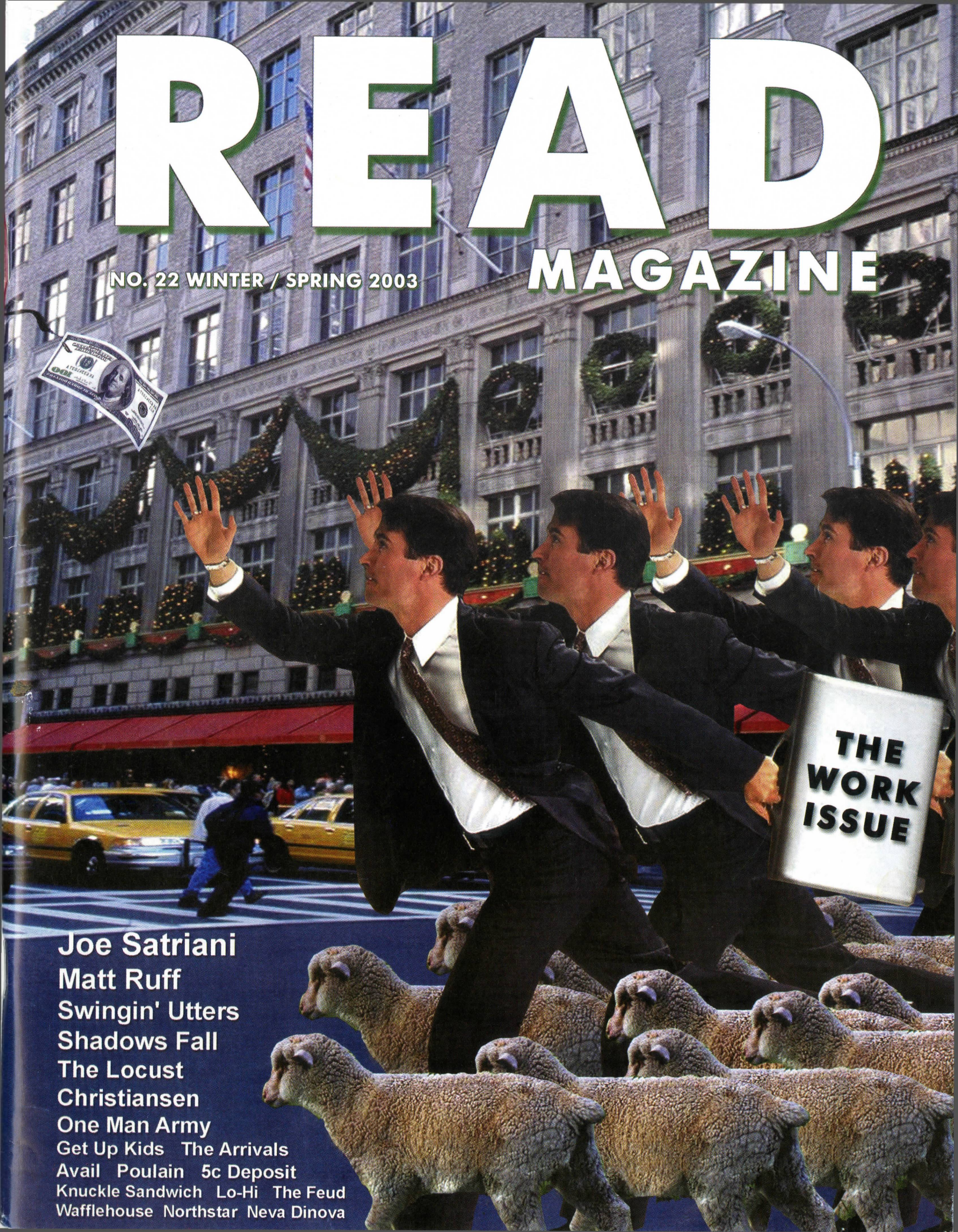


# READ

## MAGAZINE

NO. 22 WINTER / SPRING 2003



**Joe Satriani**

**Matt Ruff**

**Swingin' Utters**

**Shadows Fall**

**The Locust**

**Christiansen**

**One Man Army**

**Get Up Kids The Arrivals**

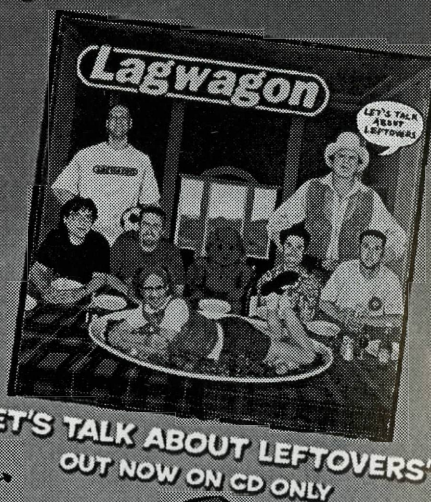
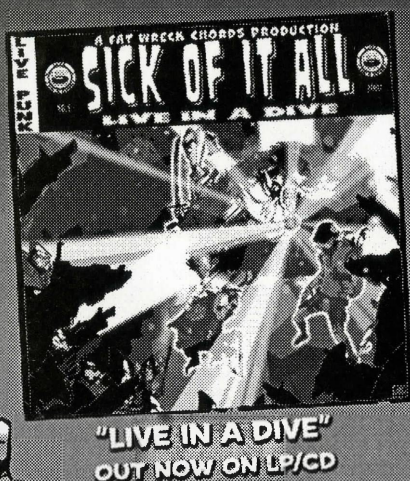
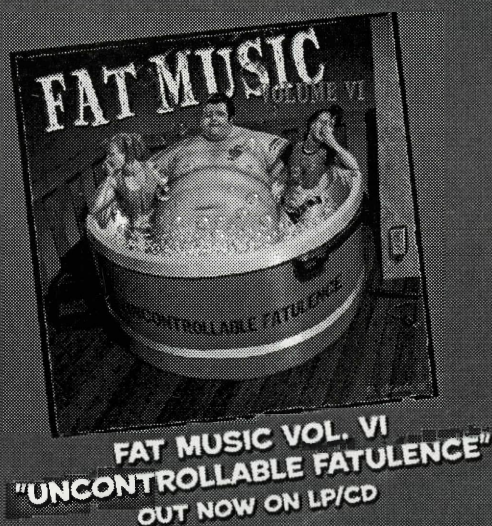
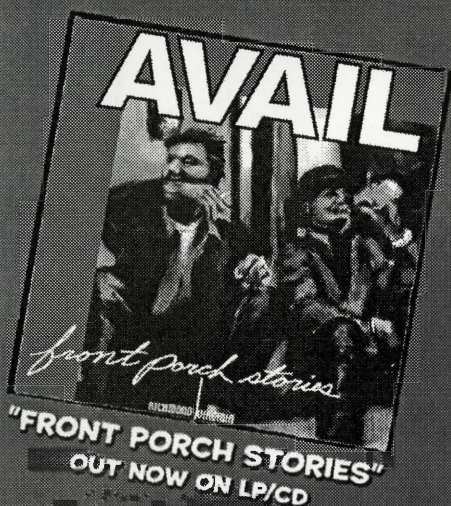
**Avail Poulain 5c Deposit**

**Knuckle Sandwich Lo-Hi The Feud**

**Wafflehouse Northstar Neva Dinova**



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Our brothers & sisters of the small press revolución!



# READers

Send Us Mail! We Love Mail! Mail Us!

## IN THE DARKO

Just wanted to drop you a line and say how much mileage I've gotten out of your time travel issue (#19) & I was wondering why the film Donnie Darko wasn't included in the "cinematic time machine" piece?

Good luck to yalls....

