is big but we never had problems with them. The small distributors that were also labels seemed to be the best like Ebullition and Profane Existence.

The magazine industry and book industry are different. Most of the books I ordered from Last Gasp or Left Bank and always came on time and correct. I didn't start using magazine distributors until after we had opened for a while. Short shipments of the magazines you really need and additions of magazines you never ordered were common. Never knowing about new titles they were carrying was a constant frustration in addition to trying to find out if they were still carrying a particular title was difficult to find out. We were never able to understand the invoicing system.

We always preferred to go to the source or as direct as possible. I did the publication buying and I dislike magazine distributors as I do not think they service the publisher or the stores well. I would

rather have a relationship with the publisher, band, or label even if it is only a business one. I can get more information about the zine, comic, music, etc. than I can get from a distributor. I also enjoyed meeting the creators which wasn't likely to happen if we didn't deal direct. Distributors were the last resort and with some record labels the only way to get that labels' music.

Chloe seems to have had fewer difficulties with distributors.

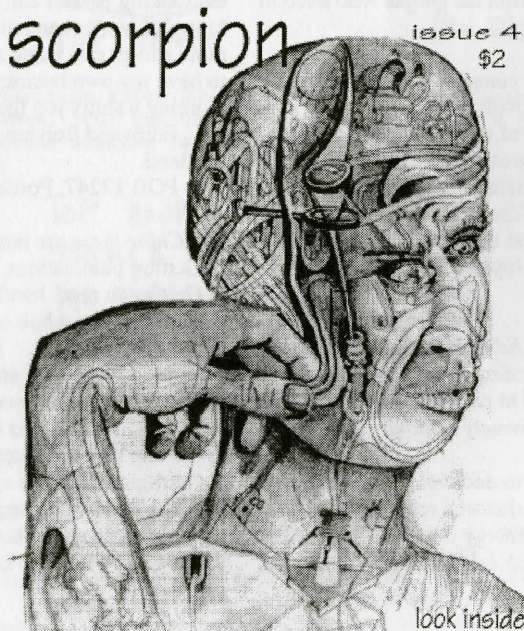
#### Shoplifters & Other Problems

Edith discusses some of the unexpected problems her store ran into:

We did have problems with shoplifters. Mostly people would steal expensive books. Graffiti magazines and books had high theft problems. Once we knew what was happening we would make physical changes in the store like moving books near the register and putting only 1 copy of a graffiti magazine on

the counter. All the cds and 7"s were behind the counter but people would still steal the empty jewel cases and sleeves even with signs posted.

The biggest problem was a New Age muffin/coffee shop opening next door. We had been there about 2 years and they opened up and didn't have a clue what we were about. They would call the cops on us, harass us, harass our customers and were impossible to deal





with. Our windows were also smashed once.

*Chloe:*

I know it happens and it's a fact of doing business. I only have a problem with it when I notice something expensive missing. I am actually about to install a security mirror because we have a serious blind spot and a lot of stuff has been disappearing lately. The most shoplifted sections are — graffiti, skinhead, and drug titles — go figure.

#### Keeping Organized

*In order to run a profitable and effective business, it is essential that the you be as organized as possible. This includes creating a competent accounting system and keeping track of all inventory.*

*Edith talks about the challenges of staying abreast of the daily operations:*

Bob did all the bookkeeping and had to spend 8-10 hours a week doing it and used the computer program Quicken to make the job a little easier.

Organization: I constantly was reassessing the way we did things as I am really into efficiency. If a particular system wasn't working we would think of a way to improve it so we could do it faster or less frequently. When you have a 2 person operation it is extremely important to stay organized and on top of things. If we let things go the store would suffer and we would have to work harder.

*Chloe:*

I use a dayplanner and make daily to do lists, besides that it's all about balancing your checkbook and creating a good filing system. *Bookkeeping* can be done manually, on the computer, or by someone else — definitely get some advice when setting your system up.

#### Community Support

*Both Mind Over Matter and Reading Frenzy receive(d) support from their communities.*

*Edith says the community in Albuquerque did the best that they could to sustain the business; and she is grateful for their support:*

Everyone was supportive. Almost all our customers were regular and frequent and did what they could to keep our store thriving. Some of the events we held at the store were sparsely attended but we certainly could not have asked for more from the people who lived in the town.

*Chloe also expresses her gratitude to the community of Portland:*

When we were recently threatened with a forced move or closure by a neighboring chain restaurant and our landlords, there was such a huge public outcry that the restaurant eventually backed off, due to what they called a serious public relations problem — otherwise known as a dramatic drop in sales. Also, a number of people go out of their way to buy things from us that they could get elsewhere — it's important to cultivate that kind of loyalty.

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*Here is where the two stories diverge. Edith and Mind Over Matter were not able to continue in Albuquerque; despite re-adjustments and re-organization, regrettably the store had to close its doors. This was a painful experience and one that is extremely difficult for Edith to express:*

We closed because our sales started to decline. It started in January and kept decreasing. We were both exhausted emotionally, physically, mentally, and just didn't have the energy to go on. We tried to clear out a lot of old inventory by having sales, eliminated buying

books, reduced the magazines we were getting from distributors. We thought about relocating and getting a smaller space but we knew that in order for us to stay open and get more customers we would have to sacrifice our ideals. We would have to turn the store into something we didn't want it to be. So, we figured it was better to close it on our terms than to have it suffer some awful transformation or slowly linger until it was a shadow of what it had been.

The most important thing I learned was to move slow and start small. If you can run your business or project out of a bedroom do it. Growth can be detrimental and nothing is forever. Businesses can be finite and serve a specific place and a specific time and it is still valid and important.

I would have rented a very tiny space and slowly chipped away at getting more inventory and growing. I would not have spent every waking moment thinking about it or working on it.

*Chloe and Reading Frenzy are still chugging along. They would not be able to do so with many adjustments and by paying careful attention to the intricacies of the business. She says:*

When Reading Frenzy opened it basically consisted of what I thought was important, over the years the selection has been heavily influenced by my customers. Whole sections have disappeared while new ones have been created. A common problem for small bookstore owners is to get into a buying rut and not bring in enough new titles to keep people coming back on a regular basis — this is something I pay a lot of attention to.

I have learned that there is nothing quite as addictive as turning nothing into something, that work can be more fulfilling than relationships, and that manners and charm go a long way. I have more faith and trust in other people and in the path I have chosen.

#### Positive Experiences

*For both women, running their own businesses has been a positive experience and one that has taught them a lifetime of lessons.*

*Edith says:*

The best thing about the store is all the amazing people I met in it because of it. I have very close friends because of it. All the amazing interactions, conversations, and experiences are too numerous to number. Learning not to judge people by the way they look — the crustiest looking punk can be the most conservative person, and the straightest looking person can be the most radical. Someone you think is a hippy's favorite band might be Black Flag and the toughest old school punk rocker can relate a heart wrenching story. I know what it's like to have my own business and know it's more work and less pay than working a shitty job like I do now and did before.

Edith and Bob are currently working on starting a zine library in Portland.

POB 12247, Portland, OR 97212;

*For Chloe there are many wonderful aspects of self-employment:*

1. Getting publications I love into other peoples hands.
2. Getting to meet hundreds of amazing and talented people.
3. Getting to be a hub of activity for these people to meet each other and share their work.
4. Getting to sit back and watch the consequences of these meetings.
5. Getting to be my own boss.
6. Helping people find what they need even if I don't have it.
7. Getting love and support from people I respect and admire.
8. Getting to read lots and lots.
9. Being constantly surprised and challenged.
10. Being late to work and not getting in trouble.

*Chloe can be reached at: [readingfrenzy@linkport.com](mailto:readingfrenzy@linkport.com)*



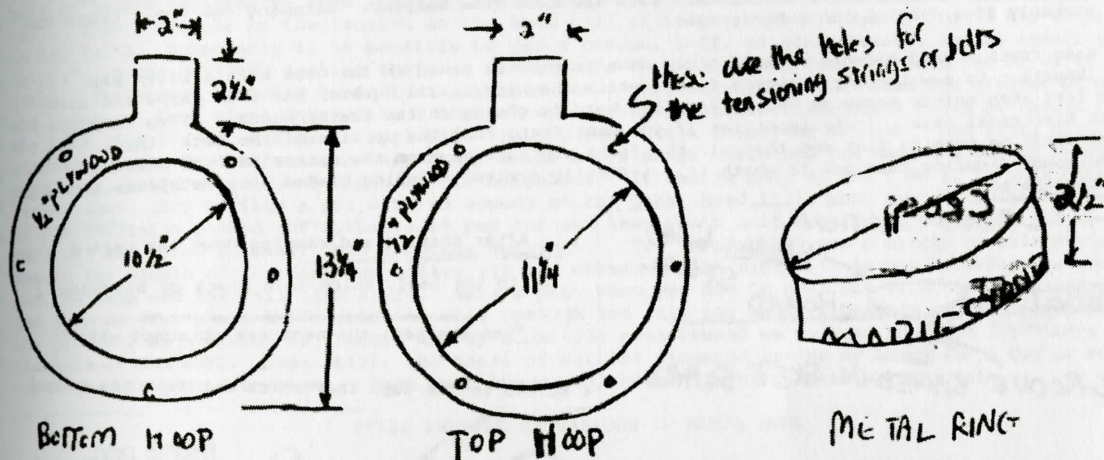
What do you do if you are bored and all you have is a oak floorboard, a detour sign, an empty cookie tin, bailing twine, some bicycle spokes, and a DEAD CAT?

# MAKE A BANJO!

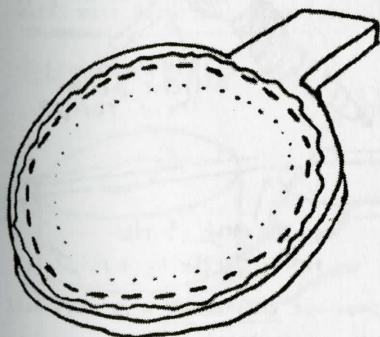
Now, before some loyal Seedhead readers get the idea that the editorial board here is prejudiced against cats, let me say you're right. I don't like cats; or dogs. But note that as of this writing I have never run over, slaughtered, murdered, assassinated, lynched, or otherwise dispatched a cat. Cats are hit by cars. That's society's problem, not mine. Besides, what proud pet owner would not be delighted to find out that their traffic-dumb cat is immortalized in a scrappy homemade banjo? Animal rights people should direct their complaints to the Seedhead art dept.

What makes a banjo a banjo is the drum head over which the strings are plucked. The taut membrane makes the characteristic sound, TWANG. I have tried 4 different membranes as banjo heads: "Filon" solar hot air panel glazing- too thick, not twangy enough too quiet. A used snare drum cover- very good, what better drumhead than a drumhead? lexan inner glazing from a solar hot air panel- very good, twangy and loud, but too clean and hummy-- not inbred enough. Catskin- very good, yields most authentic sound and smell.

The membrane must be stretched. There are many designs that accomplish this in different ways. I used the basic design from the Foxfire article on mountain banjos but adapted the materials to what is around. First I cut two hoops out of plywood that look like this:



Discarded signs from highway construction sites have great plywood, often with an already decorative finish, like reflective bright orange. Cut out the holes with a jigsaw or a router mounted on a stick. The top hoop gets the membrane stapled to its top surface like this:

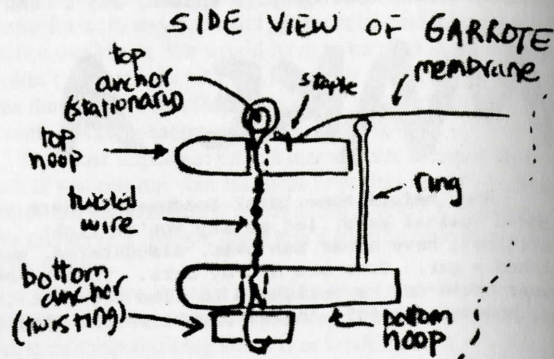
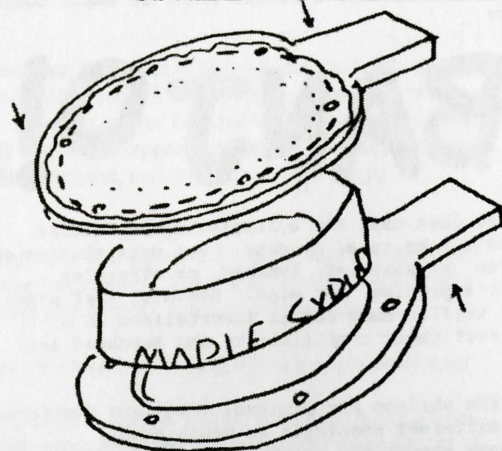


TOP HOOP WITH MEMBRANE  
STAPLED TO ITS TOP SURFACE.  
THE HEAVY DOTTED LINE IS THE  
STAPLES. THE LIGHT DOTTED LINE  
IS THE (HIDDEN) HOLE IN THE HOOP,

Then a ring of steel such as a cookie tin with the bottom and lid removed is forced through the top hoop and against the membrane to put it under tension. For the Ring I used a cookie tin and also a slice of 4 gallon plastic bucket, but my favorite so far are the two I made from slices of steel: 1 gallon maple syrup cans. You need too make sure the ring isn't so sharp it cuts the membrane, which I did by using the top rim of the can with the rolled steel edge on it (the actual lid of the can I removed with a cold chisel). The steel ring is held in place by the bottom hoop, which is clamped with compression against the top hoop so that it looks like this:

by Lu  
Seedhead  
2000 Brown Road SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87105

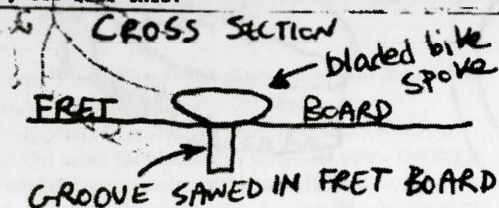




The two plywood hoops are clamped together with garrotes, which are wound up twine which gets shorter the more you wind it. You could also use 3/16" allthread to make bolts. I also tried scraps of bicycle brake cable wire threaded through shirt buttons as anchors. Joe used bailing twine and decorative beer bottle caps as anchors on his gigantic 6-string "guitanjo".

All banjos have a neck which holds the strings out. I use dumpstered oak shelving for the necks and work with the planed side up as a fretboard. I run a groove down the center of the neck's underside and trap a threaded rod under the neck with a piece of veneer. This truss rod is tightened to counteract the tension of the strings and keep the neck from warping. Skipping the whole truss rod is probably fine, just build a burly neck

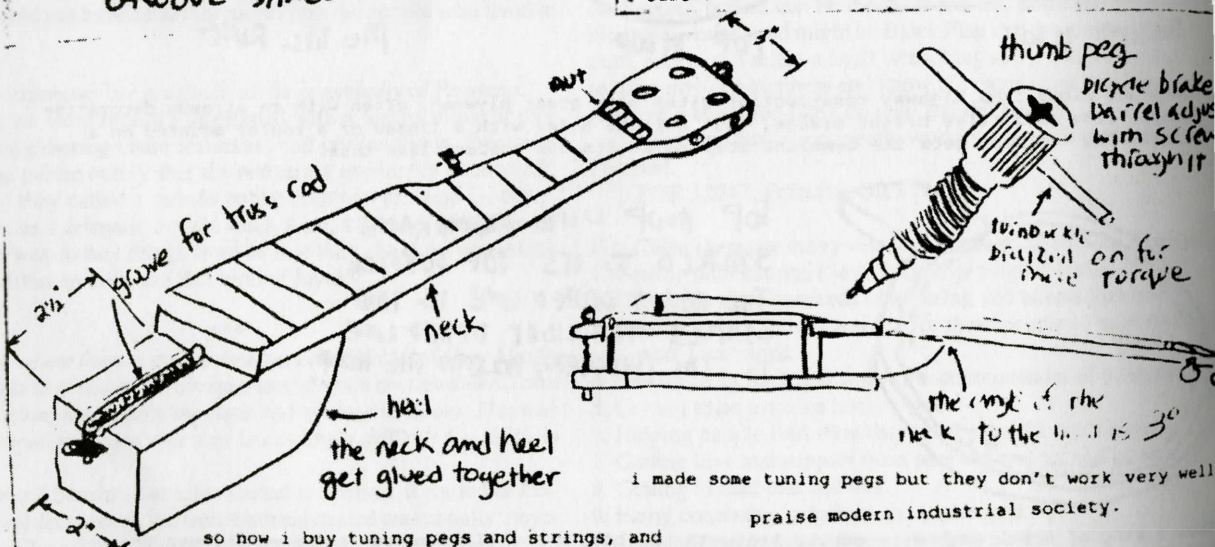
To make frets I used bicycle spokes, glued down to grooves sawed in the neck with a mitre saw. It is important to saw the fret grooves first, while the neck is all square, and then shape the neck. The last step before screwing the neck to the head is gluing on the frets, which I clamp in place with electrical tape. It is important if you want frets that the up side of the neck (the fretboard) be totally flat and that all the frets protrude up from the neck a uniform distance. Time spent figuring this out is worth it. I finally arrived at using bladed bicycle spokes glued in place like this:



After shaping and sanding down the neck I glue it to the heel, which is a block of hardwood

Then the heel and neck are attached with

4 screws to the lugs that stick out from the hoops



praise modern industrial society.

The purpose of this article and probably all the articles ever published by seedhead is not so much to give readers the exact recipe so they can effortlessly duplicate the experiments of the authors, but rather to inspire the reader to enthusiastically tackle the process of learning to do things for themselves, and adapting the general plans to the specific tools and materials available. People have been making musical instruments since there were people, at times before there were even table saws and routers! I am not trained as a carpenter, and never even went to shop class. If you like music, you can make your own instrument with whatever tools, materials, skills, and help available. Also check out the Foxfire books, and MAKING FOLK INSTRUMENTS IN WOOD, by D. Waring.



To make a "natural" (ie. cat) banjo head glean some of the directions from the doc watson song "muskrat":

"Muskrat oh muskrat i'll trap you on the bank  
skin your hide and stretch it out  
and tack it to a plank boys  
i'll tack it to a plank"

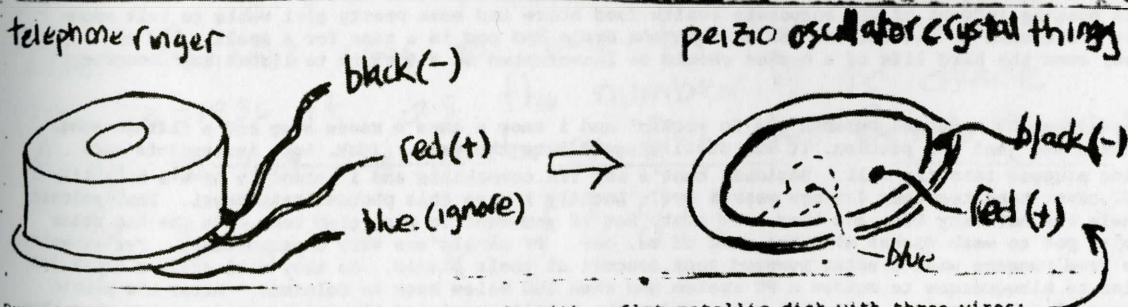
Muskrat oh muskrat i'll trap you sure's you're born  
sell your hide when it gets dry  
to keep some pretty gal warm boys  
keep some pretty gal warm"

Since pretty girls these days aren't wearing fur, let alone housecat, you won't be tempted to sell your cat skin instead of making it into a banjo head. Probably for lack of an inspiring rhyme Doc

forgets to tell you that while you have the skin tacked fur down to a plank you must use your thumb and forefinger to pick all the membrane and fat off the flesh side. This is just like picking your best friends peeling sunburn so enjoy it. Next let the skin dry out while you go off and make some hoops. When you are ready to use it soak it overnight in water. I took this opportunity to give my cat a little shampoo because i planned to leave a decorative band of fur around the outside of the banjo head and i don't subscribe to the fantasy that constantly licking yourself keeps you clean. The next morning stretch the skin tightly over the hoop and staple it on, fur side up. Remember topeen the staples so they clamp the material. Allow the skin to dry on the hoop for at least a day, until totally dry again. Then assemble the Hoop and Ring structure of the banjo head, putting the skin under some tension. At this point i was told by L. Drummer to shave the hair off with a safety razor. This may work for goats but it didn't work on cat, so i ended up removing the hair with a pair of shears followed by some sanding with increasingly fine grits of sandpaper. That worked well. Then i brought up the tension on the head till it rang out when tapped. That's all there is to it, folks. Supposedly it is possible to use o'possum, calf, or other beasts, and to remove the hair ("slip the hair") by soaking the skin for a while in a (slightly caustic) solution of water and ashes. The nicest sounding banjo i ever played has a very strange natural head the origins of which are unknown. Upon close inspection i noticed widely spaced little thick black hairs as though from the back of a 50 year old man. Pig? Pig? Playing that banjo creeps me out now. One final note on skinning cats. You will need a very sharp knife and a place where you can hang the cat up by the hind legs, preferably out of sight of the neighbors. It smells bad, so don't do it in your parents living room. Try to find a cat with no wounds on the back, head kills work best (if the pressure of the collision caused the eyeballs to pop out and they won't quit staring at you, just cut the head off and throw it away, then continue working). You'll probably use a circle of skin centered around the middle of the back, so unless you are obsessed with style, it is not necessary to skin out the legs and the tail like a pro. Have a pro show you how to pull and filet the underside of the skin so your sharp knife doesn't slice through and ruin the skin. Despite my enthusiasm for the project, my aversion to viscera and my sensitive nose caused me to hang back and let others do the bulk of the work. Even still, the smell of cat fat lingered around my hands for a day or so. Consider this your disclaimer. Wash your hands well before going to pick up your date.

#### STILL FURTHER EXCURSIONS IN BANJO LAND

After making an instrument or two it is probably a common phase in musical development to want to make a lot of noise, with as much distortion as possible. One just feels compelled to go electric. Maybe this fad gets left behind just as a child eventually grows out of torturing bunnies or smearing feces on the bannister. J. Genoa Haus showed me how to make an electric banjo pickup out of the ringer from a broken telephone. First you grasp a broken telephone and smash it against the wall, with flourish. Then you pick out the small plastic disk with three wires attached to it:



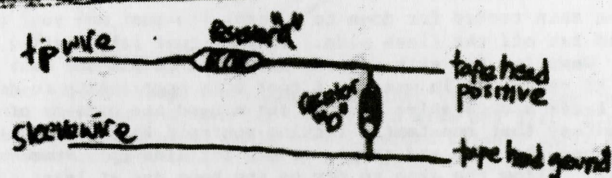
Pry off the plastic resonator and you are left with a flat metallic disk with three wires:

Attach the ground wire to the sleeve of a 1/4" plug. Attach the positive wire to the tip of a 1/4" plug. You will probably need to use a soldering iron and some rosin core solder to do this. Also, since the wires are tiny they are a bitch to strip and break easily. I used a match to burn back the insulation and strain relief to prevent tugging on the wires. If you don't know what strain relief is ask an electrician. The third wire on the metal disk can be cut off or ignored (although in the future a way might be discovered to use this wire and the electronics in the phone to make some sort of special effects). Slide the disk under the bridge of the instrument. Plug the 1/4" plug into an amplifier and rock out, dude. J suggested running the output of the pick up through an equalizer pedal to use the equalizer as a filter, but i liked the sound as is through the amp i borrowed with just a little tweaking of the tone adjustments.



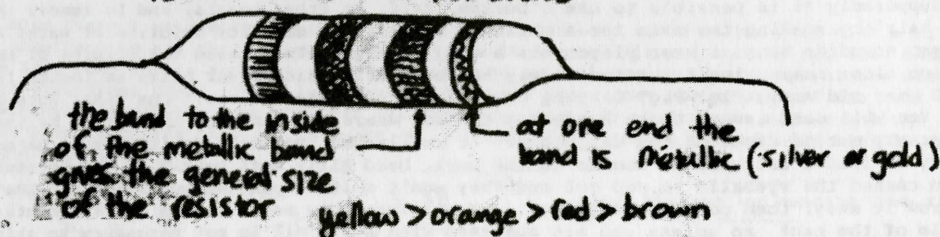
## STILL YET EVEN FURTHER EXCURSIONS IN BANJO LAND

When the pick up started working, i figured i could pick up a little amp at the pawn shop for 25 bucks, but the cheapest one there was 90 bucks! So i went to the mexican flea market and bought an old boom box with one working speaker for "cuatro lanas". It has a little equalizer on it and takes a 12 volt battery configuration (though i think a 16 volt configuration would also work fine). i ripped off the door on one of the tape decks and with a teeny screwdriver removed the tape head. The tape head had three wires attached to it which i took to be "right positive", "left positive", and "ground". Maybe i'm wrong. Anyway, randomly soldering the wires to the tip and sleeve of a 1/4" jack will eventually cause the electric banjo to play through the boom boxes tape deck amplification circuit. (Hint: black wires are usually "ground", ie. "sleeve"). The problem i encountered is that the telephone ringer pickup is too sensitive for the tape amp circuit and so the noise comes out so distorted Jimmy Hendrix's rotting corpse sighs and moans. The solution, thanks once again to Merlin, is to "skua" (scavenge) a couple resistors from the broken telephone on the previous page and build a nifty voltage divider which attenuates the signal between the pickup and the tape deck:



ex: on my voltage divider resistor "a" is yellow ( $\approx 10^6$ ) and resistor "b" is brown ( $\approx 10^1$ ) so the ratio  $a/b = 10^5$

RESISTOR SHOWING COLORED BANDS



For the voltage divider the ratio of  $\frac{\text{resistor a}}{\text{resistor b}}$  is what's important. The larger this ratio the more attenuation of the signal occurs.

Once i got the voltage divider working the range of volume provided by the volume control on the boom box perfectly matched the range of desirable volumes the little speaker is capable of handling. If all the resistor ratio bullshit makes your head swim and you see the colors backwards and constantly drop the tiny resistors into the sawdust on the floor and burn your fingers on the solder trying to hold the damn things in place, then you are like me and just need to get an electronics hack to help you. To them this renovation of your boom box will be a trivial five minute operation. You can trade them some of your apple cider or something. One cool thing i noticed about this boombox amp is that i can play "karaoke" banjo by plugging my electric banjo into tape deck one of the boombox, and, leaving that tape deck on "off", put my favorite tape into tape deck two and press play. i'm not sure why this works. It's also neat to have the other tape deck intact so that if one is busking in front of the corporate health food store and some pretty girl wants to talk about buying a cat skin or two one can set aside one's banjo and pop in a tape for a spell. And of course, even the hard life of a busker should be interrupted at 4 o'clock to listen to "Democracy Now".

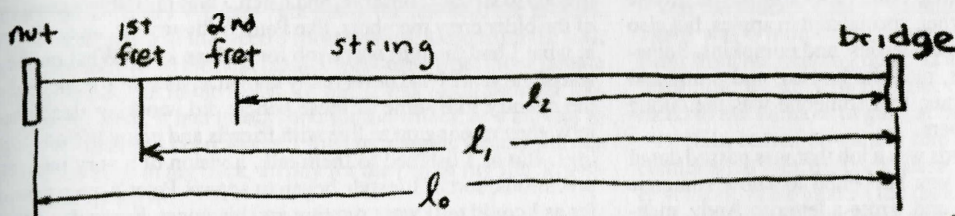
So anyway now my homemade boombox amp is rockin' and i know a guns n roses song and a fifteen song, but there was just one problem. It was still plugged into the wall. Yuck, hobo instruments hate

being plugged into the wall. Besides, that's not Y2K compatible and i intend to have a hillbilly ACDC cover band together for new year's eve. Luckily i have this photovoltaic panel. Photovoltaic panels are not very DIY, and they cost alot, but if you want to play glam rock with the big stars you've got to wash dishes with the rest of us, boy. PV panels are very contradictory. For example, the Tree Huggers want a solar powered rock concert at their picnic. So they will drive a truck 200 miles to Albuquerque to borrow a PV system and then 200 miles back to Colorado. After the picnic they will drive again. They will waste twice the gasoline driving the solar panels around then they would have wasted running a locally aquired generator. These eco freaks are nuts. What is so wrong with acoustic music? There is a saying that goes something like, "White man builds big fire and stands way back, Indian builds small fire and huddles close." "Electric person builds big amplifier and stands way back, Acoustic person uses wooden resonator and huddles close"... The trick for hooking a PV panel up to a boombox is to attach some wires to the end of some sticks which resemble batteries. When you shove the sticks in the back of the boombox where the batteries would normally go, the wires contact the correct negative and positive leads to the electronic guts of the boombox. Then hook the PV positive wire to the battery positive wire and the PV neative wire to the battery negative wire and you have tricked the boombox into thinking your PV panel is a stack of disposable batteries. The only possible problem with this scheme is that an unregulated PV panel not under load could put out too high a voltage for the boombox ( although my set up worked fine, different boomboxes could have different internal voltage regulators) so it might be advisable to "regulate" the voltage of the panel by putting your hand, foot, or piece of cardboard over the top of the panel.



**WARNING! SEEDHEAD PARENTAL ADVISORY:** This article contains math and algebra, which you may wish to prevent your child from seeing. Therefore this section is printed on perforated paper so it can be easily removed. If you object to your kids being exposed to adult subjects such as math or physics, simply remove this section of Seedhead, keep it in your underwear drawer, and only look at it late at night.

The joy of building your own instrument is customizing it to fit your stubby fingers or peculiar personal styles. I got into building banjos 'cause I wanted a banjo-lele (little banjo) to stick in my knapsack when I go camping. To customize the length to the neck you must determine where to place the frets so they will "stop" the strings in the right place to make the notes of the chromatic scale. Taking a look at the different instruments at the music shop gives you some ideas. First of all, the formula for the distance between the frets must not depend on the thickness of the string, because different strings go over the same fret board. Secondly, I had a hunch that the formula was also only dependent on the length of the "scale" (here the word scale is defined as the length, in inches or centimeters, from the nut of the instrument to the bridge of the same instrument, measured along the shortest path). This hunch I got from noticing some sort of symmetry between long and short scaled instruments. Also, since musicians use the same instruments at all altitudes, temperatures, and humidities, I guessed the formula did not depend on the speed of sound. Then I was trapped on a "not shot" with my brother for two days in the blazing sun of the Nevada desert. This was important preparation for deriving the fret formula because we became inured to the boredom, fatigue, and tedium requisite of math. Also the only reading material we brought was a textbook on musical acoustics and a copy of the book of mormon given to us in Salt Lake so we boned up on our acoustical theory. Finally, we knew the answer already from reading it in Earl Scrugs book which has an awesome DIY banjo section in the back. It always helps to know what you're trying to end up with. The derivation of the fret formula is elegantly rendered by Nick as follows:



we want to find  $x$  such that  $x l_0 = l_1, x l_1 = l_2, x l_2 = l_3 \dots$

For each  $l$  there is a definite frequency  $f$  (the pitch)

And so we know there is a  $y$  such that  $y f_0 = f_1, y f_1 = f_2 \dots$

The definition of the chromatic scale also says:

$y^{1/2} f_0 = 2 f_0$  The octave is twice the frequency

solving this for  $y$  gives  $y = \sqrt[12]{2} = 1.05946$

The rule of life is  $f l = c$  (frequency  $\times$  wavelength = speed)

so  $f_0 l_0 = c = f_1 l_1 = y f_0 \times l_0 \Rightarrow x = \frac{1}{y} = 0.984387$

The funnest way to remember this number is to express it as the number  $q$  to divide  $l$  by to get the distance from this fret to the next

$$\frac{l_n}{q} = l_n - l_{n+1} \Rightarrow q = 17.817$$

If math bothers you remember three things. There is probably a really simple way to derive this formula by ear or with a model (some people have perfect pitch because the little special place in their brain for music is a mass of pulsing neural connections). Also, this formula is for the chromatic scale (here the word scale is defined as the arbitrary intervals in pitch which people use to divide a larger interval in pitch, usually an octave) (that's the problem with english-- too few words and too many meanings), which is a western convention. Different placement of the frets will simply lead to a different type of scale. Why follow the snobby herd? Invent your own scale. And, the ultimate in musical liberation is to have no frets at all, and "stop" the string by putting your finger on the fret board wherever you like, which is what mountain banjo people do (They also don't have amplifiers). Why do you need frets, anyway?



# The Motel Of Lost Companions

## The Orchard Crew

by Kate Haas  
Miranda  
3510 SE Adler St  
Portland, OR 97214

The main thing about working at the apple orchard was how beautiful it was. How to describe it without reverting to clichés? The work was physically hard and frequently boring, but when I stood on my aluminum ladder at the top of a tree, resting my arms on the smooth bark of a branch, and looked out over the ripening orchards to the dark green New Hampshire hills in the distance, and up to the brilliant blue sky where perfect summer clouds sailed, I felt a joy in being alive which temporarily banished the doubts and unhappy preoccupations of that summer.

The main season for working with apples is, of course, fall, but a summer crew was also necessary to do other tasks around the Moose Hill Orchards empire. Andy, the owner, specialized in apples, but also grew pick-your-own strawberries, raspberries, and pumpkins. Someone had to hoe the pumpkin fields, pick the berries, and prune and thin the apple trees. For one summer, that someone was me, along with the other assorted crew members.

Working at Moose Hill Orchards was a job that was passed down among students at my college. If you happened to know someone who had worked there in the past, and wrote a letter to Andy, mentioning that person's name, chances were good that you'd get taken on for the summer or fall season, sight unseen. I knew some of these people casually, and there was, to me, something of a wholesome, hippie mystique about the idea of working on an apple orchard. Thus, when I found myself at loose ends a month or so before graduation, I thought I might as well give it a try.

Up the hill from the main orchard offices, screened by pines, and overlooking a large pumpkin field, was an old barn, converted to a bunkhouse for the crew. On the first floor was the dark, low-ceilinged kitchen, furnished with a communal refrigerator and a huge, ancient gas range. Next door were the dank but clean bath and laundry rooms. "Maison de Bunk," someone had painted in flowing script over the whitewashed stairs leading to the second story, which contained a messy communal area, with crates of left-behind books on one wall, a black and white TV with grainy reception, assorted rugs and blankets, and a few rickety chairs. There were also three rooms on this floor which, by unspoken agreement, were reserved for certain long-time crew members and/or couples. But most of us slept in the attic. It was a big loft which smelled of sun-baked wood, sweat, and the tall pines which swayed in the breeze outside the windows. The loft contained a stack of mattresses as well as a multitude of old, wooden apple crates, worn to a silvery gray. Although each crew member built him or herself a sleeping area, stacking crates around the mattresses to provide storage space and some privacy, living in the loft was mostly like sharing a room with a dozen siblings.

That particular summer there were around 12 of us, ranging in age from Liz, the crew boss, who was still in college, to Peter and Bill, in their late thirties. Amy, one of my best friends from college, was also there, as were Anita, who was going to Kenya in the fall, and Rosa, who discussed her inner child a bit too much for my comfort, both of whom I knew slightly from school. There was Dan, the antithesis of hippie, who wore a yellow Caterpillar baseball cap and listened to Lynyrd Skynyrd tapes in the kitchen (when he could pry someone else's Cat Stevens out of the boombox), and Katie, Liz's broodingly glamorous older sister. Then there was Eddie, a longtime crew member who was like a young, wide-eyed, child of Nature. Eddie lived for his guitar and the environmental cause; you could never

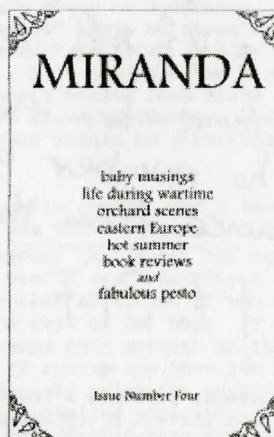
badmouth anyone around him - his look of puzzled surprise and the knowledge that Eddie himself would never speak ill of a soul, induced instant remorse. The last to arrive as the season got underway were Trish and Ronna. Ronna was a small, pale, elvish woman who would be the cook for the fall picking crew. Her girlfriend Trish, stolid and bespectacled, had quit her accounting job to follow Nan and experience rural communal life.

Coming to the orchard for the first time was a lot like entering a new school. There were old rumors, legendary deeds, gossip, politics and traditions attached to nearly every aspect of life, and a newcomer needed to sit back, observe, and listen. I was initially puzzled by some of the older crew members, like Peter. Why was he, an adult, working at what I had thought was a job for college kids? What did he do the rest of the year? I had never really known anyone who wandered around the country like some of these people did, working steady seasonal jobs, then moving on to live with friends and enjoy life on their earnings. But as I listened to them talk, a vision of a very interesting, if precarious, sort of lifestyle began to appear. Peter's main passions (as far as I could tell) were running and his juicer. Every day after work, while the rest of us flopped in exhaustion on the benches outside the bunkhouse, Peter would put on his running gear and lope out the driveway. When he returned, an hour or so later, he would load beets, carrots, and greens into his juicer, which would produce a revoltingly healthy-looking concoction that he'd down with gusto. Peter was a wiry guy, with wild black hair and a beard, always up for adventure. He drove a beat-up old Chrysler Satellite, and whenever he started it up, I loved to hear him yell, "The satellite is in orbit!!" as the car lurched down the dirt driveway to the main road.

The first two weeks I was at Moose Hill, I thought that I was pregnant, and consequently went through day after day in a state of dread, with not much to say to anyone except Amy, who was in the same boat. Although I worked with the crew, I didn't really hang out with or feel a part of the group. This changed the Saturday that we all piled into a couple of cars and drove off to Old Orchard Beach in Maine. The rest of the crew were sitting on the sand, swapping gossip about people who would be arriving in the fall. (The main subject of their talk was a woman famed chiefly for having memorably declared, "I can get my own orgasm, thank you, but I need a *man* to massage my feet!"). I was lying on my towel, reading *The Hotel New Hampshire*, which I'd found lying around the bunkhouse. I had just come to the point at which a girl in the process of inserting a diaphragm catches sight of a dead dog in the bathtub, and faints. For reasons which memory fails to supply, this scene struck me as exquisitely hilarious. I laughed so hard that I couldn't speak; I could only kick my legs feebly in the air while the rest of the crew stared in astonishment. When I tried to explain, the same symptoms reoccurred, until they were all laughing, too. A few days later, I got my period, but that incident on the beach was the ice

breaker.

I can't say that everyone on the crew always got along, or that I felt immense liking for all of them, but we were a team. In the cool mornings, we climbed into the back of a battered blue pickup, along with our ladders and tools, and Liz drove us, bouncing all the way, down the back roads to the to day's assignment. The orchards spread for what seemed like miles. My favorite was number nine, on top of a hill overlooking a valley. Purple clover grew thigh-high at the ends of





the rows of trees, and the air was sweet. Most of the time, we'd lug our ladders along the rows, moving from tree to tree, thinning the cherry-sized young fruit. Apples grow in clusters, and if you've got a bunch of four or five, you'll end up with a cluster of small apples that will never sell. We would thin each cluster on the tree down to two or three apples, giving them some room to grow. Most of the time, we'd just toss the discarded apples on the ground, but the temptation to throw them at each other was great. Since we were all working in different rows, screened by the foliage, we couldn't see each other, but we could aim in someone's general direction. Once one apple flew, it was all over. Soon the air would be alive with tiny apples whizzing in all directions, and the orchard resounded with yelps and dire threats of revenge, until Liz would reluctantly order us to knock it off and get back to work.

Other times, we would spend all day in one of the fields, hoeing the weeds out from between the pumpkin plants. It was hot and boring work, but when I wasn't quizzing Peter about the granola life in Santa Cruz (his favorite wintering spot), it gave me plenty of time to think. One of the things I found myself pondering quite a bit that summer was how timeless this work was. The hoe is a simple tool, and people have been using it for thousands of years, I'd guess. I would think about all the people across time who had performed the exact same motions as I was now: chopping the hoe into the ground, feeling the muffled rip of the weed's roots coming loose from the soil, moving down the row to the next plant. I wondered what those people had thought about, out in the fields. To me, it was just a summer job, but for some of them, it had meant food for the winter, or a harvest to sell. Some of them had been slaves. I tried to imagine feeling the sun beat down, the ache in my back, all day for the rest of my life, knowing I could never leave.

Most afternoons, just when it seemed as though quitting time would never arrive, and the heat was becoming unmerciful, someone would yell, "Swim time!" and we'd throw down our tools, hop in the back of the truck, and bounce down a back road to Cross Pond. A dirt road led through the woods to the small pond, which shone in the sun like a hidden treasure in the forest. Sometimes a few locals would be there, drinking beer and skinny dipping, but often we had the place to ourselves. We would race to the water, kicking off shoes on the way, and run in, still wearing our clothes. The shift from grime, sweat, and weariness, to the instant cool of the water, was sheer bliss. These swim breaks were definitely not on the bossman's agenda for the crew, and we always had to hurry back, but our wet clothes kept us cool for at least an hour or two.