Joe Darone

Black Pumpkin Records

## DO THE ROBOT

I got your package today! Holy cow-pies! I was hoping for one or two copies, but FOURTEEN? Thanks! You were spot-on about "Men are Monkeys, Women are Robots," but like Prometheus, you put yourself in a dangerous spot with "the fair sex" by blowing their cover. I have often heard that women in other countries aren't quite so selfish and cold hearted, but I couldn't say for sure. Wish I could send that to my ex, but she would just burn a perfectly good magazine. The truth hurts; too bad we're the victims too much of the time!

Your Pal,

Ben Waugh, The Sillies

## MOMS LOVE READ!

Hi honey...I am away for the weekend with my sister in laws for a fun girls' weekend going to a spa. I brought your zine up here (Syracuse) for everyone to see and read. Have I told you how much I laugh reading your zine (usually when reading it in the bathroom)? You kill me with your stories... and I really enjoyed reading your Nana's stories--she was very sweet... she must have loved you all very much. I'll tell you the feedback from "all the older women" when I get back. Be good.. Love, Bryan's mom, Barb

## TOILET HUMOR

Hey Adam, just writing to say what a great mag you got going. Funny funny shit. You did a review on our CD in issue# 19 and I wanted to thank you for the kind words on that as well. Don't take the next paragraph as an insult, actually it's praising that I am doing. Most of my reading is done while I am on the toilet and I have found myself eating foods that churn the stomach so that I may sit down and read more of your mag. I think when your pants are around your ankles the mind opens as well. My roommate must think that I am fucking nuts, when he hears me shitting and laughing. Anywho keep up the good work.

Brian Ellingham,

F.O. The Smack Magnet

## SPREADIN' THE WORD!

oh yeah adam i jsut got a whole huge package in the mail yesterday. and i must say READ fuckin' kicks ass. i've read some of the online stuff but the actual zine is so full. i dig the content. how could i not you interviewd mr show, dan savage, tons of ska bands, tons of good punk bands. i've been spreadin' the word about how great the zine is. i love reading zines and i was mighty impressed with it. anyways i'll be sending in a subscription thingie for it as soon as i can. u should look into possibly getting the zine distro'ed some places too. i dunno. there's a kick ass independent book store in baltimore called atomic books. all sorts of indie books and zines gallore all over the place. i'll ttyl piece BOB

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

## PROPS FROM THAT OTHER COAST

Designated Dale here from Razor-cake magazine out in L.A. and I just wanted to send you a quick email to let you know how funny some of the shit in your READ mag is, especially the "Snap Judgments of Movies We Haven't Seen" and your old "The Library" piece. It was cool to see Sean's (one of our co-editors here) work in your mag, too. Anyway, just wanted to say hello & to keep it rollin'. By the way, I noticed you're a "fucking Literati master", huh? That game's pretty happenin', but if you play POOL on Yahoo! too, look me up online and we'll shoot a few games.

Take care, Adam. -Dale

## EGGHEAD LIKES HIS BOOKY-BOOK

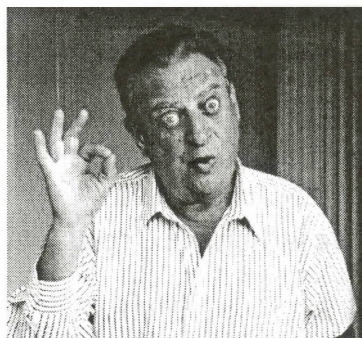
Thanks for sending me a copy of READ #21. I just got it and I've already read a couple pieces. Your health club bit was very funny and I started reading "It Seems Like Only Yesterday" which is so far the highlight of the issue. The only part I don't like is the library part. How can a magazine entitled READ make fun of libraries? I fuckin' love libraries. Books, sweet sweet sweet books.... Ahhhh... Libraries are little bits of heaven on Earth and deserve, at the least, respect, if not sincere, pathological devotion. Bye for now, Cristoph



# LetterFromTheEditor

I get up at seven, yeah,  
and I go to work at nine.  
I got no time for livin'.  
Yes, I'm workin' all the time.

It seems to me  
I could live my life  
a lot better than I think I am.  
I guess that's why they call me,  
they call me the workin' man.  
—Rush, "Working Man"



I was in the car with my sister, talking about my job as a grants manager. It's a really cool profession, and even though I'm not a rich lawyer or stockbroker, I think I've done pretty well for myself. Especially considering what I've had to do in the past.

My sister said, "That's right—you've always worked. I can't remember a time you haven't had a job." We reminisced about when we worked at TCBY together, and the mall jobs I've had, selling everything from books to ice cream to women's shoes. I told her some funny stories about the crap I had to deal with, and she remarked that I should write about it for READ.

I had always wanted to write about the jobs I've had, but it just seemed like a formidable project. Where to begin?

But to be honest, I couldn't think of any other topics to write about, and I have many articles on jobs already written. You can't beat the combination of laziness and convenience, and so this issue's theme became WORK.

Besides my various stories of retail hell, temp hell, and various other kinds of hell (including physical labor, accounting jobs, food service jobs, roadie-ing, involvement with a dotcom, etc. etc.), we have great contributions. Shawn Granton of Ten Foot Rule and Modern Industries is back with a killer comic. Sean Carswell of Razorcake generously let us reprint a great piece from his excellent short story collection "Glue and Ink Rebellion" (Gorsky

Press). And Bryan Kremkau, of Ska-PunkAndOtherJunk.com, did a TON of illustration work, including the excellent cover.

Plus we've got the usual gang of friends and family members here, as well as another awesome Kittenpants.org insert.

The jobs described herein cover everything from hot dog vendor to shoe salesman to dominatrix, from wearing a Barney costume to being a school psychologist. And they're written by everyone from a virgin at an adult shop to a Buddhist killing rats in a nut stand, by people who have either found what they love doing, are floundering in something they hate, or are treading water until fate turns up something better.

Kahlil Gibran once said that work is love made visible—that we should love what we do or else we're no better than a beggar on the street. Easily said from someone who had the luck and skill of making a living writing sappy phrases. The rest of us have to find our way the best we can, and try to remember who we are. Because who we are isn't what we do. Who we are is how well we do it.

Hope you enjoy the issue! Write us!

**Postscript:** I'm not too happy with my contributions to this issue. Due to laziness and lack of room, I didn't even discuss my two most bizarre jobs I've ever had.

The first one was as editor-in-chief for a teenybopper website that was trying to cash in on the dotcom boom. I was hired to provide mainstream content for junior high school kids, and I was put in charge of a writing staff of 20-30 freelancers. I ended up subverting the site, covering only punk and hardcore, alienating our core which was looking for the latest Britney news. It was awesome—I was getting thousands a month to post interviews with my friends' bands. After a few months, I licensed READ to them to use as their house organ (in return, I was promised tons of ad revenue and stock shares), but after a year of them sitting on READ and tying up the production, I quit the dotcom to get READ back. It was good that I left when I did—the dotcom bubble burst weeks later and the teenybopper site went under.

The second most surreal job I had was with a cult. A headhunter called me, offering me a finance position with a non-profit. I jumped at the job, and only after being hired did I bother doing research on the organization. It turns out they were more like a for-profit self-help organization disguised as a nonprofit, and as far as self-help orgs go, this one was the wackiest. They were manipulating people worldwide for their

money, promising impossible benefits to mankind, and using the donations for crazy self-help seminars that use techniques that many critics have likened to brainwashing. (In fact, the founder had fled the country to escape multiple charges, from tax fraud to molesting his children.) Everyone at the job, except me, had gone through their seminars, and they were the freakiest freaks I've ever worked with. They would start sobbing uncontrollably, or laugh hysterically, for no reason at all. They were messes. The head of the company was treated like a deity or pope, and she called meetings where everyone (but me) would confess their sins and beg her for forgiveness. Even though I was pressured, I never took the seminars, I never donated part of my paycheck to them, and I never confessed to the queen bee. I had enough after four or five months and quit before they forced me to drink the Kool-Aid.

I also have tons of great roadie stories, some already written, but didn't have room for them. I'll put them on our wonderful, super fun web site, [www.readmag.com](http://www.readmag.com).

Oh yeah, I started by saying that I wasn't happy with my contributions. Yeah, probably not my strongest work. I think I'm slipping. Luckily, there's enough great contributions from others to balance out the ish. Hopefully you'll find something here to enjoy. If not, haha, you just wasted your time! Pbbth!



It began 18 years ago in a little town called Lynbrook. A Jewish temple stood there so proudly on those flat plains of Long Island. It still stands there on those same flat plains.

My oldest child, Sherri, began her school days at that Temple Emmanuel in 1974. She stayed there until June 1976.

Sherri knew, at a ripe old age of 3 years, that she was going to be a Rockette dancer when she grew up. She's now a psychologist.

My second oldest child, Michael, began his school days at that temple in 1979 also at the age of 3 years. He graduated from there in 1981 knowing he wanted to be an astronaut when he grew up. He is now a chiropractor.

My youngest child, Adam, tried to begin his school days at Temple Emmanuel also at the age of 3 years. I figured Adam would be the most successful of the three children because he was putting together 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles by the age of 2, reading the World Book Encyclopedia by the age of 2 1/2 years, becoming bilingual at the age of 10 months (thanks to Sesame Street), and singing along with Anne Lennox to "Sweet Dreams Are Made of These" at the age of 3 years.

I couldn't understand why my genius (as I quickly nicknamed Adam) would want to waste his time in nursery school when he could be out there writing poetry and music in English and Spanish and making a fortune by the age of three. Nothing could possibly stop him... except that he had a lisp and pronounced "Sweet Dreams" as "Thweet Dreamth Are Made of Theeth."

Well, I knew he really needed to be around kids his own age, and that's why I signed him up for nursery school. Plus, I got a little tired of him discussing Camus, Sartre, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky with the babysitter all the time.

It was to be our first day of school back in the year 1981! I had been schlepping the other two kids for four years already to this same place and I had to trek the three miles each way for another two years for Adam. I suppose that I was kind of tired of going there, so I thought that a little intelligent conversation with my genius would do the trick to get me out of my funk.

I began the conversation with Adam the same way I had begun it with my other two children in the same car, on the same road, going to the same school:

"So, Adam. You're now 3 years old. It's time to start thinking about plans for your future. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?"

Very enthusiastically, Adam replied, "I want to be a MAILBOKTH!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ What Does Adam Want To ★  
★ Be When He Grows Up? ★  
★ By Mom ★

I hopefully figured he meant a mailman, but I said, "Adam, you can't be a mailbox." I assumed he would laugh and I would tell him what a great sense of humor he has and how clever he is. Instead, he burst out crying! He thought that I said he couldn't be a mailbox because I wouldn't let him because I was MEAN! I tried to explain that one

couldn't be a mailbox because it's not a thing that's ALIVE!

I gave him a second chance because I didn't want him to think I was mean. So I asked him to think of something else that he could be. Adam answered through his sobs, "I want to be a NOTHE." And, once again, I tried to explain to him that he can't be a nose because it's not alive.

He got so hysterical crying that I feared for his life! When his hysteria turned into gulping sobs, and when he was finally able to breath, I said quietly, "Adam, this is your last chance. Please think of something else that you can be when you grow up. And this time it has to be ALIVE!"

Adam thought for a while. It was very quiet in the car. I turned around to look at him in the backseat. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "I want to be a BEAR."

I shouted, "Adam! You can't be a bear! That's an animal!" Then Adam shouted back at me, "Well, at least it's ALIVE!" And then he cried so hard that he turned blue. I then turned the car around and went back home and Adam never did get to go to Temple Emmanuel for his first day of school.

That day taught me a lesson: Let your children be whomever... or whatever... they want to be in life and never force them to be anything else. I am very proud of my three children for who they are for what they chose to be.

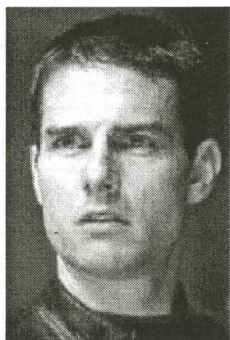


And as it turned out, Adam actually knew what he wanted to be at the age of 3 years! He has a NOSE for business (presently majoring in accounting), and he's hoping it won't be a BEAR market. And continue to look for Adam's zines in your local MAILBOX!

—from READ #14



# Best & Worst of 2002



Take that, Columbine!

## Best Movie:

### Minority Report

Sure, it's not as important as *Bowling for Columbine* or has the heart of *Spider-Man* or the levity of *The 25th Hour* or the beautiful storytelling of *Spirited Way* or the irresistible charm of *About A Boy* or a singing Richard Gere as in *Chicago*, but it's the most flawless sci-fi movie since *Blade Runner* (except for the lame-ass unmask-the-villain-during-the-formal-dinner-party ending).

## Worst Movie:

### Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Jeez, what a letdown. Peter Jackson should take some lessons from George Lucas and learn something about special effects. These movies just look terrible. And am I to believe that Elijah Wood is Frodo? You can't even see his hairy feet! And the movie is so soulless and devoid of any sense of magic or awe. It's definitely no Harry Potter.



Not even Tim the Enchanter could save this crap.

## Best Chick Channel:

### Oxygen

It was supposed to be the Oprah channel, and yes, there is quite a bit of the beast, but Oxygen has some surprisingly good programming. There's O2Be, a Daily Show-ish parody of those annoying, vapid early morning shows. There's the Isaac Mizrahi show—this guy is so cute that if I were gay, I'd put the map of Hawaii on his face. And there's *Girls Behaving Badly*, which is, along with the Jamie Kennedy Experience, one of the funniest and most clever hidden-camera shows. (And since it's women behind the pranks, you can imagine how hilariously mean-spirited it is.)



Isaac: Guys want him and girls want to be him.

## Worst Chick Channel:

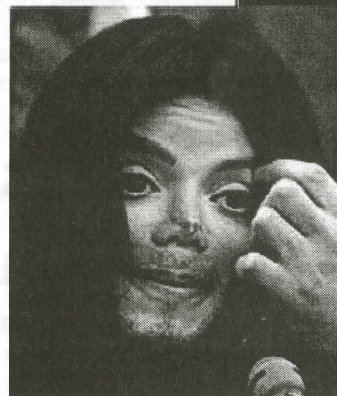
### Style

Next to the vibrator, this is the enemy of Man. This channel is dedicated to shopping, runway fashion shows, and makeovers. There is nothing more physically and emotionally painful than watching your girlfriend shop all day, only to come home and be forced to watch other women shop. Woe be unto all men foolish enough to allow this channel to exist in their cable plan.

## Best Celebrity-In-Court Appearance:

### Winona Ryder

So cute. Find her guilty for a dozen grotesque cannibalism-murders, and I'd still want to give her a hug and take her home and take care of her.



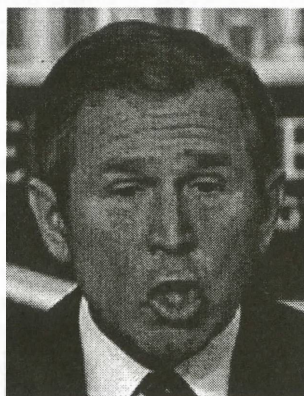
## Worst Celebrity-In-Court Appearance:

### Michael Jackson

I'm 25 and I screamed like a girl. Somebody glue his face back together or at least put some *Thriller* make-up on him to make him look less scary.