Although we spent all our working hours together, events back at the bunkhouse spring most to mind when I summon memories of the crew, and seem more emblematic to me of the solidarity which developed between us as the summer wore on. There were the nights when Eddie would play his guitar outside the kitchen, and Katie, who had a strong, sweet voice, would sing along, while the rest of us listened, looking up at the stars and swatting mosquitoes. There was the time that we all sat around the TV watching "Jaws" (which I'd never seen) talking to the characters on the screen, making sarcastic comments, and dying with laughter at our overall wit. Other evenings, someone would decide to fire up the sauna (a rustic, wooden structure built by the crew of '76), and five or six of us would lie down on the wooden tiers of benches to soak up the steam. The sauna was dark, and full of the sweet, spicy smell of the sliced apples which were spread out to dry on screens hanging from the ceiling. Nakedness and the dark inspire confidences, and conversations in the sauna inevitably turned more personal than talk out in the orchards. Philosophy, relationships, yearnings for the future, present doubts, all found a voice in the warm darkness.

The event I remember best took place long after the whole crew had gone to sleep for the night. Without warning, we were all awakened by what sounded like a huge explosion directly above our roof. It was the loudest clap of thunder I have ever heard, before or since. There was a moment of scared silence, and then, "Yee-ha!" yelled Peter from his sleeping nook, as a glaring flash of lightning lit the sky. With that, we all wriggled out of our sleeping bags, shouting, and raced to the window to gaze at the storm.

Rain lashed down and into the loft, and the deafening thunder continued to rock the bunkhouse. The lightning flashes were unearthly veins of white against the dark sky, lighting up each blade of grass for a thrilling instant. There was a tractor parked in the pumpkin field down the hill, and each lightning strike stabbing jaggedly down illuminated its orange paint and silver controls, with a cold, bright precision that exhilarated me. I remember the way we all crowded together at the window to watch this spectacle, the way I noticed only vaguely that Trish was completely naked, and how small and banded together we seemed, like a prehistoric tribe at the mouth of our cave, awed at the might of nature. At length, the storm died away, the lightning only flickered in the distance, and the rain eased up. We made our way back to bed.

Except for Amy, I never saw any of the crew again after that summer. But each time there's a thunderstorm, I see them all in my mind.

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## An Interview with Nathan Berg Punk Rocker, Activist, and City Councilman

By Theo Witsell  
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Little Rock AR 72225

*Nathan Berg is an anti-corporate activist, a columnist for the monthly political/punk magazine MAXIMUMROCKNROLL, and a city councilman in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. He's 22 years old. I ran into him at the 1998 More than Music Festival in Columbus, Ohio and we had this little chat. He offers an interesting perspective on this "non-traditional" (yet in some ways completely traditional) route to activism and social change.*

Spectacle: Tell us a little about who you are, your political background, and how you came to sit on your city council.

Nathan: As far as politics and that sort of thing... mostly, what got me into it at first was punk rock. You know, there's obviously no lack of talk about political issues in punk rock. I started to get more and more into zines and the whole theory aspect as opposed to just music. So, I became more and more political and got into the idea that democracy, if it exists at all in America, exists on a local level. I always felt that voting, as far as national and state elections... it's almost useless in the sense that it's kind

of become a one-party system. But on local ballot initiatives and voting for people on city councils and school boards... I always thought that was a good thing... promoting community.

Spectacle: Well, it directly affects our lives in a lot of ways.

Nathan: Yeah. So, I was reading my local paper one day and I saw that the deadline to get on the ballot to be elected for city council was the next day and no one was running in my ward... not a single person. So I went down and talked to the city clerk... it's a pretty small town... 12,000 to 13,000 people... Everybody's friends with each other or knows one another. On a five minute walk to the grocery store you may see ten people that you know. So I talked to the city clerk and he told me that all I needed to do was get somewhere between 20 or 40 signatures from voters in my ward. So I walked around my neighborhood and talked to people a lot and told them what I wanted to do... and I have a few funny stories about that, but I got enough signatures and I got on the ballot. Since I was the only one running I won pretty easily (laughter).

Spectacle: If you didn't run, what would have happened?



Nathan: The person who had done it before me was the council president and he had done it for seven years and was kind of burnt out on it. So he decided not to run again and no one else wanted to... apparently what they do if no one else wants to run is the council itself can appoint someone with the mayor and the council.

Spectacle: How old are you?

Nathan: Twenty-two.

Spectacle: Wow. When it was first announced that you were the councilman, what was the reaction from people that someone so young was in that position?

Nathan: Well, when I was first going around asking for signatures, I went up to knock on this one house's door and I saw that there was a Christian Coalition sticker right on the door... but I knocked anyway. This woman started talking to me and I told her I was running for city council and that I was trying to get enough signatures to get on the ballot to run, and she asked me if I was joking... if this was some kind of a weird joke or something... and I kind of took a little bit of offense to it because anyone should be able to be involved in direct politics. In fact, that's the way it should be. Obviously there should be more diversity. So she asked me if I was joking and I told her that I was completely serious and that it was something that I really wanted to do. I love the town where I'm from... I have a lot of hometown pride, I guess. I don't even necessarily think that my town is run badly but I wanted to be a part of it... especially because no one else wanted to. I thought it was something great that I could do. So after I told her I was serious she asked me my name again. I told her "I'm Nathan Berg" and she said "Berg... is that Norwegian?". I said "Yeah, actually I'm 100% Norwegian", and she said "Well hell I'll vote for anyone that's Norwegian!". (laughter) And there was another woman that signed it that told me she was glad I was running because she had somebody to vote for. It didn't matter to her what anybody thought, she just wanted to be able to vote for somebody. Those were both stories that I thought were sickening.

Spectacle: Did people inquire about your politics at all?

Nathan: Not really at all... and honestly, a lot of the things that I believe politically... I'm a vegetarian, I'm into environmental issues quite a bit, that sort of thing...

Spectacle: I can tell from your shirt that you're some kind of left-leaning commie sympathizer (he was wearing an FZLN shirt - ed.). (laughter)

Nathan: Actually this is a shirt that I just got from my brother. He was touring around Nicaragua and saw Daniel Ortega speak in the '96 elections and brought me this shirt back... but the politics with those kind of things really aren't involved in the city council. The city council does things like public works... they do street repairs... they do make ordinances and policies, and that's where your politics get involved... but a lot of it is just logical and doesn't really have to do directly with your politics. It's just a common sense sort of thing.

Spectacle: When you registered to get on the ballot, did they ask you to declare a party or anything?

Nathan: No, they didn't. I mean, I assume that in larger cities like New York City that's an issue for a lot of people because it affects a lot more people's lives. But this is a smaller community and the people just want to make sure that the people running have a common sense attitude.

Spectacle: When did you become a councilman?

Nathan: This past April. April of 1998.

Spectacle: How many people are on your city council?

Nathan: There's seven of us altogether and then the mayor, and there are department heads, like the head of public works...

Spectacle: What would you say is the average age of the other council members?

Nathan: I would say the next youngest person is about 50. It goes from 50 on up to about 75.

Spectacle: Wow.

Nathan: And they're all old white males. I'm not adding a whole lot of diversity by being a young white male... but our mayor is a woman.

Spectacle: Are you taken seriously?

Nathan: Yeah, for sure. I mean, I do a lot of things... I'm trying to put out my own zine and I write a column for MAXIMUMROCKNROLL (an international punk magazine), but this has become my top priority. It doesn't actually take as much work as I thought it would, and that's a relief... but at the same time I'm still taking it very seriously. When there's issues around, I try to go and talk to everybody about how they feel about them instead of just having my own opinion, and that involves a lot of compromise.

Spectacle: It becomes a question of who you're doing it for. Are you doing it for your own agenda or are you doing it for the people...

Nathan: Yeah, but at the same time I think that the problem with a lot of

politicians in America is that, even if they are just completely representative of how the people feel, they never try to take a role as educator. So when I'm talking to people about issues around the town, I let them know how I feel and explain why I feel that way. At the same time though, I'll vote against things that I feel strongly about that I think should be there just because there's an overwhelming amount of support in the other direction.

Spectacle: Give an example where that was the case.

Nathan: I've only gone to about five meetings so far but one example is... there's this dam in my town called the Starmill dam, and what it is... back in 1936 they built this dam for the Starmill Flour Company. The company that built this dam hasn't been around for decades. The building isn't even there anymore, just this dam. It's kinda by this big park, a recreational area in our town, and on the other side of the dam are a bunch of property owners who live next to the dam. The council ended up having a study done... somebody came in and assessed the dam because they were having problems with it. Every time there was a flood, these splashboards would fall and they would have to fix the dam and it would cost \$5000 every time there was a flood, and there were two different people who had to be sent home on paid leave for an entire season because of back injuries from working on the dam. So the assessment was done to see what they could do about the problem. One of the issues that was brought up by the company that did the assessment was that removal of the dam wouldn't be a problem at all. It was something that I was kinda for... especially... I mean, one could argue all sorts of environmental points about dams, but it's at least arguable that if there's a dam that's not serving any purpose, you've at least got to question why it's there. But the property owners that live near the dam consider it to be an object of beauty, which is an eye-of-the-beholder issue I guess, but they consider it to be a beautiful, historical landmark because it had been in the town for so long.

Spectacle: Was there a lake upstream from the dam that they were using?

Nathan: There was a small pond upstream but it wasn't that large at all. But arguably, it is kind of beautiful... but I myself am more interested in... if we can restore nature back to the way it was, at all costs, we should. But the amount of people that have turned out on this issue in favor of keeping this dam there is amazing. They don't listen to rational thought at all. They want a place... there's a lot of people who fish there, and they're concerned about loss of property values. I mean, that's not something that I'm too concerned with. I'm not even a property owner but at the same time, these are legitimate concerns of theirs. And there were definitely a lot more people who felt that way about the dam than felt the way I feel. The way we're going about it now is, we're going to keep the dam but make a few improvements so that they can avoid the large costs every year and still keep these people from getting hurt when they have to fix it. So it turned out OK... not the way that I wished, but that's what happens when you're on the city council. Even if I had stood out on the issue and said "No, I think this dam should be removed", there were six other people on the council that were going to disagree with me. There's a lot of compromise involved.

Spectacle: Have you proposed any initiatives?

Nathan: A couple of other council members gave me the comments when I first got on that for the first six or seven meetings, you're not really gonna say much because... I mean, I'd only been to about two council meetings before I got elected so I'm still getting the hang of it even at this point in time. I'm learning how to go about getting that sort of stuff done. There are a lot of things that I'd like to push for. For one thing, I'd like to see our town more positive toward bikers and pedestrians. Our town, as small as it is, is still very congested with respect to traffic. And it's small so riding a bike around town is something that would be easy to promote but it's something that I don't see. So I'd like to propose some sort of initiative about alternative transportation. There's also issues facing the kids in our town. Our town is predominantly older people... it's almost a senior citizen sort of town but there are getting to be more and more kids. A lot of them though, are kind of shut out from the rest of the community. I remember when I first graduated from high school my first impression was "I've got to get the hell out of here", and I moved away two days after I graduated and lived in Colorado for two years... just to get away from it. It doesn't foster a healthy environment for kids. They don't have anything to do... we don't have a movie theater in our town... there's just nothing for kids to do.

Spectacle: Is there a juvenile curfew?

Nathan: Yeah, there's a juvenile curfew. I believe it's 11 PM on week-nights and midnight on weekends. It's age 14 for that, and then there's really late curfews like two AM for older kids. So that's another issue I have.



Spectacle: Do you have plans to fight the curfew?

Nathan: I'm not so sure that I have plans to fight it because in order to fight it I'd have to get some initiative raised so I could do it, and I think that before I would do something like that I would try explain to people why I thought it was wrong and see what my means were to go about it... At least... not eliminating the curfew, because I know a lot of people would be opposed to it, but at least trying to get something done along those lines. That's something that I just do not agree with... that kids have to be in by a certain hour... especially in a town like that where there's essentially no crime.

Spectacle: So what are the major problems facing the community?

Nathan: One of the big problems right now, at least as I see it, is that the governor of Wisconsin, Tommy Thompson - I don't know if you've heard of him... he's very republican... very right wing... he is the one who passed the Wisconsin Welfare Reform Law that was the model for the national one they just passed here in '96 or '97... But he has started to refer to our area of Wisconsin - there's three communities; Menomonie, Eau Claire, and Chippewa Falls - and he has started to refer to them as "the silicon valley of the midwest". There's all kinds of companies that are moving in that are high technology companies. In fact, I work for one of them, Johnson-Matthey, a semiconductor package industry. They make products for Intel and Cray Research. There's also Hutchinson Technology... and more. So he's starting to call our town "the silicon valley of the midwest" but there are a lot of people there that like it because of its small town atmosphere... because, largely industry has stayed away from the town... It's been kind of a community effort... there's mom and pop stores and that sort of thing. But corporate industries have, for the most part, been kept out of our town. But they're starting to come in and that's something I'd like to stand against. Keep it locally-owned and expose some of these multinationals for the crimes that they do commit. I mean, not all of them are necessarily evil per se, but a lot of evil issues are involved with corporations.

Spectacle: Yeah, I just go back from a trip with my girlfriend... we went up to visit her parent: who live in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It's pretty rural... a nice place but the corporations have recently invaded and they've taken over everything. Then we were up visiting friends in Cambridge, Massachusetts and all around Harvard Square, where there used to be all these mom and pop independent stores, but they've all been kicked out and displaced by the chains.

Nathan: It doesn't even take long to see how it happens but for some reason people don't always see it coming. I've seen it too. That stuff is really starting to happen in my area.

Spectacle: Have you talked to people about it in your ward? Do they even care? A lot of people seem to think it's great.

Nathan: A lot of people... you get a split. Where I'm from there's definitely a lot of right-wing thinking...

Spectacle: "It's good for the economy"...

Nathan: Yeah. That's the argument that you hear... that it creates jobs. You hear that all over the place. Whenever a corporation wants to move somewhere... they want to create jobs. And creating jobs isn't necessarily a bad thing... but creating quality jobs for companies that do things that are worthwhile...

Spectacle: But what kind of jobs are they creating? If it's minimum wage with little or no benefits...

Nathan: Well, these companies are offering some benefits... not full packages but a decent amount. It seems to me that they are doing enough to get by with not being considered heinous. Which is kinda their agenda. They wanna keep costs low, keep everything efficient... so they can sell the cheapest and become the market dominator. That's how corporations work. But there's also issues like... there's this land on the edge of town that the city is considering selling to WalMart for development.

Spectacle: Is it farmland?

Nathan: Much of it is farmland. The city limits kinda end where the farm-

land starts, but there's still a lot of that going on. And one thing that I'd like to get people in my town involved in is open space projects. I lived in Boulder, Colorado for two years and they had referendums all the time as to whether or not they wanted the city to spend the money to buy open land and keep that land open and away from development so that, in the future, if you want to start parks... or just have an area where people can go and enjoy nature as opposed to everything being just cement and industry... Just to do what you can to stop urban sprawl before it hits you like a plague.

Spectacle: I was talking to some people in Chicago and they were lamenting how there were no parks and there was just sprawl in every direction...

Nathan: And where there are parks they just end up becoming homes for these people who are disenfranchised by the rest of society.

Spectacle: Share some other stories. What interesting experiences have you had?

Nathan: OK. The meeting before the one where I was sworn in, these skateboarders came to the city council meeting and proposed the idea for a skatepark.. I used to skate... in fact that's how I got into punk rock... because I used to skate back in the day. Anyway, these kids wanted to start

a skatepark in our town. Skateboarding is illegal in our downtown to the point where skating downtown carries a bigger fine than possession of marijuana... for a fourteen year old... which is absolutely silly. It's also illegal to skate on the sidewalks in the residential areas. So these kids came, and this is something we've been trying to do since I was fourteen, to try to get a place where skateboarders can go. So finally, a kid named Billy Akin, took the initiative and made a design of a skatepark and proposed it to the city council. The council gave the OK and they donated land, but they said "this has to be privately funded" and that it had to be done by the skateboarders, which is crazy. There was a skateboarder who was there who said "When you guys build a basketball court you don't make the basketball players go and raise money for it... when you build a little league thing, you don't make the little league people pay for it..." I'm kind of ashamed that the city wouldn't take a more active role in it. They just gave the land away... which they have plenty of. They gave us 100 feet by 130 feet. But at the same time, there was something started. So they started having skateboard park meetings and I've kind of become friends with the Parks and Rec Director since this whole thing began and he ended up inviting me to be on these meeting that they're having. It ended up being me and these three other skateboarders and the rest of the people were from like the optimist club and the

Parks and Rec Department, and what not.

Spectacle: Is the skatepark in your ward.

Nathan: Yeah, it is. But that's another thing about the council... they try to not just restrict each other to their wards. They try to work with everyone in the community which I think is a good thing. I mean, like WalMart going in on the outskirts of town doesn't just affect people in that ward. It affects everyone in town.

Spectacle: Right. If WalMart moves in, businesses in all the wards are likely to suffer.

Nathan: Yeah. But anyway, these skateboard kids have finally started to get something going, and even though the odds are stacked against them... they have to raise like \$65,000, and in a town that doesn't do that much business... it's hard to try to get those funds privately. But they're working on it and it's getting accomplished a lot quicker than I thought it would. And actually the Parks and Rec Department is all behind it and they're a little upset with the council that they didn't give up money. Furthermore, at the end of this summer is when we start doing the budget for 1999. This will be the first time I'll be involved with budgeting process, but I think

an interview with  
**Nathan Berg**  
(punk rocker, activist, city councilman)

Nathan Berg is an anti-corporate activist, a columnist for the monthly political/punk magazine MaximumRocknRoll, and a city councilman in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. He's 22 years old. I ran into him at the 1998 More than Music Festival in Columbus, Ohio and we had this little chat. He offers an interesting perspective on this "non-traditional" (yet in some ways completely traditional) route to activism and social change. (Interview by Thea)



Spectacle: Tell us a little about who you are, your political background, and how you came to all your city council.

Nathan: As far as politics and that sort of thing, mostly what got me into it as first was punk rock. You know, there's definitely no lack of talk about political issues in punk rock. I started to get there and there into areas and the whole thing's super as opposed to just music. So, I became more and more political and got into the idea that democracy is a lot of words at all in America, much on a local level. I always felt that voting, as far as national and state elections, it's almost useless in the sense that it's kind of become a

participatory system. But on local ballot issues, like and voting for people on city council, and school boards, I always thought that was a good thing. promoting community.

Spectacle: Well, it directly affects our lives in a lot of ways.

Nathan: Yeah. So, was reading my local paper one day and I saw that the deadline to get on the ballot to be elected for city council was the next day and no one was running in my ward, not a single person. So I went down and talked to the city clerk. It's a pretty small town, 10,000 to 12,000 people. Everybody's friends with each other or knows one another. On a five minute walk to the



it's fair (to give \$ to the skatepark). Last year I think they gave the police another \$80,000 to upgrade their telecommunications equipment and buy more cop cars. And this is a town with no crime! And there's not low crime because there's that many police watching everything... it's low crime because it's friendly people just trying to co-habitate in a peaceful manner. If you read the police report in our town, it's stuff like "Fourteen year old cited for underage smoking"... it takes up almost the whole thing. A lot of it is kids getting busted for whatever they're doing. Why can't we take some money away from things we're giving it to like this, which aren't that useful, and giving them to kids that just want to have a place to go and do their thing in a safe place.

**Spectacle:** What are some of the things that you don't like about being a councilperson? Talk about the compromise involved.

**Nathan:** One thing, my town has virtually no radical thought whatsoever. Even if... if I dyed my hair blue and went to a city council meeting, it would be a large issue with these people. I mean, what difference does your hair color make? They would make a big deal about this. Another fact is that right before every city council meeting begins you have to stand up and say the pledge of allegiance.

**Spectacle:** So you just do it?

**Nathan:** Yeah. I do it just because... I'm trying to do something positive with the whole experience and I can't let little things like that stop me from trying to make a positive influence.

**Spectacle:** I've been involved in a lot of activism over the last few years and you get constant criticism for small compromises like that. And some of them aren't even compromises... it's not even an issue. For example... my pal Jon Strange went to that "Town Hall Meeting" here in Columbus that they had about the bombing of Iraq when the US was about to start bombing recently. So Jon goes up in a shirt and tie, dressed nice, clean-cut, clean-shaven... well groomed... and he got to go up and ask this question and basically played a large part in...

**Nathan:** Yeah. This was like a huge televised event right?

**Spectacle:** It was on CNN. I mean, basically that played a huge part in stopping this planned bombing. The whole event was so obviously orchestrated by the state department to justify the "fact" that "all these people are behind us... we can bomb!"... But him having the access to ask that question played a large part in sabotaging their whole plan! It's like... if you want to be effective, there's more important things to worry about than whether or not your hair is funny or whatever.

**Nathan:** I see that a lot with the leftist community. There's no willingness to compromise... and I understand that to a degree. Building alternative institutions to the ones that exist is very important. And breaking down a lot of these compromises is important, but at the same time we kind of exclude ourselves from the way things are done presently. And I think we need to be there as well. We need to be both places at once... helping to build a new way of thinking and trying to change the old way of thinking. For example... an issue I've given before is flag burning... A lot of people take a lot of pride in the flag, like veterans of wars. They believe they went and fought and died for what this flag represents. If you go up to them - and obviously I think that flag burning should be legal because it's a free-speech issue, but at the same time, if you go up to one of these people who believes in the flag and you burn it in front of them... you're not going to change their mind at all. You're not going to let them know about the reasons why you want to burn the flag... because we're allowing companies to go into Indonesia and China and pay the workers dirt to make shoes, or the fact that we're trying to bomb other countries to spread so-called "democracy"... you're not going to get these issues across. All you're gonna do is piss them off. So I think a lot of tolerance and compromise is needed in those areas.

**Spectacle:** So you've had that mindset from the beginning with the city council thing?

**Nathan:** Yeah. I knew that there was gonna be a lot of battles that I'm not gonna win... a lot of issue that I'll just be able to make my point on, and other than that it won't go my direction. I'm OK with that, you know, I don't think the world should be run by me... I don't think that my town should be run by me. But I do want to at least have an active role in helping decide the way things go.

**Spectacle:** Do you think you'd ever want to pursue something further - outside the city council - in local politics?

**Nathan:** That's a good question... a lot of people seemed to think, "Wow, this is great! You're twenty-two years old and getting involved in local

politics... you could be senator someday!", and all this... And I have to explain to these people that that's not something that's really in my interest. You know, I could change my mind down the road, but right now what I'm interested in is our community... in what we can do better in our community. I don't have plans in changing the way the world thinks, per se, but I can have my little mark. If it's just in this community then that's great... that's the way it should be. This is here I was born and raised. This is where I'd like to make my mark and have my say. So I don't know if I would go into politics further. Even a lot of what I'm learning right now gives me reason to understand why people dislike politicians. You know, there's obviously a lot more dirty politicians out there than what gets recognized in the major media.

**Spectacle:** Have you had any run-ins with corruption on a local level?

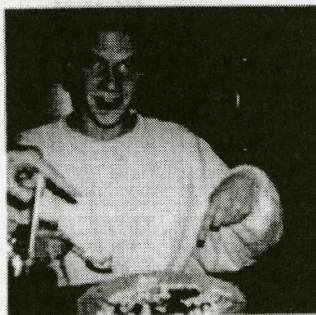
**Nathan:** No. There might be a few minor issues that will pop up here and there but for the most part, I think people who are involved in Chippewa Falls - whether they're on the city council as elected officials, or the mayor, or department heads... people who work for the city do things out of a love for the town. Sometimes they may be misguided or they may have ideas that they think are great but really aren't that great, but people seem to do it for the community.

**Spectacle:** What is your column about in MRR? Is it about being on the city council?

**Nathan:** No, actually I started my column in MRR about a year ago - well before I was elected. I haven't even spoken about it in my column at all. I write about corporations. I write about multinational corporations. The column is called "Corporate Know-Who" and it's all about... I try to focus on a specific company or a specific industry and the issues involved. I've written about agriculture with Monsanto and Dow and Dupont going into genetic engineering...

**Spectacle:** Yeah. We were talking last night about Monsanto and the terminator seed... how they've genetically engineered all these crops that produce sterile seeds. Their goal is that no one will be able to save seeds to plant the next year. Everyone will have to buy their seed each year and they'll have total control of the global seed market.

**Nathan:** Oh yeah. That kind of stuff is happening all the time. Monsanto is a big one. In the last few years they've started producing these Roundup-ready plants. What these plants do... they are resistant to roundup herbicide and pesticide. And they make Roundup herbicide and pesticide... I read an article about it in a magazine called Successful Farming which is a magazine that is sponsored and funded... all the advertisers were major seed companies, major tractor companies... that sort of thing. And the article I was reading talked about how this farmer had such a positive experience because he used Monsanto fertilizer with Roundup, Monsanto Roundup-ready seeds, and then he sprayed twice the normal amount of Roundup on his plants. The plants themselves are more resistant, but what about everything else?! They weren't talking about what happens when it seeps into the soil and gets in our groundwater. What they want to do is control things so that they can sell more and more of their product, as opposed to just farming organically - which is something that I'm a firm believer in. Especially in my area.



The first side of the tape ran out and I didn't notice for a few minutes, during which we got to bagging on WalMart. Side two begins in mid sentence...

**Nathan:** So my brother just got a job at this WalMart Distribution Center... it's this huge building - like a half mile by a quarter mile or something - where they drive forklifts full of stuff and load it into semis which deliver to all the WalMart stores. But they have this whole page in their orientation manual dedicated to how large their buildings actually are and how proud they are of that fact. They have these facts like "Did you know... that a WalMart Distribution Center uses enough cement to pave a two-lane highway for 275 miles or pave 400 baseball stadiums"... they had about

ten different examples of how much cement they used. They were proud of it. "We're this big!"...

**Spectacle:** "How much useless crap do people buy in our stores?"... Meanwhile they neglect pointing out how many mom and pop stores they sunk.

**Nathan:** Or even issues that aren't exactly as big as the consumerism issues to me... there's free speech issues involved with WalMart a lot. Like stickerizing or black-labeling certain artists and stuff. That's another issue when companies get that big.

**Spectacle:** When they put everything else out of business and you can't



buy anything that's not sanctioned by the corporation because all the other stores are gone...

Nathan: A couple months ago Z Magazine published a list of the top twenty richest people in America. And if you go down this list... they have a whole category of what company they are the CEO of... meaning that if you are one of the richest people in America you are either a CEO of a corporation or a major stockholder. Out of the top ten, five people were Sam Walton's descendants. And you have to wonder... I mean, this woman I work with was discussing this with me and she told me she loves WalMart because of how cheap it is and how she could go there and get all these different things under one roof. And I'm like "Yeah, but the people that run this store are five of the richest ten people in America... do you really think that they're looking out for your best interest? Do you really think that they're doing this because they're so good hearted that they want you to be able to buy all these things as cheap as possible?"... No, they can make a profit by undercutting all these mom and pop stores' prices and put them out of business so that they get ALL the business... It kinda waters down the economy in a sense.

Spectacle: It's this conglomeration of everything, this consolidation of more and more wealth and power into the hands of fewer and fewer people that's the biggest threat to any sort of real democracy.

Nathan: Which is maybe something that I could promote with my city council position and my column. People should start thinking about it more. I've noticed in the punk/hardcore scene... it seems to get a lot more lip service than it does in other places. Like with my mother and father, for instance... my mother and father go to eat at McDonald's and whatnot. I try to explain to them why supporting a company like that is wrong, and at least my mom, to a certain degree, has gotten into a lot of that. Because she's started to understand why it's wrong. I mean, my mom's all for trying to make the world a better place...

Spectacle: And it's so easy. It's what I call "passive activism". You don't even really have to do anything... you just make a different choice when you want to get something to eat or whatever.

Nathan: Exactly. And a lot of times I know that gets sort of shot down with the mentality that... like with natural foods co-ops... a lot of people say "oh, that's a hippie store... I don't want to go in there 'cause it's all a bunch of hippies" or whatever... but how could that not be in your best interest? Sometimes it just baffles my mind and I have a little trouble relating. But at the same time I try not to harp on anyone too much. I mean, obviously I make a lot of compromises myself. I can't live completely outside of corporate control... I don't think any of us can. But I

think we can work toward that a lot more to help support an environment where eventually someday we could.

Spectacle: If everyone would just do a little, no one would have to do it all... to make such huge...

Nathan: I mean, I'm not necessarily here to put WalMart out of business but I'm here to make people think about what they're supporting when they shop there... to change the minds of people, so they understand why it's wrong. Sometimes greed will put a blindfold on and WalMart might not ever understand that it's wrong but if the people who support them understand that it's wrong, it's gonna cut into their profit margin and then they'll catch on.  
Spectacle: Hit'em where it hurts.  
Nathan: Yeah.

Nathan Berg, p.o. box 504, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

#### UPDATE

This interview was done last summer at the More Than Music Fest and Nathan has been a busy guy since then. He gave speeches to Optimist Clubs (and others) helping the Chippewa Falls skateboarders raise \$15,000 toward their skatepark. They are negotiating with two professional skatepark design firms including the legendary "Team Payne" who has built ramps since before I started skating in 1986. They are now working on getting a grant from AIRWALK (the shoe company). It looks like they'll get their park afterall.

Nathan is also part of the ten-person "Crust Island Collective" that has just

opened the INSIGHT infoshop and lounge in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. INSIGHT is a "collectively-run, non-profit space to utilize in the development of a true counterculture". There are no membership fees to use the space, which houses a zine library, show space, regular movie showings, speakers, workshops, discussion, and so on. There was recently a workshop on consumerism. Upcoming events include a bike repair workshop, potlucks, a micropower radio workshop and broadcast, and numerous shows. The Crust Island Collective is made up of a group of ten individuals with different political ideologies and there is no party line to be followed. The only rules are that there is absolutely no drugs or alcohol allowed and everybody has to be nice (to the space and each other).

So far, the space is being financed by donations. Feel free to call (715-830-8685) or stop by the space if you're in Eau Claire. Hours are 4-10 PM Monday-Friday, and 2-8 PM Saturday and Sunday. INSIGHT infoshop/lounge, 308 E. Madison St., Eau Claire, WI 54703 Or, if you want to write, the mailing address is INSIGHT, P.O. box 1151, Eau Claire, WI 54702-1151





# Kids and Hunting

by Mike Meisberger

Here Be Dragons

ed. Mike Q Roth and Eric Meisberger

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I write this from the backwoods and foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where you can still see the stars at night and breath semi-fresh air. I am a conservationist, outdoorsman and hunter. I love the Mother Earth and all she has offered us unconditionally and free of charge. I give back as often as I can, and tread lightly whenever possible. I have hunted since the age of fifteen. I am now thirty-five. This year I literally had an anxiety attack in the woods while hunting. This is the first time in my life that I did not feel completely at home and safe in the woods.

First a bit about why I stalk the oaks for the ever illusive whitetail. First and foremost it is really the only meat that I will willingly eat. No 'roids and mega drugs lingering about. Its fat content is almost nonexistent. If prepared properly it is the absolute best meat you will ever stuff your chops with. Second, I am a conservationist. The deer population should be cropped with effective, legal and ethical hunting practices rather than letting them become a share croppers nightmare or the bane of the insurance industry (the leading cause of auto insurance increases are accidents with deer and false claims...). Besides, who **LIKES** to see a dead deer along the side of the road? Virginia has no real department that is in charge of removing deer from the highways. It is a travesty to watch them turn to skeletons along our major byways. And yet the department of game and inland fisheries shuns citizens from actively attempting to remove and bury them. Get caught with one in your possession without a note from the king himself and you just lost your car, license and one hell of a lot of cash.

Besides this stupidity, you must deal with other wonderful factors in the field as well. Just like last Saturday. I go hunting on a private farm that I have been hunting for some ten years. I am amazed to find that two of the hunters are toting along **CHILDREN**. Allow me to define children: a four year old and a twelve year old. The men who were taking them afield are very competent but...

What is so evil about that you ask? What is so wrong about exposing your child to the sport of hunting? Not a damn thing. At the right age. Did I fail to mention the third child of five years that was hunting with dad also? This was the first time the man ever hunted and he is bringing along a kiddo to add to the mix? These people have just plain lost their collective minds. Let's for one moment put aside the outstanding possibilities that might occur. Firearm malfunction (a bullet is nothing more than a controlled explosion), phys-

ical mishap. "Yes your honor, my child fell down the hill and broke seven bones while I was watching what I thought was a deer but turned out to be a troop of squirrel." Mistaken identity...most hunters are used to looking for man size movement in the forest. Small movement usually means deer or turkey. This unfortunately can lead to disaster. Sound. One man walking sounds like one man walking. A

man and a child walking sounds remarkably like a deer...four feet doing the leaf shuffle. These are but some of the many factors that have raced through your skull when you were attempting to out think me. Allow me to add an element that you did not think of. I know you did not think of it because Virginia has one element that is legal while deer hunting that most states do not. Dogs.

That is correct, Canis familiaris. In Virginia you are allowed to hunt deer with packs of hounds that 'run' the deer. There are many schools of thought on this practice. My personal thoughts are that the dogs move the deer better than man can, because in most parts of this state some landowner was out for a quick buck, so he had his property logged. Two years after this devastation occurs the land becomes choked with low growing vegetation that only a dog can penetrate. Acres and acres of unusable, unpassable land. Great deer habitat. Unhunting without Rover. You are now screaming that it is an unfair advantage. I will just say this and allow your intellect to do the rest. Bath County in Virginia has the highest harvest rate of any county in the state. They have a two week deer hunting season. No dogs are permitted

to be used while hunting deer. Bath County sportsman kill 2/3 more deer in two weeks than the counties I hunt in for **two months, with the use of dogs. Do the math.**

However, the factor of hounds in the forest, hunters with shotgun and children, can in no way be added up as correct, intelligent or even remotely sane. I had a wonderful Saturday planned. Sit in the woods and just relax. If the opportunity to take a deer comes along...it has not in the past two years...make a clean quick kill. If not, enjoy the day.

Instead I sit there and attempt to understand the need of a grown male to take his child or grandchild into the woods during deer season to "hunt". Hell, armed police officers don't go jogging through the forest on Saturdays in Virginia for fear of being harvested by an over zealous hunter! And yet here we have daddy and son, grandpa and granddaughter and I do not have a clue, first-time out, "Elmer Fudd"

## KIDS AND HUNTING

by mike meisberger

intro by eric

my whole family are  
avid gun activists.  
that includes hunting.  
why, i myself went hunting  
a few times in my life.  
now, 11 years later  
(and vegan), i find  
it hard to imagine  
sometimes.

i got this in the  
mail from my brother  
who resides in  
virginia.  
here, be, dragons  
isn't necessarily  
a pro-hunting zine.  
we are however, a pro-  
active-exchange-of-ideas  
zine.





with his five year old son wondering the farm aimlessly. For the first time in my life I had chest pain because I was scared to death that something was going to happen to the children. I was scared for the children and pissed as hell at the ignorant adults who put their children in danger. I know hunting. I have stalked the forest for some twenty years and I know that the LAST thing a hunter needs when the deer come plowing through the woods is "Where is my kid?" (will they even think of the kid or will concentration preclude them from thinking of them for a critical split second?) Will they botch the shot and only wound because they are worried about the child? What are the effects on a four year old child watching a loved one kill a deer? I am sure you can understand exactly how many questions that can be broached by this subject. Questions that I have only have an opinion on and little fact.

My reaction to the day was complete and total frustration. In the days past I have been looking for a new place to hunt. A much quieter and less traveled place. On Saturday I hunted with six adults and three children on a very small farm. In my ever so humble opinion I should have left real early. But these places are at a premium and

very hard to find. Should I give up something that I enjoy because of others? Should I stop hunting on that farm? Stop seeing a family who has all but adopted me? Fear not. The owner of the farm was just as unhappy as I was. He had made a grand mistake and duly noted it. It was a topic of discussion after dark. Sportsman often make mistakes but they will also recognize them a lot faster than most people realize. What we had on the farm is known in the military as a 'clusterfuck'. Fubar (fucked up beyond all recognition) from the word go. I can only hope that this mistake is not repeated again or even thought about. There are some good hunters out there who do care and really try to give the sport a good reputation. But as this case shows...even a very good crew can make a mistake that is just plain stupid. I am still frustrated and intend to seek other areas to hunt. I feel that this whole mess could have been avoided. Hunting parties, more so than any other group need perfect, clear, concise communication. It is in fact, a matter of life or possible death. If you hunt, or know someone who does, voice your opinion to them. Make sure they know who and where their other fellows are hunting. And on behalf of myself, please, hunt safe and CHILD FREE.

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## Interview with Bill Frankel-Streit

by Greg Wells  
Complete Control  
PO Box 4021  
Richmond VA 23220

*Prelude: I have only known Bill Frankel-Streit for a relatively miniscule amount of time, but in that short time his presence has impacted me greatly. On first glance it would seem highly improbable that we would be acquainted at all, not to mention friends. Bill's former life as a Catholic priest would seem to be a clear cut warning bell for an Anarchist to stay away, and I must admit that at first I was a little timid to befriend him. It didn't take long for his passionate persona to win me over. Bill is one of the rare folks who has a profound impact on all he comes in contact with. In this interview I asked him some hard questions expecting some gritty soul searching replies. I feel that he responded from the heart and left no stones unturned. The interview was trimmed somewhat for space and clarity but holds true to its original form. The interview took place in August near the end of a six month prison stint Bill was serving for an action at the Pentagon against US acts of aggression in Iraq. I have many doubts and concerns regarding pacifism and it's adherents, but I don't for one minute question Bill's dedication and drive to make this world a respectful, peaceful and humane place for all of it's inhabitants. Enjoy, Greg.*

*I guess the obvious starting point would be your childhood. Tell us about your upbringing, your family and early memories?*

I was born and raised in Northeast Pennsylvania in a small town called Hazleton. I'm one of five children born to my parents, who were raised during the great depression and enjoyed the prosperous fifties. My dad was a simple grocery store clerk for 37 years. Both of my parents had high school educations. My father was a WWII vet and my mom worked for the newly built Pentagon as a secretary. In short, my parents were products of the US having grown out of poverty in the great depression, victory in war and tasting the relative prosperity of the fifties. I have a memory of my dad bringing home a pay of \$54 a week. We may have even been poor, but when you're a child you have nothing to measure against. Both of my parents had many siblings who got married and had children, thus a big extended family resulted with regular family gatherings.

Hazleton in the late fifties and early sixties - the frame of time I went to school was anything but multi-cultural. In fact, I never met a

person of another race until I got to college. Besides the fact that there were few jobs, and jobs available were mostly blue collar, one has to wonder why no blacks or Hispanics moved into the area. I was never raised to ask these questions. Religion was big, but now I realize it as more of a cultural Christianity. My family was very Roman-Catholic. I had an uncle who was a priest and an aunt a nun. Later I would follow the example of my uncle and be ordained and my sister would join the religious order of my aunt. As I said we were very Roman-Catholic, but the questions of social justice were not a part of the church I knew. Hence the church wasn't asking why the city and area was so white. I'll let it go at that.

*At what point in your life did you become class conscious? What effect did this have on you?*

As I mentioned, questions of injustice or oppression were not in my vision early on. Although "class conscious" would not be the vocabulary used, I got a sense from my parents of compassion. To pull for the underdog. I'm sure this has to do with my parents upbringing during the depression, in poverty.

I would live this art during my college and graduate school years by picking up hitchhikers and bringing them home for a meal and a rest. My mom would feed whoever I brought in the door, no questions asked, not knowing if this fellow was a hitchhiker or a fellow seminarian (a guy studying to become a priest).

I'm sure this concern for the poor is what motivated me deep down to want to become a priest. Once in seminary, I became exposed to oppression through service projects sponsored by the seminary, the language of injustice was still not in my vocabulary, service and charity were,

It was a book by journalist, Penny Lernoux on Liberation Theology that opened my eyes and gave me the vocabulary of justice. Cry of the People about struggles in Latin America, with the subtitle "The Catholic church in conflict with US policy", was the book that electrified me. From there I read more and more and eventually came across the book that changed my life forever: Loaves and Fishes by Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker (CW) movement. From there I was off and running visiting CW homes, reading everything by the Barrigan brothers (prominent anti-war resisters and pac-



ifists) and everything else to do with justice and peace. At that point in the early 80's, I was ordained and the Catholic bishops came out with their pastoral letter on war and nuclear weapons. At the time I thought it was pretty radical, but today as I've grown more and more in the radical movement, I'd call the document mediocre at best.

*When did you first begin working around social justice causes?*

I'd say my first step towards working in social justice circles was going to seminary in the first place. The reason I say that is that my life as a seminarian and priest brought me into the middle of the Catholic church which in the aftermath of the Vatican Council II in the mid 1960's was taking steps towards social justice. My "pulling for the underdog" that I was raised with became translated into the "preferential option for the poor" coming primarily out of Latin America. The preferential option for the poor meant that the church would now take strides at siding with the poor, to look at reality from their viewpoint. I think Dorothy Day and the CW movement were pioneers of this option way before the Catholic church coined the phrase.

When I discovered Dorothy Day's book while I was still in seminary I completely devoured it and found in that book an articulation of the seeking of my soul all those years. To back up briefly, although priesthood attracted me I still fought with myself (and sometimes the administration) about the church. The church was powerful with luxuries and riches. I read the bible of a poor, suffering messiah. Later I would say a poor, suffering revolutionary. By the time I came across Dorothy's book I had fought long and hard to finally say "yes" to priesthood. Her book inflamed me, but I decided, rather than join the CW, I would be ordained, but live it out in a CW way. I discovered later on that it was easier said than done.