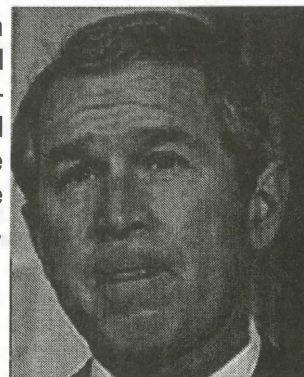
## Best Bush Moment:

"There's an old saying in Tennessee — I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee — that says, fool me...once.....shame on.....shame on you (five second pause).... (real quick, with an enthusiastic arm pump) Fool me... Can't get fooled again!" (stares into space for awhile)



## Worst Bush Moment:

That whole war with the rest of the world thing. And not capturing Bin Laden. And pissing away the entire surplus to make the top 5% even richer. What a dickface.



Right: Dickface



**Worst Case of Food Poisoning:**

Street Meat, November

I ate some street meet—you know, the weird Middle Eastern meat from those street vendors—could be lamb, could be goat, could be spider monkey, who knows but it tastes good with hot sauce over rice. Anyway, I barfed and shat plasma every 10 minutes for two straight days. I am now all for bombing the hell out of the Middle East.

**Best Case of Food Poisoning:**

Homemade Burrito, January

Yeah, technically 2003, but January doesn't count. Anyway, this bout of food poisoning was actually pretty good—I didn't throw up, and I didn't spray diarrhea all over the place. I only felt nauseas and couldn't smell fried beef n' onions for a week without gagging. But it worked to my advantage—my girlfriend did my laundry for me, and I got to stay home all weekend and play Legend of the Dragoon.

**Best Sports Moment:**

Lance Armstrong Winning Yet Again

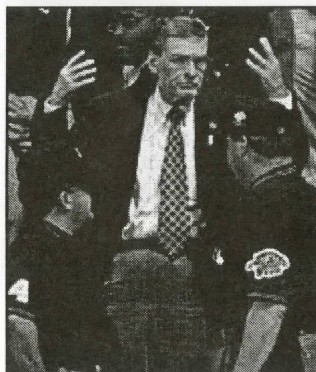
Dude, this guy had cancer of the nuts and he's still beating the French at cycling. Not that it's difficult to beat the French in anything, but, hey, bike riding hurts MY balls, and my balls are perfectly healthy. Well, except for the lice.

In any case, whatever radiation Lance zapped his nuts with, give me some of that.

**Worst Sports Moment:**

MLB All-Star Tie

I sat through hours of this back-slapping showboating bullshit, and it ends in a fucking tie? What is this, third grade? "Everyone's a winner!" Fuck that. They should've kept playing until one team dropped dead. Pussies.



Left: Bud Selig sez: "Do whatever you want so long as it destroys the game of baseball!"

Ugh! So 2002!	Totally 2003!
Britney Spears	Emmett Otter
"Bling-bling"	"You want fries with that?"
Lord of the Rings	The Pianist
New York Yankees	Filthy, diseased rally monkeys
The Strokes	Las Ketchup
Osama Bin Laden	Harvey Weinstein
Scooters	A punch in the nuts
The Sims	Real social interaction
P. Diddy	P. Diddy in a meat grinder
Reality shows	Reflecting on your own pathetic life
Missing girls	Missing girls' skeletons
Enron employees	The rest of America's workforce
The Bachelor	Bill Clinton
Ecstasy	Power rock trio Rush
J-Lo	N-Po (Natalie Portman)
Viagra	The Olsen twins
The Bible	READ Magazine

## Sequels We Would Like To See In 2003

**Addams Family Tree** Pugsley discovers masturbation and Thing lends a hand. MC Hammer does the soundtrack for food.

**Batman 6** Bruce Wayne battles an adversary that even he cannot defeat—bankruptcy.

**Braveheart 2: Braverheart** Who cares about the plot, so long as the British get beaten up.

**A Christmas Story 2** Ballistic tests trace the DC Sniper's rifle back to Ralphie.

**Return of The English Patient** Just kidding.

**ET 2** ET returns for Reeses Pieces to find Drew Barrymore all grown up. He puts his long, glowing finger to use until the army arrives and beats him to death.

**Final Fantasy II** This time, it will actually somewhat resemble the original RPG games that we all know and love.

**Little Mermaid 3** Sebastian gives Ariel crabs.

**Memento 2** Continues where the last one left off. That is, before the movie begins. But backwards. Aw, fuck it.

**Scary Movie 3** This time they spoof such horror classics as Scary Movie 1 & 2.

**The Seventh Sense** Haley gains the power to grow pubes.

**Star Trek: Final Voyage** The crew takes their final voyage... to an old age home.

**Toy Story 3** Buzz and Woody are confused by a new toy called Mr. Anal Beads.

**Superman 5** Christopher Reeve becomes able to wiggle his toes.

**Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory 2** Charlie discovers the secret ingredient is oompa loompa diarrhea.

**The Wiz 2** Michael Jackson returns to Oz to ask the Wizard for a vagina.  
—Bryan Kremkau & Adam Liebling





## The Youngest Entrepreneur

My earliest memories are of working. I always loved thinking up new ideas to make money. Being 3 or 4, my resources were limited, but I managed to be industrious. Imagine my mom's surprise when she came home to find half the possessions in her room gone. She panicked, thinking a thief was in the house, and ran into my room to make sure I was safe. There I was, her photo frames and sewing kits and clothes in front of me... with price tags stuck on them. At first, she thought I was really cute and sweetly asked how much her scissors cost. My cuteness faded when I refused to go lower than ten dollars per item.

My room wasn't only an overpriced clearance house. Before I hit six, my room was transformed into a magic shop, concert hall, casino, gallery, and private members-only club. I remember one of my performances well. I put a sign on my door: "GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH! 10 CENTS!" My older brother, who should've known better, came in and asked what the greatest show entailed. "Ten cents," I demanded, my hand outstretched. He sighed, gave me a dime, and I got to work. I ran behind my magic set and did a trick that failed miserably. I attempted it four or five times until I got it right, while my brother stewed in impatience. Then I ran to my Fisher Price bongos and thumped wildly while chanting "Babaloo." Then, I ran to my bed where I staged an impromptu play starring my Cabbage Patch Kid, Mac.

After my brother beat me up and took back his ten cents, I tried other tactics. My room soon became the place to be if you were interested in three-card monty, lotteries, or seeing works of art (my surreal crayon phase). I also told my fellow kindergarten classmates and neighbors that they could socialize in my room and enjoy refreshments for a nominal dues charge.

I soon realized the problem of trying to make money out of your room—no one comes over. And my family was already wary of my schemes and kept themselves and their possessions away. After a brief stint of making money by stealing my brother's prized bicentennial quarter collection (and paying heavily for it in bruises), I took my entrepreneurship to the outside.

From age five until I was no longer cute, I would hold weekly garage sales in front of my house. While others would set up in their garage or on their lawn, I took my snack table of unwanted goods right to the middle of the sidewalk. No one was allowed to pass me without buying something. Having already been chastised for stealing my family's stuff to sell back to them, my garage sales featured my own stuff, which wasn't very impressive. I sold beaded bracelets and rings, masks made out of paper plates, spaceships made out of yogurt containers and toothpicks, and ill-fitting clothing constructed from paper and scotch tape. (My sister recalls that I also sold my pillowcases and bed sheets, and any other toy-unrelated junk that wasn't nailed down in my room.) A whole day of work could bring in two or three dollars, donated by neighbors, whom I later found out were simply taking pity on me.