*What were some of the first steps you took towards your newly chosen lifestyle?*

Before being ordained I made an effort in a self designed retreat to view reality through the eyes of the poor. I went to New York City on the greydog (greyhound bus) with only a little change and a return ticket the following week. My idea was to sleep on the street, hang out and pray as like on a pilgrimage. I never did sleep on the streets and the CW house in the city was less than hospitable and warned me against the violence of the city shelters. I ended up spending the nights with an old seminary friend but spent the days walking the length of Manhattan talking to and more importantly listening to anyone on the streets. Baby steps.

My lifestyle as a priest was an effort at living in voluntary poverty and being hospitable to the poor in the CW style. Any panhandlers or folks of need who came to the rectory were directed to me by the secretaries and the high school kids answering the doors in the evenings. I was still struggling and learning.

*When and what was your first act of civil disobedience?*

My first act of civil disobedience (CD) was in May of 1985 in D.C. at the State Department. The arrest was all part of a weekend of workshops and talks culminating in CD at six different sites in D.C.: the State Department on Latin American issues, the White House on the arms race, the South African Embassy against apartheid, the Russian Embassy against the invasion of Afghanistan, Health & Human Services on abortion issues, and the Supreme Court for the Death Penalty. About 240 people in total were arrested at the various sites and brought to one very large central holding cell for an overnight in D.C.

I had been arrested at the State Department since I had traveled to Nicaragua during the Contra War as part of a Witness for Peace delegation. The State Department opposing our Latin American policies was the place for me to be.

*Describe the conflicts you ran into with the power structure by being a priest who was involved with the CW movement and getting arrested at demos?*

I have already described how I came across the CW movement. Unfortunately I never met Dorothy Day. I discovered the CW in September, 1980 and she died a month later before I got a chance to arrange a visit. While in the parish, I spoke about the CW regularly in homilies and visited the CW house in NYC regularly. As I continued

to become somewhat of a radical priest, going to Latin America, getting busted in D.C. and New York on Hiroshima Day (August 6<sup>th</sup>) and speaking about all of this in the homilies, I eventually, as you could guess came in conflict with the powers that be.

A small group of powerful men in the parish tried to get a petition together to the bishop to have me removed from the parish. When Dan Berrigan (who I was getting to know) heard about it he declared "Ah what a tribute". Reactionary people who heard my homilies denounced me as a communist (remember some of the worst values of the fifties are isolated in NE Pennsylvania) in letters to the bishop. At one point, I was called into the chancery to see the bishop on a weekly basis.

Finally after six years I got burned out and exhausted physically and emotionally. I needed to take a leave of absence from priesthood. At this point I just needed to get out. I gave no thought of where to until I was at home with my parents. It was May, 1988 and I happened to find a CW paper among my belongings. I opened it to discover two full pages of CW house addresses. It dawned on me that I should put my body where my mouth was. You see, I loved priesthood but was burned out with the way I was ordered to live it. I should add that with this also came questions of celibacy. I ended up at the Dorothy Day house in D.C. which changed my life forever.

*Describe in detail your thoughts on violence as a means of revolution and your strict adherence to pacifism?*

Violence was always foreign to me. Even as a kid I seldom got into fights and even then I held myself back when escalation happened. I lived a pretty sheltered life not being exposed to street violence and certainly not war. Only much later when I traveled to the war torn border of Nicaragua and Honduras, was I exposed to the still smoldering ruins of war. Later on I would visit Iraq.

What has come much later and what I continue to try to be aware of daily is how I benefit from the violent institutions and system of our nation. What Dorothy Day called the filthy rotten system. That, of course, is the much harder task. That is where my violence lies. I continue to trust and believe in non-violent direct action as a means of change. In fact, I believe it's the only true means to revolution, to creating the "new man" (sic) as Che would say. I have been reading a new biography of Che. the amount of bloodshed during and after the (Cuban) Revolution is just staggering. I certainly understand the revolutionaries idea of purging or cleansing. However it seems clear to me that the violence of Batista was only replaced by revolutionary violence. This is the same reasoning for just war. When our side commits violence it somehow miraculously becomes just and good. It seems to me that the exploiters and the revolutionaries copy each other and violence begets violence begets violence.

Now I know I'm treading on volatile ground. I am very much supportive of the Third World struggles for justice. Ethically I'm fully with them. However the "means" or "praxis" I cannot support. In fact, I take inspiration and courage from the dedication of a Che or the Irish uprising of 1918-19. The willingness to die for liberation is the key.

*How do you feel that organized resistance as a whole has changed in the twenty plus years you have been involved, and is the movement weaker as a whole today.*

One could say, I suppose that organized resistance has deteriorated in its adaptation to the times. I think a violent armed revolution is dependent totally on results. Whereas if one is dedicated to a non-violent revolution as the means and the end becoming one, one realizes that the act of resisting in itself is the means and ends in one. In other words this is what we mean when we tell the pentagon or the White House that peace cannot come through bombs. Human misery cannot be realized through the barrel of a gun, whether you're the Pentagon or a guerrilla.

Dan Berrigan wrote a great book, *No Bars to Manhood*, where he wrote, "In the beginning of the 70's we cry peace, peace, peace but there is no peace". He then goes on to state that "the seeking of peace is at least as costly as the waging of war". Since the beginning of the republic we have accepted that good citizens would interrupt their life to go off and fight war. We don't have peace because by and large,



the so called peacemakers, have clung to the "normal" life and have not been willing to interrupt their five year plan of school, or ten year plan of family. Very challenging price.

However, the dedication of revolutionary guerilla groups should be studied and their courage, commitment, and self sacrifice emulated. For instance, the roganized resistance in the past was focused on one issue or cause. The sixties saw the anti-war movement focused on stopping the war in Vietnam. People still had their own lives as students, professors, etc. I believe organized resistance demands a full time response. There is no such thing as a part time revolutionary.

We need people to give their lives to resistance, and this resistance must be supported and cultivated in communities of resistance. these communities would be symbolically and pro-actively a constructive program. This is what we are trying to create, a new society within the shell of the old. This is where the "new person" is created the liberated person.

In terms of resistance, one has to be free enough to go to jail...both interiorly free, standing on the immovable rock of conscience, and practically speaking in a community of support. One doesn't hold "outside" jobs punching somebody else's timeclock. The community also supports family, communal daily work, etc. When you live in community, payment of rent doesn't fall individually on one individual's shoulders. I've heard many times: "I can't risk arrest because I have to be at work".

*What drives you and motivates you after all these years in the struggle?*

I can answer that with faith and violence. What drives me is the tremendous need, violence and injustice in our world. I recently traveled to Iraq bringing medical supplies to the dying children there. Dying primarily because of US bombings and sanctions. Sanctions have become a weapon of mass destruction. In fact it was US policy towards Iraq that landed me in prison this time. When one sees and touches children dying, children the same ages as my own, one feels the imperative to act. Unfortunately there's no shortage of the victims of our American empire.

What drives me and inspires me first of all is faith. I see my resistance as a gospel insurrection, the victory of life over death. My faith is not a static belief in dogmas or doctrine. No, my faith is a dynamic trust in the story of Jesus, his non-violent revolution becomes our story when we dare to follow him by picking up the non-violent cross. Today that means jail or prison. That is to believe that things can change. Unbelief is the paralyzing acceptance of the imperial propaganda that nothing can change. Faith hope and love is what inspires me.

*How did you begin the process of Unlearning?*

With the anniversary of Columbus' invasion of America on could talk of 500 years of genocide. I've read Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee again here in prison. Yes it is a disgusting evil history. Part of undoing that history is to unearth the 500 years of resistance. Howard Zinn has begun to do this in his People's History of the United States. It's the side of history that I never learned. That being the point of view of American history from the poor and victims. This all fits in with the preferential option for the poor that I mentioned earlier. Then when one sees reality from the point of view of the poor taking off the blinders from the propaganda of the powers that be then we can realize our privilege and status. When I recognize my status as a white male in this world, I can't stop being white, nor male, but I feel it is my duty to resist.

Our very act of resistance is a repentance, to risk arrest and go to

jail in non-violent resistance to the imperial state. I want no part or privilege from this 500 years of disgusting history. When Sue, (the woman who became my wife) and I began the disarmament of a B-52 bomber by hammering it with household hammers, we were convicted as felons for our act of resistance and repentance. This placed us squarely where we wanted to stand vis-à-vis this empire of America! In total opposition!

*Tell us about all of your various stints in jails/prisons and the harsh realities you've faced and have been witness to.*

First of all, lets get this out of the way immediately: prison in no way, shape or form is about rehabilitation. The federal government and the Bureau of Prisons doesn't even use that terminology anymore. Federal Prisons, like county and city jails are used solely for warehousing and punishment. Of course, I myself, have never been rehabilitated.

However, my time in prison is never a stagnant warehousing. Rather, I am very active and focused. What I call being vigilant and

awake. One must do something for one's mind, spirit and body everyday. Therefore my days are filled with a regular schedule of prayer, studying, reading, writing and of course interacting with my brother prisoners. I regard prison as a continuing education better then any master or doctorate program... education in the opposition of our government, racism, classism. Also I'm constantly learning from my brother prisoners, listening to the victims.

My various stints have spanned over a 10 year period and have mounted to 2 years total time served.

The education is ongoing

both in the courts and the jails. Our courts are interested more in convictions than in justice; more interested in protecting the rights of the military and the rich rather then the poor.

Besides an overnight back in 1985 for my arrest at the State Department, I have been jailed for 7 days in a Georgia jail for a protest at the Trident Nuclear Plant in St. Mary's, GA. The action that baptized me into resistance was the Anzus Plowshares action at Griffiss Air Force base in Rome, New York on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1991, 15 days before the deadline to the Gulf War. With preparation, action, court and prison the process took approximately 2 full years and there was no turning back.

My wife Sue and I cut through three fences and were able to hammer on and arm a B-52 bomber armed with nuclear cruise missiles ready to take off at a moments notice at the end of the runway. It was this action that solidified our relationship and resulted in our marriage. Certainly my wife and three small kids are of primary drive and inspiration to me. Each time I go to jail we do it in one spirit. It was a real gift for both of us to do the year sentence we each received at the same time. This shared experience of solidarity bonded us and solidified our vocation to this way of life. - At this point Bill goes on in length to discuss the difficulties of being imprisoned during the early months of his son's life and how he managed to cope with it.

*What do you see as the single greatest struggle facing us living in a country as corrupt and evil as the US is today?*

The single greatest entity hampering us is our own selves, the ego. Our ego expressed as self absorption, selfishness, self preservation. In addition, I'd add the corporate ego. Self absorption on a national level is what empire is all about. What underlies and drives this expression of ourselves is fear. I look around me and I see fearful, lost apathetic people.

What I think we need to form are joyful revolutionaries. A friend



What has come much later and what I continue to try to be aware of daily is how I benefit from the violent institutions and system of our nation. What Dorothy day called the filthy rotten system. That, of course, is the much harder task. That is where my violence lies. I continue to trust and believe in non-violent direct action as a means of change. In fact, I believe it's the only true means to revolution, to creating the "new man" (sic) as Che would say.



of mine from the CW house in New Haven, Connecticut says that nothing betrays the gospel more than a miserable catholic worker. I'd say the same for the movement. I think this is the "new prison", the "new humanity". The individualist is the one who is turned in on ones self, paralyzed and self and less tehcn human in the self-centeredness. That's a pretty good description to what kind of people the empire creates.

We in this country seem to have a jail/prison phobia. Brothers and sisters in third world countries risk torture and death for themselves and their families. Of course all of this is directed. finance and in some cases carried out by the US empire. Jail and prison is much more frightening on the outside then they are on the inside. However, I must add that, although the majority of my prison time has been enriching, I've had one brief stint where I actually feared for my life. There is much greater potential for this to happen in city jails. But jail can be a violent place.

That real fear that I felt in the D.C. city jail, I believe was a real failure of my non- violence. I didn't threaten or strike anyone, however I was impotent with fear. I believe that illustrates how much

more I need to grow and learn and deepen non-violence within me. I think we need to be willing to sacrifice, surrender ourselves, even to death.

- At this point Bill goes on to quote several scriptures to back up his statement before leading into the closing comments section which follows below.

I would suggest that the radical movement needs to be students of non-violence with the wisdom of Ghandi and the commitment and earnestness of Che. -We must have a radical analysis of all our ways of life, first recognizing we live in an empire, not a democracy. Therefore, no voting, no electoral politics, no lobbying. Direct action - voting with our feet in non-violent resistance. -We must be full time revolutionaries. To this end we must work toward building a "constructive program"

With that the interview drew to a close. Bill can be reached at: The Little Flower Catholic Worker Farm - 2780 Hadensville-Fife road Goochland, VA. 23063

## The Arthurstown Seven

by Darren, Tina, and Andy .  
Direct Action Against Apathy  
C/o Green Action  
QUBSU  
University Road  
Belfast, N. Ireland  
BT7 1NF

*Davie Philips is a man with many hats; involved in Low Impact/Source Media, Voice, Feasta, and well lots of other stuff. In Summer 98 he was involved in a genetics action at a test site in Wexford. This action led to Davie and 6 others (The Authurstown 7) getting dragged through the courts by our old friend Monsanto. We fired some questions at him over the old jiggy pokery machine and here's what he had to say...*

**Give us a bit of background on yourself ? Why are you the kinda person who feels the need to 'disrespect' the 'law of the land' and go uprooting some 'poor farmers' crops?!**

Well I grew up in Scotland. I got to travel a lot when I was younger due to the fact that I was good at skateboarding. Sponsors paid me for trips all over the world. I suppose seeing the world is what opened my eyes to what was going on globally. In Glasgow I owned a clothing company and shop selling snowboards and skateboards, it was quite successful but I got really disillusioned with business. In 1991 I sold out to my partner and went off to Romania to work in an orphanage. I came to Ireland in 1994 after spending a year in a half in Asia. I ended up studying anthropology at Maynooth University and was one of the founders of 'Low Impact' the organisers of the 'Sustainable Earth Fairs'. I am still working on projects that we started as Low Impact and disseminating information on sustainability with Source Media. Apart from smoking a bit of dope I have never broken any laws, so I'm not someone that feels the need to 'disrespect the law'. With the genetic issue and the 'poor farmers' crop in Wexford, that was a spontaneous thing really.

**Tell us about the action in Wexford during the Summer of 98, I believe it followed on from a Good Food gathering held in the vicinity.**

All we did was organise a public talk in Duncannon Fort, four miles from the test site of the genetically engineered sugar beet, to alert the locals of the dangers of genetic engineering in food and agriculture. Nuala Ahern MEP, John Gormley TD, Joe Higgins TD, and John Sey-

mour informed the 150 people that attended of the immediate threat posed by GMO's. A few days before, unknown persons dug up about 50% of the test site, there were conflicting statements in the newspapers regarding the amount of damage done so it was suggested that the press should be taken up to the test site to investigate for themselves. No one talked about going to dig up the beet or anything like that.

About 70 people walked to the test site including the politicians. There were about seven policemen and three Monsanto security guards waiting for us when we reached the test site. John Seymour and his friend Ritchie Roach had already been into the test site and had been stopped digging up the beet. It was a very surreal scene, behind a barbed wire fence with a 2 meter gap from the conventional sugar beet were the genetically altered ones, they looked small and scraggly. We walked up to the fence and looked over, people chatted to the police explaining why we were concerned. At first no one did anything then without any prompting people started jumping over or climbing under the fence, the guards followed, it was all very good-natured. Over 30 people went into the 1/2 acre test site. While the beet was being pulled Joe Higgins the socialist TD found a team of security guards secretly filming from the bushes, this caused a bit of commotion. No one was arrested on the day, not even a name and address was taken, so it was quite a surprise when I was visited a few months later by two Wexford gardai to be issued a summons. Seven people ended up being charged with forced entry, occupation and criminal damage without lawful excuse.

**Tell us about Monsanto's pre-action eyes and ears. Did the fact that Monsanto had set up surveillance of the activists become public during the case? I presume this further helped to bring public opinion on your side?**

The seven that Monsanto choose to prosecute made it easy to swing public opinion in our favour. Here were a pretty respectable bunch including journalists and writers singled out of over 30 people to be prosecuted by a giant American agrichemical company. Plus the me-



dia over in England were having a field day with the GM issue, Dr Putski's research that had been suppressed by the industry had been validated by independent scientists. Then during the court case it came out that people had been under surveillance before the public talk in Wexford, our solicitor obtained the film footage from 'Probe Security Network' who had been hired by Monsanto to gather intelligence. It showed 'suspects' in Dublin getting onto the bus and later people coming out the public talk filmed from the blacked out window of a van. This may have helped to bring public opinion to our side, I don't know, it's scary though.

Are they listening to our phone-calls and reading our e-mails? Probably

**The court case sounded like fun and a good 'excuse' to get lots of colourful activists and expert witnesses down in Wexford! Tell us more.**

It was planned to have a 2-day long awareness-raising, idea-sharing, informative and discursive event happening in New Ross, to coincide with the court case. The New Ross Hotel's ballroom was booked for two days and information stalls, public speakers, street theatre, good healthy organic food and music were all part of the plan. We wanted to make the event as colourful and friendly as possible, putting a strong emphasis on informing people about the possible hazards of Genetic Engineering, and giving organic food lots of coverage as a sustainable and preferable alternative. For the court case Mae-Wan Ho the geneticist and author of 'Genetic Engineering Dream or Nightmare' flew in as one of our expert witnesses. Our solicitor David Bulbula, who was brilliant, had prepared our case. We pleaded not guilty to the criminal damage without lawful excuse, we all firmly believed that GM was a serious and immediate threat to health and the environment and therefore according to the law we had lawful excuse.

**From all the activists who took part on the day why were only 7 prosecuted? Could it be a coincidence that they're all well known in environmental activist circles?**

Well four of the 7 had organised the debate held at Maynooth University where Vandana Shiva, Mae-Wan Ho and Quentin Gargan debated against top geneticists and Monsanto management, also those four had organised most of the event in Wexford. One of the seven was the local town heretic, one was at Caransore Point the anti-nuclear protest, and on paper probably looked the most experienced activist even although he was the most innocent. And the most famous of the seven was an 85 year old writer and organic farmer who has been an outspoken critic of the agrochemical industry for most of his life.

**How did having 'quasi-celebrity' John Seymour on board help the case?**

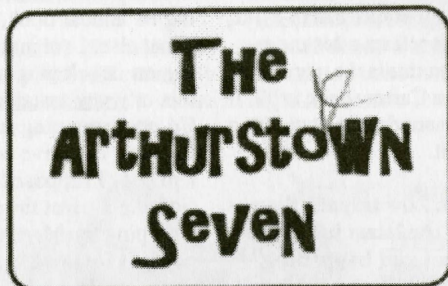
It was very helpful, he had no fear about possibly having to spend a few nights in prison. His statement was inspiring:

"...if a government does not take action to protect its citizens from serious danger, is it not reasonable that the citizens should take action to protect themselves? If an army of Normans landed again at Baginbun and started looting and destroying I should expect the Irish army to go and try and stop them. If it did not then I should feel it my duty to go and try and stop them myself, if not with a pike then at least with a pitch fork and I should do so. And when a huge multinational corporation comes and starts planting completely untested and untried genetically mutilated plants in the country where I have made my home, and the government agencies which are supposed to be there to protect us from that sort of thing fail in their duty, then I feel it not only my right but my duty too to do something to try to stop them. And if I have to go to prison because of it then I will go with a good will, and make the best of it, and when I

get out I will try to stop them again!"

**The judge applied the 'Probation Act' in passing his verdict...and so both parties claim victory. This seems a definite compromise by the judge, hold on, make that 'cop-out'. Is this ruling likely to be duplicated for other actions?**

Yes, the Judge said that he felt the protest was 'conducted in a very honest, good-humoured manner' and applied the probation act instead of charging us. It is understandable, it was a small district court, if he let us off with the lawful excuse it would set a precedent. Our solicitor felt that the judge didn't really even consider this point of law and that we had very good grounds for an appeal. The same plea is used by the genetic activists in England, it will work.



**How has the events impacted on the level of public debate on the whole genetics issue in Ireland? Even more vitally, how has it affected the level of citizen action (be it pressure on Government, supermarkets etc).**

In this climate of apathy it feels like no-one cares, the Wexford case got media attention for a few days then everyone forgets again. The governments public consultation process, where the 20 groups that made a submission walked out as they felt the issue was being railroaded through, got some attention. Citizen action here is almost non-existent, if it wasn't for what is happening in England the supermarkets would be advertising the fact that their products contain GMOs and

not what we are seeing, the race for them to source non GM ingredients for their products. There are a few committed groups and people doing some great work, Genetic Concern of course. I wish there was more citizen action.

**Why do you feel that direct action is the only way forward on the GMO issue. Do you think that public protest without this spikier edge would be effectively neutered by broader public apathy?**

I certainly don't think that direct action is the only way forward but it is an effective way of getting people aware that there is something wrong with GMOs.

**For anyone intending to carry out a similar action, what advice you would give them before venturing into similar territory?**

The best advice I could give is to get a copy of the Genetix Snowballers 'hand book for action', which is available on the net. It covers everything you need to know about accountably removing genetically modified plants from release sites, including briefing the action observers, what to do when you are arrested and how to write effective press releases. Monsanto and Agrevo recently attempted to take legal action against the genetiX snowball group serving injunctions against those involved in the snowball to stop them digging up test sites. What the GE giants were also after was a list of everyone that were sent a copy of the 'Handbook for Action' so they can be served with copies of the injunction. You can download a copy of the handbook as an Acrobat file at the 'Green Backlash' section of the website: <http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/dc/backlash/>

**The Wexford action was very different from the previous GELF action in the way that one action was deliberately anonymous and the second was overt. The Wexford action bears many parallels to the Ploughshares action, where the people stayed to 'bear witness' to their actions. Give us your thoughts on the merits/disadvantage of both approaches.**

Both have merits, I would prefer to see people being accountable and being responsible for their actions. I know it can't always be done this way, but if it is not accountable then Monsanto and the press can have a field day. That is what is happening now after the hits on test sites in



Wexford and Cork, these were clandestine and there is no-one for the press to ask why they did it and only Monsanto's press release for the journalist to cut and paste into a story. The most effective way to stop this is what happened in England recently where 700 people, all sorts of people, went to decontaminate a test site, professionals, mothers, concerned individuals, all aware of the issues and not some organised rent a mob that the press would have us believe they are.

**OK, we know GELF is a flag of convenience (just like Earth First, the Deliberate Incitement campaign etc) but tell us a bit more.**

I honestly know nothing about GELF apart from this is the name used by the group that covertly dug up the GE beet in Carlow back in 97. It stands for the Gaelic Earth Liberation Front, sounds like something out of Monty Pythons 'Life of Brian' doesn't it.

**Yowser's Davie, you're a busy man what with Low Impact, Source Media, VOICE, Feasta etc. Feel free to plug the latest juices from these sterling concerns, and tell us what's hot and happening.**

Well LOW IMPACT is working with SOURCE MEDIA now, the magazine SOURCE, Ireland's social, environmental and holistic mag, comes out in September. Almost all my energy right now is going into the Sustainable Ireland Source Book, which is a directory of sustainability initiatives in Ireland with articles by some leading thinkers, its being produced by us in association with VOICE. I still work with FEASTA, which is the foundation of the economics of sustainability, it has a newsletter for members out now and later this year is publishing its annual book, this year's theme is indicators of sustainability. What else, I am involved in Sustainable Projects Ltd, which is working on developing a sustainable community, you can see details of this at [www.sustainable.buz.org](http://www.sustainable.buz.org). Also I work with the Dublin Food Co-op. Promoting and making organic food more accessible is one of the most effective ways to undermine genetic engineered foods. Yes I'm busy I suppose but I enjoy what I do, hats off to you at DAAA for fighting against the apathy that the corporate spin doctors have been whipping up. Martin Luther King once said, 'For evil to succeed all it needs is for good men to do nothing'. Check out [www.voice.buz.org](http://www.voice.buz.org)

## I Can't Believe I Have Punk Rock Parents!

(Excerpts) by Dan Halligan  
10 THINGS Jesus Wants You To Know  
8315 Lake City Way NE  
PMB #192  
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*In the punk-underground-hardcore community, parenting is a very overlooked issue. There are some obvious reasons for this, our community tends to be very youth oriented, there are more teenagers into punk than adults, and also many punk kids look down on more traditional things like parenting. Regardless of these factors however, there are plenty of punk parents out there. They are struggling not only with all the normal things you and I have to deal with, but they also have a kid or two in the mix that is dependent upon them. When I've seen kids at all-ages shows or walking down the street with their dad with a mohawk, I've often wondered how those parents manage to do it all. How can they work, raise and support a kid, and still have any time left for punk and hardcore in their lives? Since I really haven't seen too much coverage of punk parents out there in other fanzines, I thought it not only be fun, but also fairly informative to talk to a few punk parents in 10 Things.*

*Over the next couple of pages we will introduce you to some punk parents. What they have to say is not only entertaining and enlightening, but in many cases they touch upon some valid issues that the punk community often fails to address. I would like to thank all the punk parents who helped out with this article and opened up their lives to us: Erin, Brian, Tom, Nickle, Elizabeth, and Jeannie.*

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I'm Brian Krashpad, I am 40, I have 2 kids, Hannah Beth (5) and Jack (2). We live in Gainesville, Florida, with my wife Kim.

*Why did you have kids?*

Because kids are cool! Besides, at a certain point it's do or die, kid-wise. If you wait too long, Ma Nature makes it dangerous.

*What are the cool things about being a parent?*

You get to watch stupid TV programs and go to kid movies with your kids. Plus kids can get raised in an alternative to totally-traditional ways (although there are many good things about some traditional ways, too). It's fun to teach your kids stuff. My wife and I are teaching Hannah Beth to read (she's in kindergarten) with a neat phonics book designed to be done in about 100 days. She's about 60% through it and already way ahead of where I was in 1st grade.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present?*

In some respects it's the "worst of both worlds," but I choose not to look at it that way. Yes, some people who know I'm in band I'm sure think I'm a bit daft. But they also know that I'm a responsible parent and love my kids. I don't go to as many shows as when I was a kid, but then most people my age don't. And in fact most just stop entirely, where as I'm still pounding the boards myself! Fortunately, my kids don't hate punk. Sometimes we put on music and pogo around the house, and one of Jack's fave words is "guitar!" (which comes out "g'nar!"), but is always said as if followed by an exclamation point). But they get exposed to a lot of other kinds of music around the house in addition to punk, too.

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your children?*

My wife and I have scheduled our jobs so that our kids don't have to be in daycare (they do go to preschool for socialization). I take care of the kids Monday-Thursday evenings when their mom's at work (she teaches English to adult speakers of other languages), and she watches them during the day while I'm at work. We're going to try a new public school only a mile from our house for Hannah Beth next year, but if we don't like it, we will home-school her or we'll find someplace else. We don't avoid religion. I think spirituality is important. You don't have to go to a temple or church to be spiritual, but on the other hand there are benefits with communing with others who share your beliefs. One thing I've always felt was that the main problem with organized religion was that it often tries to force itself on those who don't want it and disrespects people who have other beliefs. We're not Jewish, but our daughter has already learned about Hanukkah in kindergarten and even brought home a dreidel with instructions on how to play! That kind of cross-culturization is important for kids. Since my wife's students come from all over the world, it's a little easier for us than for most people to teach that kind of thing.

*Are you a single parent? Married/living together?*

Married, although my wife kept her last name. When we were on our honeymoon in London, someone asked if we "weren't sure!" That was almost 12 years ago.

*Do you have any advice to new punk parents, potential punk parents, or DIY tips with parenting?*



If you're not sure you're ready, don't do it! But if you can be responsible, raising kids is one of the most satisfying things you can do. I wouldn't immediately have kids in a relationship either, save some time for you and your love to get to know each other well before introducing the stress of kids into the picture.

*If you are active in the punk community doing a band, label, distro, zine, shows, etc., what do you do? Is it hard to be active in punk with a kid?*

I'm in band, Crash Pad, and write for a music mag, Ink 19, in addition to my day job. It's harder than if I didn't have kids, but still eminently doable. The band practices once or twice a week, and our shows are mostly local and after the kids are abed, so it's not a terribly huge chunk of time. If it's something that's important to you, you find a way. I've been in bands for most of the last 19 years, and without it I Jones bad.

*Do you have anything else to say or add about parenting?*

Only that there are no rules, just like punk. Think it through, get advice from people with experience, and if you love your kids great things will happen.

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My name is Erin, I'm 18 & 1/2, and I have one child, who's name is Jonathan. He's 1 & 1/2 and we live in California.

*Why did you have a kid?*

It was more of an accident really... we all know how those accidents happen, but I'm never letting Jonathan know that he wasn't planned, because he was the best thing to ever happen to me. At first I didn't want to have him, because it would mean I'd have to stop drinking and everything else, but I realized that a child was more important than my bad habits, so I went to rehab and stopped. Not only did I give life, it was given to me too, so that's why I had him, so I wouldn't kill both of us.

*What are the cool things about being a parent?*

Well, I've always liked kids to a certain extent, and having one of my own just gave me a new respect for their individuality (and what a force to be reckoned with they are). I love waking up every morning and feeding and playing with him, he's probably the best thing that happened to me.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present?*

Well, if I'm walking down the street, with blue spiked hair, and carrying Jon, people look at me really weird. But the guys at the piercing studio have offered to give him free piercings, which I find hysterical, because they get upset when I say no. My friends, actually started hanging around me more, just because they think my son is such a cute kid, but they get upset when I can't go to shows. Jon, appears to like punk... or, at least the way punks look. My best friend has all these spikes that Jon loves to play with. Surprisingly enough though, I've gone to a lot of shows with Jonathan. I try to stay in the back because of the loudness, but the bands/band members just adore him. Doctors offices don't like my appearance though, they're actually afraid of me and don't like standing too close.

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your child? (Like home schooling? Talking more frankly about sex, politics, etc. at a younger age? Avoiding religion or any other non-traditional ways of raising children?)*

Well, Jon is only 1 & 1/2... so, it would be pointless to tell him about sex, but we're raising him on a vegetarian diet, just because it's been proven to be healthier for children when they're very young. We are also planning to not even bring up religion, or force ours upon him,

it's his own decision. When he becomes interested in something, then it is his choice and we'll support him all the way.

*Are you a single parent? Married/living together? If you don't have a 2 parent married family, what problems does this present? Or are there benefits?*

In all technicalities, I'm a single parent, my boyfriend/fiancee (also the father of my son), is over here all the time, without actually living here. The problems of this far outweigh the benefits. Jonathan knows who his daddy is and recognizes him instantly, but he isn't around Jon enough to "bond" with him, and he doesn't get up in the middle of the night to comfort Jonathan when he's scared of something or hungry. That's my job, along with everything else... baths, diapers, food, etc.

I love it, but it's just more difficult doing it on my own.

*Do you have any advice to new punk parents or potential punk parents? Or DIY tips with parenting?*

First of all, don't have any kids until you're absolutely sure you want them. They're a lot of work, they get into everything. If your punk lifestyle doesn't allow time for your kids, either don't have any or get over your need for socializing. But, if you have kids, don't be overbearing, and don't force punk, or anything for that matter, down their throats. Okay, so I gave Jon a mohawk for his 1st b-day, but it was

just cute more than anything.

*If you are active in the punk community, is it hard to remain active with a kid?*

Actually, I'm in a band (Ingrates), I play guitar and sing, which on top of working, takes a lot of time away from parenting. It's hard to do both, there are even times when I'll skip practice or work just to be with my son. It's very hard to be active in punk and have a kid, but, I'm not giving up either.

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I'm Tom Cassar and my wife and I have 2 girls. Rachel is 7 years old and Gracie is 3 & 1/2. I am 36 and we live in New York City.

*Why did you decide to have kids?*

It was both my wife's and my decision seeing that it was her body that was going to be used to bear them. I try to experience as many things as I can in life. I had the opportunity and was up for the adventure. My wife always wanted children and although at the time it was not on the top of my list of things I was planning, she was in her late 30's at the time and it was best to have them when we did. In retrospect I am glad I had them when I did as I would rather have children when I have energy and things now are setting into a new order that should remain relatively stable for years.

*What are the good/cool things about being a parent?*

I have very funny smart kids, so I am often laughing and having more meaningful conversation than I may have in other situations. Children's insight is often over-rated, but it is another plus. I think there are many things that I have learned that I would not have learned if I didn't have children. I'll probably realize what I have learned in the future as there is not as much time for analysis now. Having children in NYC makes me experience much more of the city as I'm not stuck in a simple home to work to home mode as many people I know are. I go to parks, museums, schools, music, shows, dances etc, often on weekdays when many of my friends are stuck at work.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present? Are you looked at funny at daycare or school parent night?*

I can handle it and in NYC people are pretty tolerant and non-preju-





dice. The drummer from the Dictators daughter and mine are in the same 1st grade class. We are both liked by the other parents and kids and our girls go to just as many birthday parties and play dates as other children (if not more). It may not be that way if I lived outside of the city.

*Do your friends stop hanging out with you?*

Not really, but I am limited in the amount of time I can hang out. I spend so much time here at Vital working and often my kids are here painting, playing drums, using the computers or just dropping in for a visit. Everyone here likes them. Most people like kids, at least the type of people I tend to be friends with or hire.

*Do your kids hate punk?*

They like some of it, but I don't play much recorded music at home. They ignore it pretty much when they hear it at Vital. I don't like them to hear music too loudly so they rarely see bands play live. Kids don't like heavy stuff too much anyway, they prefer more melodic things. I don't see any reason to have them listen to what I listen to. Rachel does the posters for the shows and many of the bands like them so much they are planning on using them for artwork on records.

*Does child rearing conflict with your punk lifestyle and ethics?*

It does take away a lot of your freedom and adds more responsibility, but that can be a good thing too. Some people I know who had a lot of freedom and no responsibility are now dead or useless sacks of shit. I think I am getting a lot done. The only ethics conflict might be the overpopulation problem.

*Do you go to a less shows?*

Going to less shows has more to do with running Vital Music than having children, as Vital demands a lot of time and I can't go to as many shows as I would like. I am trying to solve that problem by having shows here at Vital. I still "go out" when I play shows and see a lot of bands play. If you want me to see your band, book us on the same night!

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your children?*

I don't like home schooling as I think it's important for kids to interact with others. I do spend tons of time reading to my kids (we watch almost no TV), doing homework, helping with music lessons etc. I do give my kids my view on the politics of media, business etc. We rarely take them to movies and discourage media-driven entertainment and toys, preferring books and non-pop music. Just say no to Spice Girls! Sex is not a big issue with kids as young as mine, but I don't want my kids to have hang-ups so things like nudity and touching or exploring their own bodies I try to deal with it as casually as I would the weather. We don't practice any religion, but my kids are exposed to many religious beliefs going to public school in NYC, so I try to answer questions generally and if they want more information we'll read about it. Children are very spiritual and want answers to many questions. It's a fine balance between not being too specific as to advocate a belief and not undermining their faith in you as an authority by seeming that you don't know the answer.

*Are you a single parent? Married/living together? If you don't have a 2 parent married family, what problems does this present? And/or what benefits?*

We got married so that there wouldn't be so many difficulties, legally or socially. It didn't compromise anything we felt and didn't cost but a few bucks. I wouldn't want to ever try to raise children by myself. It's hard enough for two people and I think it is better for the children to have 2 parents as long as they get along and work well together.



Nickle and Sienna

*Do you have any advice to new punk parents?*

When I talk to older people (seniors), the first thing that comes out of their mouths is how short the time is that your children are small and how fast it goes. Taking advice from this I would say that the time your children are little is finite and compared with your whole life it's just a chapter. Do everything you can to them while they are around. You'll be back to your business before you know it and they will be better off for it.

*You are active in the punk community, what do you do, and is it hard to be active in punk with a kid?*

I run Vital Music, a mail order and label, and I play in Sea Monkeys. I am also doing some shows here at Vital. It has always been hard budgeting time and I do a lot of all-nighters to make up for time in the day spent babysitting, taking kids to school, etc. There is also school vacation days and summer vacation, which means a constantly changing schedule, plus unexpected illnesses. The strength in doing what I do is that I can arrange the schedule, but many times I have to work late to make up for it. Many times I have worked until 6:00 in the morning, walked home and sat on the couch only to have my kids wake up and walk in the room to start their day. They don't give a damn about whether or not I've slept. They need their breakfast and need to get to school by 8:30. Then

I'm back to work at 9:00!

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Our names are Nickle and Sienna Pierce from Seattle. I am 29 and Sienna is 2 1/2. Sienna's mother (Ailee) and I live together as co-parents.

*Why did you have a kid?*

There were many reasons that we chose to have a child. I believe that some of the reasons we choose to have a child was a concoction of many things: biology; having a sense of meaning; love; passing on knowledge; proving our adulthood; selflessness; boredom; no condom; and wanting to dedicate our life for another life. For the most part, we had confidence in ourselves to be excellent parents. We felt that our beliefs were strong enough to raise a child with a healthy mind and body, and we felt that we should give that to a new life. Yeah right! Of course, once Sienna was born and ideals became solid, we realized we were naked in understanding the art-form of raising a child. Naive in our assumptions, but profoundly in love with a crying, sucking, demanding little life.



*What are the cool things about being a parent?*

Everything. The way my daughter takes a bath and then runs around the house naked, the way she stands on Brazil (our dog) to look out the window, the way she throws a tantrum by swinging her arms and stamping her feet, the way she asks about EVERYTHING, the times she figures out the difference in taste between green and black blackberries, the absolute awe in watching an every day occurrence, the crazy dance she does to Citizen Fish and Avail... Her outlook on life is one where everything needs to be figured out because everything is new. Watching and helping this process is beyond cool.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present?*

I think most of the difficulties is relating with the world coming from a punk and progressive perspective. Punk has been a catalyst for discovering and developing new ways to look at the world. Some of those different ideas lead us to our choices in giving birth and raising a child. We choose to have a home midwife (illegal in the state we were in), not to vaccinate, raise her vegan, and not to punish, among many other things. Our ideals are met with general resistance. It is difficult to also continue to go out to shows and go to parties, where most of our non-punk friends don't give it a second thought. We don't attend many shows or go to many parties as comparative of a pre-Sienna time. The punk scene is not set up to accommodate punk parents. Have you ever seen a play room in a place where bands play? Or even a room with other kids and toys and a sober adult, at a house party. It doesn't happen. The punk scene is not a child-parent friendly scene. It is not really an issue even within the discussions and performance of the punk culture. How many lyrics do you know that remotely address the issues of parenting? Punk parents, like us (or any parents for that matter), often tend to feel isolated in the earlier years of the child's life, especially mothers whom often stay with the child while the father goes out to work. This was our situation until recently. Many of us have also moved away from an oppressive situation with our own family, often to an entirely different city miles away from the cheapest babysitters in the world: grandparents. Factor in breast-feeding and it is no wonder that the mothers that I know feel incredibly trapped and isolated in their new life as parents, as it was for us. It would be wonderful if we could work against the notion of the "nuclear family" type units and be able for families and single mothers to rely on one another in communal type situations, or, as in our situation, for welfare to actually give mothers and families an actual LIVING solution. Rather they promote a racist, sexist, downsizing of the welfare system with a barely livable situation. There are many difficulties for us being parents in this society, especially that our beliefs often conflict with the surrounding society and culture.

*Can we back up to punk's openness to kids for a minute, how about all-ages punk events? I've seen kids as young as 3 or 4 at all-ages shows and zine conventions where the atmosphere is fairly healthy.*

Yes, that is entirely correct, it does happen. I am a little biased since my child is still very young. My experience has been that when she goes to shows, it hurts her ears and she can't be there. I still think that the fundamental problem is still there, the punk scene is not set up for kids. It is set up for all of us, and once in a while children can be accommodated. When we used to organize events at this activist community space, one of our goals was to always have someone on staff that could take care of children. Our main purpose for this was so mothers of young children could not be excluded from our events and would be able to participate fully. However, in punk, this issue is never thought of. Why should it be really? Most people could care less if there are children at shows or not. They are there to see a show, not to build community, and not to recruit people into punk or to teach people about punk. I guess it comes down to what each person's own interpretation of what punk really is. To me punk has always felt like being involved in something other than the "live, buy, consume, die" mode of life. It is about building friendships and taking us away from the elements of our society that keep us trapped in front of the fucking TV, isolated from other people. When I first got into punk, that is what it was about for me. That is what it still means to me. For most people it is something different. Integrating all aspects of our life into punk would be one step away from isolation.

*Maybe it's time to start a punk parent band or a punk parent support group. I guess as I get older, I consider becoming a parent some day. I know more of my peers are having children and I envision more acceptance and openness towards children in the punk community. Like punk BBQs with a bunch of kids running around and playing games and kids coming maybe to matinee all-ages shows. Is this realistic?*

Sure, much more so than when I first started going to shows. I also have seen kids (in punk) pop up in the coolest places. Did you ever know that one band that was friends with MDC who had like a 10 year old singing for the band? That was pretty cool.

*Do you worry about when Sienna rebels and starts making decisions you don't like or trust?*

Nope. Well... my eternal fear is that she will become a Neo-nazi skin head and go live in bumfuck Idaho to become a breeder for the white race. But when you see her cute little naked butt running around the house, you just can't see that happening in the future. Seriously though, I think that if I have respect and love for her in every way I can, I will need to also respect those decisions and maybe she can teach me a thing or two. I have to keep an open mind.

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your child? (Like home schooling? Talking more frankly about sex, politics, etc. at a younger age? Avoiding religion? Any other non-traditional ways of raising children?)*

As Sienna is only 2 1/2, we haven't had to have a direct dealing with school and relationships yet. However, we strongly believe in an individual's right to choose, and this extends to any person at any age. For the most part, we want to home school, have no organized religion, and we trust her decisions when it comes to sex, relationships, and actions. (So far.) We have made some "alternative" choices so far in our life. Our first was one of birth. Ailee has studied and practiced midwifery and firmly believed in natural childbirth. Sienna was born in our living room with 2 midwives to watch over the birth and attend Ailee's needs. Sienna was born in a state where her birth at home was an illegal one, yet was the perfect and safest situation for bringing this life into the world. We also have made choices on physical and mental health, like our choice of eating a diet based on plant life. The vegan/vegetarian diet probably received the most resistance from family and friends. It was the same old argument on health, vitamins, calcium and protein. None of which we feel deserved the least amount of worry, however we still feel a big amount of resistance to this that makes it hard. The choice not to vaccinate has met the most aggressive resistance, some from family and friends, but very much from the medical community. One day, when Sienna was 6 months old, she was running a high fever. Being the worried new parents as we were, we took her to the family doctor to make sure everything was all right. They proceeded in routinely asking us questions that would give them more information, like if she was pulling on her ears, or having a hard time swallowing... Just routine stuff. However, when they found out that we choose not to vaccinate Sienna, the nurse got very worried and upset and almost demanded that we give Sienna a vaccination, then the doctor was called in to calmly discuss this "dire" situation. We were no longer talking about her fever but our choices in not immunizing our child. After a painful blood test they ended up demanding that we never return to that doctors office again, using all the authority they could have to make us choose to vaccinate. Needless to say, there was nothing abnormal about a baby having the flu. There is an incredible deference associated with peoples choices they make for their children, as we discovered with making educated choices in our daughter's. From circumcision to diet, major facets of our society demand conformity for children, yet yields for adults. Fuck 'em! Their education comes from books tainted by greed and profit, ours comes out of love. The health "professionals" don't really know shit about good health.

*Wow, no vaccinations at all? Do you think the health risks of getting vaccinations outweigh the risks of getting the diseases most kids are commonly vaccinated for?*

Yes definitely, no questions about it. Vaccinations are a very new technology and not very refined. There are many reasons not to get vac-



nations and I feel that they outweigh the alternative. I can list about 10 good books on the subject, but I won't.

*Are you and Ailee married or living together? If you don't have a 2 parent married family, what problems does this present? (And/or what benefits?)*

We are 2 co-parents that are both considered "single." We are both able to have relationships with other people. Our transition from being a couple into individuals was not/ is not without difficulty, but it is what we want to do for Sienna's life and each others friendship.

*Do you have any advice to new punk parents, potential punk parents, or DIY tips with parenting?*

Trust your instincts when it comes to your child. You know what is best for your child, it is just a matter of doing it. Do It Yourself: Educate and liberate your own power to be parents. No day care will ever be a better learning environment than parents whom love their children.

*If you are active in the punk community, is it hard to be active in punk with a kid?*

I have a record label (Spiral) and I find that there is no difficulty at all doing what I am supposed to do with a kid, just more time constraints on projects. Sometimes she might throw the records around or something, but kids love watching and trying to do the every day tasks that the parents do. I try to teach her how to staple booklets or stuff records and it is usually takes 5 times longer. Probably when she gets a little older she can really help me out.

*Do you have anything else to say or add about parenting?*

Other punk parents and parents with common interests should get their kids together. It would also be great to have punk picnics and shows with other punks with kids this summer. (But what parent has time to organize it?)

\*\*\*

My name is Elizabeth and my son's name is Ian. He's 6 years old and in the 1st grade. I'm 26. We live in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. The picture is of Ian and his friend Emily playing in my closet. I added the lettering for a shirt I'm making.

*Why did you have a kid?*

Well, it wasn't exactly planned. Condoms break, etc. I suppose the question is really why did I keep him. It was pure selfishness on my part. I was a mess... drinking, drugs, no job and just back from a couple of months living in a tent. My periods were really irregular then, so I didn't even know 'til I was 3 months along already. I couldn't stand the thought of an abortion at that point and I kept him out of pure selfish want. Once I saw the ultrasound and heard that little heart-beat I was hooked.

*What are the cool things about being a parent?*

Oh god, there are too many to list. It (becoming a parent) literally saved my life. It forced me to be a better person if not for myself, then for Ian. It gives you back some of the joy that you had in life as a little kid to see your child finding those same joys in the mundane.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present?*

My son is in 1st grade and when I have to go to the school for parent's night or whatever the other moms stare, then politely ignore me. The

school secretary was downright rude to the point that I wrote her boss a letter about how she needed customer service training. She's nice as pie now. When they have school skate night once a month at the local skating rink, I'm the only mom who straps on skates and goes out on the floor with the kids, the others all huddle together by the snack bar talking about their new minivans. They're missing out on so much. I

do go to a lot less shows. Especially in winter. In the summer I take Ian with me to shows and we play outside or run around the back reaches of the club. I don't often travel to go to a show anymore. Before, it was nothing for me to take a three day trip to see a band. I no longer have the freedom to pack a backpack and hitchhike somewhere. I have to maintain a reasonably stable job, insurance, etc. so that means little or no travel. Sometimes I still get the urge, but now it's confined to mini-vacations while my son is visiting his Dad in Mississippi, and short trips by car to see friends. I miss that freedom more than anything else.

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your child? (Like home schooling? Talking more frankly about sex, politics, etc. at a younger age? Avoiding religion? And any other non-traditional ways of raising children).*

I talk more frankly about everything with Ian than my parents did with me. I figure if he's old enough to ask the question, he's old enough to know the answer. I wasn't raised with a religion. My Dad is agnostic and Mom claims to be Baptist, but I've never seen her go to

church. Ian's grandparents take him to some Christian church and he knows bible stories, but he also knows the Pagan wheel of the year and we do something for each holiday. In May for Beltane we make baskets of flowers and leave them on the neighbor's doors, knock and run away, he likes that. It's not exactly traditional either way, and I'm not pushing anything on him. If he grows up and wants to go to any church, I'll not stop him. I think he should be able to choose that for himself.

*Are you a single parent?*

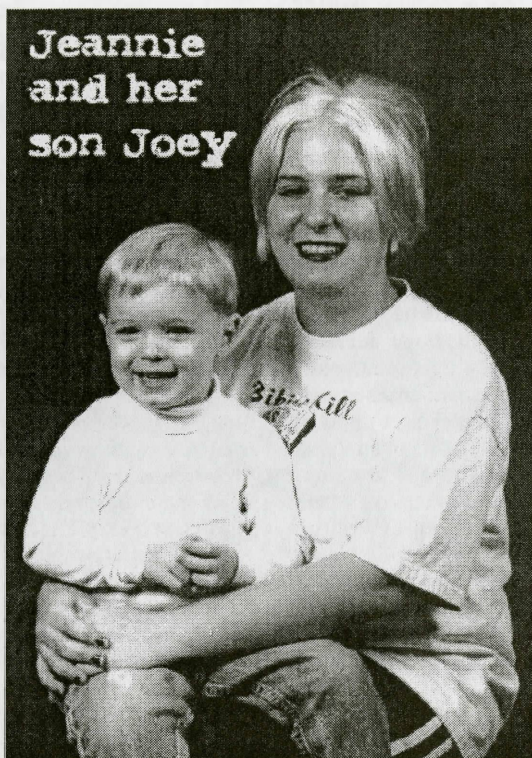
Yes, I'm a single parent. My boyfriend has a 3-year-old girl, so we try and help each other out. It is much easier if you have another person there to pick up the slack when you're at the end of your rope.

*Do you have any advice to new punk parents, potential punk parents, or DIY tips with parenting?*

DON'T DO IT! Hee hee... seriously though, don't give up. Trust yourself, but take advice from other people who've been through it before you. Always have back-up baby wipes and diapers handy. Realize that for the next 18 or so years, you come second. Telling your kid why he can't do something is way better than just telling him no and smacking his ass. (Smack his ass when he needs it though... no matter what you may think before you have a kid, there will be those rare times when that will be all that gets his attention.) READ to your kid. Read him zines, read him books, read the newspaper. Let him see you reading. Let him see you being active in the community. Teach him that he CAN make a difference.

*If you are active in the punk community doing a band, label, distro, zine, shows, etc., what do you do? Is it hard to be active in punk with a kid?*

I do a zine called "Canned Under Authority". I'm working on the second issue right now. I don't think it would be any harder to do this, be in a band, etc. than it would be to find time to do "normal" things like go to the gym, play golf, or any of those sorts of things. If you love doing something, you find the time and the babysitter, or you do





what I do and involve your kid. Ian loves stapling things and drawing in the margins.

\*\*\*

My name is Jeannie, I'm 21 and I live in Cincinnati, OH. I have one son named Joey, he is 3. As a useless punk rock anecdote, he was born the same night as the first time Bad Religion played in Cincinnati in about 10 years. Joey was born right around the same time as Bad Religion took the stage.

*Why did you decide to become a parent?*

I didn't plan on having children, not at 18 anyway. I got pregnant my senior year of high school, which turned into a major nightmare. I had wanted to wait until I finished at least a couple years of college, but that didn't happen.

*What are the good/cool things about being a parent?*

I think the best thing about being a parent is that I have a beautiful child who's independent, smart, funny and creative. I love spoiling him with clothes, books and toys. I suppose it's living vicariously through my kid but it's still fun as hell. I also have an excuse to watch "Bill Nye the Science Guy" now, other than me thinking he's rad. I couldn't even begin to list all the reasons why I love being a mother.

*What difficulties do having kids and being into punk present?*

Luckily, my day care provider is very accepting of both me and my son. I do worry when my son will have to enter school though, not just worrying about the other parents and teachers, but how the other kids will treat my son because his mom is "different". Some of my friends stopped hanging out with me because I couldn't do all the things we used to do like leave town for a couple of days on a whim. I have met a lot of punks who have children as well and I would rather be with them than those who don't like hanging out with me and my son anymore. I also get "parenting lessons" from people who don't know me because they assume that I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I'm not sure if it's because I'm young or because I'm a punk, it may be both. For example, one day I was driving to school and my car broke down and my son was with me. It was a windy day and I waited with my son out in a parking lot for the tow truck to get there (the business wouldn't let us wait inside). My son kept pulling his hood off every time I put it up. An older woman approached me and chastised me for not putting my son's hood up on such a windy day. This type of thing happens all the time. I don't think having a child conflicted with any of my morals or ethics. If nothing else, it made them stronger, because I had someone that needed a foundation to grow on. I don't go to all the punk shows anymore, just the big ones, but I don't really mind because I can spend the money I save on my son. We go to some punk shows together, mostly local shows, but when the Suicide Machines came with Avail, my son asked if he could go with me (he loves SM) so we contacted SM's manager and she gave us passes so we could watch the show from the stage. He had a blast and everyone adored him and gave him lots of candy and food. He loves punk music, especially Bikini Kill and the Misfits. He picks up his guitar and dances on the furniture trying to sing the words.

*Do you practice or attempt alternative styles of raising your children?*

I had thought about home schooling my son, but I am becoming a teacher myself and I won't be able to home school him. I do teach him about racism and sexism (on a level he can understand, such as girls can do anything boys can and vice versa) and about political issues such as the war in Kosovo and Mumia Abu-Jamal. His favorite thing to do is run around chanting "Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're going to free Mumia Abu-Jamal". I want my son to be vegetarian like I am, and at home we eat no meat products, but both of my parents are completely against it and give him meat. We avoid any sort of religion, just like my parents did with me. At my stepfather's funeral, the preacher (or whatever he was) said Jesus Christ and my son leaned over to me and said, "That man said a bad word."

*Are you a single or do you have a partner?*

I am a single parent. My son's father thinks that smoking pot and skateboarding all day are more important than raising a son. I used to be angry about it, but I feel that it's the best thing for my son. I don't want him growing up in an environment like that. It's difficult being a single parent, being responsible for my son 100% of the time. I rarely get a chance to do anything besides go to school without my son with me. I have to fulfill both roles as mother and father (whatever that means) and although it's difficult now, I think my son will benefit from it in the long run. I get a lot of sympathy and encouragement from people who find out that I'm a single parent, especially those who know my son's father. I could do without the sympathy because I am doing just fine, but the encouragement helps a lot. Sometimes I get frustrated because there are things I can't do anymore, but my friends step in and offer their help. I can't be as active as I would like to be in groups like Food Not Bombs, for fear of being arrested. I also find dating difficult as a single parent - being able to find a babysitter, finding someone who is willing to accept the fact that I have a child, someone who will eventually become a part of my son's life.

*Do you have any advice for new or potential parents?*

I wish I had advice for punk parents, but the only thing I can think of is just to encourage in the face of insecurity. Just because you're a punk doesn't mean that you can't be or aren't a good parent. If anything, I feel that punks make the best parents. They care more about political and social issues, are more involved with their communities (even if it's just the punk community), reject society's standards of what's real and true, and encourage independence by doing it themselves.

*If you are active in the punk community, what do you do and is it hard to be active in punk with a kid?*

I write a zine and run a small clothing/bootleg/zine distro. I'm also in a band (at least trying to get one together). My son helps me with my zine, either by picking out pictures he likes to be in it, listening to what I've written, getting supplies for me, helping with silkscreening, singing with me if and when we have band practice, etc. He makes writing my zine and doing stuff for the distro a lot more fun for me. He also goes to Food Not Bombs, Wimmin's Health Collective and Riot Grrrl meetings with me and does his own thing while we talk. I don't think he makes it harder to be involved with activities, and I hope that when he gets older he'll still want to attend meetings, protests, shows, etc. with me.

*Do you have anything else you want to say?*

I just wanted to say that I'm really stoked to even answer these questions. It's so rad that you are interested in focusing on punk parents.

\*\*\*

*These interviews have been in no means an endorsement of parenthood. As you can tell from all of the people I talked to, while there have been many real benefits to the parent's lives by having children, they also have sacrificed a lot in their choice to raise kids. We at 10 Things totally advocate birth control and hope all our readers are smart enough to avoid accidental pregnancies and sometimes life threatening venereal diseases by practicing safe sex. Becoming a parent is a big decision, not one to take lightly, and we highly advise you do not even consider it until you are out of your teens and are with a partner who will share both the financial and parenting duties. There is a lot more to raising a child than we have touched on here, we just hoped to shed some light and insight into the world of some of your peers that do have children. Unfortunately the lives of punk parents are touched upon so rarely in our zines and music, we hope to change this just a little. There are not a lot of punk oriented resources out there for parents, which is unfortunate, since there are quite a few punk rock parents. If you have internet access, Bill and a few other punk parents have a list-serve to help punk parents get connected and to share stories and tips. To subscribe go to [www.onelist.com/viewarchive.cgi?listname=PUNK-PARENTS](http://www.onelist.com/viewarchive.cgi?listname=PUNK-PARENTS). If there are other punk parents out there, we would love to hear from you, help you get in touch with others in similar situations, and share your letters with our readers next issue. Write us here at 10 Things.*



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# Gettin' Hitched - Eloping Style!

## DIY Marriage

by Jessica Mills  
Yard Wide Yarns  
PO Box 12839  
Gainesville FL 32604

I didn't wake up nervous; I was just excited.  
As soon as his mom left for work, we called the court house.  
The result is this handy guide for a DIY marriage in four easy phone calls.

**CALL #1** This call was to the Justice of Peace whose clerk told me the first thing I needed was a marriage license and second, an appointment with the Justice if we wanted him to marry us.

**CALL #2** I called the Marriage License office. I was asked two questions: Have you ever been married before? Are you both over 18 years old?

I answered no and yes respectively, the correct answers, so the woman proceeded to tell me that I needed four things before she could issue us a license:

1. A pre-marital blood test for rubella.
2. A driver's license.
3. \$30.25 cash.
4. Our parents' full names, including maiden names and the states in which they were born.

The woman said that once I got to her office with those four things, the process would only take 15-20 minutes and that the license would be good from the moment they issued it, up to six months.

We were in luck with the driver's license, cash and knowing our parents names. But the first thing on the list, the blood test, was going to take a few days. Ugh. So much for our exercise in spontaneity.

**CALL #3** I called the medical lab place and they said I could come on down with \$14 and have my blood certificate tomorrow by 3pm.

**CALL #4** Another call to the Justice of Peace. Since we'd have the blood certificate by 3 tomorrow, and it only takes 15-20 minutes to then get the Marriage License, I made an appointment with the Justice of Peace to marry us at 4:30.

They said to bring the Marriage License and two witnesses with us. Great, we don't know anyone in this town.

With information gathered and appointments made, we sprang to action. I flipped the phone book open to the town map so we could find our way to the medical lab at 300 N. Wilson. With a few mental map notes and boots laced, we began our tromp across town.

Along the way, we spotted a show flyer for THE DONNER PARTY. Wow! I got so excited. My band had just played with them back in Gainesville a few weeks prior. This flyer was for a show a few days away. If only we could get them into town early, they could be our witnesses at 4:30 tomorrow. We decide that the club listed on the flyer, Zebra, will be our hunting ground tonight for witnesses.

At the medical lab, it was going to be a while, so Earnest left to gather food for lunch. While I waited for my name to be called, I read a *National Geographic* article, BRIDES OF THE SAHARA. In the Sahara, where marrying cousins is a norm, camels bring family

members to the bride's town for the seven day ceremony. Part of their traditional customs involve attendants elaborately dressing the bride's hair and henna wrapping the groom's feet and hands. For the first full year of their marriage, the groom lives with the bride at her parents' house.

Not exactly what we're doing, but I take the marriage vibe as a sign none the less.

My name finally called, I skirt around the corner and am sat down in a narrow nook behind a door. The chair is wide, steel and throne-like with super wide arm rests. Supposed to be comforting, but it's coldness was intimidating and sterile.

I've been pricked for a blood sample before; I've even donated a pint here and there, so I wasn't nervous at all. Maybe I was just a little anxious to tell a stranger my eloping plans because when that lady started probing that needle around in my forearm crease, three strikes and I was out.

I came-to quickly. Another lady had rushed over and stuck my vein good on her first try. I stopped bleeding, though, with the tube only half full. I flexed and flexed my forearm, but no more blood would flow. They told me I could stop trying to bleed more because they were confident they had drawn enough for the test. I hoped I wouldn't have a big bruise there tomorrow on my big day.

I paid my \$14 and walked back across town.

As I got back to the house, I ripped the bandage off my arm so no one there would be suspect to our plans. What could I have said to the question, "What happened there?" A reply of, "Oh,

I just felt like donating blood today," would have been too transparent. I'd be lucky if his mom didn't notice the needle mark, let alone the emerging bruise. I went for long sleeves.

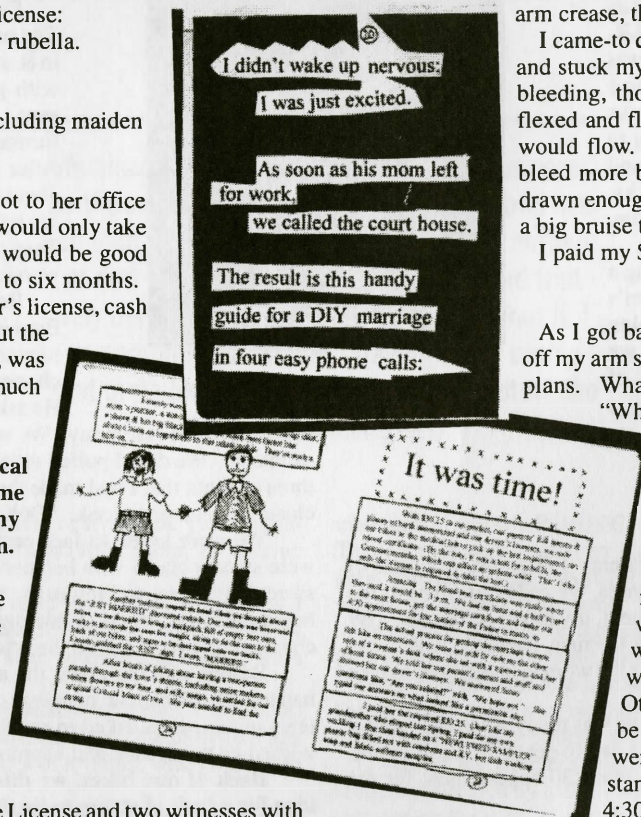
Later, our search for two witnesses was on. The first place we went was to the food co-op where his mom works as the vegan baker. We knew she wouldn't be there. Our coast was clear. Others in the deli area, we thought, would be safe keepers of our search, and they were, but none could step to the witness stand because they had to either work at 4:30 tomorrow, or already had prior commitments.

We inquired about the club, Zebra, that we saw the show flyer for and decided it wouldn't hold any luck for us. Someone told us the Donner Party on the flyer is not the Donner Party I thought it was. This Donner Party was a local hippie space jam band. No thanks. Didn't this town have any punks?

We called the witness search off and instead found a game room on the local campus. Rounds of pinball, Dig Dug and a game of bowling pacified us.

Traditional bells rang in my head later that night when we laid down together for sleep. We weren't supposed to be together the night before our wedding day. And we weren't supposed to see each other at all tomorrow before the actual "ceremony".

Since we weren't tying our knots traditionally, I hoped this un-





avoidable situation wouldn't hang dark clouds over our giddy heads. Snuggle tight.

\*

Our big day greeted me with a nervous stomach. Stress was definitely gripping our conversation. We both knew the score, so our collective tweekiness ended up being simple, silly giggles.

My obsessive-compulsiveness kicked in and what we would wear became an issue. Since the not seeing each other before the ceremony was blown, I went for the something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue tradition. Old = my motorcycle boots given to me by my dad. New = a Venetian glass bead necklace my mom had just given to me. Borrowed = a white T-shirt from Ernesto's mom's closet. Blue = work shorts dumpstered a few months ago back home. Add my bullet belt, hair brushing, a little brown mascara and some purple lipstick & I was a blushing bride-to-be.

Earnest went for some borrowed shorts from his mom's partner, a not-too-wrinkled dumpstered button-up shirt, a shave & his big black boots. The black boot factor has always been an ingredient in this relationship. They're such a turn on.....

Another tradition reared its head when we thought about the "JUST MARRIED" decorated vehicle. Our vehicle was borrowed bikes, so we thought to bring a backpack full of empty beer cans, rocks to go inside the cans for weight, string to tie the cans to the back of our bikes, and signs to be duct taped onto our backs. Earnest grabbed the "JUST" sign. I wore, "MARRIED."

After hours of joking about having a two-person parade through the town's streets, including noise makers, stolen flowers in my hair, and silly songs, we settled for our original Critical Mass of two. We just needed to find the string.

\*

It was time!

\*

With \$30.25 in my pocket, our parents' full names & places of birth memorized and our driver's licenses, we rode our bikes to the medical lab to pick up the last requirement, my blood certificate. (By the way, it was a test for rubella, the German measles, which can effect an unborn child. That's why only the woman is required to take the test.)

Amazing. The blood test certificate was ready when they said it would be. 3 p.m. We had an hour and a half to get to the court house, get the marriage certificate and make our 4:30 appointment for the Justice of the Peace to marry us.

The actual process for getting the marriage license felt like an interview. We were sat side by side on the other side of a woman's desk where she sat with a typewriter and her official forms. We told her our parent's names and stuff and showed her our driver's licenses.

We answered funny questions like, "Are you related?" with, "We hope not." She typed our answers on what looked like a permission slip.

I paid her the required \$30.25. (Just like my grandmother who eloped last Spring, I paid for my own wedding.) She then handed us a "NEWLYWED SAMPLER" plastic filled not with condoms and KY, but dish washing soap and fabric softener samples. She told us we could make our way downstairs and wait for our certificate to be delivered to the Justice's office.

Of course the wait seemed like forever. We switched from chairs to a bench, from hallway to hallway, made a few visits to the bathroom to kill time and laid all over each other giggling. I was goin' outta my mind.

Oh shit! We didn't have witnesses. We popped back into reality and bolted to the counter behind which the Justice's secretaries worked. We explained sweetly that we knew no one in this town and had no luck recruiting strangers. They agreed to stand up and witness our marriage.

One of them showed us to our very own private court room and told us Judge Smith would be in to marry us as soon as he finished wrapping up a case upstairs. We impatiently, rearranging the court room's furniture and playing with the flags. Bouncing off the walls.

FINALLY!!! Judge Smith emerged. The two secretary-witnesses followed him in & stood to the side. He was an older man with gentle looking hands and soft blue eyes. He affirmed that we could have the furniture placed here & there as we wished. After all, it was our wedding. He told us about his wonderful marriage to a wonderful woman for over 40 wonderful years. They probably had wonderful children and wonderful, wonderful grandchildren.

Before the ceremony began, he told Earnest that it was obvious why he wanted to marry me, but gave me three chances to change my mind. I told him I was sure. He asked if we were opposed to God being

included in the ceremony. We weren't. He asked if we had rings to exchange. We did. I pulled them from my pocket proudly & told the three of them that I had made them myself. Impressed, they stepped closer to get a good look. "Ooh, Aah."

We were asked to face each other and join hands. Our hands were sweaty clams with bad nerves in the air conditioning. Short & sweet, with tears welling in my eyes, hanging on to every word I've heard before at others' weddings, we said "I do" to each other, exchanged rings and kissed the bride.

Before walking down the aisle out of the court room, we five had to sigh the official marriage certificate. The witnesses, with little tears in their eyes asked to see the rings again, shook our hands and wished us much luck and happiness.

Back at our bikes, we ditched the cans with rocks in them idea for a lack of string to tie them onto our bikes with. We even ditched the "JUST" & "MARRIED" signs on our backs idea in favor of a slow, calm hand-in-hand bike ride down the roads' center lane with the sun bouncing off the mountains and reflecting off our smiles.





# Here Be Panthers!:

## Mountain Lions in the Eastern and Central United States (and Arkansas in particular)

by Theo Witsell  
Here Be Dragons  
ed. Mike Q Roth and Eric Meisberger  
PO Box 8131  
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Ask someone "official" about mountain lions in the eastern United States and you'll likely be told that there aren't any outside of southern Florida. Ask me and I'll tell you that I'm one of a handful of folks that are trying hard to prove the "officials" wrong.

The official story goes something like this: By the early 1900s, mountain lions of the Eastern Cougar (*Felis concolor cougar*) and Florida Panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) subspecies\* were hunted to extinction in all the states east of the Mississippi River with the sole exception of Florida (where a small population of the critically endangered Florida Panther subspecies, is still hanging on). Remnant populations are said to have persisted into the mid 1970s in the more remote, heavily-forested areas of Arkansas, Missouri, and Louisiana, but these too, it is claimed, have long since been completely wiped out.

Like most "official" things, however, this story is full of holes. Start talking to people who live in rural areas of the east (especially heavily forested and/or rugged areas) and you're likely to get a different story. In rural Arkansas, it seems that almost everyone has a story of seeing a panther, hearing one scream, or finding some evidence of mountain lion predation on deer or livestock. These sightings and signs didn't just stop in the mid 1900s either, or start up again recently for that matter.

The files of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission reveal a steady stream of reports over the past 50 years, many of them by trained biologists and employees of state wildlife and conservation agencies.

Some sightings were even accompanied by tracks, scat (feces) or other hard evidence. Despite all this, however, the party line has remained that "there is no hard evidence of a viable, wild population of mountain lions in Arkansas".

My fascination with mountain lions began a long time ago. I grew up reading about them in nature books and field guides about how they had roamed throughout Arkansas a hundred and fifty years ago until they were hunted to extinction in the early 1900s by settlers, livestock ranchers, and other humans. Their former abundance is hinted at by the great number of "panther creeks", "wildcat hollows", and "panther hills" that stare up at you from topographic maps of the state.

Early settlers' accounts described "a panther up every holler" and pioneer diaries are full of accounts of people killing panthers and stories of their terrifying vocalizations, reminiscent of a woman screaming.

I've been convinced that there are mountain lions in Arkansas for several years - ever since a biologist friend of mine told me a story of a deer-hunting trip with his father in the Felsenthal Wildlife Refuge in southern Arkansas. They were in their camp one night when they heard a panther scream repeatedly. They ran to investigate - in

hopes of catching a glimpse of the illusive cat. They got to the area where they thought the screams were coming from but saw no signs of the cat itself. Just as they were about to give up their search and head back to camp, one member of their party pointed up into a tree. "Look!" In the tree, about twenty feet up, was the carcass of a full-grown deer, freshly killed and half-consumed.

This tale got me quite excited and I began reading all I could about mountain lions - I requested files from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and filled several notebooks with xeroxed articles from scientific journals. It

became (as my girlfriend puts it) an "obsession". The more I uncovered, the more convinced I became that the panthers had somehow persisted. There was no gap in the sighting reports that would indicate that they had been wiped out and reintroduced. Then, on New Year's Eve, 1998 my obsession took on a whole new meaning.

None other than Here Be Dragons' own Mike Q, Deanna, and Chris and Martha Tracey had driven down to Arkansas to visit over New Year's and we decided to spend the day hiking up Rattlesnake Ridge - a 920 foot-tall

mountain in western Pulaski County (a half mile from my back door). This area, though owned by a timber company that is actively logging, still has a largely wilderness-like quality to it. There are no people, no permanent settlements, few roads, and no recreational development (such as trails) on thousands of acres bordering Lake Maumelle (one of the lakes supplying Little Rock's drinking water). The terrain is quite rugged with lots of craggy rock outcrops, bluffs, and overhangs. There is an (over)abundance of deer and plenty of other wildlife as well (coyote, bobcat, black bear, fox, raccoon, etc.).

So, as we were descending the summit - on a steep rock outcropping bounded by a cliff - we discovered a large scat (feces) lying exposed on the rock. It was about 13 inches long and over an inch in diameter. It consisted almost entirely of deer hair and bone fragments and had that very distinctive, twisted cat-shit look about it. I immediately got excited - having never seen a scat quite like this (yes, I take notice of stuff like that - I'm a biologist!). I had read everything I could get my hands on regarding mountain lions and this seemed to fit the descriptions of panther scat. Furthermore, I didn't see how anything could have gotten up onto that steep rock ledge except a large cat capable of leaping great distances. We stopped for lunch and I hurriedly ate my sandwich to free up a large tupperware container and carried the scat home to the freezer (much to my roommate's disgust).

A week later I took the scat in to Dr. Gary Heidt, mammologist at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. I told him I had something to show him and produced the scat as his eyes got big and he asked "where'd you get this?". He verified it as the real thing and deposited it into the permanent collection at the university. He told



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me that it was the third panther scat that he had ever seen and that the other two were given to him in the three months previous.

Two months later I was doing some geologic mapping on Buzard Mountain, a few miles from the community of Ferndale (about seven miles south of the Rattlesnake Ridge site). I was walking an old logging road and keeping my eyes on the ground looking at the rocks.

There, in the middle of the road was another scat, slightly shorter and slightly fatter, but otherwise similar to the first. I searched the area for tracks but it was near the top of the mountain and there was nothing but rocks in the old road. I walked about a half mile down the mountain to a long flat place where the road runs along a power line right-of-way. By this point I was checking every wet spot for panther tracks and could hardly believe it when I saw the first print. It was huge! Four and half inches wide and four inches long! The print looked to be about a week old (the same as the scat). I found about four prints that afternoon and, with the help of my parents and girlfriend, eleven more the next day when I returned with plaster of paris to make casts. The front footprints were slightly larger than the rear prints and the stride was 22 inches. The prints themselves are textbook quality.

This find, as near as I could tell at the time, represented the first conclusive, hard evidence of a panther in Arkansas since 1975 when a 116 pound young male was killed near the town of New Blaine in Logan County (I later discovered several examples of hard evidence in the Game and Fish Commission files that were never made public).

My pal Tom Frothingham found the remains of a deer on his farm that had been killed in a field, dragged over a fence, and partially consumed in a dense thicket along a stream. While we aren't positive this was a panther kill, the dragging and stashing of the carcass are characteristic signs. Plus, this was only about a mile from the New Year's scat site.

Once word got out that I had bona fide tracks and that Tom had found a deer kill, more people became interested and Tom and I began our "careers" as amateur mountain lion trackers. We spent a lot of time searching the literature and as much as we could talking to people in the area and walking the logging roads of west Pulaski County looking for sign. We turned up a bunch of false alarms and went on several "wild panther chases" but we also found a dozen scats, including one with an entire deer foot in it and another composed entirely of what looks to be poodle hair!

In April I presented a paper and slide show of our evidence at the Arkansas Academy of Sciences Meeting to a packed house. Several people came up to me afterward with more information and a team of students at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock volunteered their help to continue the research.

Since April, the project has taken me around the state, deep into the files of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and into a real political tangle in the Ozark National Forest, where environmental activists are planning to sue the forest service to stop a timber sale that would cut 70 acres of old growth where alleged "panther scratches" can be seen up several tree trunks (these could be bear scratches too). It's a weird situation because there are no real experts on mountain lions in Arkansas. Tom and I, while we are admittedly amateurs, know more about panthers than many of the "qualified professionals" around here because we are the ones researching and doing the field work. So, while we may be able to out-panther a lot of the "officials", what we say carries no weight in court because we aren't "qualified". It's bullshit.

Right now the bulk of the field work is being conducted on and around a farm in Logan County, just south of the Arkansas River in a place that has had more reported sightings than any other in the state (including sightings of a mother with kittens). It is an area where, as the locals put it, "them woods is thick" which means that it is very densely forested.

We have a series of scent stations using catnip oil and bobcat urine to lure cats into a six feet by six feet bed of powdered lime. The hope here is to capture good footprints. We are also using motion-

triggered cameras that snap a picture of anything that moves in front of them and setting up traps designed to snag hair off the cats for DNA analysis. One station is set up on the property where the panther was killed in 1975 (mentioned above).

The DNA analysis is probably the most important aspect of our research in terms of possible conservation implications. It could reveal what subspecies of mountain lion we have in Arkansas. If it is indeed the Florida Panther subspecies, the shit will hit the proverbial fan and the melee that will follow is likely to make the conflict over the spotted owl in the pacific northwest seem tame. On the other hand, it may reveal that we have an escaped pet from California or South America and that might have no significant conservation implications (though in my book it should because they are all the same species and they all fill the same ecological function). We may also (and this is probably the most likely scenario in my opinion) have something in between. I mean, after all, there is no guarantee that it was the Florida Panther subspecies that was native to Arkansas. These subspecies were based on minute variations in physical characters (this was long before DNA analysis technologies) and ranges for the various subspecies were often arbitrarily drawn at state boundaries.

Mountain lions are controversial animals. First of all, they are big. Adult males have been killed measuring up to nine and a half feet long (tip of nose to tip of tail) and weighing up to 270 pounds. They are more than capable of killing an adult human. They possess incredible strength and have been known to drag a 600 pound cow 600 feet up the side of a mountain. Their reintroduction, and even their presence, is an emotionally charged subject. Though they primarily eat deer, they will kill domestic livestock. I recently photographed a calf that had been sliced (in one graceful swoop) from the back of its neck to its shoulder - the long way around! A hunk of flesh was missing the size of a fist. In California, where mountain lions are abundant, humans have been attacked and killed as the suburbs expand into cougar territory.

If the cats that are being seen in the eastern and central U.S. are really the Eastern Puma and Florida Panther subspecies, they are federally endangered species under the controversial-in-its-own-right Endangered Species Act. This act is a powerful legal tool capable of protecting not only the animals and plants that are on the endangered species list, but their habitat as well. Since mountain lions require large areas of mature forest, this could mean substantial changes in land management and timber practices. The presence of these cats could mean the preservation of huge wilderness areas - areas that developers and the timber industry are carving up as you read this. These industries have a lot of influence in Arkansas as in many eastern and southern states. There are those that think this influence has something to do with the official denial of the existence of mountain lions east of the great plains.

Well, stay tuned next issue for a discussion of mountain lion ecology in the eastern and central U.S., reports of evidence from virtually every state east of the plains, and the possible connection between the expanding cougar population and illegal meth labs n plus an update on our research. Also, if you've got a panther story, I want to hear it!!! Please get in touch!

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\* While all mountain lions (also called cougars, pumas, panthers, and catamounts) are actually members of the same species (*Felis concolor*, or "cat of one color"), they are divided into a number of subspecies, based largely on their geographic location. The mountain lions in the east were assigned to two subspecies: the Eastern Cougar (*Felis concolor cougar*) in the north and central east and the Florida Panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) in the southeast. It should be realized, however, that all the above names are referring to the same species of animal n most commonly called the mountain lion.



# Indo-Chic

by Ananya Mukherjee  
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Several months ago, a boy I know—a smart and gracious boy, but one I know pretty damn peripherally—asked me casually what I think of all this new “exotic style.” We were walking down Ave. A on a Sunday, and it was very evident that he was referring to the return of chic Third-world fabrics and chic Third-world fashion to the U.S. hip-scene—there was a profusion of bindi’s and head scarves and cane-rowed hair adorning the white women around us. I could only respond by exploding that, “I fucking hate it,” and then sputtering out some sentences punctuated repeatedly by, “I mean, I don’t know, you know?” I was trying hard not to overwhelm this slight acquaintance with my years-old distress surrounding the topic but was really unwilling to act as if it didn’t bother me or as if it left me opinion-less. I also didn’t want to invoke the coded sentences that are usually most meaningful to me (employing terms like “appropriation” and “cultural colonialism”) but that tend to turn off 85% of the people I know. It’s been a struggle to articulate a response to that question and to my own frustration, but it’s not an easy question... Responding to it comes together, for me, around the issue of the Hindu bindi in American culture—its progression from a point of confusion to a focus of racist hostility to a newly fashionable adornment—more attractive for its atypical placement on white skin.

Let me start by sharing a little from my own humble life. When I was four and living in some mostly white suburbs, my Indian mum sent her Indian daughter (me!) to day-care wearing a bindi—the kind painted on with traditional vermilion powder rather than the now-common sticker ones. At day-care, my “American” “care-giver” rubbed it off my face and made an example of me in front of the other little angels, saying I made up ridiculous stories about so-called customs to get away with wearing something weird on my face.

18 years later, in those same suburbs, I returned to wearing a bindi everyday—a plain, round, red sticker one—for personal, family, and religious reasons. Soon after, in 1996 (just as ethno-chic was surging back into style), I moved to Manhattan and was immediately stunned by everything new—for starters, the amount of racial and ethnic diversity in the city and, unrelatedly, the shocking amount of sexual harassment women sustain on the streets. For example, a man followed me 3 blocks through the garment district one day, shouting, “Hey India! Miss India!” “Miss India” became a common nick-name for me, used exclusively by men I’d never seen before: meant, perhaps, to make me feel like a beauty queen but more effective in making me feel ill. There was other harassment too. A woman squeezed onto a crowded elevator right in front of me and chose me (not any of the many Judeo-Christians surrounding me) to inform that God was dead. I thanked her for the information—Bitch!—and wondered just what ethnically and nationally-specific presumptions made her feel entitled to speak to me. Did she maybe think she was liberating some passive Asian woman? or did she just not think at all? Months later, a man approached me by Washington Square, spit at me, pointed at my forehead, and told me to “go back.” (Tell me exactly what that means, Dick!) I stood there with tears of fury welling in my eyes and planning futile revenge. Since then, I’ve switched to a tiny, unobtrusive black bindi; and if I’m on the subways alone late at night, I don’t wear one at all.

Let me turn now to dip into some other humble history. In 1987, while I was still in junior high in the South, a group of predictably young, mostly white, and angry men formed in New Jersey, not far from the ever-chic New York City, joined by their common anger at the burgeoning Indian and larger Asian populations in Jersey and calling themselves the “Dot-Busters.” This was yet another “American” response to the wearing of the bindi, preceding its adoption as “body-jewellery.” As is usually the case, their hatred was economically grounded, as they felt displaced by this new wave of immigrants, who came with their entire families and slogged away at occupying the

niche of lower-level businesses—gas stations, convenience stores, cheap motels—we’re all familiar with the types and stereotypes. “Little India’s” had started to establish themselves in white-flight areas, and the smells of curry and incense had started to permeate the air in those neighborhoods. Overcome by an unsurprising sense of losing something precious and employing unoriginally misdirected and reprehensible violence, the Dot-Busters engaged in a spree of assaults that left two people dead and one beaten into a coma. In the South, too, my mother and I were repeatedly called “Dot-heads,” but no such groups formed there; there were few Asians where we lived.