When neighbors weren't feeling generous, school was always a great place to swindle people. A psychologist I went to years later told me, in a tone that was a mix of disgust and respect, that my social problems stemmed from the fact that I saw my peers as moronic suckers whom I could easily exploit. Good point. I made a killing off of my fellow second graders, the fools. I would give my mom, a member of the Price Club, five bucks for a giant tub of Bazooka Joe or Now & Laters. Each tub would hold about 350 units. Selling them at lunchtime for ten cents each, or three for a quarter, was reaping me a huge 1000% profit, something like \$30 per \$5 tub. I was also very frugal with my money—my father would give me \$2 to buy lunch at my school's cafeteria. Occasionally I'd splurge 40 cents for chocolate milk, but usually I'd pocket the money and go hungry while my piggy bank grew fatter.

This last money-making method got me in a heap of trouble. Known for not eating, my classmates would tease me, offering me the crappiest parts of their bagged lunches. Which, of course, I would eat. Little Meredith got a spotted, mushy banana? Give it to Adam. Asshole Bully Jared would rather buy lunch than eat his chopped liver sandwich? Give it to Adam. Child Prodigy Dennis and Precious Amy both don't like that nondescript processed mystery meat in the corner of their Lunchables? All mine.



One day Mandi found a Ho-Ho in her brown bag. A treasure to most, but this Ho-Ho was completely covered in white, webby mold. She held it up for the table to see, spinning it slowly in the air, letting the florescent lighting bounce off its white, willowy surface. Everyone "ewww'd!" It was the worst looking, foulest Ho-Ho that has ever seen light. Its very existence was an affront to God. And someone suggested feeding it to me.

The table began chanting, "Give it to Adam! Give it to Adam! Give it to Adam!" Yes, give it to Adam! I was starving that day, and a Ho-Ho, even a Ho-Ho oozing with bacteria and fungi, would have suited me just fine. But then I thought about it... What if I got sick? What if I died? This was certainly no healthy looking Ho-Ho. Then someone said, "I'll give you fifteen cents!" Someone else chimed in, "I've got a nickel!" My reservations vanished, but I kept my poker face on while the hat was passed around. When the total topped \$3.16, I grabbed the notorious Ho-Ho, stood up, and raised it heavenward. In one swift motion, I stuffed it in my face.

The girls eeked, the boys faked vomit noises, and I munched greedily on the odorous Ho-Ho. For dramatic flourish, I stuck my tongue out, displaying the stale shit-brown cupcake bits, the rancid cream filling, and the spider web moldy giblets.

Witnessing the infamous event from behind the window of the staff lounge was the school principal and the nurse.

I soon found myself in the nurse's office, flanked by the principal and the nurse. "What did you just eat?" asked Dr. B, the principal. "It was just a Ho-Ho," I replied miserably. "Mandi said it was hers. Why did you eat her Ho-Ho?" asked the nurse. I suddenly got defensive. "She said I could have it! It was moldy and she didn't want it!" I shouted indignantly. "Why did you want to eat it if it was moldy?" I thought about it. If I said I ate it for money or on a dare, they'd think I was easily influenced or childish. Bet-

ter to spin it that I was hungry. "I was hungry," I said. The nurse and principal exchanged glances.

Forty-five minutes later, my mom showed up and was ushered into a private meeting with the principal. She was told what a horrible, irresponsible mother she was to not give her son any money for lunch, or even at least pack him a brown bag lunch, if she couldn't afford the measly \$1.60 a day. Apparently, the nurse had been watching me at lunch for weeks, noticing that I was going hungry and eating my classmates' scraps. She had no idea that I was simply being frugal, and she came to the conclusion that I was either being abused or came from utter poverty.

In either case, the Ho-Ho incident led her to tell the principal her theories, and he in turn felt my poor mother needed a stern talking-to. He told her everything as he saw it – that I was a broke and starving child who pathetically resorted to eating moldy Ho-Hos for nourishment. Instead of me exploiting my classmates for free food, it was they who were exploiting me – using my hunger to dare me into eating dangerous things.

My mother came out of the meeting shaken and red-faced. She was told to take me home or the doctor's – that the school wasn't responsible if I got sick. She grabbed me and we drove home in silence. The only thing she said was, "Starting tomorrow, you eat lunch." I nodded, too embarrassed and scared to talk.

It turns out it was the best thing that could've happened to me. Starting the next day, my father began giving me THREE dollars instead of two! And that Saturday, I received my first-ever allowance of \$5 a week! Although the principal tipped off the child welfare service and put agents on my mom's back, who ended up doggedly shadowing my mom for years to come to her utter paranoia and their utter frustration, I took it all as a giant step forward in my budding career as an unscrupulous entrepreneur.

*Image by Bryan Kremkau*

## The Cold Heart of Business

On the outside, I was the most mild-mannered kid you could ever meet. Calling me studious is a nice way to frame it, but I was simply an egghead. My fave thing to do in my spare time was extra credits. It got to the point where even the teachers were sick of me. When not making unsolicited school projects with oak tag and markers, I would while away the hours reading encyclopedias. I would help my sister's friends with their reports.. when I was in 1st grade and they were in 8th. One of my favorite tricks was to recite the dictionary to them from memory.

But like most self-proclaimed child prodigies, I had an evil side. I was bereft of guilt. I could steal with impudence, cheat with impertinence, and lie with impetuousness. (I also had a pretty good vocabulary!) I never thought twice about using my peers' inferior intelligence to my financial advantage. In a way, I was truly a child of the 80s – greedy, money-hungry, and callous.

I had a silver tongue and a golden touch – I could talk anyone into needing a 51-card deck of cards, a bike chain with a forgotten combo, "rare" and "one-in-a-million" prizes from cereal boxes. All unwanted junk in my room became priceless treasure. A cheap plastic water gun became a magical dispenser of heavy artillery. My one-armed He-Man toy could actually bestow superhuman strength to the owner. What, it didn't work? You obviously didn't use it correctly. No refunds.

One of my biggest coups was against the Hur brothers. From a Korean family that just moved into a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, the two young Hurs were fish out of water, and

because of my own poor social skills and alienation, we became friends and hung out almost every day after school.

Things were going fine until we started collecting baseball cards. My evil side soon reappeared. I owned a Beckett's price guide... they didn't. I swore to them that my cards were unbelievably valuable and theirs were crap. We traded and traded until I had all the Jose Cansecos and Darryl Strawberry's and they had all the obscure, third-string no-name outfielders and relievers.

It's because of these trades that I am certain I'm going to hell. At that time, and at that young age, no one swore to God and then lied. I can't count the amount of times I swore to God that they were getting the better deal. I didn't even bother crossing my fingers – I knew even then that I had no soul left to save.

If any redemption is possible, I did phase out my evil by the time I was 10 or 11. One theory is that my parents' divorce at that time drove out a bad influence on me – my father, who spent most evenings counting and recounting his money or cheating at cards. It's possible that he taught me that the accumulation of money was more important than how it's accumulated, and my natural moral code kicked in after he left. But most likely, my attitude changed with necessity. With only one income, and a deadbeat dad who refused to pay child support for half a decade, I grew up pretty fast. My fifty-cent gain from screwing over the Hurs that day wasn't going to put food on the table. I needed a job – a real job.

And so, at 11 years old, I began my long journey into the art of working, and left behind the easier, if ultimately less rewarding, art of making money.



## Horrible Happenings in Home Ecch by Mom

### Part 1

Have you ever been a Home Ec teacher, or should I say... Home Ecch?! Well, I have and it ain't no picnic.