Somewhere around 1995, the band No Doubt, with its energetic, effervescent, cute lead—“just-a-girl” Gwen Stefani hit MTV (and North American hearts everywhere) hard. The story was this: the guitarist was this Indian-Californian boy named Tony Kanal and was the love of Gwen’s life for a few years until he dumped her (for being “too clingy”) just before the production of their mega-hit album, breaking her heart. Consequently, every song on the album is written about their break-up and her heart-break. She moved on, eventually, to that guy from Bush; but her sexual/emotional brush with the East remained significant. It was there in all these songs, in the interviews where she discussed her fallen relationship at length, and in the videos where she crooned at Tony (who remained silent throughout). Most visibly, it was there in her fashion—in her ever-present bindi and in the expensive sari’s she wrapped around her waist sarong-style, matched with a little bustier. No one ever talked about Tony being Indian (that would be strange and irrelevant, no?) or discussed the myriad complexities of inter-racial romance (again, a different story) or even articulated which subcontinent her fashion was borrowed from (but, why?)... her bindi and sari fabric were just quirky, “new,” and cute—like Gwen, herself. My much-maligned bindi looked attractive, it seemed, on Gwen’s racially different face; and the implicit message seemed to be that the dark and silent Tony had squandered his chance with this girl who featured fusion-sexy (white skin, American attitude, exotic style) so temptingly well.

Something like a trend started. Designers began cutting up sari’s to make dress pieces and built skirts and strappy dresses. My mother was horrified by the disrespect. Those intricate, “pretty” bindi’s favoured by Gwen and others, manufactured by craft-makers in India for around a Rupee each were boxed attractively and sold in New York for \$5.00 each (Rupees 200). Henna “tattoos,” usually applied to women’s hands and feet around weddings or religious holidays, became popular; and, at a “World Music” (Thank you, Peter Gabriel...) concert in Central Park in 1997, hippie’s all around me sat together and henna’d each other. It was beautiful or something. Sting and Madonna and other stars turned to the ministrations of Hollywood guru Deepak Chopra and attended practices at the Jivamukti yoga center on Lafayette, and, then, Madonna took her spiritual epiphanies even further. She maximised them; she commercialised them.

Madonna’s MTV performance, wearing a silk sari and backed by Indian Odissi dancers, ruffled Indian communities: was it great that this Western divinity was adopting and popularising “Indian” culture? Was it offensive that she was using Hinduism as fashion, dreadfully mispronouncing her way through Sanskrit verses? Her use of henna, of Indian styles and fabrics, and her New Age babble about yoga and “Indian spiritual” serenity filled up air-waves; and, all through this transformation, she undeniably produced some damn good dance pop. All through her career, Madonna’s treated culture as disposable and handy; it’s simultaneously refreshing and insulting. She started off by flouting her own Catholicism and white-Italian roots. When Pepsi pulled its backing of her “Like a Prayer,” it was unclear if they were offended by her burning crosses, her Black Jesus, or her kissing the Black Jesus. Since then, she’s taken her cultural appropriation (I can’t resist the term) to Latin America (where



Catholicism thrives, as well as dark-skinned men) and to Harlem (where Christianity, at least, thrives as well as dark-skinned men) and incorporated popified Latin rhythms and jazz syncopation into some of her songs. In her movie, *Truth and Dare*, she ranted and raved all over issues of gender, race, and sexuality—generally asserting that challenging almost everything was more important than thinking about anything. I do love, indeed, the way she puts the social sanctity of culture and religion in its place, implying that it should all be there primarily for pleasure; but it's interesting which cultures and religions she chooses to play with (NOT ones she considers mainstream); and I hate, hate, hate that she promotes the general U.S. tendency towards just not thinking about anything too deeply. I counter that and simply ask that we all think about everything very deeply.

I know that Indo-chic is a phase for Madonna and for the New York hip-scene—that it's been picked up and will be put down again. Already, a different kind of orientalism is taking over—that of the vague "Far East"—and, maybe soon, that will shift on to some other Third-world fascination. Or, perhaps, the Third World will stop being fashionable for a time, again; it is seldom fashionable, though, in the eyes of either Third-worlders or First-worlders, until it is first approved by and metamorphised by people in the West. I hated, when I was small and in the South, the way my Indianness and Hinduism and darkness made me exotic and weird and ridiculed; and I hate the idea of using all that exoticism now to make myself interesting and alluring. I'm just a girl too, Gwen Stefani, and I want my cultural, reli-

gious, and social forms and choices to be normalised and respected. So, I do fucking hate that all these intricate bindi's on non-Indian foreheads (and shoulders and necks and cheeks) around me look so interesting and delicate to people while my plain, red one on my plain brown forehead between my plain brown eyes marks me as unusual, alien, and problematic. But, I don't know... you know? To what extent is imitation a compliment? and to what extent is imitation (mis)appropriation?

I'll tell you—I think of the whole issue of ethno-chic in terms of the following concepts: appropriation; cultural/racial supremacy; displacement; sustainable economies on local and global levels; naivete; colonialism; and pluralism—and I try to have a complicated anti-racist and anti-poverty, feminist response to the whole matter. I do think that learning about and sharing in multiple cultures can be a good thing but—please—neither culture nor fashion is ever meaningless. Slapping someone else's cultural, religious, or sexual artifact on your body in the name of diversity does not comprise progressive action; nor is it automatically the wrong thing to do. I don't believe in elevating or reducing anything to pure art or in the social innocence of art, so I think it's important to pose specific questions to ourselves when we're borrowing or changing or leaving behind cultural forms. I go through this process every morning as I lean into my mirror and decide on the bindi, going through each of the above concepts in my mind. It's a difficult way to live my life, but it's the only way I can try and be an honest, social human being. And being social, after all, is—in my opinion—the best part of being human.

## Untitled

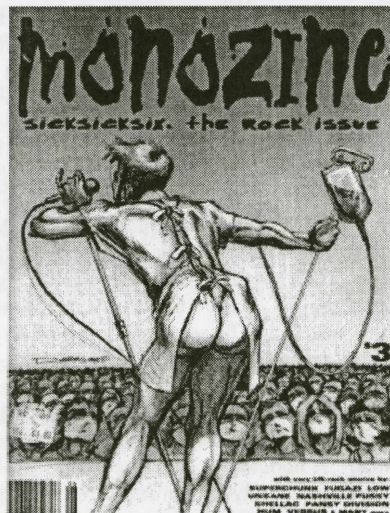
by Peter Gordon of Poem Rocket  
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I'll tell you what happened to me when I was 12. Um, it's kind of disgusting. Peter Gordon from White Plains, NY this small town north of NYC. When I was 12 I went to Costa Rica with my family and we were there for a month, it was like a summer thing, my parents were both teachers, blah blah blah...I was not a particularly skinny or fat kid but I started losing a lot of weight and I was hungry all the time and I was eating, eating, eating. They discovered I had a tapeworm, which was growing. But unfortunately we couldn't leave and I couldn't be treated in the states because it's like quarantine or something. So, they had to treat me there.

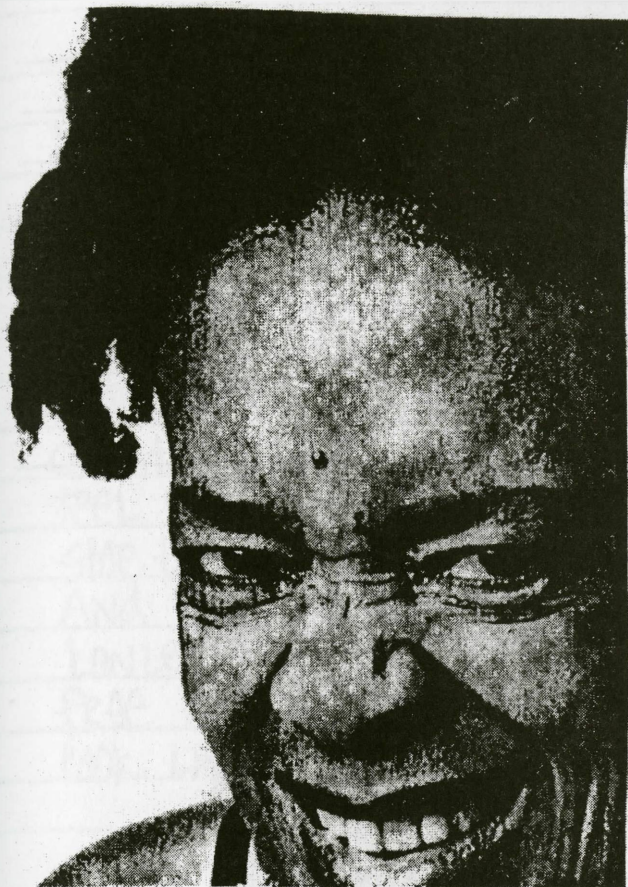
Unfortunately they didn't have proper medicine. I think they do stuff now where you take pills and it's like the strongest Ex-Lax you could ever take and everything in you comes out. But I didn't have that option, so the way they treated me, was the way they used to treat a lot of people for this problem which was they

starved me for like 4 or 5 days (it was like from the Middle Ages?). Yeah, so for 4 or 5 days I didn't eat anything and I was just absolutely ravenous and I'm 12 years old and I'm crying. On the fifth day, they put me in this chair, I'm strapped down in this chair and they brought in this big plate of steaming hot pasta with all this like rich sauce on it

and it smelled great. They put it down in front of me and I just fuckin' sat there and I just had to breathe in the smell and—this is actually true—the tapeworm comes up to get at the food. The doctor had 2 assistants, they were on either side of me, they waited until the tapeworm came up to get the food and as it came out of my mouth, they GRABBED it and pulled it out. It was like probably 6 or 7 feet long. And that's how I was cured of the tapeworm, it's a very old method that they used. (Did you throw up?) Yeah, it was disgusting, this whole thing came out of me. But it was basically coming out for the food. Fascinating, story, it's not a joke.







## FEMINISM ANGST

TOO MANY BI-SEXUAL ROCKSTARS AND NOT ENOUGH LESBIAN HIP HOP ARTISTS, IT'S LONLEY OUT HERE, OUT THERE GIRL. GUYS NOD AT OTHER GUYS AND SOMETIMES AT GIRLS BUT GIRLS DON'T NOD AT GIRLS AND IT'S LONLEY OUT HERE, GIRL.

LOMBOYS WITH MAKE UP BONDS, G.Q. DYKES WHO SUSPICIOUSLY REEK BARBIE-LIKE TENDENCIES, TOO MANY BLEACH JOBS AND NOT ENOUGH GIRLS IN MO-HAWKS.

GODDESS OVERTOSING IT HAS BECOME PRE-PACKAGED INTO SALAD DRESSINGS, SOAPS, COSMETICS, ... AND WAS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE SISTERHOOD?

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## Feminist Angst

by Sarah O'Donnell  
Too Many Bisexual Rockstars  
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NO, I'D RATHER NOT DANCE IN LONG FLOWER  
DRESSES PAYING ODES TO WOMYN JUICES AND  
MOONCYCLES. AND I JUST WISH THE JUICES  
WOULD GO AWAY AND THAT THE MOON CYCLES  
DIDN'T HAVE TO BE SO INTACT ... AND THAT  
I DON'T USE TAMPONS OR PADS, BUT TOILET  
PAPER, HA! AND IT'S LONLEY OUT HERE, OUT  
THERE GIRL.



AND I FEEL WOMYN IN A BASEBALL CAP ON  
A SKATEBOARD CRUISING DOWN THE STREET  
PEOPLE ARE SCREAMING "IT'S A GIRL" AND I  
FEEL MORE AND MORE WOMYN EVERY TIME THE  
RAZOR SMOOTHS THE HEAD BACK DOWN TO  
A CREW CUT BEHIND MY BACK. THEY ARE  
WHISPERING "OH, IT'S A GIRL" ... BUT I'M NOT  
JUST OR GIRL OR "OH, IT'S A GIRL". I AM  
NOT JUST YOUR SISTER. I AM NOT JUST YOUR  
BUTCH. I AM NOT JUST YOUR FEMME. I AM  
NOT JUST YOUR SWEETIE. I AM NOT JUST YOUR  
BITCH OR CUNT OR DYKE AND I AM NEVER YOUR  
HONEY!

TOO MANY MEN JACKING OFF IN RESTROOMS ON  
ONE TOO MANY BATHROOM BREAKS AND NOT  
ENOUGH GIRLS EVEN TALKING ABOUT MASTURBATION  
OR ADMITTING TO IT.

IT'S LONLEY OUT HERE, OUT THERE GIRL, GIRL  
YOU COULD JUST MORE THAN GO SO GO AHEAD  
AND MASTURBATE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BED AND  
BRAG ABOUT IT! STEAL A DILDO, MAKE A  
HOMEMADE DILDO AND BARTER THEM FOR SPICES  
AND THINGS LIKE THAT. GIRL, SEW YOUR OWN  
SUITS AND STOP MAKING FOOTBALL AND  
CONSTRUCTION MASCULINE ENTITIES. JUST  
FEEL WOMYN IN ANY WAY YOU PLEASE AND PLEASE  
STOP TRYING TO PASS GIRL, STOP TRYING TO PASS  
AND PLEASE AND POSE, 'CUZ I KNOW IT'S  
LONLEY OUT THERE FOR YOU TOO SO PLEASE FEEL  
FREE TO NOD AT OTHER GIRLS WHO MAY NOT  
LOOK LIKE YOU AND TO SAY HI.





# Preparing for the institute... A Fresh Punk Girl: My Life as a Fashion Politicia... And Where the Wasteland of War Begins

by Michelle  
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It was the summer after 8th grade. I was only weeks away from beginning high school and some drastic changes were taking place in me. I was old enough to understand some basic political facts. One of them being; poverty isn't just a tax bracket... it's who you are. And every dumb fuck in the world can't wait to get the opportunity to look down on you. Anger and frustration had become constant relentless sensations that marred my personality. I needed something new, I needed to express all the feelings I didn't entirely understand, I needed to explode.

At the time, the coolest place for us kids to hang out was the arcade at the local movie theater. I met kids there that weren't from my own neighborhood, and some were a little older than me. Someone I had met handed me a video tape of Social Distortion featured on Night Flight. I watched it at least a thousand times, slurping up a depiction of my emotions, a context I could feel, unlike the empty, yet swollen, world of Hollywood. Just days later, I dyed my hair black and started painting spiders on my face with eyeliner. The catalyst, for me, was fashion. Hell, my mom and I didn't have money and you can't be shit in school (or anywhere in this stinkin' greedy world, for that matter) if you ain't in the appropriate uniform. I got along alright with the kids at school and in the neighborhood, but there was always this distinction like: well... you fit in but you are still less because of your clothes... you understand. NO. I didn't understand at all. Kids rank order themselves into the precise idiotic social hierarchies their parents live in. A glance is all it takes and the community is sized up right there in the school building hallway. This is education? Indeed it is. The only education anyone needs.

So... punk was a creative escape from the damnation of being mall deficient. Punk was a way for me to get a little dignity for myself in a world where everything comes down on your head and tries to turn you into a piece of shit. If being a piece of shit was all it came to, I wasn't going to take it quietly, much less thank anyone for it. The politics of fashion was the first social wall I had collided into with my peers. I always had issues with the education police and their open-daily prison release programs. This was the first time, however, that I realized: the political IS personal.

I tried to put together punkish looking outfits from the clothes I already had. I pulled everything out of the closet and tossed anything bearing a corporate logo (it was, and is, my contention that I should be paid for advertising products!). I tried on my old clothes in new combinations, some alterations were definitely necessary. These alterations were done solely with scissors and permanent black marker. I looked real silly, honestly. But, it didn't take long for me to get my style together. I went to a local record store that some hip kids told me sold punk music. I'll never forget... I went in and asked if they had any Dead Kennedys or maybe some Cro-mags. Funny. I had no clue what I wanted or what any of it even was. These were just bands I had heard someone or another mention. The girl at the store was so cool to me. She kind of smiled and took a little pity on me. She was into it and probably thought I was kinda cute, or at least decided.

Her name was Gail and she talked with me like I wasn't an idiot. Real nice. She told me about places in St. Louis where punkers hung out and stuff. She offered up names of record stores, clubs, thrift stores (my need of a cooler wardrobe being painfully apparent). She sold me Plastic Surgery Disasters and I was on my way to learning a few more lessons, and quick.

I took that tape home and put it on. The noise that hit me was

unlike anything I had heard before. The truth is... it scared the hell out of me. I had nightmares that night. All the same I was tenacious, if nothing else, and within a few days I was singing Winnebago Warriors along with Jello. I bought new clothes second hand (black), and cut my hair myself. I went to the places Gail told me about. Well... the ones I was allowed, anyway. I wasn't allowed to go to concerts yet and didn't have anyone to go with even if I could have.

I made my mom take me to U-city so I could check out Vintage Vinyl. She and my aunt went shopping somewhere else, which left me alone to explore. I flipped through the bins of records I found under the category of 'Hardcore'. I was utterly mesmerized. There were so many bands, and art work. Off the wall shit. I spent the afternoon soaking up these things which made sense to me. I only had enough money to buy one record, and to this day I believe I made the best possible choice: Dayglo Abortions, Feed Us Fetus. The look on my mothers face was unforgettably priceless.

I played that record so much I'm surprised I didn't wear a hole in it. The following weekend my friend, Tricia, and I rented a few movies: Repo Man, Spinal Tap, Suburbia, and Sid and Nancy. We watched them back to back, and that was it... we were punk. All in all it took about a week and a half.

Here's where the irony comes in, I was one of those kids who wasn't all that excited about growing up. I didn't want to stop playing with my toys. My bedroom was pale pink with hot pink trim, I even had one of those canopy beds with a pink ruffled cover on it. Back when my dad and the extra income had been around, my mom made sure I had all the stuff that little American girls have, like canopy beds and stuffed animals. Maybe that had something to do with my reluctance to just shelve my childhood suddenly. Still, I was punk now, and some changes were in order.

I took the canopy off and strung christmas lights around it instead. I took down my pictures of Wonder Woman and Strawberry Shortcake. In their place, I hung letters that Tricia and I had stolen off the signs of local businesses, I ordered them to read things like: Misfits, DK, SNFU and, of course, Anarchy (which I understood only as 'no rules' and that sounded fuckin' kick ass to me). So there I was, listening to Generation X and Corrosion of Conformity in my black clothes and cropped black hair and badass attitude... playing with Barbies!

I ran out of friends who still played with Barbies, or at least any who admitted to such behavior, so I did it alone as my awareness hesitantly circled the knowledge that this part of my life was ending.

One afternoon I had a serious talk with myself. The bottom line of which was... punkers don't play with Barbies. My creative solution to this contradictory desire was to clear out my bookshelf and make a permanent Barbie town house. This way, I was just dis(playing) that little hussy like a collector instead of playing with her like a freak. Truth is... I played with Barbies until I was 16. I was ashamed of it back then, but now I'm glad. I'm glad I had the good sense to cling to a certain innocence no matter how fettered in the disfiguring perversions of consumer culture. Barbie was my innocence. No wonder I was so angry, bewildered, and unwilling. Clinging to a symbol of innocence that was, in itself, adulterated and riddled with implication. I'm glad I took my time and got a serious look at what is really up in the scheme of things. It's a tough break for most people, I guess. Those grey years between being a kid and being a full fledged teenager. Giving up childish objects



means giving up childish hope and I didn't like that one bit.

Just a few short weeks after my full transformation, high school started. The absolute socialization was about to begin. From day one in that place it was battle after battle. All of it political in content. I didn't have problems with the kids, just the administration. Just the reality of orchestrated racism, sexism, classism and violence. The hard truth that competition is all there is, win or die! I hated those fucking people and I had the greatest gift my mother ever gave me... PERCEPTION. I used it against them at every possible turn.

What I wasn't at all prepared for were the endless contradictions that would hit me slowly and end up becoming the obsession of my life. What I was not prepared to deal with is how impossible it is to cease being the broken, deranged, perverted, emotionally crippled animals the war machine designed us to be. I wasn't prepared for a world of mirror after mirror after mirror, distorting every thought, every mood, every undeclared ritual, every fucking cell utterly penetrated. I wasn't prepared to know that there is no distinction between where society ends and I begin.

The wasteland of war after war after war begins inside the chest cavity, a place where the maps of history and civilization claim their territory. Inside me, this pure annihilation noticed its emptiness and was hungry as hell. My personal defeat, everyone's personal defeat, the greatest weapon the machine ever created. A totally efficient bomb, complete devastation replicating from historical DNA, and translating into me.

## WHY SATAN MUST BE MY FATHER... THE BIG AGENDA... MY VIRGINITY... AND GREETINGS FROM OUTSIDE THE OUTSIDE

By Michelle

Starting high school made me extremely nervous. Many of my friends from junior high were busy buying new clothes and shoes and notebooks and stuff. Not me. I was practicing my 'detached look' and fantasizing about cute punk boys. Maybe I would meet one.

As far as peer groups went, high school was a cinch for me. I had a shtick, a chosen identity... I had punk. This made me popular with the kids cuz it made me so unpopular with the administration. Within two weeks I was out of my basement level freshman locker and moved into another on the top floor where the punks were. Punks and seniors. Damn, I was so fucking proud of that accomplishment. Arrogant might be a better word for it... but isn't that what class divisions are all about? Conquering? Climbing? Accessing?

On the other side of things, I made immediate enemies out of the freshman principal. I spent all of September in Saturday school. In fact, the principal did me a 'favor' by granting a 5th when the limit was four. Thanx. It started when I skipped the second day of school, and then another the following week. Through my very short career as a high school student, I never showed more than three days a week. Sometimes not at all, because after you run out of Saturday schools they have to suspend you. I loved being told not to come to school as punishment for not coming to school. Ain't bureaucracy grand?

Not all of my Saturdays were intended as punishment for skipping. In fact only two were, the others reeked of something much more sinister. That month a really great thing happened, Corrosion of Conformity played at Mississippi Nights. Now, I wasn't allowed to go and I didn't push real hard with my mom for it because, honestly, I was scared! All the kids had been telling me stories about punk shows, fights, blood, death. Terrible things. I believed them, though I shouldn't have, and even with me

being all bad and black and stuff, I thought it would be alright if I got the scoop from a couple of the kids who were as green as me. It wasn't worth it to get into with my mom considering how much trouble I had already been in. But, I loved that fucking band and handed over my allowance to a friend for a T-shirt.

The day after the concert we all looked like a COC army. And we all got in trouble. Why? Because the lyrics to the song 'Holier' were sloppily printed on the back and they "suggested there is no God". Fuck yea... a constitutional right being revoked and I hadn't even been there a month! We all got Saturday school because we didn't believe in God! Unreal, for sure. My friend Scott and I wore ours everyday. He spent that first month of Saturdays right there with me.

We wore the shirt to the punishment and no-one said a word because the detention teacher was just makin' some extra cash, he didn't know we weren't allowed to adhere to our own philosophy (He was an ok guy anyway, after my month of Saturday school he wound up with a hell of a collection of my pornographic stories. He let me write for the whole four hours and THEN confiscated them. Ha). I wore the COC shirt everyday until the principal could no longer make me show up on Saturday and had to start suspending me. Once suspension began, he had to call my mom. That is how it ended, but not the way you might think.

The principal calls my mom and asks her to come in for a chat. When she arrives, I'm in the office wearing the, now filthy, article of offensive clothing. What that moronic vanguard of mediocrity (the principal) had not taken the time to consider was this: my mother was and is the most hardcore atheist I have ever met. Growing up, I wasn't even allowed to use the word God in the house! When she heard what I was being charged with, she was stunned and angry beyond belief. They argued.

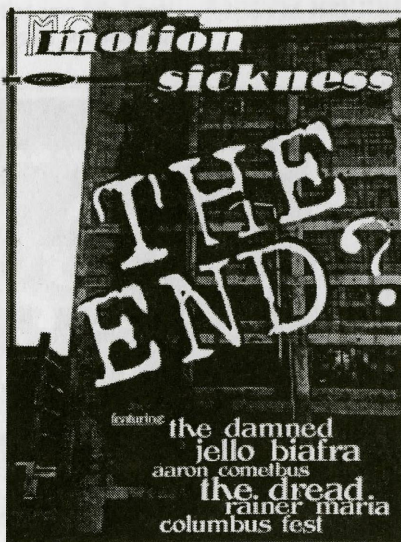
Then the most uncanny thing happened. While my mother was busy educating the educators on the subject of the bill of rights, some kid walked into the office wearing one of those shirts that was popular in the '80's which read in big bold letters: TRUST JESUS. My mother, a great advocate of freedom, demanded his immediate suspension on the grounds that his clothing was morally offensive to non-christian students. That was the end of it. I didn't get suspended (the Saturdays, too, were revoked, only to be used in lieu of my truancy) and I could wear my shirt as often as I liked. Punks, I... administration, 0.

A great triumph it certainly was, but a very small battle in the middle of a very big war. The best part about it for me, was the simple fact that they had turned my mother into a passionate enemy. From then on (and it was only September of my freshman year) the school would get absolutely no co-operation from my mom. In fact, she highly encouraged my blatant rebellion.

Indeed the political IS personal. I continued to painfully acknowledge the sad truth of this (un)distinction. The main purpose of education being not to teach facts and development, but to make sure that all of us learn how to show up on time, stand in line, speak in turn, chase arbitrary goals - like grades - as a means to self worth. That is the big agenda, but, like most stories, there is a subtext. And therein LIES the structural network that keeps us from understanding one another. The subtext reads something like this: money makes you worthy, varying skin pigments denote enemies, winning at any cost is admirable, masculinity is more important than life

itself, and women are useless except as possessions. While we rebelled against the big agenda, we silently accepted the subtext.

Virginity sucked. At least, for me it did. Virginity made me this walking target. Virtually every guy wanting to be the first to stake his ground and plant his flag. I hated that. Wasn't any of it about me? How was it that even if I sought it out, wanted it, decided upon it without being hustled by the 'I love you' shit, even if the act





was all my doing, I would still lose. Lose my virginity and submit to male conquest. Why am I always losing a game I'm not allowed to play?

These realities quickly settled into my guts. The easy knowledge that... yea, we sure are punk and we sure are just like every other clique in the world. I was battling the same shit as any cheerleader and if there was a black punker around, he or she hid it real good. Rage tore through me like the most harsh natural disaster you could imagine.

I kept getting into trouble and while the boys just got their punishments and moved on... I had to endure endless lectures and physc.evaluations. The principal once asked me, "Do you think boys like wild girls?". My counselor went even farther, "How are you going to find a husband dressed like that?". He went on to console me by saying that I would grow out of it and then go to tech school and meet a man that had the skills to pay the bills. Which was important since he had also once told me, "You have the I-Q of an ashtray." (quite untrue). Those fuckers were absolutely priceless.

Meanwhile, in my own little world things seemed to be following this larger insult in so many ways. Don't get me wrong, we were a pretty tight group of friends, and as most things went we were all on even ground. Most things, except sex anyway. Eventually, as my world spread into a bigger community, the lack of regard would transcend the simple territory known as my pussy and spill all over music, adventure, and value in general. This I was not yet aware of, however. The main thing on my mind, at the time, was getting out of the vicious stigma of virginity, like a boy would.

I wanted to rid my body of this terrorist as soon as possible, the way one might desire to rid the attic of squirrels. The Plan? Pick the cutest boy I could get a date with, somewhat outside of my own clique and get it on. In its' own way... this wasn't such a bad plan. On the other hand, it came with its' very own bag of skinned wax cats... or however that saying goes. You might think this a simple task... cute punk girl wants to lose it... no problem. Right? Well... yes, but, I'm a born politician and I wanted what I wanted. It took about four months (that is forever when you are 15, by the way) for me to get it right, and even then it kind of took me off guard, and was full of bullshit... just as I had suspected.

#### MY FIRST BOYFRIEND... HIS MOM... MY FIRST PUNK SHOW... AND HOW I LEARNED TO DISTINGUISH MYSELF FROM A PIECE OF FURNITURE

My first boyfriend (lets' call him Bob), was tall and pretty. Of course, he would be pissed off about being called pretty, but he was... and I liked it. Most girls did, so I'm not sure why its' such an insult.

I used to hang out with his mom when I was at his house. I would sit on the counter and eat 'Bugles', while she talked and cleaned in her leopard print halter top. I liked her because she defended my right to have sex with her son if I wanted too. Bobs dad on the other hand seemed to think I should practice a bit more decorum. "Men are just like that." She said. "Like what?" "They will do anything to get you out of your clothes, and I mean anything... then turn around and be disappointed in you for doing it. Take my husband, for example... he hunts... as much as he loves to get a good kill 'n all... he still talks about the ones that get away. He has alot of respect for the animals that out run his bullets." I choked on a 'Bugle', it was a shocking metaphor.

I heard Bob laughing in the other room. He and a couple of his friends were in the living room checking out dads tattoos. I guess dad must have said something pretty funny. I could only imagine, looking down the hallway, wondering.

I was getting restless. 'The Exploited' were playing downtown and my buzz was beginning to wear off while we were fuckin' around. My legs started an involuntary kicking against the cabinet doors. "She'll be here soon... relax." Mom said genuinely. I smiled crookedly, and mapped out places in my mind where I might be able to get high before the show. As soon as Juniors' new girlfriend showed up, we would all hop in moms beat up old Bronco and 'get this show on the road', so to speak.

The girl arrived and the crowd moved into the kitchen. Bobs' dad turned his attention to me, "Better keep on eye on this one, in the skirt. Looks like you lost more'n half'it 'lready, eh?". I responded to him the same way I always did, I pretended I didn't know he was talking to me. "Leave her alone." Mom said quietly as she drifted down the hall to change clothes. She liked taking the kids downtown because it gave her an excuse to slip out of the house and see her own friends. Nobody bothered to introduce me to the girl now sheltered firmly under Juniors arm. I didn't care, I just wanted to leave.

Mom dropped the five of us a few blocks from the club. We didn't want anyone to know that 'a mom' dropped us off, even if she was wearing a cheetah print tank top with matching stretch pants under a leather coat.

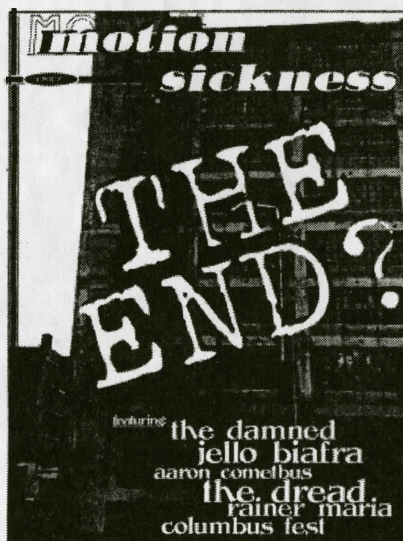
"I'll meet you guys inside". I said. Bob laughed. "Oh no you won't. It's too dangerous out here." His arm curled around the back of my neck and pulled me up against his side. I looked out into the darkness of the city and felt a genuine fear of something I didn't understand. Just the darkness itself, maybe. I don't know what I was afraid of, but I knew I couldn't be alone. At least, I thought I knew that. "Anybody want to get high?", I asked pensively. Nobody did... the girl didn't even look at me... she was busy studying the sidewalk or something.

Once inside, the five of us collected against the back wall. The first band was on its last song. The place was already filled with smoke and beer stink. I watched the people squeeze between one another, leather rubbing leather, mohawks and safety pins. While I surveyed the crowd, the guys talked about how cool 'The Exploited' would be. They were getting revved up, punching each other and cussing. The girl was continuing her in depth study of 'places feet are'

It seemed like the blank space between bands went on forever. I just watched people mill about. I thought it was cool the way everyone seemed to know one another. I smelled pot when I went to the bathroom, so I figured I'd get my buzz on too. The stupid thing that I did was tell Bob of my plan. Did I want his permission? He scolded me like a bad dog and I felt embarrassed. It was stupid for me to do things like this with Bob and his buddies. I was frustrated and missing all of my real friends. I hoped I would run into some of them, hoped I could be saved from this pathetic situation.

Just when my frustration and boredom began to reach a climax, 'The Exploited' took the stage. All I could see was the top two inches of someone,s bright pink liberty spikes. I tried standing on my toes, but that didn't help. "I'm going down!", Bob yelled. "Watch my coat... if anything happens to my bomber I'll be pissed!". He disappeared into the crowd with his cronies behind him. I continued to try and elevate myself to a position where I could see. After a few songs I realized I just wouldn't succeed from where I was.

I flopped onto a bench next to a pile of coats. Suddenly it hit me... I'm in charge of ALL the coats. Everybody... including friends Bob hooked up with once he got inside... had left their prize punkwear with me for security. There were nearly ten coats in the pile, most of them leather. I took a moment to consider the weight of this burden, that's when I saw Junior being passed along over the crowd. His hands were balled into fists and his head moved vigorously up and down to the music. I see... they are boys and I'm a... I'm a... a...





COAT RACK! Fuck.

"Hey," I said nudging the girl. "Go ahead and see the band... I got stuck with the coats... might as well watch yours too." She looked at me with wide eyes like she thought I was probably crazy or something. "No... I'm fine here." "Okay...well, cool. I'll go watch the band then." I said as I stood. She grabbed my arm, "Don't just leave me here!"

I'm a... I'm a... a... a BABY SITTING COAT RACK! Fuck.

Fortunately, insult to injury has always held a certain pleasantly ironic value for me. I leaned my head against the back wall and imagined myself breaking enormous panes of glass with a baseball bat. So real, I could hear the shattering mix with the music, glass cracking under the bass lines. With my eyes closed, leaning against the back wall of a dark stinky club while the boys were having fun, I realized it just didn't matter. None of it mattered. I felt at home, whether I was or not.

"Wanna' cigarette?", I asked the girl. "No... I'm fine, thank-you." She crossed her arms in front of her and continued staring at some anonymous punker backside. I reached into the stack of coats and started rummaging through pockets. "What are you doing?", the girl asked as if I were insulting or violating her. As if I could somehow be more offensive than her new boyfriend. "Collecting the coat check fee. You tell and I'll kick your ass!", I snarled. Don't ask what made me think I was so tough. I have never been a fighter. I hate pain too much. But, at that moment I knew I could get away with alot because girlfriend was already afraid, and needed me much more than I needed her.

"Maybe I will have a cigarette." She said. "Have a pack.", I insisted, producing a pearl white box of Marlboros from a leather pocket. I hoped she was starting to catch my drift. A drift the two of us could be on together. UNITY... Aren't the punks screaming about it all the time?

Eventually the lights came up, and people began to disperse. Bob and his cohorts returned to the coat rack, sweaty. Bob grabbed me and kissed me hard, his tongue flicking in and out of my mouth. "Wasn't it great?", he asked. I just nodded my head and smiled. Honestly, it reminded me of sex. He kept kissing me, and rubbing

my legs. All the boys came by and retrieved their coats from the pile. Not even one of them thanked me, or even looked at me for that matter. Bob wrapped his arm around my neck and stood proud as he talked and slapped the boys on their backs. I was totally invisible aside from being Bobs wet hole. Junior was mauling the girl whose name I still hadn't heard. I just kept smiling.

As soon as we hit the pavement outside, we saw Bobs mom and the old Bronco, with white smoke emitting from its' tailpipe. "Did you all have fun?", mom asked as we piled into a vehicle. Everyone excitedly said 'Yes' and started an immediate rehash of the best parts. Well, everyone but me and whats-er-name. "What about you?", Mom was speaking directly to me, making eye contact in the rear view mirror. I smiled and nodded, "I love loud music." Which, wasn't a lie. She knew, I knew she knew, and it made me feel good to know that at least someone could actually see me.

I was silent all the way home, and mom kept checking me out in the rear view mirror. As we got close to our neighborhood, I thought about Bobs' dad. I didn't need that tonight, especially with Bob on some punk aphrodisiac. "Drop me off at my house, please." I told mom. "NO!... Don't go home... you gotta' stay." , Bob said excitedly. I paused for a moment and locked my eyes into his, I smiled a little as I said: "No, Bob... I don't gotta' do anything." "Yea... okay", he said softly. Mom still watching us in the mirror.

The Bronco dropped me in front of my mothers' house. I let myself in carrying a purse full of various cigarette brands, lighters, gum, some change, and a pretty cool AC/DC key chain that I had managed to snag from someone,s' pocket. I fell into bed and lit a joint, the only thing I had really wanted to do all night. I wondered what would have happened if I would have just walked away, from the coats, the girl, all of it. I don't know what would have happened, but my suspicion told me it would have been like shit for me. All sorts of rumors would have started flowing about what a cunt I was. Lesson learned. It wasn't going to happen again, I'd see it coming the next time. I only got to be a coat rack if I let that shit hang there. I fell asleep and dreamed that 'The Exploited' were all dating my mother. I think the dream was better than the show anyway.



# Interview with Guy Picciotto of Fugazi

by Andrew Bottomley  
Skyscraper Magazine  
PO Box 4432  
Boulder, CO 80306

Questions: Andrew Bottomley

Answers: Guy Picciotto

Conducted: March 19, 1999

Still Photography: K. Wilcox

**Now, I don't mean this to offend you at all, but do you find it strange at all that I have these questions for you - that I care, that a lot of people care about what you have to say?**

Do I think it is strange? Not really, mainly because when I was, and still I am, an obsessive fan of bands and music and I tend to read as much as I can about bands that I am into and I am always curious about what people have to say about what they do. So, if people feel the same kind of interest - if they enjoy the music that we play - it doesn't surprise me that they might be curious about stuff to do with our band. Plus, we are not particularly accessible to people in terms of having a lot of conventional media coverage, so in a sense we are removed from whatever the normal conversation is about bands. So, I think people are kind of curious sometimes to know what is going on inside our group, so we try to make ourselves accessible. So, I don't think it is strange but sometimes I hope people aren't let down by what they hear. [laughs]

**Also, tying into that, bands in general are in a unique position to say what they have to say more so than most anyone else.**

Ultimately, we think as a band that our basic message, our basic presentation, our basic point is contained in our show and on the records. So, I feel that is the creative expression of the group. I am never adverse to talking to people about things or doing interviews but at the end of the day the music is really the message with this band. And if people see us play live, they listen to the records or whatever, and if people are responding to it then that is the message. If they don't get anything from it then that is cool, too. But, really, we feel like that is the full thing, the full package.

**And I suppose that as long as you are making vital music that has a message then there will always be a relevance to talking about it. You get interviewed so much, though, do you ever run out of new things to say?**

We actually don't get interviewed that much. Recently we have been getting a lot of computer e-mail type interviews where it is almost like you are doing a midterm or something like that. [laughs] You sit down and answer these questions, it is not really as conversational, so sometimes those are difficult. Usually, I just try to answer the questions as honestly as I can, it has never been that much of a problem. We definitely don't do as many interviews as I think most bands probably do, we restrict ourselves mostly to fanzines and to more underground stuff; things that are more motivated by enthusiasm. We tend to do those, so it is not like we have a publicist cranking out five interviews a day or anything like that.

**But within the realm of fanzines - and maybe it is because you have been a band for so long - you are still one of the most interviewed bands.**

I wonder? I don't know. Maybe.

**Does it ever bother you that people are always after you for advice and answers? Because you are pretty looked up to, you are in that position where you are well respected and seen as...**

I guess so. I have never really felt that it was a weird kind of wor-

shipful...

**Oh, no. This is still punk rock and everything, so it is not quite like that; but on a small scale...**

I just put myself in the shoes of the people who are basically interviewing me; in terms of I have the same curiosity, the same respect for the music that I really enjoy. I feel like it is a leveling experience. To me, I don't feel a lot of difference between the way people approach us as musicians and the way I approach other musicians. There is a reciprocal energy that goes around. There is an interest that is mutual. Because music is hugely important in my life and I think for the people who interview us, and tend to do fanzines, music is a huge currency in their life as well. So, I just feel there is an equity there. I don't really feel like there is some kind of weird power imbalance. It is a respectful exchange. Do you know what I mean?

**Definitely. I was thinking more outside of the interview process, though.**

Right. But even outside of the interview process - when we meet people at shows or people who are fans of the band or people who come to a bunch of shows in a row on tour - when you actually speak, get to know the people, I never feel a weird distance. I mean, I feel close to that experience because I have followed bands and I get excited about groups. I try to force my way to the front of the show to see the band up close. [laughs] I want to see what people are doing. So, I don't feel like there is that great of a divide.

**You just said that music is a big part of your life and I was going to ask you if you would say that music is your life, really?**

Pretty much. I started playing music, and with Brendan in fact, when I was fourteen, fifteen years old. When I started getting into seeing bands in Washington and was hit with the... when I started listening to punk music in 1979 it altered my life in a way that I never would have expected, and it sent me on a completely alternate trajectory that has maintained its power since. I am almost thirty-four now, so it has been almost twenty years. As a young person, I never considered myself a musician but all of a sudden I was part of a community where music was the binding thing that made the whole thing work.

**Was there a point where you realized that this was what you were going to be doing for such a long part of your life?**

I don't think I ever expected to be in bands for as long as I have, but the minute I really started going to shows and when I really felt what it meant to be a part of a scene or a community it definitely felt like a life altering experience. I mean, I don't really project into the future, like how much longer I am going to be involved in music, but it becomes part of your fiber, it becomes part of who you are.