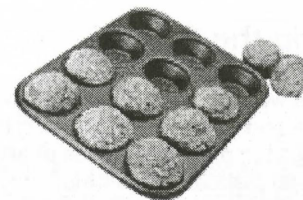
For instance, take carrot cupcakes... please! I help my classes make a total of 252 cupcakes a year, give or take a few burnt ones. Out of that amount, maybe half turn out edible. The 7th graders don't mind - they'll eat *anything*. This year was a first for me - One of the kitchen groups put one tablespoon of baking soda into the recipe instead of one *teaspoon*. Know what happened to those cupcakes? THEY IMPOLODED!! The cupcakes looked like mini Grand Canyons! The students didn't mind the salty, bitter flavor or the big hole that was supposed to be a cupcake. They filled up the hole with frosting and ate it anyway.

Which reminds me of my son (your editor), Adam. When he took Home Ec in 7th grade, they had an entrepreneurship sale. The class formed a small business to sell a product for profit. All proceeds were to go to a charity. Adam's group decided to make Irish Soda Bread which can be quite delicious if made correctly. I guess Adam's had the Baking Soda Blues as the soda in the Irish Soda Bread wasn't measured correctly either.

Poor Adam-no one bought his bread, and he had all these hard loaves leftover. As he was waiting, a potential customer arrived. Adam was so excited until he saw that the person bought a cookie from the booth next to him. Soon, another person came over only to buy a cookie but there was no one to take the money because the cookie people were so busy tending to their throng of customers. Adam, bless his little heart, was kind enough to help the cookie customer and he quickly slipped the \$1.25 into his pocket. Adam helped many other cookie customers too. At the end of the sale, Adam's group was left with the same amount of Irish Soda Bread, but with the most money.

Adam was quick at manipulating money but he was not too adept with a sewing machine. Remember how you had to sew a project in Home Ec? Well, Adam had a choice of which sewing kit to do. Of course he had to choose the hardest one - A ROBOT. The teacher gave them about 7 weeks to complete this project. God knows what Adam was doing for 6 weeks and 6 days. He probably spent his time dreaming about money and girls, his two favorite subjects. Well, the night before it was due, he brought the project home to show me. I didn't want to laugh, so I told him how great it was. But after he went to sleep, I had the best belly laugh in my life. He had sewn the leg to the head in place of an ear, and the arm (attached to the chest) was sewn on backwards. I suppose he wanted to impress me because everything was sewn together using a zigzag stitch. I guess the laugh was on me because I stayed up all night ripping the whole thing out and sewing it back together the correct way. He had already failed the cooking part of Home Ec (aka Irish Soda Bread) and if he didn't get the sewing project right, he would fail this course. NO SON OF MINE WAS GOING TO FAIL HOME EC!!! Well, the next day he proudly brought in his robot and he got an "A" for my efforts. At least he passed the course. But to this day, Adam still uses a stapler to hold his pants up when he loses a button. No matter what, I love him to death. How could you not?

**Editor's rebuttal:** It's all true! We also took the soda bread and pegged them at people who walked by in the hall. Someone would walk by and we'd scream "BUY OUR FREAKIN BREAD!" and if they didn't (and they didn't), we hurled hard inedible bread at their craniums. One girl actually bought a piece of bread and, shockingly, liked it! That deserved more projectile stone-like bread targeted at her hollow head.



### Part 2

"Hell no! We won't go!"

Remember that chant from the 60s and 70s? It was loudly heard from the students of that era who were protesting the Vietnam War. Well, if you miss hearing that catchy little phrase, tune in to a public middle school every morning at 7 am and you can hear me screaming it.

It takes a lot of effort and patience to teach—especially when you do a lesson on food safety. Do you really think that these 7th graders give a damn about bacteria? I mean, they scarf down Belly Bombers from White Castle without even twitching; they eat three Big Macs and five Double Whoppers without so much as a burp!

In Newsday of '98, there was an article about a little girl who died from eating a fast-food hamburger. They gave all the gory details, including dehydration, kidney failure, high fever, seizures, coma, and her death rattle. This was because the meat was not cooked properly, stored properly, nor handled properly and she contracted E. coli.

When I mentioned the phrase "E. coli" to my students, there were varied reactions. "Eeek!what?" was one response; another was a yawn; and a third said, "Oh! I know what that means! I saw that in a TV commercial. There were two men wearing shorts with suspenders on top of a mountain blowing on a long horn. They were shouting 'Eeeee-COLI!'" I stared at this kid wondering if his mother slapped him at birth. I racked my brains trying to remember that commercial. Wasn't it for a cough drop? Well, I guess he was close enough, so I went on to the next one.

"Who knows what botulism is?" I timidly asked.

"I KNOW! I KNOW!" A million hands shot up, but I chose the girl who wore the largest glasses. She explained, "That happened to me last year in 6th grade. I had to do a science report..." I was getting excited. Someone seemed to know something besides N Sync or Backstreet Boys. She continued, "I was doing my report, but then I messed up my research on the phaseolus vulgaris. The act of botching up is called botulism."

I just stared at her in horror and quickly changed the subject. On to the third and final kind of food poisoning: Salmonella.

"Okay, class. Who can explain what salmonella is?"

The familiar annoying response, "I KNOW! I KNOW!" Once again, millions of hands, eagerly raised, eyes imploring me to acknowledge their answers. "Okay, Daniel. Salmonella?"

Daniel proudly said, "The Weinsteins."

"Huh?? WHAT??" I yelled. "The Weinsteins?"

Daniel explained, "Sam and Ella. Sam and Ella Weinstein are my parents' friends who live in Florida."

There are 55 more days left of school. I'm not sure if I'm going to make it. Then I get two months off. Then it starts all over again. HELL NO! I WON'T GO!

—from READ #17



## Delivering the Goods

I learned a lot working for Big Bob's Delivery Service. I learned the intricacies and subtleties of carrying boxes, pushing armchairs on dollies, cradling priceless pieces of art, and lifting baby grand pianos up spiral staircases. I learned how to drink coffee in a turbulent truck without spilling a drop. I learned the ancient trucker's art of feng shui—the most efficient manner of stacking misshapen things into the back of a truck. And true to its slogan ("We deliver everything except babies!"), I learned the proper way of delivering everything you can possibly imagine.

Most of the time, I learned these skills the hard way. But no lesson came harder than the time I learned to use deodorant.

Being 13 years old, my body hadn't yet developed the stink that surrounds those entering puberty. But being that I wasn't so much "strong" as I was "cheap labor," the heavy manual work took its toll on my glands. My boss, Big Bob, was kind enough—or stinky enough himself—to not mention my manly vapors.

But, like most truckers, Big Bob was an eccentric fellow. You would never meet a nicer, gentler guy, and yet he wouldn't hesitate a moment to scream out his window "SHAKE WHAT THE GOOD LORD GAVE YA!!" to any decent-looking woman, or to ANY woman for that matter. He could go days without talking, only listening astutely to whatever was on your mind, sometimes offering insightful fatherly advice. But there were also days when all he did was sing along to the Eagles at the top of his lungs while hitting you in the chest, shouting, "THE EAGLES ARE THE FUCKING BEST, HUH!!!!"

My point is that Big Bob was, in general, an amazingly nice, laid-back guy, and it was only at random moments that his trucker instincts would kick in. Normally, even in his macho state, he was funny and happy-go-lucky and charming, and it was only once, and I'll never forget it, when his ribbing became mean-spirited.

That day Big Bob picked me up, and as usual I asked about the job.

"We're helping someone move," he said.

"Business? Office?"

"No, just a person. From one apartment to another."

Now, Big Bob only took big jobs. Whole houses, offices, buildings... We moved pianos, entire galleries, libraries. You could charge those people a lot, and they didn't have much choice. But apartments? That was a waste of a day—the people didn't have much money and it's a day's work of moving little shit pieces around.