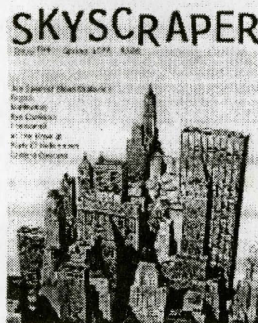
**It is almost not your choice anymore. Also, when you are not doing Fugazi you are recording and producing and such - so even your spare time is dedicated to music in other ways.**

Yeah, and if I am not recording or producing I am usually listening to music or checking out bands. It is

definitely a full time religion.

**What quality do you think has made Fugazi so vital for more than a decade now?**

Ummm. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that we had all been in bands before this, so we had worked out a lot of confusions about what we wanted to do. So that by the time that all four of us ended





up in this band, we were all really focused in terms of what we wanted to accomplish; and we also had learned how to communicate within a band situation. It is an enormous amount of compromising that goes on in trying to make a creative statement between a group of people. If you don't have one person who is like the chief, who is ordering everyone around... if you are trying to do something that is democratic it takes a long time to learn how to negotiate and make sure that everybody is getting represented. So, by the time we got into Fugazi we kind of figured a lot of that stuff out. And we are just lucky that, for some reason, there is some kind of internal chemistry between the four of us where we can work together and communicate and when things get fucked up or there is a bunch of shit that comes down that we are able to work through it and keep going. As long as we have been together, there has been a bunch of times where things got kind of dicey but we have always managed to work through it. I also think that we have never felt that we hit a plateau. We always feel like we are pushing each other to learn more about how to play.

**The four of you have, obviously, always been very tight - the fact that you have been together for so long is an easy testament to that - and you play incredibly well off each other. So, I was wondering how you have managed to keep that chemistry alive and what musical ideas tie you together and drive you?**

Well, I really don't know how it works. It always seems like once we get in the practice space someone has got some kind of spark that seems to keep it moving. What is

interesting is that everyone in the group writes stuff. I don't think a lot of people know how Brendan, our drummer, plays incredible guitar and bass and he writes a lot of the guitar and bass parts. So, there is a lot of interchange, everyone is bringing parts in and then hatching them out. There is this process where we beat up each others parts for awhile and then people teach each other things. There are a lot of different ideas flowing and it is not always one person who is depended on to provide the spark. It is like four corners of the room throwing stuff in the middle and then something always comes out of it. So, it is one of those indefinable things, it is just something that happens when we get together. Also, the longer we play together the more comfortable we feel in terms of playing. When we first started as a band we went out and toured really, really hard before we ever even put out a record, so we had a real strong foundation of learning to play together. I think that is what made the band, is when we first went out we were touring six, seven months a year. It was like serious summer camp. We would go out there and learn how to tie all the knots and take swimming lessons and all this stuff. And then once it was all done we had a foundation to work from.

**Is the common ground for you guys just to continually make interesting music?**

That is really the only thing. We feel like we are at this point, like if we are not able to come up with new ideas and we don't feel challenged by it and we feel like we have hit a plateau, then I think we are all really comfortable with no longer continuing the band. But we have never reached a point where we felt like we had run out of gas. There is always something else that we want to try or some new ideas that come up. And I think that there is always this challenge for us that we feel strongly that we want to make better records. We have always been pretty comfortable playing live and we attack the stage in a way that we feel pretty confident about; but with our

records we always feel like there is something around the corner that we still haven't fully hit yet. The last two records we have started feeling a little looser but I think that we have got more work to do to make a really great record. So, there is always that dissatisfaction. We are really hard on ourselves.

**I was going to say: you must be very critical of yourselves then.**

I think we are. Even show-wise, in terms of playing live, and definitely in terms of recording and in terms of writing and arranging songs we are pretty hard on each other and hard on ourselves. I think that is what kind of keeps our nose to the grindstone a little bit.

**How hard is it for you to comprehend the impact that Fugazi has had on it's fans?**

I don't really think about it that much really, except when we go out and play and it is nice when you actually get to meet people. It is not something you want to think about a whole lot. I know there are a lot of people out there who buy our records, who pay attention to the band, or who are into it but the motivation for making the music can't come from trying to reflect on that, it is more like you are trying to create something and then you hope that there is feedback or there are people who send that energy back to you. But you don't really want to spend a whole lot of time trying to feather your bed or whatever.

**Does it bother you at all that Fugazi will always be known more for what you stand for than for what you sound like?**

That is a question we get asked a lot, people think "do you get tired of talking about the five dollar shows?," "do you get tired of talking about the ethics of running an autonomous band?" To a degree it is frustrating only because you start to get self-conscious, you think "well, maybe the music isn't really as much a part of what people are getting from this." Then on the other hand, those ideas are important and the way that the band functions is important. I wish it wasn't treated so much like a freak show, because a lot of bands do similar things to what we do - maybe not on the same scale...

**That's it, though, it's just the scale.**

There is an underground ethic that we come out of that in the early Eighties was not atypical and was kind of the norm. You had bands like Black Flag, the Minutemen, a huge underground scene all across the country. The way bands toured, it was all self-managed, all independent labels, there was nothing freakish about it. On the other side of the big weird Nirvana explosion that happened, everyone thinks "oh no, it is really strange to be doing it this way," but for us it feels completely organic and natural. And I think that it is a mistake sometimes for people to try to make us like this weird Dodo bird, like "oh, man, they are not extinct yet, there are still people out there doing it," because there always are still people doing it.

**Oh yeah, there are still tons of people out there doing it but, like you said, it is the scale on which you are doing it.**

I guess so. But if you think about rap or you think about other kinds of music there are independent rap collectives that sell crazy amounts of records, way more than we do. You have to maintain some kind of perspective about it. I mean, I do hope that people are understanding that all of the groundwork, business foundational stuff that we do, is really just to serve as a platform for the music. That we feel that the content that the music is presented in is important to the music. For us, those two things are really bound together but ultimately it is the creativity that should be the focus and the other stuff



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is to make us feel comfortable, so that we can be creative and feel that we are... we have a very fragile make-up. We feel that we really need to be in control of what we are doing in order to do what we are doing. Those two things are really bound up. So, I never mind talking about those things because I think they are important but they are only important in the context of the music and what the band is trying to do.

**And I don't intend to discount that political power at all but the music has structurally and conceptually grown in leaps with every release, especially with *Red Medicine* and *End Hits*, but to an extent that seems to get ignored... not ignored but overshadowed.**

Well, with journalism in general, it is all about the hook, it is all about the angle. And really early on in the band's career there was an easy journalistic edge to it and that article got written again and again. As the band has progressed... we don't operate a clever publicity machine in order to alter that image, so people just refer back to old articles and things get recycled and the same things get said over and over again. So, yeah, it is a little weird. Sometimes I kind of wonder... you feel like you are throwing these records out into the void but just from the perspective of the way journalists treat the records. But people who are fans of the band and people who actually take time to listen to them or enjoy the music, I think they pick up on those changes really easily; and some people are really into them and some people are not into them, but at least they recognize that there is some evolution happening.

**Do you ever feel that you are in a unique position for a punk band in that your music receives so much attention and is so thoroughly deconstructed all the time - even for a rock band that is kind of rare, especially when you are still together? How do you feel towards the constant critical attention?**

Again, it is one of those things... honestly, you always hope that someone is going to pick up on what you are trying to do and then break it down in a way that makes sense to you, and that rarely happens. I often read things people have to say about the music and I don't recognize my perception about the band in what I read about the band. But again, it is not the kind of thing that you can get too hung up on because at the end of the day the most important thing for us is to do the work and to get to work. So, I try not to get too distracted by stuff like that.

**What are the kind of things that people say that you really disagree with?**

When people don't recognize that there has been some kind of shift. It always ends up being that, I think, people hear the first record and think that there hasn't been any development. You know what I mean? Sometimes I don't think people recognize that there has been some kind of progress made.

**Another thing is the way in which the fans react to the music - they have always held such a desire to attempt to unravel everything about the songs and the lyrics and what not. In a sense, everything is treated like a mystery or a puzzle. Do you ever put an ambiguity to it or create a mystique?**

You mean lyrically speaking?

Yeah.

Actually, that is one of the things that drives me crazy about some of these reviews we get, because we really get one of two kinds. One is that Fugazi are incredibly didactic, they write these simplistic political creeds that are anthemic or whatever. And then the other one is that we write impenetrable, ambiguous poetic stuff that is complete nonsense. It is weird, we get both sides of that. It's funny. And I feel like they are both off the mark in terms of the way that we write. A lot of it has to do with the fact that we have two songwriters in the band, or actually three now with Joe writing lyrics, so there are different people writing the lyrics and there are obviously different personalities behind it. But, also, we have a loose lyrical attack, we write what we want to write and we discuss things that we want to discuss in a way that we want to discuss them. It is like you say, it is not a puzzle or it is not a riddle. It is not like people are supposed to be diagramming it and coming out with the correct an-

swer. They are songs. And the way the lyric and the music works together is the song, and what people get out of it is what they get out of it. It's not something that is supposed to be broken down and analyzed to death. I think that the songs that work for people are the ones that are successful, the ones that leave people scratching their heads and unhappy are unsuccessful. We are not trying to create something that is causing confusion, we try to write honestly; and part of writing music, part of writing lyrics, is you try to write something that satisfies you, words that work for you, words that you are able to sing. None of us are prolific lyricists. Every time that we write a song it is like a serious exercise in pulling teeth, for both Ian and I. It is not like we have tons of stacks of lyric books and we are just pulling out little journalistic phrases. We work really hard on the songs that we get together. And they are what they are.

**Does it ever amaze you, though, at the length to which fans will stretch things or try to decipher them, even though they are not intended to be deciphered?**

Well, I don't know. I guess I haven't heard that many times of people trying to break them down. Sometimes people say stuff and you are like "wow!" Like "this song is supposed to be about the OJ Simpson trial," and I am like "what?!" I don't even know where it is coming from.

**Personally, I pay attention but I don't delve into it.**

When I listen to Beatles songs or Dylan songs part of the fun of it is, if you are getting into it, to pull it around. But the mistake is to try to think that there necessarily needs to be one perspective or one point of view or one answer. It is funny, though, sometimes I write something that is difficult or whatever, the associations are all over the place or I am pushing together a bunch of ideas, and sometimes you know that someone out there will write a letter and it is like "man, they really had a feel for what was going on," and that's cool. But the thing about music is there is two ends to it: the person who is sending it out and the person who is receiving it. They are completely equal, in my opinion, in terms of the work that is done on the music.

**That relationship between listener and the artist is extremely important. In particular, something like the title *End Hits* there are fan pages that propose theory after theory of what it really means.**

[laughing] I haven't seen those.

**I have seen seven or eight interpretations of what that title is supposed to mean.**

Wow. The only thing that I have heard about it is that everyone was convinced that it meant that we were breaking up.

**That was the first one.**

But I haven't heard a ton of other ones.

**They are almost really funny. It is funny in that people were researching it or something, they were going to outside sources to try to discover what it meant. And it is as if they *must* know. There is something kind of cool about it.**

**There is. It shows an enormous amount of dedication.**

When I was growing up I was fixated on the Beatles in a way that was probably unnatural. I had this whole thing where I couldn't buy records by other bands until I had every single song in every single form that the Beatles had released. I had this insane Beatles collection, I had enormous amounts of books, I was just a complete maniac. I would spend time with those records... and obviously the Beatles have generated a fair amount of literature in terms of people breaking that stuff down. And that stuff to me, it was my lifeblood. I was totally into it. The fact that people would spend time doing that stuff for stuff that we do... if it is evocative to people in that way, that makes me feel great.

**Do you ever feel that you may be letting them down a little? If someone comes up to you...**

It is not us though. That's the thing about it, it wasn't the Beatles. **It is created around them.**

It is really reflective of your own interests and your own energy you put into it. It is like with the Beatles: they put this thing out there but I was investing it with energy and I was investing it with my



own imagination, and really the credit goes to the person who is receiving. That is the way I feel about lyrics: if you want to spend the time to try to pull something out of it... really all it is it's a catalyst to work your mind. And if people are using us as a catalyst I think that is what it is there for.

**You have grown old, per se, in the punk scene but - it always kind of has been and it is now - the age of those involved is basically young, fifteen to twenty-five. So, do you feel almost that everyone around you is not your peer group and that you probably don't have as much in common with them as maybe you would like to have?**

Within DC, within this scene, a lot of people are my age and there are a lot of people playing. Recently we were on tour on the East coast and we were playing with this band, The Ex from Amsterdam, and they have been together for twenty years, they are in their forties, and they were playing shows that were completely jaw-dropping, and I felt really connected to them and I felt really inspired by what they were doing. So, there is definitely people out there but in terms of a larger scale thing... I think music when you are fifteen - between fifteen and twenty-one - that is the time when music impacts you in a way that is the strongest. The people who are really young, music is part of their growing up process, it gets you out of your family, it is like your own world. So, I think that age group will always be the most dedicated to music and that is particularly true in punk rock, it is supposed to be an alternative space or whatever. So, I feel really in touch... I mean, I am thirty-three but when I see kids who are sixteen, seventeen at the shows I don't feel like there is this enormous gap, for me. But I definitely recognize that I have got some years and some experience on people but it hasn't felt alienating. But it also could be because I have had a retarded development. [laughs] I mean, when you continue doing that kind of thing... it might be a little different for Brendan who has now got a kid and who is married, but my life hasn't substantially changed that much since I was seventeen. [laughs]

**You mentioned, though, that you have been lucky enough to have an audience that has grown up with you. A lot of older bands will lose an audience their age as they get older but you still have that. How have you managed to keep punk rock relevant to you?** It hasn't been any great struggle to do. I think that the ideas are endlessly interesting, the ideas that come along with punk rock and with independent music and independent creativity. And it is not just music, there is an enormous amount of interesting things being done in film and writing, there is a lot of places to draw inspiration from. Occasionally I get frustrated, I feel like "I wish there were more bands that I found incredibly interesting," but it's a really seasonal thing, there will be periods... and it has always been this way, for the last twenty years, there are always fallow points and then points where there are incredible amounts of things happening. But there are times when I get frustrated or feel like there is not a lot of inspiration in the air but it is usually something that is just around the corner, that is ready to kick my ass, so you just have to be patient.

**What would you say the difference is between when you were seventeen - well, you said your life hasn't changed much since**

**you were seventeen but...**

I guess that's not completely true.

**Of course, I understand what you meant by that.**

When I was sixteen or seventeen, when I first started going to shows and when there felt like there was an explosive amount of activity coming out of Washington, that was unique in my experience. But you don't want to get in a position where you are so nostalgic that you create that as a golden age that will never be repeated because for tons of young people that moment is happening right now. And their moment is this moment. So, I have a special rapport feeling for my entry point because it felt like a revolution was happening. There was an enormous amount of stuff going around in Washington from '80 to '84, it was a really fertile and intense time. But I think it becomes really solipsistic, you don't want to become so egocentric that you think that you are the only one that had that privileged moment, those moments are going on all the time for people all over. I may not have access to what is going on right now in the same way that I did then.

**Exactly. When you are young, when you are sixteen or whatever, every show that you go to is this amazing event but once you get older it begins to lose its luster a little. It becomes, eventually, that maybe you see one amazing band every six months instead of seeing one amazing band every other week. And so you have to sort of adapt your involvement and your relevance to punk. In a way, you begin to shape your involvement around your life and how it works for you. Obviously, being a musician and playing your music is going to be your main drive - do you even think you would be involved still if you weren't making music all this time?**

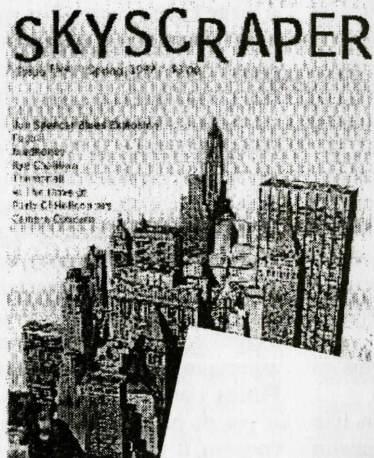
I think I probably would. You mean in terms of going and trying to check out bands? I check out bands really, really consistently and I still get really surprised and seriously whacked in the face by things that happen and by bands. I like seeing bands a lot. I feel kind of localist in my perspective because I like to see bands that I can see over and over again. When I was young you would go see a local band, your friends bands, every other week and it wasn't just this special event it was like you were part of this continuum and you were watching the band develop. I still really get into that, I still really get into local bands and seeing how things are progressing.

**Wouldn't you say, though, that you have to meld your involvement into having something more of an adult life?**

I guess so. [laughs] The amount of time we spend on this band and on this work is pretty consuming. For the last ten years there has been a real consistency to what my life is. Things are changing a little bit now, since Brendan had a kid we don't tour quite as much. But, for the most part, the last ten years there was a very uniform situation in my life where I would be touring for a long period of time and then coming home and working on music and writing. There was something about it, it was like being in cryogenic freeze or some sci-fi thing where you are maintained in this way because there is such a consistency to the work. Definitely now that we have slowed down a little bit you are kind of playing catch up, in terms of the rest of your life.

**Your life certainly must be very contained to Fugazi.**

It has been to this point, but there are things that are just starting to happen outside, now that we are not touring quite so hard. Like you said, me with producing, and Brendan is going soundtrack work for Discovery Channel documentaries, Ian will always have





an enormous amount of work to do because he runs the label as well (he is the most consistent in terms of his work), and Joe Lally is working really hard on his label and this band that he is super into called Spirit Caravan who he is releasing a record by. So, we all have these other things happening on the outside but they are all pretty much music oriented.

**How do you feel about the way punk has been represented in the media and in the mainstream eye - particularly because you existed through the whole punk explosion?**

It was kind of embarrassing when it happened, really honestly. But it is also very consistent with what happened when punk rock first happened in '77. It is hard to remember but when those bands were coming out of England in '77 and punk was first generated it was seen very early on by major label money people as a marketing mechanism. The only difference was it didn't work back then, the stuff didn't sell, so it was abandoned. But eventually it came around and the same interests came to the floor and this time they succeeded with it. I feel really divorced from it, I don't see the two things as being reflective, necessarily. I am not saying that all of the music is completely god-awful but the mechanism that gets trodden out is not interesting to me. The things that have always been more interesting to me are independent ideas that existed before punk rock existed as a term. There has always been underground channels and networks and that to me is the interesting stuff.

**But to a minor extent - and obviously we are talking on very different levels - you have been one of the people chosen to be something of a figurehead in the punk movement.**

Ummm, I guess so, yeah.

**I mean because Fugazi has been spotlighted as the model for the do-it-yourself ethic. So, how do you feel about the people who have been chosen to represent it?**

It is really hard to say because there are so many different people involved and so many different things entailed in that. I mean, a lot of stuff I just don't recognize as being of any value; I just think it is kind of crappy. And there is a lot of interesting things that aren't pushed to the floor that I wish were, ideas that I think are interesting. But, again, that kind of stuff can be paralyzing if you get hung up on because there is a bitterness that comes in there. [laughs] It is just not helpful. A lot of unfortunate stuff went down when money intruded on the scene because it changed people's expectations of what music could do in their lives. A lot of people suddenly had this concept like "hey, shit, this is a career," and that it can be done in this way. And a lot of people got severely disappointed when the river banks started to dry up and a lot of stuff had been sacrificed and there was no place to go back to.

**What initially got you involved in punk? What made you go from being that Beatle-maniac into...**

What happened was, I guess in the end of '77 to '78, I had been, like I said, a huge Beatle-maniac and I had been listening to Zeppelin and I went to see Kiss and AC/DC and Aerosmith and Golden Earring. I had seen a bunch of arena rock shows when I was like ten and eleven.

**But it was the Seventies, that was the age of arena rock.**

And I will tell you this, though. The first big concert I saw was Kiss with AC/DC, opening with Bon Scott playing, and it was, to my mind still, one of the most completely over the top things I had ever seen; I mean, just the scale of it, the whole thing was completely amazing. But I started reading about English punk rock and my initial reaction was it really freaked me out, I was kind of terrified of it, but I was curious about it and I started buying singles that had come over from England. There was an independent radio station here in Washington, run out of the basement of the Jesuit university, and they were playing a lot of punk rock stuff. I was hearing bands like The Adverts and they were also playing weird stuff from the Sixties like The Pretty Things and I started to get an education from this station. They eventually got closed down because they were running abortion clinic advertisements in a Catholic school and they got completely gutted and all their equipment got sold for a dollar. There was all this resistance built up around the shutting down of

this radio station. There was a concert held, a benefit concert, and it was the first punk rock concert I went to, it was 1979. It was a bunch of local DC bands and it was headlined by The Cramps. I am was there and a bunch of people from his high school, who I didn't know at the time, and then me and some of my friends from my school went down to the show. That was really the catalyst event that shook my world because up until that point I hadn't seen local music, I hadn't seen an underground type show. And from the minute I got there... the vibe there was so out of control because there was so much anger directed against the university and the show was in the university. There were amazing characters around: the Bad Brains were handing out fliers for their first concert at this show and they were all completely punked out and walking around. The whole time I was trying to keep my brain together because I was just so freaked out by the experience. And then The Cramps played and there was a riot and people started smashing out the windows and Lux Interior threw up on stage and their guitarist, Bryan Gregory, was spitting cigarettes in people's faces. The whole thing was so fucking nuts. [laughs] From that moment on I knew there was something happening and since there had been local bands on the bill I started to realize that there was other people playing and young bands happening. At that moment I felt like the whole world had opened up, and I started to realize that you could play yourself and that it didn't have to be this bigger thing, that there was a grass roots thing happening. And from that point on it was all over, I started going to shows all the time. It was kind of two levels: on one hand I was seeing bands like The Clash and whatever big bands would be coming over and at the same time I was starting to check out high school bands and other bands that were playing, seeing Teen Idles or whoever was happening. And that was kind of the way it started.

**You were talking about all that anger and that vibe, and punk is based on rebellion, basically, especially at that point in time. To a large extent none of us would be involved if we weren't rejected at some point or didn't feel that close tie to truly believing that things needed to change. But now that punk is more popular, even below the mainstream level, it is a "hip" thing to be a part of, in a way. So, do you ever feel that it is less about rebellion and maybe just more of a diversion?**

It's weird, I know what you mean. There is one way to say, "back then we were punks and it was hard to walk down the street without getting your ass kicked, it was real statement back then," but, at times, there is conformity on all levels.

**I'm sure there was a certain "hip" factor to it then as well.**

It is really hard to say. The fact that you can have a Stooges song in a commercial, obviously people have realized that there are salable aspects to a rebellious stance but, again, they knew that back in the Fifties. [laughs] It is hard to tell exactly what the difference is. But if you do have a sense of anger, if you do have a sense of political concern, if you do have a sense of trying to find an alternate route, those things still make sense. There are still ideas there that are provocative and that are disturbing and that will never be able to be assimilated. There has to be a reactive force, you just have to find it.

**What would you like the legacy of your work to be?**

I don't know.

**Do you feel that you have garnered a legacy at this point?**

Again, I don't know. It's weird. I feel like that is the kind of thing you think about when the work is done, and the band doesn't feel done to me. I really feel like there will be time to think about that later down the line. I have been in a lot of bands before this and I felt that they were really important and you see things move on. There is a relevancy to what we do now and it is important to focus on that and let that perspective take care of itself down the line.

**I know that a lot of these questions aren't the kind of thing that you are going to be sitting around thinking about and it can awkward or even impossible to deconstruct yourself. And so I understand if some of them are a little weird or if you don't really have an answer.**

No, no, it's cool. I am just being honest with you.



And I know you are, that's great. How have you kept yourself continually interested in the songwriting of Fugazi? Because, naturally, your style of writing is going to change just to keep yourself interested.

Yeah. I am a slow to learn guitar player so if I learn new things I get excited about them. I still feel like I have got a lot to learn and I learn a whole lot from playing with those other guys. I mean, I learned a lot from playing with Brendan and writing with him, I learned a lot from playing with Ian and Joe. So, I feel like I am still hungry for it. Occasionally we hit these points where we are having

a hard time generating stuff. Like I said, we are really critical and there will be a point where we have thrown so many parts on the scrap heap and then we start to feel a little bit dispirited because we are not clicking, it is not happening, but something will always come up that saves the day. So, we always just keep reaching and hoping and holding out for the thing that is going to make it interesting. Right now, actually, something that has happened that has made it really interesting is that we have been playing with... we have had this roadie Jerry Busher who has been traveling with us for a long time and he is a musician in his own right, he has been doing a second drum set and trumpet on the road because on our last record we overdubbed a lot of drum parts and had a lot of things that we couldn't pull off live, so we said "why don't you help us out on stage because you are traveling with us anyway?" And I think that is going to be something that we might want to push harder when we start writing again because it is like another tool and he is incredible to play with. The rhythm stuff that him and Brendan can generate together can be really cool, so maybe we can do more of that.

I mentioned it a little bit before about *Red Medicine* and *End Hits*, how you have definitely begun to explore more musically. It has often been called 'experimental' though I gather that you don't really consider it to be experimental, that it is just growth. Yeah. Well, what happened was that we decided we were going to produce ourselves. We did it once with *Steady Diet of Nothing* and gotten really freaked out by how unsuccessful we felt, we had done a really crappy job of it - so we got kind of freaked out. But by the time that we did *Red Medicine* we all felt more confident about producing the record ourselves and we were just like "fuck it, we'll just try." And I think we had a few ideas that at that time we felt really satisfied with, we felt more loose. I think one thing with our records is that we go in there and we are so tense and we have had a really hard time - live I always feel like we are really loose - and then we go in the studio and we are totally under the microscope and we never could really relax. That is one disadvantage, I guess, about not having access to some insane major label recording budget is that there is an economic window that you are in. We can't spend enormous amounts of time getting the right vibe together. [laughs] We have to get in there and do the work. But we came to a point,

mainly because we bought this small 8-track and we started recording more on our own - it is actually the 8-track we used to record a lot of other bands with - and by doing that we started learning how to run the machines and started feeling less freaked out by the whole thing. Particularly with *Red Medicine* and the last one is the first

time where we started to get our hands more involved in the whole process of recording. So, it is not really experimental, we are just trying to open it up a little bit because we feel less freaked out.

I don't want to use words like "mature" but it definitely seems like you have sort of realized the importance of contemplating ideas and

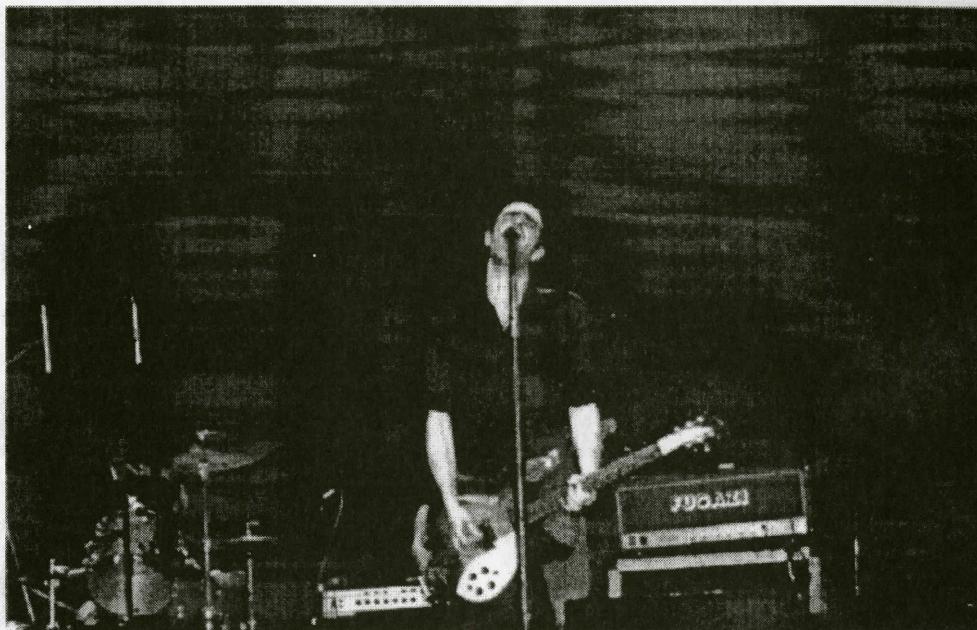
exploring, not that you hadn't before. But instead of just playing the same style that had worked for you before you continue to change things up. You could keep making *Repeater* again and again but what would be the point of that?

A lot of it has to do with the way the band has developed. When the band first started Brendan and I weren't in the band, so a lot of the songs had been written by Ian or by Ian and Joe before we joined the group. So, the first record, basically, was not really the product of everyone's contributions, musically speaking. Things opened up immediately once I started playing guitar and we got more integrated into the band. So, I don't look at the early stuff as less mature it is just a different way of songwriting. Now it is more complicated because there is so much more input from all the members happening - and I am not sure if it is better or worse, frankly, it is just different, it is just different ways of doing it. You build on what you have done before and you try not to repeat yourself, not because you are dismissive of what you have done before but because it is more interesting to try to do something different, that's all.

We spoke, also, of how you are a big fan of music and you are always listening to music. And so I would assume that your influences have expanded incredibly even the time that you started playing in Fugazi. Tying into the theory that existence is defined by experience - I mean, you have grown up listening to punk rock, playing punk rock - has that diet of thought provoking punk rock led you to creating more innovative music?

I guess so. But a lot of it has to do with local influences, as well, and maybe those aren't as apparent to people if you didn't live here. One thing about DC is that bands really do feed off of each other even if the bands don't sound anything alike, there is this building on whatever other bands in town are doing and being inspired by that. I think it has a lot to do with that, as well. It is just catching influences locally and also listening to stuff. The more stuff you listen to the more stuff you have got working around in the back of your brain. Even when we were younger, though, we were always listening to all kinds of crazy ass shit. So, there has always been a lot of material to draw from.

You guys seem very meticulous about the band and the recordings, so are there a lot of songs that never even make it to an





**album?**

Yeah, oh yeah. Actually, one thing that will be sort of interesting for people, when our movie and soundtrack come out, a lot of that material that was scrap-heaped we used as soundtrack music for the movie. So, when that soundtrack comes out, there is a bunch of stuff on there that is demo versions of songs that have already been released but also songs that never really made the cut and are in their weird scrap-heap form. I am not saying it is the most mind boggling thing on earth [laughs], but for people who are into the band it is kind of interesting because you get to hear stuff that didn't make the cut. And some of the stuff is great, some of the stuff is really interesting and you will listen back to it and think, "I'm not really sure why we didn't do this." [laughs] But a lot of stuff gets junked; particularly musically, lyrically not so much because, like I said, we don't write tons and tons of lyrics but musically a lot of stuff has hit the dirt.

**I noticed that you were playing a new instrumental on this last West coast tour.**

Yeah, that is a new song that we are working on. We actually have a few pieces but that was the one that was the most together, that we wanted to play out. I am not sure if that will end up having lyrics on it or not. [Talk turns to recent West coast tour in February-March of 1999] It was weird, on this trip there were a few nights where things got kind of strange but for the most part, compared to shows we played in the past, I do feel like there was a shift happening. It used to be shows were so confrontational, we couldn't get through a set without there being an enormous amount of trying to cool things down or keeping people from beating the shit out of each other. There is still some rough stuff but for the most part it is not anywhere near as hectic as it has been in the past. There has been some progress. We really enjoyed this last trip, I must say. The West coast trip was really good for us.

**You always hear things about Fugazi shows, and the confrontational aspects, but I have never seen much of it myself. Nothing too extreme.**

It really depends. When you get a chance to see this movie that we are putting together [*Instrument*], there is a scene in there where we are playing in Knoxville, Tennessee and things get really out of control. We were really ambivalent about putting it in the movie because it takes up an enormous amount of time and it is not the most fun thing to watch but there is a point in there.

**You have always made a point of keeping a strong control on all the bands actions - with everything from Dischord to the shows - but is every move the band makes well planned out?**

Well, everything that we decide to do is discussed by everyone in the band. We have pretty regular meetings in terms of making sure we all agree on how we want to proceed with certain things but we don't work that far ahead into the future, we work with a limited power. Right now we know that we are touring Iceland, Ireland, and the UK at the end of April and May and we are discussing stuff with that. And we have some work to do with the film screenings but a lot of the band's policies and stuff we hatched that out really early on in the band's career and at this point it is like a machine that runs on it's own.

**They are just so well defined?**

Yeah. When the band first started we had quite a few arguments because there was a lot of stuff to work through and once that all got sorted out it really works on it's own. I mean, Ian does a *hell* of a lot of work managing the band - he books the group, he runs the label, he has a lot of work to do in terms of that. We kind of divide up the labors within that: I deal a lot with the communications in terms of answering our mail and our e-mails, which is turning into a lot of work, it is a lot of hours of the day to keep on top of that stuff but, again, it is something we feel strongly about doing. Everyone in the band has different jobs, roles within it. Outside of Dischord, the label, which has a bunch of people working for it, we have to cover the ground ourselves. We have managed to work it out.

**When you write and record something do you ever later reflect on it and see a greater meaning in it? Do you see something that**

**maybe you didn't realize at the time?**

That happens. Quite honestly, I don't really listen to our records, hardly at all, after we make them.

**Even playing a song.**

Oh, playing a song? All the time. When we play live we don't use a set list and we have to really pay attention to each other because we tend to re-work the songs, some of them more drastically than others, when we play live. There is a sense that you can take a song and fuck with it and the rest of the band has to follow you or check into what you are doing. [laughs] So, a lot of the times we will be playing a song and you will suddenly think "oh, shit, I want to do this," or a lyrical change or we will expand a part or whatever. That kind of stuff happens all the time and that is what keeps the songs really fresh because they always feel like they can be kind of reshaped.

**You don't ever feel that they lose their meaning?**

Not generally.

**Because you still play "Waiting Room" and a lot of old songs.**

What is weird is that I was really nervous when we first started the band, I was like "I don't think we can keep playing these songs forever, we always have to keep moving, do new stuff," but it seems the way we make out sets - we have eighty, actually maybe ninety songs that we know, that we practice, and we can play any of them - when we play live we make up the sets as we go along. We just start songs and we work off each other and build a set as we go, it keeps it fresh. So, we might not do "Waiting Room" for three or four nights and then we will play it again and it doesn't feel played out because the sets are always evolving and they work off each other in this way. There are a few songs that occasionally you will play them... someone will start a song and you're like "oh, man, this one." You may not feel it that well at the time but it is pretty few and far between. They seem to have retained something, I don't know why, but it is always fun to play.

**That is great, though, that they aren't losing their energy and expression.**

It's not a chore, I will tell you that. Particularly with the old songs, it is nice at some point in the set to be able to put the guitar down, for me, and do the old stuff where I don't necessarily have to play guitar. In the early days, I wasn't playing guitar so the whole set was basically singing back-ups or singing lead on songs and just moving around. For me, it is a real release, I enjoy it, so I am always happy to play those songs.

**As far as culture and art, what do you feel the music of Fugazi is expressing?**

Hmmm. I don't know how to answer that one. [laughs]

**Well, rock'n'roll or punk rock - guitar driven rock - is, in a way, the most exciting art form because it changes so continually and because it is such a social commentary. It adapts so quickly and so much to what is going on around it, especially with youth. So, are there any real strong expressions that you feel you are releasing in that sense?**

I don't think that is for me to say, I really don't know. That is the kind of question that is best seen from the outside. You are right, there is something about the immediacy of rock'n'roll and the immediacy of a concert; that is true, it is really different. Having worked on film - working on this film or doing films on my own - or writing or these other more reflective things, I find them less satisfying, there is something so in the moment...

**It is that now moment.**

At any moment something could go down. It is like a tight rope where something really fucked could happen or something really great could happen, and it just teeters on the edge of that. And, to me, that is the best, that performance type stuff; there is a looseness to it or spontaneity that is really awesome. I don't think that it is particular to us, it is particular to the experience of rock'n'roll.

**Your approach to political and social issues - and we mentioned this a little bit before - is very unique in the way that you handle it lyrically. The lyrics are more involved and there are multiple layers in the use of language and what you will. But that is a**



very different approach than most political punk bands, most are going to have a more preaching style in the way that they direct their political or social messages. So, I was wondering if the way you approach it is almost a reaction to that style?

Well, we have actually been accused of being that kind of a punk band, some songs have been interpreted that way. Some songs are fairly on the surface, some things we address we address pretty point blank and other things we don't. My personal feeling about writing songs is: I think a lot of issues are pretty complicated and some issues are not. Depending on what I am trying to say, I will either try to respect the complexity of it and reflect that in the lyric or I will try to address the bluntness of it and express that. Depending on the subject matter and depending on what you are trying to do, they are both viable ways to write a song. But a lot of stuff I feel unclear about or I feel complicated about or there are layers of things going on with it and I want to work that into the song. It is like you are trying to shape a tool and if you give a tool more functions then it is more useful - it is hard to explain. I think there is a lot of stuff going on in the country and in the world that is really fucking fucked up. [laughs] I want to reflect on it but I also don't want to write something that is easily digested and then easily processed because there's no barb, there's nothing that hooks it into you. So it is like "oh yeah, they are mad about this shit," it just slides off your back if it is just a slogan. It is really easy - not easy - but it can be done, you can write an anthem that can generate some spirit and some energy with people - and a lot of great anthemic songs have been written - but sometimes you also want to do something that is going to generate or produce some thought or reflect on something that might motivate them to do something more serious.

**Right. And you often wonder, with those anthemic songs, if people are really grasping the message of it. There is also the thing with slogans: that if you can put your beliefs in a slogan then they don't really mean that much, if you can condense them down to one sentence or a hooded sweatshirt.**

Right. A lot of people use music as a gasoline to give them energy to do stuff. Anthems can generate a mood in a crowd and it can be really powerful but that is only one aspect, it only goes so far, you hopefully also want to supply some ideas along with it.

**Do you strongly believe, though, that music can change things socially or politically?**

I think that people can and people are hugely affected by music. It is not a direct causal relationship but it helps affect change because people affect change and people are affected by music. Obviously, if you write a protest song it is not like you are going to wake up the next morning and everything is going to be solved, but people are going to use that music in their lives to go out and do stuff. I think people can make a lot more of a difference in things than they think they can. I also think music can act in a way besides just the songs and the messages, in terms of doing things like actions or beliefs or consciousness awareness type of events where you can couple the thing with something else. Even something rudimentary like raising funds for things. The benefit concept gets overplayed and there is a lot of stuff that can make people really cynical about it, the way rock stars use it, and it gets kind of bogus. But on a grass roots level, if you are playing shows and raising money for groups where that money is a serious asset then those things are really viable, too.

**In a sense, if you are working with very forward-thinking politics or social ideas your art, in your case music, should be as forward-thinking as your message. I don't know if that has even been a conscious thing on your part but you have continually tried to make innovative, new music while also carrying very progressive messages.**

Yeah, maybe, I hadn't thought of that.

**To say something political, it doesn't have to be done through only a three-chord punk rock song. There can be a more advanced way to do it, that in many ways could work more effectively.**

Yeah, I agree. A band like The Ex are a perfect example but, again, there are tons of incredible three-chord anthems that are awesome, too. So, I see the value in all that kind of stuff.

**Did you ever study politics in school at all?**

I didn't, not really. I finished college and I studied prison literature and I studied a few things but I didn't focus on political stuff.

**Where is the interest born from, then?**

I don't know where it was born from, maybe living in Washington, there is certainly enough crap that goes on down here. You are always aware of it, politics is really in the air here. I guess, also, just through punk rock. It was such a big part of all that music and it generated that. In DC there has always been a really active, socially conscious thing going on here. There has been an organization called Positive Force that has always been agitating and creating protests, they have basically organized every local show we have ever done and we have always done them in conjunction with them and doing benefits. So, there is a high degree of awareness here.

**As you are growing older, now that you are reaching your mid-thirties almost, do you ever worry about having to maybe obtain a more normal life - I don't mean to say "normal" life - but how Brendan has a child and a family, does that ever sink in, that you need to stop being that seventeen year old?**

I am happy with the way my life has gone. Again, I think things will take care of themselves, however things develop. I don't get hung up on issues of security or issues of normalcy. I just kind of progress and see how things evolve.

**Do you ever feel extremely lucky?**

Definitely

**You are living any punk rock kids dream, that you can take it and make a life out of it.**

Oh, completely, it is unbelievable. I don't feel lucky because it is not like it was handed to us, certainly we are working really hard, but I am very appreciative of what I have been able to do, particularly in terms of traveling. I can't think of any other thing that I could have done which would have allowed me to go to as many places - we have been to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Tasmania, we have been to so many crazy places as a band. I do feel incredibly appreciative that we have been able to do that

kind of stuff. It is not really a matter of luck but I do feel, like I said, appreciative of it.

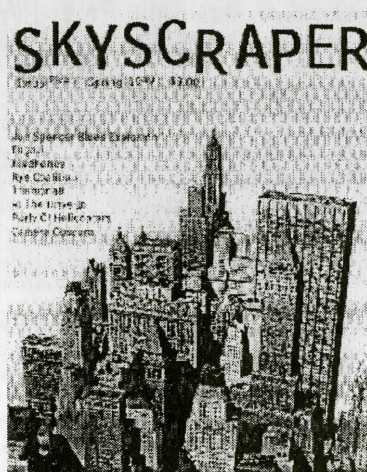
**Has having that freedom to tour and record whenever you want - totally on your own schedule - helped prolong the life of the band?**

Absolutely. There is no way that we could have ever done something where we felt like the band was under orders from some outside body. It is maybe particular to the way we are as individuals. We really need to be in the driver's seat or we can't get anything done. That is just the way it is.