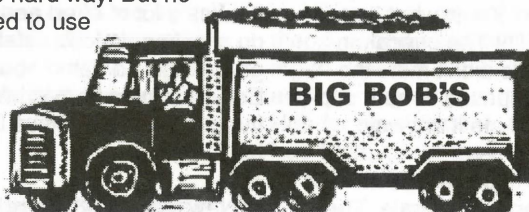
As usual, I kept my mouth shut... that is, until it dropped open and everything made sense. Out of her three-floor walk-up appeared one of the hottest girls I had ever seen in real life. Tall, dark Asian, with the most unbelievable bod somehow poured into tight jeans and even tighter sweater. And she was young and spunky—big sunglasses, big grin, big tits. She was like Tia Carrera and Asia Carrera wrapped in one. She was so fucking cool.

"Heya, Big Bob!" she said, smiling radiantly, clapping him on the shoulder. "You ready?"

"I'm always ready for you, sweetheart," he said smoothly. Damn, he was smooth. I also noticed he didn't introduce me.

We got to work, or I should say, I got to work. Sure enough, it was little shit pieces, up and down a three-floor stairwell. Since none of the pieces were incredibly heavy, and since the stairwell was narrow, Bob decided to get out of my way and use the time to chat up the hottie. After two hours of up-and-down, up-and-down, the truck was fully loaded. I was exhausted, dirty, smelly.

The hot girl spoke: "Okay, Bob, I'll meet you at the other apartment!" and she headed to her car.



"Nah, get in the van, sweetheart," said Bob.

"You sure? It's okay?"

"Yeah, the kid will make room for you."

Now, this was a delivery truck. There are two seats in the front. That's it. What was she going to do—climb onto my lap?

She climbed onto my lap. She apologized for her weight (what weight?), but I was too shocked to do anything but smile meekly. To get comfortable, she put her arms around me and sat across on my lap. If I wasn't so tired, I would've creamed my jeans, or at the very least, popped a monster boner. Things like this just didn't happen to your average 13-year-old, especially to a chubby metalhead dork like me.

Bob, either sensing my happiness or her arms around me, decided to do some further cock-blocking.

"Pheewwww!! Is that you, Adam? GOD YOU STINK!!"

I did. I really did stink. I had sweat pouring down me, I was wet through my clothes. And my pits had the most awful tuna fishy, rotten meat smell.

The girl said, "Aw, it's not so bad," but that confirmed that I DID stink, and I started feeling awful. And nervous. And I sweated more and more.

It was a hot day and a long drive. No air conditioner. The girl began fidgeting in my lap. Worse, she was wrinkling her nose. All the while, Big Bob was going on and on about how bad I smell.

"YOU GOTTA GORGEOUS GIRL ON YOUR LAP AND YOU SMELL LIKE SHIT! WHAT ARE YOU, A RETARD? DON'T YOU KNOW HOW TO USE DEODORANT?? AND HE SMELLS LIKE THIS EVERY DAY! KID, TAKE YOUR MONEY TODAY AND BUY SOME COLOGNE!! HOLY SHIT!! I THINK THE GIRL IS GONNA PUKE ALL OVER YOU, YOU STINKING BASTARD!!!"

Between my stink and Big Bob's ranting, the girl spent the trip in quiet discomfort. When we drove up to her new apartment, she actually LEPT out of the truck, almost falling to her face.

I spent the next few hours moving her stuff in. She didn't talk to me, didn't even offer some water. When Bob asked her if she needed a ride back to her car, she couldn't say no thanks fast enough.

The next day, I bought my first stick of deodorant.



# The Condom Con

by Christopher Campbell

At 16, I had my first job at Staples, because I was somewhat of a nerd and I loved school supplies and office supplies and most of all I enjoyed curiously punching numbers on calculators. Unfortunately, the managers made me sell computers, which I had no knowledge of or investment in and therefore I developed a most certain disregard for my employment. Later on, I sold music and movies for a store by the name of Co-conuts. It was a very different kind of shop from Staples in the fact that they did not sell what they were named, yet the management there was similar for they too made me sell something I had no care for.

Now I work at a movie theater. My knowledge of film is more than my knowledge of anything, including spelling, which I am admittedly a genius at, and my love for watching films outshines my love for food, which if slight would not have caused me to get fat. Employment in a cinema is perfect for me although I don't usually get to astound people with my intelligence on the subject. When they want to see *The Hot Chick*, they are going to see *The Hot Chick* and nothing I say on the quality of a Rob Schneider movie will deter them.

It is most wise to work in an area that you are particularly interested in. Knowledge of your profession is important, yes, but without a passion for the product or purpose, you really have no motivation, do you? When I lived in Philadelphia for a summer, I walked up and down South Street in search of a perfect temporary job for myself. I eventually took employment with Condom Kingdom, not because I had great knowledge of anything that they sold, but because I would have great interest in my purpose there.

I didn't have the same purpose as everyone else there, however. The store was there to make money. The other employees were there to make money. The customers were there in order to later make love. I was there to make an ironic experience for myself.

I was in fact a virgin while working at a store that sold items I had no familiarity with. I rang up lubricants, lotions, videos, dildos, vibrators, enhancements, handcuffs, and, yes, like Staples selling staples, Condom Kingdom sold condoms. At times I would get jealous because nearly every customer that came through there was getting laid while I wasn't. In spite of my innocence,

though, it never really got embarrassing or uncomfortable. Most of the time people knew what they wanted, whether for pleasure or humor, and were typically silent or cracking up, respectively. There were only a few actual moments where I was asked for help in choosing a brand, flavor or style. I didn't particularly want to admit my ignorance since other people tend to see irony as something to make fun of rather than have fun with. I figured if they really had no clue either, I could just make something up and act confident.



Captain Condom sez: "Don't be silly—wrap your willy!"

Then the management had to go and like me, and trust me, and leave me alone at times. Little did they know that stores who made that mistake in the past lost a significant amount of their inventory. I wasn't so much a kleptomaniac as I was an anti-capitalist rebel, but I grew accustomed to the lifestyle. It was always easiest to steal from a company that I worked for. I would convince myself that I was treated unfairly and deserved free gifts or that possession was unnatural and the CDs actually belonged to the world, not the corporation.

At Condom Kingdom, there was nothing that I needed or wanted, yet I stole anyway. I stole condoms in the hopes that one day I might use them. I stole special balms for erectile dysfunction in case I found out I had that problem. I stole vibrators in the event that I come out of the closet. By summer's end, I had become prepared for anything, healthy or deviant. Six months later, I finally got to use the condoms, and for a short, nervous time, I had a...lets just say that I got to put most of my stolen goods to use. I didn't end up being a homosexual, so the vibrator was given out as a gag gift to a close friend.

I am an old man now. I have become too dull to work in the name of irony and I have become too bitter to encourage people to have sex. As a result, I will never find myself working again for Condom Kingdom. It was extremely interesting while it lasted and I recommend the laughs for any young soul.

On a final disclaiming note, I do not recommend stealing from your employer. Never bite the hand that feeds you.

And for legal reasons, I'd like to state that this article has the equivalency of a box of jumbo size condoms.



# TCBY. The COOLEST Best YOb\*

\*According to Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Y used to be pronounced like a J, so just go along with it.

Working with food could be the most soul-draining, torturous experience. Wherever you are—kitchen, wait staff, host, dishwasher—you're part of a hierarchy and you're always seemingly on the bottom. Not only does everyone hate each other, fighting each other for tables and tips like some Machiavellian nightmare, but you also have to deal with customers, who are all of varying degrees of unpleasantness.

I was lucky enough to have never formally worked in a restaurant or burger chain. I never had to work the fryer, wait tables, or any of the other awful acts that make serving food hell. In fact, my experiences have all been the exact opposite—working with food, in the extent I did, had been some of the best fun I've had in my life. I mean, what's better than ice cream?