**If the band stops touring, which it seems you guys have hinted at a little bit, what should we expect?**

Well, I know one thing: I don't think Fugazi will be a band if we don't tour in some fashion. Being a live band is completely vital to us being a group. This isn't set in stone but that is the way I feel right now, personally. There has to be some

ability of the band to perform live. I don't want to become this removed sound architecture group that just released records. [laughs] I feel like it is really important for the band to be out there playing -





for me, that has always been what the group has been about. I feel strongly about our records but if people really want to understand what we are doing they need to come and see the band live. So, we will tour less but we will continue to tour. There has been a bunch of different issues that have made touring complicated for us now, not just the fact that Brendan has a kid. We just need to keep trying to be creative and adaptive and try to think of ways to do it. We are just going one step at a time - we have this three week tour coming up and when that is done we are just going to continue to try to make it work. The thing that is most difficult right now, for us, and the thing that is really frustrating is that we have always prided ourselves in terms of coverage; we would go out and we would play everywhere in the States, we would do small towns, big towns, really try to make sure that we played everywhere. And now with these shorter tours it is much, much more complicated. We worked really hard on this last tour trying to include a Phoenix show or a Denver show but we just couldn't do it; this trip we had to fly, there were so many weird economic things, and with price of the shows and just trying to make the whole thing work it is incredibly complicated. So, we decided that we are going to have to come back and do a second West tour - Midwest, West - which would cover those places that we missed, and we are going to do that at some point. But we haven't been to Europe in five years - we do things in cycles, we try to put things in line and do them in order fairly and then within those things we try to do a lot of coverage. I am not sure we have been entirely successful doing those short tours because it is just hard, it is really hard to map it out. So, we are still working on it. But we never forget! That is the one thing: we never forget what we have skipped, so if the band is still a band, eventually we will come back around, it's a guarantee. If we can't do it and the band is not playing live then that's it. That is the end of the story.

**There has been all this speculation about the band breaking up.** There has been for, seriously, about five years. [laughs] Since '94 when Brendan moved to the West coast for the first time, people were like "oh, it's over," and it almost was over then. But more recently, the *End Hits* thing was one of the biggest mistakes we ever made because...

**It just perpetuated it.**

It was kind of a joke. There have always been these small jokes, like we had this matrix scratching that said "don't worry this is the last one," which blew up in our face because everyone thought it was the last record, and that was on *Steady Diet of Nothing*. In one sense, it is good because people really come out to the shows because they think it is the last time we are going to be there. [laughs] On the other hand, we can't guarantee that we are going to be together in six months but at the same time there are no immediate plans to break up. When we are going to break up, definitely, people will know about it, it is not going to be something we are going to hide and people are going to have to cut open the entrails of a bird to figure out. [laughs] We will definitely let people know.

**I was going to say that I know that as a band you don't place expectations on the future but that when you do break up you will definitely say it.**

Oh, it will be broadcast far and wide. And I can't say this as an absolute fact but I really do feel that if we don't continue to play

live or find some way to play live, I really don't see how the band can justify it's existence. That, to me personally, is a really important thing. So, we will see how it pans out but right now we have been alright, we have been managing to get out there, here and there, and do some tours. Even if we are losing on the coverage battle, I still think the shows themselves have been really good events.

**Where do you imagine going with Fugazi that you haven't already?**

Geographically?

**In the whole scope of the band. Are there any things that you want out of it that you have still yet to achieve?**

A great record. That is really the thing that we want more than anything, is to release a record that we feel completely a hundred percent great about.

**You could really upset people saying that.**

What do you mean?

**There are so many people that feel you have already made some of the greatest records of the last fifteen years, at least.**

Well... I hope so... I am really glad if people think that. It is just a personal dissatisfaction. It is also maybe something that is unattainable because there is a specific thing that I want to get out of it that hasn't happened yet. [laughs] But I don't know if it is going to happen.

**Do you know what that is, really, that you want to get out of it?** Ummm, I don't know.

**Is it the kind of thing that you will know it once you get it?**

Yeah, it is kind of like that. With shows, I know. When the show is over, whether it went as far as it could or not, I feel pretty confident about being able to analyze them. It is like looking at a picture of yourself, there is something so over about a record. It is done, there is no shift in it. That is why shows are so great because they kind of evaporate. The record just sits there, it never goes anywhere; it is like a stone, you have to stare at it and it doesn't change.

**And you are always going to find those little, little things that no one else is even going to notice that you are unhappy with.**

God... I remember reading an interview with John Lennon when I was a kid and they were going through every Beatles song and he was answering what he thought about the songs, and everything he said about the songs was, "oh, we blew that backing vocal" or "I wish we hadn't done this thing there." No one who listens to the record ever hears that shit but it is the really awful position of the guy who made it to have to see where the stitching is bad. You were there when it was made and that stuff really wrangles you. I also think that it is really hard for us to listen to our own voices. That is the hardest thing for me, really wishing that my voice... sometimes it freaks you out. It's weird.

**So, are you just going to keep going until you reach that record?**

I hope so. [laughs] My feeling is that we get closer every time. Again, if people don't so much like the newer stuff - and I think a lot of people don't so much - then I feel okay about it because they have access to the stuff they do like, the stuff is out there. It is just that we need to keep finding something else and keep working. You read about your favorite band and all they do is dis their old material but I am very proud of everything that we have done, not even just this band but other bands that we have been in. I have never felt dismissive about anything, I always feel hungry for the next step.



# Vanilla Ice

I know a lot of you when you saw this in here assumed it would be fake. Guess what? It's real. This was the very 1st in-person interview I have ever done. I got to the Trocadero (Philadelphia Club) about 4:30 for the 5:00 interview that was planned. In-person interviews are a pain in the sac to get started especially when dealing with the Troc. Go around the front...go around the back...who are you here for?...blah..blah..I finally just decided to call Mr. Ice's managers cell phone to find out what was up? It was a call that cost me \$15, it seems he may have been in Philly but his cell phone is from Hawaii!! We straighten out a New time which gave me time for me and my wife (Did I mention that she came with me?) to get some Japanese food and more importantly some Saki! (My buzz was wearing off!) Luckily, I ordered a pot of saki which gave me my buzz back and then some. This pot was never-ending. Now, I felt good. Well, until I had to deal with the Troc again and then hear how Ice's Manager was told I was there and he said "Uh, Huh!" So can I go in then? No, I can't because his manager just said "Uh, huh!" and didn't say "Let Him in!" Do I like dealing with the Troc? Anyway, his manager finally comes to get us and we're in. They lead us backstage and tell us that as soon as Ice is off the phone we'll do the interview. We stand there watching him not 3 feet from us as he talks on the phone and I'm thinking about how weird this is. He finishes up and we get introduced and we travel the backstage area looking for a spot to do the interview. I turn down his first two suggestions which were directly behind the stage (Loud as Hell!) and a big room that had some dude passed out on the floor in it and people constantly flowing through. He then turns down my 1st suggestion, the weight room. Maybe, he's afraid I would challenge him to a bench off. We finally agree on this room with a door that closes. The room has maybe one working bulb and it's flickering. It's dark and seedy. Perfect! I first give him his very own copy of Metal Rules! Magazine and an Official Metal Rules! T-shirt! He responds "Killer!" with each gift and wondered aloud "Who's that guy?" when looking at my face on the T-shirt. "What a character!" he exclaims! We both laugh and he says "Thank You!" obviously appreciating the gifts.



MR: Now bear with me here, I had a hard time coming up with these questions because of the way you get beaten up in the press. I was trying to write questions but trying not to piss you off. So we'll have some fun questions.

**Vanilla Ice:** I don't get beaten up quite as often as I used to. (Laughs)  
MR: You can talk as much as you like. I don't edit what you say, so the longer you talk the longer the interview. First thing, did you know

that your tour manager John Bush has the same name as the singer from ANTHRAX?

**VI:** John Bush, yeah really, killer. I like ANTHRAX, dude.

MR: That's some Metal for you there. Well how is the tour going so far?

**VI:** Awesome. Overwhelming. Completely being blessed. Its fucking killer, I mean I had no idea what to expect putting this record out being completely different than anything I have ever done. And plus kind of starting over again with that stigma attached to me so its like to see this whole brand new body piercing, tattooed, stage diving, crazy crowd coming out to embrace me and there is a shit load of them. There's like this underground following. We had some radio play but for the most part this records really not a radio record. Then to see so many people come out is just fucking awesome man. Like I said I had no idea what to expect and its just amazing. All the shows have been sold out, pretty much. We played a 10,000 seater in Padre, just last week we played an 8,000 seater in Panama. Went to Penn State sold it out, went to Buffalo sold it out. All the people that couldn't get in there drove all the way to last night's show.

MR: You losing your voice now? (It had obviously been abused.)

**VI:** Oh yeah, its fried.

MR: Yeah I can hear it. (We laugh) I was gonna ask what kind of crowd you're getting but from the crowd out front, it looks like you have a surprisingly pretty young crowd out there. You've got a lot of fifteen and sixteen year olds out there in line. That's like all we saw out there which is really surprising cause I thought you would get the KORN, SEPULTURA kind of crowd.

**VI:** That's for the most part what it's been. Last night was a younger crowd as well. But I think that was the first time last night as well and this is probably the second time tonight. For the most part it has been the LIMP BIZKIT, KORN crowd. Older eighteen to twenty-one but you know its an all ages show, we don't restrict anybody. If you're into the music come on out the music's not aimed any age bracket. It's for anybody's ears. (We were then interrupted by John Bush telling Ice he was going to pick up some dude at the Airport and get a bite to eat. Ice told him not to go without him. He was doing the interview and then wanted some food. He was starved. Maybe, next time I'll bring a picnic for my interview subject.)

MR: How did you like working with Ross Robinson?

**VI:** Fucking awesome.

MR: He's a young guy isn't he? He looked very young.

**VI:** Thirty-two, I think, thirty-one.

MR: He looks like he's in his twenties.

**VI:** Yeah, he looks young. He's a vegetarian so maybe that helps him. Plus he didn't have to go on the road, maybe that helps too. You get older out on the road.

MR: Do you like any of the bands he works with? Like KORN, SEPULTURA and...

**VI:** Sure, I love 'em all. Pretty much for the most part I like everything he's done. Definitely, I just can't say enough great things about the guy. He's just super-talented, you know a huge heart. A lot of people get the wrong impression about him, because I've read a lot of stuff about him saying that he throws guitars against walls and really gets crazy and shit. Which is true but he's not mean about it, there is a different thing. If a musician is just sitting down with his headphones on and he's recording that's just not gonna fly with Ross. He will be trying to concentrate on his playing and shit, not messing up and Ross will come in and say "Fuck all that shit get up fuckin' give me some of that anger." And what he will do is before we play he'll find something out about everybody, like really deep and personal something that really bothers them and he'll mention that in there. He'll say



"Think about your dad when he was whipping your ass." Or something like that when you were this or that and just fucking pull that out of you. And fucking yeearrgh!! And give you one of those. So while we're recording it's not like a recording session that you see most people do. It's more like everybody is like fuckin' yeearrgh!! (At this point he starts bouncing around like a Mental patient and Maria and I just smile but are preparing to run....) We're recording and he just catches the energy. In the beginning I heard him record like this and then I seen him record like that and I'll tell you it's two different songs.

MR: Is that your crew out there now?

VI: Yeah.

MR: They're playing OVERKILL riffs. (The opening bass line to "Powersurge" off of *Taking Over* to be exact.) Very cool. I just interviewed them they'll be in the same issue as you. What other Metal bands do you like?

VI: My favorite band is SLAYER and I like PANTERA, they're from Dallas, pretty cool. But I'm definitely into the heavy shit. I've changed musically personally because of all the things I've been through. The stuff I'm writing about now contains a lot of anger, a lot of anxiety and depression. It's fucked up that, that is the shit I remember, but that left the impression on my brain like a tattoo. I wish I could remember some great things but I don't have too many great things that happened to me in the last ten years. So it's been a rough road for me, pretty much. That is what I'm writing about and that's what music should be about. I really believe that it's unfortunate that I never got to do that until now but at least I got the chance to do that now. So I'm grateful for that. Yeah, venting through the music exactly and using it as my therapy and fuck the image. Now I have an anti-image, which is just being myself now because of what everything was before, being a puppet for a record company. Record company where whatever you want to call it, they were pulling all the strings and had everything staged for me and all that shit. I'm very happy to be away from that. A lot of people look at my success if you want to call it that, I don't call it success I call it hell. If you look at the numbers and shit and how many records I sold and the music awards that I got, people think I live this famous lifestyle of being famous and I don't know what the fuck they got of me but it is the wrong image. Honestly I've never been able to enjoy any of my success, if that's what you want to label it, at all, it's been fucking hell. Right now I'm enjoying it after all those years. I wish I would have started out like this from the beginning. It's really fucked up how my whole thing came about because I played for three years, I signed with this label out of Atlanta called Ichibon Records, I played opening for an all black audience. I opened for ICE T, STETSOSONIC, EPMD, PUBLIC ENEMY I did the *Stop the Violence Tour*. For three years, I thought this is where I'm gonna be for the rest of my life. This is what I made the "To the Extreme" record for, this audience. And when it came to down to signing with a major label I had two deals on the table. I had one for thirty grand to sign with Def Jam a very credible. (I tell him of course that Rick Rubin rules!!! -Jeff) And Hank Shockney was gonna produce the record, which is PUBLIC ENEMY they were gonna be on the record which would have given me fucking shit loads of credibility forever. Or take a million five to take my record to sign with SBK and crossover to the pop market. So I was like, "fuck"; I was three car payments behind on my 5.0 at that point, I was living with three other guys in an apartment I couldn't pay my share of the rent. A million five or thirty grand, uh yeah. So I took the money, which was the wrong thing to do, I sold out.

MR: You still think so?

VI: Absolutely!

MR: You must have enjoyed your wealth a little.

VI: No way. And you know why, from 1991 to 1994 I was heavily on drugs because what happened from that was, yes the money was huge tons of money flowing in like fucking a faucet left on just flowing in. I was riding it out, so what happened was overnight my crowd went from that crowd I was just telling you to huge arenas just selling them out everywhere. Twelve-year-olds with braces like that overnight, I was like what the fuck where did my crowd go, you know what I'm saying. And I'm still

performing the same fucking record the same fucking music but to a completely different crowd. So what happened out of that was I got turned into a novelty act. A fucking teenybopper novelty act which was not what I intended not what I wanted. And it was too late at that point, we were selling too many records. Everything it was just so huge it was just way too late to turn anything around. So from '91-'94, being a novelty act leads to a lot of criticism and everything. And everything just contradicts everything I was doing. I was put into this very uncomfortable position to be a role model for these kids, when I'm a dropout, I sold drugs fucking coming up. How the fuck can I be put in this position?! It was very uncomfortable for me I told everyone don't look at me like a fucking role model don't follow my patterns. If you want to be like me fucking do it your own way don't go through what I been through.



MR: It always seems that it starts off some criticism. I was telling her (Maria) earlier it's like KISS, they were real big then people lost interest then all of a sudden it's like you're gay if you like KISS. And then when they put they're make-up on again everybody is like, "I always loved them".

VI: That's exactly like it is for me now. The same people that embraced it coming up are the same people who turned on it are the same people who are coming back out. But you know what I don't know if it's the same people coming back out cause like I said it's more of a body-pleasing tattooed crowd but maybe that crowd grew up. Like you said there are younger kids here and there's some places I play where for the most part they're older and then I play a college town you get the college crowd will come out. It's a very broad fan base not any particular one but the one that I'm creating is the under ground, KORN, Heavy Metal crowd.

MR: Yeah. Metal Rules!

VI: That's the one I'm catering to because I'm here to tell you that I'm very appreciative of my fans and I'm going to cater to the ones that appreciate what I'm doing and not the ones who don't. So as far as you mentioning in the beginning that I've had bad press, well I completely think this is a complete success compared to what I've had in the past. Because maybe five percent of the shit I read, I don't know maybe you're just looking at what you've read around this city or New York or something but for the West Coast...

MR: No, I'm not talking about bad press for this album. I was talking about in the past.

VI: Oh right.

MR: No, I'm talking about all the crap that went on before. From what I've read recently it starts off as "we thought this was a joke but no, this kicks ass!"

VI: That's exactly what I'm doing now trying to jump over that hurdle for people to accept what I'm doing now is serious. Because the novelty act you never can accept it seriously. And they accepted it serious in the beginning but then it was turned into that. You know how N'SYNC and the BACKSTREET BOYS



were created to be novelty acts I was never designed to be that I was turned into that shit. Why? Because of maybe my complexion, because I'm doing Rap music whatever. It crossed into a Pop market, which I never even listened to Pop music. So, it was very uncomfortable, it led to drugs, I had to escape from reality because of what you're saying about bad press. I seen Jim Carrey do skits on me I seen all kinds of fucked up shit and it hurt it hurt me bad.

MR: Did you ever find it amusing at all?

VE: Now, yeah. Then, no way man, my music is serious to me this is my diary. I fucking put my heart into that shit and they're decrediting me and making jokes about me and shit. I didn't come into this fucking... You can't pay me enough to even take my credibility away like that. So what happened was I sold out which is exactly what happened to me they took my credibility away. Which led to a drug phase, I had to use drugs to escape from reality cause every time I would come back into reality I would see that shit and the only way I could have fun was drugs. So I was doing heroin, blow, ecstasy on a fucking daily basis. Drunk as hell all the time partying my ass off. Tried to commit suicide in 1994, millions of dollars in the bank, million dollar boat in the backyard, Porsches in the garage like twenty cars in the garage. Anything material wise you could ever want, and that's why what you were saying a minute ago about having a lot of money and I was like, "So"? Because I had plenty of money and here I am totally unhappy wantin' to die.

MR: Money can't buy happiness.

VI: At all and I didn't know that and I thought it was all about money coming up and I think anybody in my shoes would have taken the same path I took. A million five or thirty grand because at nineteen that's all it was about to me but later in life I found out it wasn't. Maybe it was a learning experience for me whatever but I didn't succeed with the attempt, which is a trip because I fucking loaded myself up that night purposefully, heavily. It was a trip that I made it through blood coming out of my nose I mean it was ugly friends dumping buckets of cold water on me trying to keep me alive. I was convulsing and shit puking everywhere just dry heaving, turning white as a sheet, holy fuck! Anyway I woke up the next day felt like I was given a second chance.

MR: You got the leaf tattoo. (To go with turning over a New leaf.)

VI: Yeah, I see you read the bio.

MR: I pay attention.

VI: Basically from that point on I had to eliminate that whole crowd I was running with. Cause that's the crowd I grew up with, it was all my friends and shit and they were still doing the drugs and shit. They didn't want to quit with me so all of a sudden I'm alone on the planet. Depressed out of my fucking mind so what did I do? I went to a shrink I got on some antidepressants and he found I had this thing called ADD, attention deficit disorder. Which really doesn't help me at all as far as I am concerned, maybe it does cause a lot of people think that it fuels me and drives me and gives you that extra boost to do whatever you dream of or whatever. But me I look at it like a disease and it mentally fucks me up so I have a drug called aderill that I'm taking on top of the antidepressants it helps me focus on every thing and after some time I fucking pulled through it. And thank God I did cause I can look at my little daughter right now and I almost cry going, God man if I would have succeeded then this beautiful little girl wouldn't be here right now. The love of my life, the best thing that ever fucking happened to me. So I guess I had some people praying for me and I guess there is a God man because no book ever taught me that. And I'm not gonna believe what generation after generation brings down. I believe it's all been manipulated. All I know is what's in my heart man, I had an experience that can't just be a coincidence in my heart so at that point I started believing in God. And now since I've done that I've been blessed tremendously not just musically but like I said personally at home. I mean I have a wife and a kid now and my depression is gone. It's hard to understand how happy I am now just by listening to my record but it's fucking great, it feels fucking great. And to see so many people on top of that being blessed with the music now. There's a fucking huge buzz going on right now and like I said so many

people coming out to embrace it, it's just a blessing man. I'm very blessed over and over. I feel fucking great now. The only thing is I have a bunch of issues in my brain that I've been through still that I want to let out and I did this record in a month and half with Ross. We recorded it in the Indigo Ranch where KORN did theirs, LIMP BIZKIT and all these bands. Basically we had caterers and everything and we stayed up on this mountain in Malibu it's way at the top of this mountain didn't come down for a month and a half we took a month and a half and got the album done from start to finish. It was just so good, the buzz, the vibe was so great the musicians that worked on the record were so into it and so incredible. We all really, really got to know each other like sitting around a camp fire smoking a joint talking about your inner feelings and shit you wouldn't talk about with the average person on a daily basis. (Except maybe to me because I rule! -Jeff) Plus meeting Ross and finding a person with such a huge heart like him that really is listening to your problems and shit. Cause most people you try to tell them that shit about dark things that happened in your life they'll put everybody in a bad mood and you can just see the whole mood of everyone just going down and they just want to walk away and hear something happy. Well Ross wants to hear that shit because he cares and he's got such a huge heart which is really rare to run into people like that these days. From my shoes I don't see many people like that at all I see a bunch of fake fucks out there with two faces all day. So I opened up to the man, not music wise or anything friendship wise and he told me you need to put this on the record man I said, "No, no dude this is from me to you I don't want the world to know this". He said, "man you need to let it out of you", I said, "no people are gonna judge me upon this shit and I don't want people to fucking judge me on this shit". He says man you're gonna be free if you do it. So he had a way of capturing this emotional this real emotional rare moment on tape from me. It was so true that I was so free afterwards it was like total therapy music was the outlet it wasn't gonna happen anywhere else.

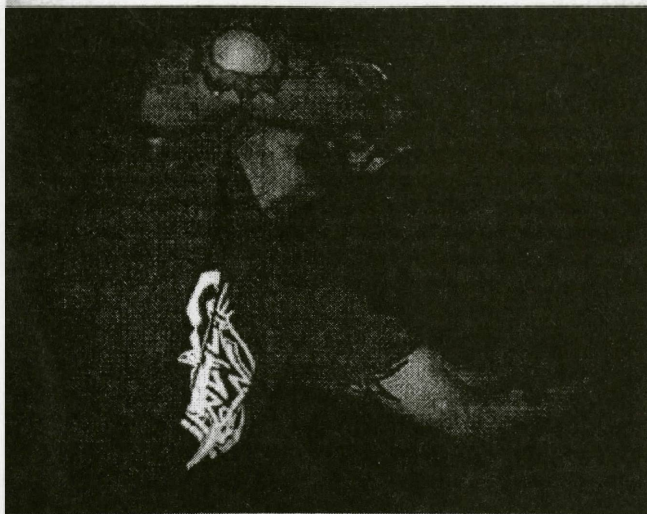
MR: The album seems so sincere I mean when I listen to it, personally I wasn't into what you were before. I mean I'm a Metalhead and it wasn't my thing and they sent me that, I got it from your label and I opened it up and said, "What's this". I was totally shocked when I saw it and I put it on and said, "oh this kicks ass" and that's when I contacted...It was about the music I said it doesn't matter. People are going to be like why did you interview VANILLA ICE and I'm gonna be like, "I don't give a fuck this is my magazine I'm gonna do whatever the fuck I want". I



interviewed STRYPER last issue people gave me shit about that. Its what I like, you know what I mean?

VI: It's cool everyone should have their own opinion and stop trying to be this hipper person. You should follow what you think is cool and everyone should base their opinion on that. Everybody has their own opinion, HUEY LEWIS AND THE





NEWS and shit I never fucking liked it. They sucked.

MR: Well Sports is a good record.

VI: I hate people like that. I've got some shit that I don't like but I don't run around going, "that sucks and you should think it sucks too". Because I let the people who like it like it. It's just irritating, just sit back and enjoy it don't make such a big issue about such things. So, anyway he caught this moment on tape and well seeing as we did it in a month and a half and I'm ready to make this other record so bad because I feel I've only scratched the surface on the all shit I need to get out of me. And at the end of the record is when it really started to come together for me, we did "Scars", on there which is very personal to me it deals with being abused and shit and my mother and how she got abused by her father and shit. They say you're supposed to forgive and forget I find it totally impossible under today's rules and shit. Because there's a level you can forgive and forget certain things, small little things that doesn't really impact your life as such a big deal. But when you see your mother and you see the scars across her neck and you see the scars under her fucking arms, where she had her ribs removed, she had a tracheotomy here you can see that and every time you look at her you see it, you can't forget it. So you can't forget it, you can't forgive it, it's impossible so that book the Bible, they call it, is totally impossible to fucking go by. Because that to me, I can't do it. It's impossible and I don't think anybody can. If somebody kills your daughter you can't forget it that's a level ten. Certain shit you can this shit you can't. Anyway "Scars" is basically about that part of my life. And "ADD" all these songs started to come together in the end those were the last few songs we did. We really didn't know what we were going to come up with in the beginning. Ross and I were just like let's get together and do this, whatever we come up with we come up with. We had no idea the record was gonna come out as dark as it did. He had no idea of all the demons that I had in me or anything.

MR: That's really heavy.

VI: Yeah, it wasn't intended to be. It wasn't intended to be played on radio it wasn't intended to be to any crowd. None of that shit was in our mind. You know radio has these limitations and shit. There's a lot of bands out there that will make their record around those limitations. Like three, three and a half minutes, they won't play a song that's over three and a half minutes. They won't play any curse words, won't play any songs that advocate the use of marijuana, da da dah.

MR: So that leaves out most of your album.

VI: That's exactly what I'm saying, I made it for me. I made this fucking record for me, this is my diary it's gonna please me personally. I'm also a person who doesn't judge the success of a record by how many records it sells and most people, for the majority do. You know its all about where they're at on the charts, how many albums they sold this week or that week or this or that. I don't give a fuck about that shit I could care less. Because if you did that, that means that you have to say that

N'SYNC is better than fucking PEARL JAM (That would be tough call for me- Angus) or some shit. There's no way in hell you could convince me of that cause their record sales are greater, there's no way man it doesn't mean it's a better album.

MR: It's better marketing.

VI: Whatever the reason. I just don't judge it upon what it sells; you know what I'm saying? Judge it upon what it does to you personally that you can relate to that moment caught on tape. That's what its all about man, I'm keeping it as fucking real as I can. Unfortunately I have this stigma that's still attached to me so when you think of VANILLA ICE you think of that old Poppy shit. Like I said I'm over that hurdle now and people are starting to lend me an ear again and shit and not just brush it off and joke about it. They see I'm trying to keep it as real as I possibly can but the reason that I didn't change my name is because I think fuck the stigma, fuck what you've heard, fuck VANILLA ICE for all I give a shit cause its not about a name it's a label who gives a fuck. I'm not running from anything hiding from anything its not about the fucking name its about the music. Sit back and listen to the music.

MR: Do you miss dancing though?

VI: No.

MR: Cause that's one of things I used to like about you, was watching you dance.

VI: I used to be that kind of guy, and did this whole Hip Hop kind of thing. I owe all that to that, break dancing but now I've developed more about the music more about the personal side of the music and that's what it should really be about you shouldn't buy the record because I'm a good dancer. Even though a lot of people did because that was the video. The old saying goes video killed the radio star. I mean the life I lived before is completely different than the one I have now.

MR: Looking back on that song, I'm sure you saw your VH-1 special, what did you think of that?

VI: Me personally, I didn't know what to think I didn't know how it was gonna be perceived by everybody else until I just see their reaction and just hear about it.

MR: But what did you personally think?

VI: It was very emotional for me. I was just in tears the whole time. I just saw my life flash before me; it just pissed me off because they promised me they were gonna give me the tape before they edited it and they didn't so there were some inaccuracies there.

MR: Do you want to set the record straight for that?

VI: Not really because I don't want...I got a problem with...I shouldn't even say anything about it right now.

MR: I don't know how they do it cause they go... I interviewed GWAR last week, are you familiar with GWAR?

VI: Yeah sure.

MR: Yeah we interviewed them and they were asked to do one of them (Jeff is slightly mistaken here GWAR was asked to a segment for "Where are They Now" not "Behind the Music"-Angus). And I just wondered if they come up to you and say we want to make a special about you is that all right. They have to ask you right?

VI: Most of the stuff in there is true. Yeah you're right. I turned them down like fifty times. They were offering me money and shit and I'm not one of these artists that did blow all his money. Fortunately I made good investments.

MR: That was another question I had for you.

VI: I actually have more money than I started with. So it's not a financial issue with me. Its funny because not only did I turn down this VH-1 special over and over and over again but the President of VH-1 called my house, the President of MTV said we'll do this for you, we'll do that for you, we'll pay. I said, "man get out of my face I don't want to do it". I don't care I'm sick of hearing that shit. I don't want to see or hear or remind myself of any of that old shit. It almost killed me, I'm beyond that personally. So, basically they told me that they would give me final editing and shit and they didn't so I'm very pissed off about that.

MR: I thought you might want to straighten it out...

VI: No.

MR: I don't edit. I'll put it in there exactly you have my word on it. I'll give you my home phone number you can call me up and yell at me if its not there.



VI: Right but, I don't want to burn any bridges.

MR: Right, that's cool.

VI: The reason why is I want to sit back and see what the reaction of everybody is. That is disturbing to me as well. But you know its more than that. What I'm saying is I want to wait and see what the response is that I get from everybody is that everybody likes it.

MR: I liked it.

VI: So, for the most part the story is true a lot of the dates are wrong and some of the shit is wrong.

MR: How old are you?

VI: I'm thirty.

MR: On that it says you were born in '67.

VI: '68.

MR: Did they say '68 on the special?

VI: No, they said '67 on the special.

MR: OK because I was born in '67 so that's why I thought that was weird. And looking through there was other things. I brought this to show you so you would know. Like this said you were 16 when "Ice Ice Baby" came out and this other one says twenty-five.

VI: I recorded "Ice Ice Baby" when I was sixteen years old. Remember I told you I was on the label Ichibon Records.

MR: OK that was before that.

VI: That was for three years. I was nineteen when everybody picked up on "To the Extreme". "To the Extreme" was not my first record, "Hope" was my first record.

MR: OK.

VI: So nobody really saw it, it sold like forty thousand records in three years.

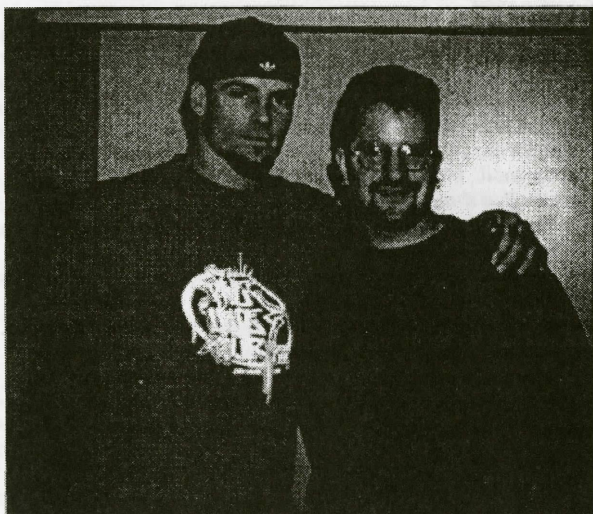
MR: Just so I know what was going on, because I'm like, "how old is this guy?"

VI: I recorded "Ice Ice Baby" when I was sixteen.

MR: So you are thirty. You were born October 30th 1968.

VI: October 31st.

MR: I have some more questions about your VH-1 special. One thing that struck me as weird was when they brought up Madonna's name you went "Ewww." Now I just couldn't ever imagine somebody going out with Madonna and regretting that.



VI: A lot of people don't understand why I regret that.

MR: She was nasty?

VI: Man, I didn't say she's nasty cause I'm not here to slander. Anybody in the public eye. I'm not that type of guy.

MR: You weren't into her.

VI: Yeah. One thing is I regret it cause I was into her cause I went out with her so there was something there for a while. But when I found out what she had done to me. She didn't ask me for permission to release this big Sex book. I just went over her house one time and she just started taking her clothes off and started taking pictures and shit. The next thing I know I see this hard copy big Sex book thing. Slutty book, you know, and I see all these other people in there she's with and I'm like, "oh my God!"

MR: Do you think you were used to do that book?

VI: Totally. She just put me in her slutty package and I just didn't want to be part of it. I'm just not that type of a person I'm a pretty clean kind of a person and a lot of people think that I'm a slut or something because I do get opportunities every night. I think you know that, any entertainer does. And I turn them down all the time.

MR: Have you dated other famous girls?

VI: Yeah.

MR: Anybody I would know?

VI: Naomi Campbell.

MR: Yeah.

VI: Short very short.

Maria: She was in your movie wasn't she?

VI: Yeah.

MR: Very good honey.

VI: Oh uh...(starts Lauging)

MR: Who is it that's making you laugh...

VI: Downtown Julie Brown.

MR: Yeah. Did that accent get on your nerves?

VI: It turned me on actually. Sexy. Her attitude is what turned me off. But I'm glad I never married another entertainer person or anything. Maybe that's not the right thing to say but you know I've met lots of girls and none of them really catch my eye. When I'm talking to this one girl, the one I married, first of all I talked to a lot of chicks and try to find out who they are to see if I'm...

MR: Where did you meet your wife at?

VI: My house at a party on the fourth of July.

MR: So I guess she knew who you were, that was the other part of the question.

VI: Yeah, she knew who I was. But she didn't care really she wanted to be a housewife that's what she told me and I thought she was joking. I never heard a girl say I want to be a housewife. What do you want to do in life? Oh I want to be a stripper I wanna be an actress or something or I'm gonna go do this, I'm wanna be a lawyer or I want to go to school and do this. It's all dreams there's nothing wrong with that.

MR: I think Maria wants to be a housewife.

Maria: Uh no.

VI: There's nothing wrong with that but to a guy that wants to get married he don't want to meet somebody... You know what I'm saying I'm ready to settle down and really have someone that's sincere and that's what I've found so it's great.

MR: When you were confronted in '91 about the difference about "Under Pressure" and your song, you said there was a little itty bitty difference did you really believe that?

VI: No man. Didn't you see me laughing then?

MR: That's what I'm saying. You know it's the same song?

VI: Oh, of course. That's another thing that was inaccurate in that VH-1 special. I'll dispute this part. They said that Earthquake, which was my DJ at the time who was programming the drum machine for me, that he is the one who came up with all the tracks and I just wrote the lyrics.

MR: Right.

VI: Bullshit. I brought that fucking David Bowie record to him and go, "hey sample this". Ding ding ding ti di ding ding (the riff from "Under Pressure"). And all he did was put a break beat into it. And I put the bass line in and played it. (He hums the bass line to "Ice Ice Baby" at this point.)

MR: And I'm watching this going, "he's not really doing this".

VI: I was laughing my ass off. You know what it was back then man, it was during the downfall I would say and MTV was editing my shit and they fucking edited that one little section like I was serious or something. But if you would have listened to the whole thing before it and after it, it was all a joke I was laughing my ass off about it. If you look at my face you'll see it.

MR: That's what I'm saying. I'm laughing going, "is he serious?"

VI: Fuck no.

MR: Yeah, it's just that itty bitty little difference there's that little ting in it. I'm like, "what is he talking about?" (He laughs hysterically!) All right now we get to the funny questions we do some silly questions in the magazine. Actually my wife came up with this question.

Maria: Oh don't.



MR: If you connected all your scars would it form a bunny rabbit?  
(This is in reference to the scars he got from being stabbed but he tried to read more into it than that.)

VI: *I don't get it.*

Maria: Like connect the dots.

MR: Nevermind.

VI: *Is it over my head? Way over my head...*

MR: What she is saying is if connected all your scars back to back would it form a bunny rabbit? Nevermind.

VI: *Why?*

Maria: With Jeff's magazine he tries to write silly questions to try and lighten up the interview a little bit. But he always asks me for input so I tried, it was a beat try, but I tried.

MR: How about her other one, she said you were a puppet for the record company would you think you were like Howdy Doody or Kukla, Fran and Ollie?

VI: (Laughs) *I don't even know the two.*

MR: Howdy Doody you know though.

VI: *No.*

MR: The little freckled puppet from the fifties.

VI: *I don't know I wasn't around in the fifties.* (We both laugh while Maria whines in the background about not asking her for any input anymore. I don't care, I thought her questions were funny or else I wouldn't have asked them.)

MR: This one is mine I'll take credit for this one. You know those big baggy pants you had?

VI: *Yeah.*

MR: If you cut the crotch out of them did you ever think of making Dusty Rain (his daughter) like a tent or a like a little tunnel to crawl through? You had one of them when you were a kid right?

VI: *Oh yeah. We'd put them over the chairs and...*

MR: Yeah. What do you think of that?

VI: *I don't even think about the baggy fucking pants I know they were corny, my man* but (Laughs all around).

MR: You wore 'em though man. (As I say this I pat him on the back. We are sitting next to each other during this interview and Vanilla has this really friendly way of talking where he touches you constantly. Not in a gay way, just friendly. I thought I would bond with him a bit since he doesn't really enjoy this specific line of questions but I was going to ask them anyway.)

VI: *Oh no I wore them, I played the whole role and played it out.*

Maria: The way, you moved on stage you had to be comfortable.

VI: *Well it was in at the time. Baggy pants were the thing at the time and I was going with it. Plus my record company had every thing staged and they had that shit lined up for me they had all the suits, the whole image staged I'm not blaming anyone here, don't get the wrong picture here, it was my option to take the million five or the thirty g's so I take the blame.*

MR: Let's see if we have any more fun questions we'll get them all out of the way at one time.

VI: (Laughs)

MR: When you wore those pants and you got a boner were you able to tell? Or was that pretty covered up?

VI: *Come on man. Save me from the corny shit.*

MR: OK. Let's see what else we got. How did it feel to get interviewed in the most important Metal magazine in the universe?

VI: (Laughs and a big smile comes across his face.) *It was great. That's where I want to fucking be I mean Metal does rule. No shit that's all I listen to now, I'm not turning my back on Hip Hop or anything but to honest with you I don't know the last time I bought a Hip Hop record its been years. Because personally it's not how it used to be, I don't know if you used to into Hip Hop at all but.*

MR: ICE CUBE. (Actually, I went through a slight phase while I worked in an Urban mall but it's because it was forced down my throat and I got used to it. Honest...uhhhhh...)

VI: *OK. You had ICE CUBE back in the day you had PUBLIC ENEMY, DAS EFX and you had all these bands that had their own style nobody sounded like them, they were them. Then you got all these fucking groups that are still doing the same shit I did ten years ago, I'm not gonna mention any names I think everybody knows who we're talking about. Take old songs and remake them and release them. Another sample, another break beat record. How many times am I gonna hear another fucking*

*break beat? I don't know it is starting to sound the same to me.*

MR: I always wondered why they can't just write new songs.

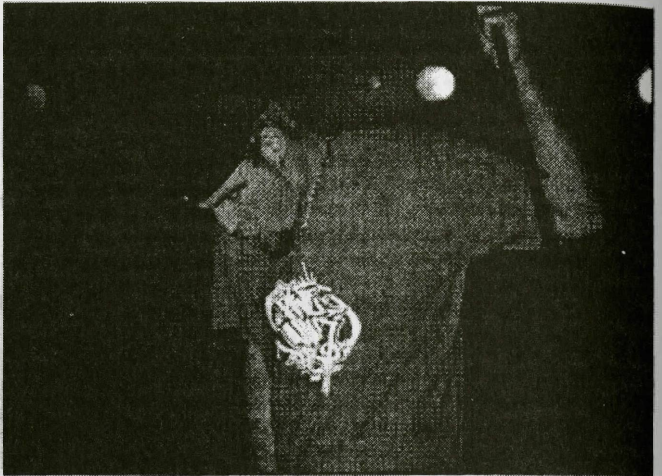
VI: *And they're all rapping about the same shit now like...*

MR: Every time I hear a song and somebody says it's a great song I'm like they're just talking over an old song, somebody else's song.

VI: *Exactly, I'm just not into it any more. I'm not turning my back on it I know it's where I came from I love the old shit I just can't get into the new shit. I like BUSTA RHYMES a little bit but not enough to go buy his record.*

MR: He's got cool hair.

VI: (LAUGHS) *Not enough to buy the new record. Its all about the video and records sales. If you go by MTV they say it's a Hip Hop nation so basically that's where all the record sales are going, so that's why they're saying that. I don't believe it I disagree one hundred percent but if you ask me it's a Metal Nation and that's the way it should be.*



MR: You're right.

VI: *Metal Nation doesn't mean let's compete against the record sales of Hip Hop. Fuck that, it's a Metal Nation because it's under ground and it's real. It's real is the key word parenthesis it's real. And that's what I've really learned over the years to appreciate about music the people who do it for real. Do it for the music not for the video not buy the record cause he dances good or look good. Who gives a fuck? Fuck the video, fuck the image, anti all of that shit let it go to the music that's what this is music it's not fucking movies or books it's music. Let it revolve around the music.*

MR: I think that's all I have unless you have any honey? No Kukla Fran or Ollie?

Maria: Uh no. Don't ever ask me for any input.

(Laughs all around)

MR: She does want you to sign her tape ("To The Extreme")

VI: *I'm suprised, You're married to the Metal guy and you got the old shit. That's cool though. It does have Rock influence though, you got your DAVID BOWIE and QUEEN thing and some other Rock shit.*

Maria: I remember my 1st car and I got a tape deck in and that was the only tape I had in my car and I would play it over and over. (Obviously very excited. Calm down honey, you came with me remember?)

VI: *Killer.*

MR: She never wants to come to shows with me. Consider yourself honored.

VI: *Cool. You know what I was going to say was remember when you asked earlier if I was able to laugh at it now? It hurt me back then, all the shit. It hurt bad, to the point where it almost killed me! Now, I look at it completely different, whether positive or negative, I see what a HUGE impact I've had.*

MR: You were humongous.

VI: *Humongous. I laugh at it now. Little 'ol me. What a tremendous impact. Big enough to leave an impression on people whether positive or negative. To put me in Austin Powers frozen in a*



*block of ice, for Jim Carrey to do a skit on me, for Kevin Bacon to do a skit on me. They feel like they have to mention it because it was so huge that they had to shut it down. Being that there audience is listening to them, they have to shut it down.*

MR: Good or bad, everybody knows who Vanilla Ice is. It's a household name like Cheerios. Well, maybe not Cheerios... (What the hell am I talking about?)

VI: *True, but it doesn't give me any personal gratification. I could care less about fame. I don't give a fuck about it. I'm not a Rock Star where you have to clear a path for me. I walk right through the crowd and shake everybody's hands. Keeping it real. I hate bands that don't do that. There's a big misconception of who I am because if you don't know me and just listen to my music you would think I'm some kind of boasting idiot. Stuck up asshole or something.*

MR: You turned out better than I expected. I had these questions written down and I was afraid you might want to kick my ass or something. (He laughs.) I know what you mean though because you sat down and didn't know what to expect. Is this guy going to trash me or be cool? One more goofy request for you. Can you cut a message for the *Metal Rules!* answering machine?

VI: *Sure.* (He didn't need time to think. He got this very cool message out.)

The Answering Machine Message...

VI: *Yo, you've reached the office of Metal Rules! And check it out this is the Ice Man coming at you and Metal does rule. Leave a message.*

MR: Can we take a picture where we're pretending to dance?

VI: *No. I'm sorry, I can't put myself into that mouse trap. Just give me a handshake man! Keeping it real. I don't pose anymore or do any of that shit*

MR: I just think it would look so weird with me doing it.

VI: *It's just I'm not like that anymore. I'm sorry.*

MR: No problem man. You don't have to apologize. I appreciate you taking this hour with me.

VI: *No problem man.*

MR: Sorry, to embarrass you with the stupid questions.

VI: *It's just....no problem.*

MR: Thanks for the time, enjoy the gifts and go eat.

Maria: Enjoy your cheesesteak.

VI: *Hell yeh, they have them in Florida but not like here.*

Maria: Nothing beats a Philly cheesesteak.

MR: I'll get some cool concert photos.

VI: *Cool man, thanks alot and enjoy the show. Put your earplugs in, we're loud as fuck.*

There you have it. True to his word they were loud as fuck and they put on killer show. It's apparent that Vanilla Ice whether he's doing Rap or Metal is a presence on stage. The crowd loves him and true to his word again he came out at the end of the show to sign autographs. Everybody deserves a 2nd chance....It's cool that he's getting one. Go check out the New record *Hard To Swallow* and catch him on tour. You'll be suprisingly pleased.

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## Selling Out

by Sascha Scatter  
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I stayed up late writing the other night and I was listening to the radio, flipping across the channels, checking out the local New Orleans and Baton Rouge stations. There was this one kind of catchy song I kept hearing, it was all over the dial, one of those songs you inadvertently start humming days after you've heard it and only then do you realize that it's been stuck in the back of your head jingling around like an old TV ad for the past week. The voices sounded familiar and I could have sworn it was this really cool band I used to listen to a long time ago, but I couldn't imagine why the big commercial stations would be playing their song next to all the other fluffy pop dance hits I'd been hearing in the background since the Summertime. I was scribbling away, not paying much attention, when the radio announcer came on and said something like: "...and that was the latest smash hit from the UK pop combo Chumbawamba!" I dropped my pen.

Do you remember back around 1985 when all those icons of rock got together and had that huge concert called "Live Aid" to send money to the starving children of Ethiopia? It was a huge extravaganza with all the big names of the time like Michael Jackson, Cindy Lauper, Sting, Boy George, Phil Collins, and Bono coming out to support relief for the famine in Africa. It was the same era as "We Are the World," do you remember that shit? Coked-out superstars holding hands in some music studio and singing about giving money to the poor? It's not just some figment of your twist-

ed imagination, that really happened, we all watched it on TV.

Or at least I watched it. Back in the mid 80's, I was still in elementary school and mostly what we did after school where I was from was go home and sit in front of our TV sets and watch this new and exciting stuff they called MTV: three minute, fast-speed, cut-up rock advertisements blended together with watered down images of sex and violence for the Pepsi generation. Like most of the kids my age, I'd just stopped watching Sesame Street a couple years back and this was basically the same thing — the colorful puppets and bouncing alphabets replaced by super models and flashy guitars. I was your typical preteen of the time who sucked up all the garbage in front of me, from Def Leppard videos to Clearasil commercials. I ate up pop culture because it was what everyone else did and it was what I felt like connected me to the rest of the world.

I was one of those kids that didn't have hardly any friends when I was growing up because I couldn't run fast and all the boys in my school played softball. I was always the kid who got picked last when they were dividing up the teams, I hated sports and competition. I was the kid daydreaming in the back of the classroom. I remember getting beaten up and getting called stupid because I couldn't spell or hold my pen right. None of the cool kids ever wanted to talk to me cause I didn't have the right clothes. I was what they called a loser.

So when I was young I'd retreat to the imaginary world of the



TV. All my childhood imaginary playmates were always TV show stars: Gary Coleman from "Different Strokes" and Ricky Schroder from "Silver Spoons," Mr. T from "The A-Team". I'd come home after school and start watching TV and not turn it off until I went to sleep, the glow from the screen keeping me company from the twelfth story of the apartment complex where we lived. It was the electronic babysitter for my parents who were always off working late, my faithful playmate and teacher.

My models for the relationships in my life came straight out of the relationships I'd see on TV, all that stuff had a huge effect on me as a kid. I remember getting big crushes on movie actresses and being totally lonely and depressed when I'd realize that I had no chance of ever knowing them in real life and they didn't really exist anyway. I remember feeling the emotions like the worst of heartbreaks I've ever known since that time. Life was really confusing and TV culture had this way of tugging deep on all my insecurities and pre-adolescent needful emotions.

So like I was saying, I remember when that whole Live-Aid thing happened because I was super excited, all the big pop stars were going to be together in the same place at the same time and back then that meant more to me than anything that was happening around in my real life. I'd been programmed for weeks with little clips in between videos to be ready to watch it on TV all day. I think when it actually happened it was kind of a let down, I don't really remember it, another big show washed over in my mind with a thousand others just like it.

By junior high school I'd gone to a few rock concerts (I'd win free tickets by calling up the local radio station until I was the lucky 95th caller and pledge my soul as a dedicated listener) and I'd always end up feeling distanced from the performers, like they were some kind of super human beings and I was just one of a million souls watching something that I'd had nothing to do with. It was this strange mix of contempt and admiration that would leave me feeling totally empty and sad. I looked up to the people on the stage but once again it was that feeling of them being so far away from my life that I wasn't even sure they really existed. Not too long after that whole time I started to become really disillusioned with the pop culture I'd been fed all my life in this vague, hard to articulate, alienated kind of way.

Sometimes I feel like so many of my childhood memories have been glossed over with this thick layer of sitcoms and action show episodes, like so many of my memories aren't even my own, they're just some script that someone wrote in Hollywood somewhere. Sometimes I have trouble untangling in my mind what was real and what I just watched on TV, the apartment I grew up in from all those cardboard living room sets, the nightly news and the war movies. I wonder sometimes how many people out there have had the same experience. I wonder how many of us have the same implanted culture festering away in our brains somewhere, this bonding link with other people our age because we all grew up with the same dumb shit.

Anyway, at some point I exploded and a couple years later me and my friends were punks. And I had a lot of friends by the way, because there were a lot of us alienated, fucked up kids. There was this one neighborhood we'd all hang out in and kids from all over the country would run away from home and come live in the abandoned buildings and hang out on the street. A lot of my friends had been through way worse shit than I could have ever even thought up in my middle-class liberal Manhattan dream world: their step-fathers had beaten or raped them, they'd been locked up and escaped from juvie or psych wards, they came from trailer parks and ghettos

in middle America and their families were drug addicts and psycho military people. My dad had just died and my early teenage years were full of my own family trauma. I'd never been able to relate to the kids in my school and for the first time in my life I finally felt like I was accepted somewhere. I related to the punks more than any people I'd ever known. For the first time in my life I learned about what it was like to have a real community around who looked after each other.

So this is what happened: I stopped going to school and I started hanging out in this place called Tompkins Square Park. The scene on the streets back then was a real mix of kids coming from out of town who were out on their own surviving and kids like me who were still in high school and living at home but just had fucked up or complicated lives we needed to get away from. We were a pretty tight knit group, us punks, we created a family together and built community out of the scraps and fragments of all our life experiences as alienated teenagers, us against the world. I started to unlearn a lot of the TV programming I'd been fed about social interaction and started to learn how to really relate to other people. Finally some of us misfits had found a tribe outside the mainstream. We had our own culture that strived to have nothing to do with the larger popular culture.

Music was a really big part of the scene we created. We'd put on our own shows and had our own spaces to play music. We had our own underground networks for distributing our demo tapes and little magazines

with stories pouring out our souls to each other about our lives. There was a real emphasis in those days on self-sufficient culture. "Do It Yourself" was the rallying cry for so many of us fed up with the overprocessed blood-soaked consumer culture and the vapid corporate madness we'd been raised with as children. Independent record labels popped up all over the place. "Selling out" the scene was a big part of the dialogue back in those days. I remember there was an album that came out called in Europe called "Only Stupid Bastards Help EMI." Because all the major record labels were huge conglomerates affiliated with arms contractors, there was a real consciousness in keeping the music within the scene, not letting the profit slip away into someone else's pocket. Making any kind of money off your art was seen as selling out to us and at the time that had its really good sides.

Everything was really informal and down to earth. There were no managers or big labels at all. If there was a band from out of town that I liked, chances were that I could write them a letter and they would write me back inviting me to come sleep on their couch and give me a personal tour of their town. When I saw bands play at the squat shows and I danced in the pit with my friends, I felt like I was part of something really cool, something that I'd helped to create that had nothing to do with mainstream society.

I think for a lot of us what eventually grew out of our alienation from society was a hyper-awareness of injustice in the world. Even if you were white the cops treated you just as bad as the black kids if you were on the street dirty and punk. Everything looked ugly at fifteen anyway: life was short and we were all gonna die young. It was the tail end of the Cold War and we'd been raised with the threat of nuclear annihilation present in the backs of all our minds. We hated society and at the same time that we hated society, a lot of us felt a really strong affinity with animals that was stronger than our feelings for humans. It was a lot easier to feel emotions for imprisoned veal calves and cats with their heads cut open in vivisection laboratories than the people that were fighting wars against each other all over the planet. A lot of us didn't eat any animal products



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"Revolution will be built on the spread of ideas and information, on reaching people, rather than on our habit of creating ghettos within which to stagnate. It's no use standing outside shouting. We have to start kicking down the doors!"

From sleeve notes to first  
Chumbawamba single, 1985



at all and if you don't know from personal experience, it can be pretty alienating to be a vegan in a meat culture — everyone's really threatened and thinks you're crazy. Try it for a little while and you'll see what I'm talking about. Go to a diner and try ordering some food with no milk or eggs or anything fried in animal fat.

Me and my friends would just get tighter and tighter as we slipped more and more outside the norms of society. We built our world underground and a lot of our codes of ethics were things that most people wouldn't even be able to begin to understand unless they hung out with us for a long time. Most of our fashion statements were really just for each other: the obscure band names on our tee-shirts or the cryptic symbols on our canvas patches we'd used to hold our clothes together. But we had community: we'd smash TV's and cook food in big groups, we'd hang out on the streets and play music and drink a lot.

Eventually some of us became more overtly political. We hooked into older activist networks and started organizing in our schools and on the street. We got our inspiration from the old Yippies who would sit around smoking pot and telling stories about the good old days of guerrilla theater pranks and we'd have meetings in an old pacifist resource center in the neighborhood that was full of anti-nuclear activists. There were lots of older housing activists and squatters floating around who'd been the ones to originally open the abandoned buildings in the late 70's and they'd had years of experience fighting the city.

Back in the late 80's New York City was a trip and a half, let me tell you: for the first time since the 1930's there were homeless people everywhere, shanty towns in the middle of Manhattan island — the after effects of a housing crisis and Reagan cutting all the mental hospital funding and social services back at the beginning of his reign in office. The Lower East Side, our beautiful neighborhood, was going through a huge and complicated economic battle between the forces of gentrification development and everyone else: everyone from the old Puerto Ricans and Ukrainians to the young artists and the anarchists were mixed up in it.

There were big riots in Tompkins Park over the tent city that had been constructed by a small army of homeless people and their supporters. I watched as friends of mine got beat bloody over nothing in the middle of police riots. I threw my first brick at a cop and set my first barricade on fire in the middle of the street. I'd get arrested all the time in skirmishes with the police and my mom would freak out. So much of our politics were reactionary, just channeled adolescent anger fueling direct actions of our rage against society. Late night stencil bombing and window smashing, blowing up cars with M-80's, always focusing our anger against the police who were all seemingly these fat mustached buffoons who lived on Long Island and were like an occupying army in our neighborhood. But there truly was love and inspiration behind all that rage and anger. I remember it really well. A lot of us had this vision of a new society where everyone was free and equal and had autonomy from the outside government. Admittedly, as a young teenager in the middle of the city it was pretty hard to articulate sustainable models for alternative futures and practical ways to live cooperatively on large scales. But more important than our far off visions for a new society, we really did have community that stretched across the world: scenes of punks all over the country with similar ideas and styles; comrades we'd hear of in Europe who were battling Thatcher's reactionary government, the Poll Tax Riots, the thriving West German Autonomen scene with their romantic black blocks and whole occupied neighborhoods. We listened to old punk records that told us of our history, all shrouded in legends and mysteries, but so much more accessible and less alienating than whatever pop star crap that was playing on the radio that might as well have come from another planet.

Meanwhile, we had so much more fun than everyone else. We were the punks. We dyed our hair all different colors and wrote our opinions about the world on the backs of our jackets in spikes for everyone to see in crude slogans. We pulled off a subtle yet somehow very appealing mix of not giving a fuck but caring a whole lot at the same time. We didn't have to conform to the same gender

rules that everyone else seemed forced into about dating and male/female division of sex roles. For teenagers, we were really super aware and conscious of sexism in our scene. For the first time in my life I started to meet really cool real girls who would school me in political theory and teach me how to make stencils; girls who didn't shave their legs and would throw bottles at cops when they were angry. I'd found my crew.

There was this great album that a lot of us listened to back then called: "Pictures of Starving Children Sell Records: Charity, Starvation, and Rock & Roll" and it was by this really cool punk band from the UK called Chumbawamba. A bunch of us used to hang out at Michelle and Isa Moscovitz's house, (the infamous Brooklyn punk sisters), and dance around to it and cook big vegan feasts. It had come out right about the era of Live Aid and it was this incredible critique of the corporate rock structure and the hypocrisy of all the stars who profited off their image as caring about the poor. But it was so much more. It beautifully and simply articulated the destructive relationship between the rich nations and the developing world, the history of imperialism, the evils of apartheid, the corporate media, and the rich families who perpetuated it all. It was like a punk rock opera. From the first lines: "I'm the boss of the company - and I've got hunger working for me. Listen, and you'll begin to understand: I build my profits from stolen land. It's the economics of supply and demand. And I make the demands around here." to the last lines of the album: "And the cycle of hungry children will keep on going round... Till we burn the multinationals to the ground." I still get chills when I think about it. It wasn't like any other punk album that had ever come out: the distorted guitars, chaotic drum beats, and screaming vocals had been replaced by keyboards, drum machines, and melodic intelligible lyrics. But that didn't matter at all, this was obviously a very punk album. We all loved it, we all knew all the words. We used to joke that if we ever wanted the anarchists to infiltrate mainstream society we'd just get them to start broadcasting Chumbawamba on the radio. Ha-ha.

Time flies. All of a sudden it's eight years later. My friends that I used to hang out with on the street and in the political meetings are scattered all over the place. If you look at all of us now and check out our lives, we're doing a really wide spectrum of things. There's still a lot of us doing radical activism on one front or another: organizing protests and collectives, working with pirate radio and alternative media projects; traveling through the network of infoshops and radical houses around the country, cooking Food Not Bombs and bridging connections. You can find some of my friends off doing eco-activism in the forests of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, keeping the last of the old growth trees from getting clearcut. Some of my friends do jail support work in groups like Prisoners Literature Project that send books and letters to incarcerated inmates all over the country. Some of my friends are off in the jungle in Mexico working with the Zapatistas or doing solidarity work with 3rd world rebel movements back in our home towns. Some of my friends work in bicycle shops and teach kids how to build bikes or help organize Critical Mass rides that protest the car culture in large cities. Some of them work in food co-ops and have studied herbal medicine and natural healing to help provide alternatives to the medical industry drug culture. The ones that stayed squatting the tenement buildings on the Lower East Side by now are either master carpenters, total alcoholics, or some twisted combination of the two.

A lot of my friends are the most creative people anywhere and I'm lucky to even know them. Off the top of my head I can think of dancers and jewelry makers and musicians and sculptors and painters and writers and freak nomad fire breathers who travel the country weaving their strange and inspiring tales. I bet if you ask any of us that are still around about those days back when we were growing up together on the Lower East Side we'll all talk about how influential and inspiring a time it was.

As for me, I ended up sticking around the anarchist scene more or less, nixed the punk thing with disgust a couple years ago when things got ugly, branched out, but I've kept my roots and my friends and I still feel like I have a big community all over the place. I travel



around the country and write stories about the people I meet and stuff that happens to me. You're reading one right now by the way.

I showed up in New Orleans the other day and the old streets were alive with magic and promise. I'd been staying in a small town across Lake Pontchartrain with some friends for the past couple weeks and helping renovate a house with their step-father. I had a crumpled up piece of paper with a contact address in my pocket for one of the local squats I'd gotten from a kid I'd met back in the Summertime who'd drawn me a map of how to find his collective house when we'd met hanging out on the same piece of land in Southern Oregon. I showed up at the house and it was a really nice squat—ted shotgun with pirated water and a wood stove, a sculpture of twisted copper coils hooked up to a bathtub in the backyard creating a makeshift hot water shower. There was a small tight-knit crew of folks living there who all shared a love for books and radical history and a hatred of authority. There was familiar art and maps and flyers for protests and shows all over the walls. I immediately felt at home.

The Crescent Wrench bookstore was a couple blocks away and I got the grand tour. The Emma Goldman books and Spectacular Times Situationist pamphlets, the Slingshot's and Shadow's and Blast's and Love & Rage's, all the national rags. There were racks full of good zines, lonely kids pouring out their souls from all over the country captured in time on little folded pieces of paper. There was a whole library with everything from carpentry do-it-yourself books to cheesy sex guides to Howard Zinn history. Every night there was a different activity going on at the Crescent Wrench: from watching Noam Chomsky movies to book binding workshops to the night I walked in and there was a room full of people polka dancing. It was a cool little scene I'd stumbled into, almost all people from other parts of the country who'd come together to create an enclave of radical culture.

So anyway, that first day I was at the Crescent Wrench info-shop I was talking to the punk guy behind the counter, happy to be back around my own kind that I could commiserate with for a little while before I headed back to small town life across the water. I asked him: "Hey, didja hear that old band Chumbawamba made it to the top of the charts? I keep hearing them on the radio. Isn't that crazy, who woulda ever thought, huh?" He looked at me and I realized I'd struck a chord. His face got all red and he managed to sputter out: "Man, those fucking sellouts! They're such hypocrites! I can't believe they're doing exactly what they preached against all those years ago! Fucking rock star bastards selling out our culture! I was walking by Tower Records and they had their album in the window! Can you believe that? They must be so rich by now. Fucking rich rock star sellout fucking bastards making money for EMI.."

I laughed and told him I thought it was a little more complicated, but inside I could relate to his gripes. The truth is that I'm just as sick of watching the music and art I care about get coopted and bought out by big business. I freaked out when I turned the TV on one day to see that the Nike corporation had bought the rights to that old Gil-Scott Heron song "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" and was using it to sell their fucking sneakers. It was like Whitey using his own anti-manifesto with the meaning sucked out and spit back evil. It was some sick voodoo shit, insidious exploitation of black kids in the ghetto too young to remember the song had originally been a call to smash the consumer culture of the early 70's.

Even more, the whole "punk explosion" in the media a couple years ago was enough to make any self-respecting older punk kid slip into an identity crisis. It was like everything you thought had meant something had just had all the meaning drained out of it when those videos with the guys with mohawks started playing on MTV. It's undeniably strange when the stuff that you and your friends used to treasure like secrets is suddenly in the public domain. The music that got you through adolescence with its caustic critiques of pop culture is suddenly being sold as the same pop culture you were rebelling from in the first place. It's even stranger when you start seeing all these kids walking around who look just like you and your friends did and you want to be able to relate to them, but they're nothing like how you and your friends were. They're like the equiv-

alent of hippies in the 80's: shallow retro fashion victims with so little political consciousness you could rub the contradictions in their face and they'd pay you to do it some more, cynical and hopeless. Back at the Crescent Wrench I found myself struck with how much I could relate to this guys angry ramblings.

Anyway, it was a couple days later, I was back at my friends place across the water, and I still couldn't get all this stuff off of my mind. By chance I'd been listening to the radio and I'd heard an announcement that if I was the 104 caller I'd win free tickets to see Chumbawamba live in concert. It was too surreal, too close to home. I suddenly felt betrayed. I kept getting visions of drunk frat boys singing along to poppy vapid feel good songs and record executives sitting in some office cashing in with big grins. The strange thing was that I was positive Chumbawamba knew exactly what they were doing. They were talking about it years ago, they were the ones who articulated it to me in the first place, shit. Something didn't seem right. This called for some drastic action.

So I went to go buy their CD at the mall, it was really the only thing I could do given the circumstances. I was standing on line at the Circuit City in the big Louisiana Shopping Center with my friend Kaia and it was the weekend right after Thanksgiving and everyone was busy rushing around doing their Christmas shopping. It was a total fucking nightmare. There was a wall with 40 television screens all playing the same droning images of war and sex: explosions and scantily clad bodies on beaches. There were all these kids standing transfixed before the flickering images and running around begging their parents to buy them the new super-hype video games and CD-Roms.

I was standing there on line with the glossy shrink wrapped CD in my sweaty hand and I was studying it for any kind of signifier that the contents were more radical than they appeared in their slick green and pink neon packaging. The only thing I could see that had any promise was a little note in the bottom right hand corner: "www.chumba.com," an invitation to check out their web-page on the Internet.

Times have really been changing in the last couple years and it seems like now everyone and their mom has a website on the Internet. A bunch of my neo-luddite forest friends still think it's a conspiracy to suck our brains out our skulls for the Man, but the more I learn about the potential communication capabilities of the Internet and the longer it's around, the more open minded I become. Unlike television, which is just straight blasts of commercial garbage injected straight into our brains, the net is full of radical information that's really easy to access and sift through. Because it's getting so much cheaper to use and because the medium is inherently interactive, I'm totally convinced that it's going to be a positive tool for large sections of the population. Not like there aren't forty on-line reactionary business web pages for every one cool on-line lefty labor journal or radical bulletin board. There are. But the more people that get on there, the more the scales will tip. I've recently been turned into somewhat of a computer geek, I'm typing on one right now so maybe I'm a little biased, maybe my brain's already been sucked out. But anyway, keep reading and you'll see what I'm getting at.

We got back to the house and I walked straight over to the computer, turned on the modem, and logged on-line. I typed in the web page address and the screen flickered for a second and then came up full of text. I breathed a sigh of relief. Chumbawamba had links to all the cool radical websites around: Mumia-Abu Jamal, The Noam Chomsky Archive, The Liverpool Dockworkers, Anti-Facist Action, AK Press, Billboard Altering Sites, tons of stuff I'd never even heard of. The 12 character address I found on the back of the CD and punched into a computer terminal gave me access to a wealth of information, all I had to do was click on what I wanted to know about and the screen would fill with text and photos. There was a section where there were ongoing debates about current political issues and dialogues from people all over the world asking questions to the band. They had a list of big corporate shops that they recommended stealing their new album from. "If you get caught, just tell the store detective that you have full support of the band." I



was pretty happy. I don't care that EMI is a weapons contractor. If this was selling out then I think I'm ready to sign up.

I don't think that me or most of my friends have a very easy time trying to imagine a large scale social revolution. Most of us are way too alienated from mainstream culture and even most other people to be able to begin thinking on such big levels. Most of us are covered in emotional scars and have retreated to our safe little enclaves in big cities or rural communities. A lot of our attempts at political organizing seem to end up only reaching each other because we only know how to talk to a certain kind of people.

We're still the same alienated kids who hate society and can't watch TV. That's OK. But the truth is that there are too many battle fronts to be just hanging out with each other. I still want to see the people rise up and take the power out of the hands of the big corporations and start organizing their own collectives. I want to see a social revolution on a mass scale in my lifetime. Building a mass movement and educating large groups of people seems like really good places to start. But it's easier said than done. I commend anyone that's trying.

So what I'm trying to say is that if it means Chumbawamba starts selling what appear to be apolitical songs that become smash hits and millions of people listen to them and then maybe at some point have the chance of getting exposed to more radical stuff, I think that's wonderful. I'm still the same alienated kid I was at 14 who scoffs at popular culture and has some separatist tendencies and still knee jerk recoils at the general amount of stupidity and sexism and racism and brainwashed TV Christian moralist bullshit most people have been inundated with. I always feel like my soul is dying when I'm surrounded by corporate culture: office buildings, strip malls and tract suburbs. I always have to be able to retreat back to the familiar world of my friends who totally opt out of the system and live in the middle of the woods or scam their way through life in the cities living off the grid. I'm totally inspired by the freedom of radical environments that can be created out of the clutches of the law. .

But the older I get the more I realize that the last thing I want to do is put myself in a bubble and surround myself with people who think just like me. That's too easy. I'm not going to scoff at all my friends who do it because I totally understand, but I'm beginning to understand that if we really want to change the world and make things better for people other than our network of friends, it takes a way more challenging type of organizing, learning how to talk to people we'd never figured we'd find ourselves talking to, thinking about things on a large scale, on a mass scale.

I used to see the future in creating a new system and a threat by example from the ashes of the old. But the truth is that I don't see the old system going anywhere yet. I think at a certain point if we want to be effective on a mass scale we have to learn to negotiate a balance with the system. We have to learn to dance with our enemies because we know it's for the best in the long run. We have to learn to be that statue of Jesus with the Mayan idols hidden inside. And be proud of it too. The truth is that I don't give a fuck anymore about an old code of the underground scene, I'm way more interested in seeing change than I am upholding the unwritten laws. I'm not going to be greedy and say my culture's getting robbed because my friends and I can always find more secret stuff to enjoy that's not for public consumption. If they figure out some way to make money off of it then we'll just think up something else that's new.

So in the end I think back to waiting in line at the Circuit City in the shopping center, surrounded by a whitewash of corporate culture. I think of all the kids growing up in this country who weren't lucky enough like me to be born in cultural centers like New York City and are stuck in the festering nightmare that are our country's ghettos and suburbs. I think of some of those kids going out and buying the new hit CD from Chumbawamba cause they heard the catchy song on the radio, making it past the surface layer and discovering a world they would have never had access to before. And I smile thinking about strange twists of fate and the unknown future in store for all of us.



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# Honorable Mentions

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- 1000 Interlocking Pieces**, 390 Roxbaro Pl, Florence, SC 29505  
**5 O'Clock Shadow**, PO Box 02222, Detroit, MI 48202  
**America?** PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604  
**Anti-Stagnant Pond**, PO Box 2401, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4A7 Canada  
**Assassin and the Whiner**, PO Box 481051, Los Angeles, CA 90048  
**Avow**, 222 SW Pine St #538, Portland, OR 97204  
**Bamboo Girl**, PO Box 507, New York, NY 10159  
**Beyond Words**, PO Box 2061, Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R4, Canada  
**Contraband**, PO Box 8565, Atlanta GA 31106  
**Enobled Mind**, PO Box 14728, Portland, OR 97293  
**Excarcerate**, PO Box 30924, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
**Expletive Deleted**, PO Box 11122, Eugene, OR 97440  
**Fishpiss**, 1232 Place d'Armes, Montreal, Que, H2Y 3K2 Canada  
**Fisticuffs**, PO Box 151385, San Diego, CA 92175  
**Former Members Of Alfonsin 'zine**, 18560 Gilmore St, Reseda CA 91335  
**Frame 609**, 74 Aldie St #2, Allston, MA 02134  
**Friction**, 1117 Patunia St NW, Hartville, OH 44632  
**Gray Matter**, 1621 W. Grace St, Richmond, VA 23220  
**Grunding**, 2510 SE Clinton St, Portland, OR 97202  
**Guide to Lost Wonder**, 570 Foam St, Monterey, CA 93940  
**Haircuts Abroad**, 152 Yeoman Road, Manahawkin, NJ 08050  
**Happy Not Stupid**, PO Box 8145, Reno, NV 89507  
**Hodgepodge**, 140 Lisbon Ave, Buffalo, NY 14214  
**In Abandon**, PO Box 82192, Tampa, FL 33682  
**Learning To Fly**, PO Box 33368, Austin, TX 78764  
**Leeking Ink**, PO Box 963, Havre De Grace, MD 21078  
**Lois Lane**, PO Box 931, Nevada City, CA 95959  
**Love Is For Suckers**, PO Box 42098, Philadelphia PA 19101  
**Message From The Homeland**, PO Box 4248, Springfield, MA 01101  
**My Views Change Over Time**, PO Box 2671, Gainesville, FL 32602  
**On The Road To Healing**, PO Box 33368, Austin, TX 78764  
**Paper Tigers**, PO Box 2945, Tulsa, OK 74101  
**Residue Comics**, PO Box 580848, Minneapolis, MN 55458  
**Sharkpool**, PO Box 208, Nottingham, NG7 6EN, UK  
**Skunk's Life**, 25727 Cherry Hill Road, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403  
**Synthesis**, 14 Batavia Mews, London, SE14 6EA, UK  
**The More Things Change**, 26 Lacona Dr, Patterson, NY 12563  
**Thought Bombs**, 27009 S Egyptian Trail, Monee, IL 60449  
**Working For The Man**, PO Box 20403, Brooklyn, NY 11202  
**Yard Art**, 12827 Salt Creek Road, Millfield, OH 45761



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# TREE OF KNOWLEDGE PRESS

Tree of Knowledge Press is a do-it-yourself publishing collective struggling to provide the finest in alternative media at affordable prices. We began in 1995 and have been publishing zines, comics, pamphlets, and books as often as possible ever since. Feel free to get in touch for more information, wholesale rates, or just to say hello. The 1999 Zine Yearbook is the first real "book" we've done. We hope you enjoy it and that you'll check out our other projects, some of which are listed below.



the forbidden fruit - ripe from the tree...

## ECO zine

**ECOzine #1:** ECOzine is a biannual journal seeking to provide a forum for young scientists, students, environmentalists, & other folks interested in ecology, conservation biology, the earth sciences, social justice, environmental activism & related topics. It covers everything from science selling out to industry to creative activism, corporate "greenwashing", finding an ethical career in the sciences, wilderness writing & travel, environmental education, and lots more. Edited by two young scientist-activist eco-nerds with big visions for a better world. Printed on 100% tree-free Kenaf paper. Issue #1 out June of 2000 (includes interview with ArcticQuest founders Jeff Barrie and Alex Tapia about their 5000 mile trip - by bike and electric car - across the U.S. to raise awareness about the threat of oil drilling the the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) \$2.00 ppd in the U.S. Foreign add extra.



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The new issue of *Spectacle* (#6) will be out during the summer of 2000. Apologies to people who sent money and are waiting!

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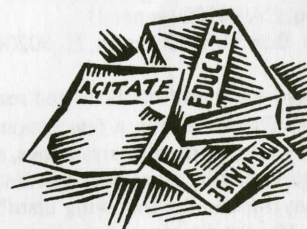
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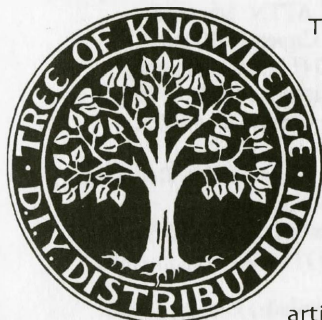
## TIPS FOR ZINE GEEKS: A BRIEF GUIDE FOR SMALL PUBLISHERS ON HOW TO MAKE A BETTER ZINE AND GET IT DISTRIBUTED:

A 20 page zine discussing the ins and outs of self-publishing - basic editing, layout tips, working with graphics and photos, printing & finishing, and how to get distribution for your finished product. An accessible, basic how-to guide. Includes a list of reliable distros. From the professional zine geeks here at Tree of Knowledge. \$1.00 ppd. Foreign add extra.



We are planning to release a huge book called THE DIY GUIDE in the fall of 2000. It will be a compilation of illustrated how-to articles covering a broad range of life skills as well as personal essays exploring the politics and implications of the do-it-yourself ethic. We want this to be broader than the typical punk rock fare (how to put out records, put on shows, make zines, etc.) though we'll include that stuff for good measure. We're also planning to have stuff about carpentry, bike repair, auto maintenance, organic gardening, canning, silkscreening, DIY health care, self-publishing, starting a small business, house building, and lots more! The fine folks at *Punk Planet* have given us permission to reprint from their "DIY Files" feature but we're trying to get as much new stuff as possible as well. That's where you come in! We know that you have some skill that you do really well... something that saves you money and gives you independence... we want you to write it down! We want to include it in our book! You don't have to be a professional. That's the whole point! We want to prove that regular old folks can take charge of their lives and do things themselves while taking power back from the corporations and so-called "professionals". What we need: We need detailed descriptions describing how to do cool

things. Step-by-step is good, and pictures, diagrams, and sketches are always helpful. Your contributions are VITAL to this project!!! Get in touch for more info or send submissions to us!



Tree of Knowledge Distribution offers more than 400 zines, books, shirts, pamphlets, & cds focusing on health & social issues, activism, DIY, anarchism, ecology, alternative living, punk/hardcore, youth culture, feminism, vegetarianism, & other forms of intelligent resistance. We've got zines such as *Auto-Free Times*, *Fucktooth*, *Clamor*, *Contrascience*, *Burn Collector*, *Inside Front*, *The Match!*, *Flavorpak*, *War Crime*, *Here Be Dragons*, *Cooties*, *Retrogression*, *Screams From Inside*, *Dishwasher*, *Temp Slave*, *Outpunk*, *Dwgsht*, *Femme Flicke*, *Cometbus*, *Doris*, *The Underground Auto Worker*, *Dwelling Portably*, *Live Wild or Die*, *Slug & Lettuce* & *Enobled Mind*... plus a good selection of comics (including the entire *Migraine Press* catalog). We've got books by Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky, Judi Bari, Graham Purchase, bell hooks, Ward Churchill, Grace Llewellyn, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Billy "Upski" Wimsatt, Seth Tobocman, and many other articulate folks. Our 2000 mailorder catalog is out and is yours for just \$1.00 (or some stamps). Thanks.

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# zine resources

## How to find more zines

The best way to get zines has always been to get them directly from their editors. However, finding out about which zines exist and how to contact them can be frustrating. The following zines are review zines. They consist of listings, contact information, and critiques of other zines. They're a good place to start:

Amusing Yourself To Death: P.O. Box 91934, Santa Barbara CA 93190 (general)  
Maximum Rock N Roll: P.O. Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146 (punk)  
Punk Planet: P.O. Box 6014, E. Lansing, MI 48826 (punk)  
Queer Zine Explosion: P.O. Box 590488, San Francisco, CA 94159 (queer)  
A Readers Guide To The Underground Press: PMB 2386, 537 Jones St, San Francisco, CA 94102 (general)  
Zine Guide: P.O. Box 5467, Evanston, IL 60204 (general)

You can also get zines from book and record stores, and from many mailorders. There are only a few national mailorders which specialize in zines, most primarily carry books, records, or comics. If you are interested in buying zines but can't find any locally, send a self addressed envelope to the following distributors for their catalogs. Included in this list are some of the larger distributions that we have personally worked with and recommend:

AK Press Distribution: P.O. Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140  
Atomic Books: 1018 Charles St, Baltimore, MD 21201  
The Diminutive Revolution: P.O. Box 8183, Victoria, BC V8W 3R8, Canada  
DMM Distribution, P.O. Box 17838, Clearwater, FL 33762  
Flatline Imperium: attn: Christian, c/o Infoladen, Schellingstr. 6, 72072 Tuebingen, Germany  
Quimby's: 1854 W. North Ave, Chicago, IL 60622  
Reading Frenzy: 921 SW Oak St, Portland, OR 97205  
Stick Figure: P.O. Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308  
Tree of Knowledge: P.O. Box 251766, Little Rock, AR 72225  
Words As Weapons: P.O. Box 4493, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Also:

The Whizzbanger Guide to Zine Distributions: Shannon Colebank, PO Box 5591, Portland, OR 97228 (Send \$3; includes zine libraries, zine stores, etc).

## zine libraries

The following list of Zine libraries was published by Doug Holland in *Zine World*. For sake of space, I have only listed U.S. addresses. Put them on your mailing lists or send them all of those zines you were about to throw away. This list includes both DIY libraries as well as collections at Universities and established libraries. Another good place to check for zine libraries, etc is [www.zinebook.com](http://www.zinebook.com), run by Chip Rowe.

Anarchist Archives Project, Box 381323, Cambridge MA

02238

Blackout Books Zine Archives at ABC No Rio, 156 Rivington, New York NY 10002, [abc@abcnorio.org](mailto:abc@abcnorio.org)  
Books for Bums, Attn: Nick Normal, Box 63074, St. Louis MO 63163  
Civic Media Center & Library, 1021 W. University Ave., Gainesville FL 32601, (352) 373-0010, [<cmc@afn.org>](mailto:cmc@afn.org)  
Darby Romeo Collection of Zines, ATTN: Dawn Henney, UCLA Arts Library, 2250 Dickson Art Center, L Los Angeles CA 90095  
Factsheet Five Collection, ATTN: Billie Aul, New York State Library, Cultural Education Center, Albany NY 12230 (NOTE: Primarily New York zines)  
Great Lakes Zine Archive ATTN: Kathryn DeGraff, DePaul University Library, 2350 N. Kenmore, Chicago IL 60614 (Midwest zines only)  
Richard Hugo House Zine Library, attn: Victoria Howe, 1634 Eleventh Ave., Seattle WA 98122, [bitroyale@aol.com](mailto:bitroyale@aol.com)  
Ind. Publishing Resource Ctr., ATTN: Dan Howland, 917 SW Oak St #304., Portland OR 97205, (503) 239-8434, [<publishingcenter@hotmail.com>](mailto:<publishingcenter@hotmail.com>)  
Long Haul Infoshop, 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley CA 94705, 510 540 0751, [<resist@burn.ucsd.edu>](mailto:<resist@burn.ucsd.edu>)  
Lucy Parsons Centre, attn: Sanya, 259-A Elm Street, Somerville MA, (617) 629-2649, E-mail: [<lucyparsons@juno.com>](mailto:<lucyparsons@juno.com>)  
Labadie Collection, 711 Harlan Hatcher Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI 48109, (313) 764-9377 (Note: Primarily anarchist and counterculture publications)  
The Little Magazine Collection, ATTN: Andrea Grimes, San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin St., 6th Floor, San Francisco CA 94102 (Note: Primarily West Coast zines)  
Mansfield Library, Small Press Collection, ATTN: Chris Mullin, University of Montana, Missoula MT 59812, [mullin@selway.umt.edu](mailto:mullin@selway.umt.edu)  
Michigan State University Library, ATTN: Randy Scott, Special Collections Division, East Lansing MI 48824-1048  
Mr. Roboto Project c/o Here Be Dragons, PO Box 8131, Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
The Poetry/Rare Books Collection, ATTN: Michael Basinski, SUNY at Buffalo, 420 Capen Hall, Box 602200, Buffalo NY 14260-2200 (Poetry zines only)  
Popular Culture Library, ATTN: Alison Scott, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green OH 43403, [ascott@bgnet.bgsu.edu](mailto:ascott@bgnet.bgsu.edu)  
Queer Zine Archive, c/o Brad Pease, Box 10692, Rochester NY 14610 (NOTE: Queer zines only)  
State Historical Society, ATTN: James Danky, 816 State St., Madison WI 53706-1488 (NOTE: Wisconsin zines only)  
Wooden Shoe Books, 508 S. 5th St, Philadelphia, PA 19147 attn: Zines



4

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