A friend of the family was the manager at a TCBY in Long Beach, Long Island, and a job was offered. It was the summer, and I was just laid off from B. Dalton Bookseller's because they discovered by real age (14) after I could no longer hide the fact that I didn't have work papers.

TCBY was one of the easiest training grounds. Because of the high prices and high competition (we were surrounded by a Carvel, Baskin Robbins, and Haagen-Daaz), barely anyone came in, and I quickly picked up the skills of serving yogurt without much pressure. In case you were interested, here are some tips:

- Yogurt is soft and comes out fast, so you only want to push down the lever halfway and let it come out slow. Making the perfect cone involves smooth wrist work, and to top off the point, you lift the cone right up to the spigot and quickly pull back down, creating the perfectly pointy apex.
- When making shakes (or "shivers" as TCBY calls them), pour in the milk first, add yogurt second. Also keep the tin canister at a tilt. These methods keep the shiver from splashing out all over the place.
- Don't get locked in the freezer.

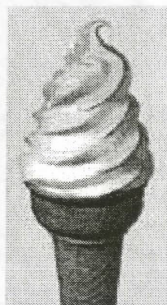
TCBY was quite a fun place. This store was squat in between Lido Beach, Atlantic Beach, and Long Beach, so during the summer, unspeakably hot girls would come in, sometimes only in a bikini, and slowly eat their cones in front of me. I was a long-haired dorky 14-year old, but that didn't stop me from making some slick moves. When a girl would order a cone, my best line was "I thought models don't eat this stuff." They would roll their eyes or firmly grip their mace.

My coworkers were a lot luckier with the ladies. Brian was a tall, blonde surfer dude who would spend his work hours making out with various girls in the backroom. I don't think he ever did any work, but he did give me some pointers on women ("they love it when you hug them, and then, like, slip your two fingers down their butt crack and push hard on the sweet spot").

Rob was the typical metalhead stoner. He once replaced the fudge brownies with hash brownies, but we ended up eating them all before we could do the damage to unsuspecting customers. One day he came to work tripping, and thought he saw

cockroaches everywhere. Every time a customer would order a cone with an Oreo cookie or Heath Bar topping, he would make it, stare at it wide-eyed for a few seconds, and then throw it in the trash. "No man, I can't give that to you..." So I made the sundaes and cones and he took over the register, but the numbers must've been bleeding off the bills because we were \$250 short that night.

Dave was the straight guy—glasses, button-down shirt, uptight demeanor—but he was also the guy who invented Brownie Tennis, a sport of kings. The net was one of those giant, gaudy promotional banners that headquarters would make us put up. The paddles were fashioned out of waffle cones and the ball was a brownie wrapped in tinfoil. At one end of the playing field (the backroom) was the sink, at the other end, the mop bucket. You volleyed like in badminton, and a missed ball was a point. Getting the brownie in the sink or mop was ten points. Thanks to the bell that rang when the door opened (or more importantly, the silence that told us no one had entered), many boring afternoons were whiled away with Brownie Tennis.



Scream for me!

But I did work hard. The manager was a stickler for cleanliness, and the yogurt machines were taken apart EVERY NIGHT and the dozens of pieces of plastic and oily rubber were scrubbed clean for TWO HOURS by yours truly. The floor had to be spotless. And we're talking about a big floor, and dried-up yogurt mixed with smashed-up sprinkles is no job for a Swiffer. I had to sweep, and then mop the floor TWICE with a soap, water, ammonia, and bleach combo that I think sterilized me for life. Closing time was 9, and I cleaned until 1 am.

My hard work paid off. The summer came to a close and the employees vanished. Dave went back to business school, Brian moved to California to find better waves, and Rob just fell off the planet (I did run into him three years later in the second row of a Rush concert). I was the only one left and I was made Assistant Manager. I didn't exactly manage anyone, but I was in charge of the store on the weekend, which was like being a kid in a candy store. Which it literally was. I gained 25 pounds in that stretch and the shit was FAT FREE.

But for all my self-proclaimed great work ethic, I still did the wrong, selfish thing. I was scheduled to work Friday night, and Friday morning my friend called with an extra ticket for a Bob Dylan concert at Jones Beach. I called in sick to the manager, who wasn't happy about working alone on a busy, hectic Friday night. And of course, being a friend of the family, he found out the truth in a roundabout way just before I left for the concert. He got me on the phone and gave me an ultimatum: go to the concert and get fired or get my ass to work. I said something lame about it being my first Dylan concert and I didn't want to pass up the free ride. After making me feel two-inches tall, I got canned.

And the kicker was that the Dylan concert ended up being rained out. The heavens, deservedly, pissed on me twice.

Two months later, the owner of the franchise, some sleazy guy who never stepped foot into the store, was caught owing five years' worth of back taxes. The store was soon taken away from him and quickly closed down. Where once stood a place of fun, laughter, white chocolate mousse yogurt, and Brownie Tennis is now a hair salon.



## The Shoe Store Wanted Urine

Many years before I became a starving magazine publisher, I worked at a Parade Of Shoes. Yes, I knew no shame. I needed work and I figured, hey, women's shoe stores can't be as bad as Al Bundy says. Needless to say, it ended up being one of the worst job I ever held in my life in terms of sheer exploitation, not to mention the degradation from the customers. Yet I should have been clued in from the beginning when I was told that a drug test was required. Did they want a strand of hair? Some flakes of skin? Perhaps a drop of blood? No...the shoe store wanted urine.

Now if you're like me, you can't pee on demand. Knowing this, I prepared myself by drinking a quart of Tropicana Ruby Red Grapefruit Juice, a peach Snapple, and about a half gallon of water. I drove into the heart of Queens to this shady medical center, and when I arrived, I gave the receptionist this letter from the shoe store.

"Okay, young man. We were expecting you. Go through those doors." I went through the doors, and there stood the cutest, hottest nurse I've ever seen. You know how on TV all the nurses are hotties, while in real life they're pretty frightening on the eyes? Well, suddenly I had proof that TV life WAS real, that the nurses are foxes and there are always happy endings. This chick was NICE.

She handed me this little plastic cup and walked me to the bathroom. But she didn't walk away! I opened the door a little to peak, and she was still there! Great, I thought. Not only can I not pee on demand, but you certainly won't get a drop out of me if someone, especially this foxy-chicky lady, is within ear-shot. So I stood there, with my pants around my ankles, holding a cup under my unit. To make matter worse, directly in front of me was a full-sized mirror. One-way, I thought, paranoid as hell. I knew I wouldn't be able to go through with it.

I stood there for 10 minutes holding my limp manhood. I was frustrated and I wanted to cry. I zipped up and opened the door. The nurse was standing impatiently right outside. "Umm, I'm really sorry," I said, "but I can't do it." She gave me a look and in a very nasty voice said, "Look. I gotta leave in FIVE MINUTES. I won't be back until NEXT MONDAY, and I really don't think your job wants to wait that long. SO START PEE-ING!!" I let out a yelp and locked myself in the bathroom. I took another cup and drank cup after cup from the sink. I drank and drank and drank. I drank about 60 or 70 little cupfuls of water. At this point, not only couldn't I pee, but I felt like I was going to throw up.

I looked at my watch and wondered what to do. I considered masturbating. See, I always have to urinate after I orgasm, a natural defense mechanism to prevent after-sex cuddling. But, I thought, what if they analyze my urine and find huge traces of sperm? Then they'll KNOW what I did. Not to mention again that the mirror might be a one-way. Well, what if, I thought, I got just a little bit excited, just enough to help me pee? That seemed like a good idea, so I started to fantasize.

(We are now going into fantasy-mode, which, in pure pornographic fashion, is in italics:)

*I'm sorry, I just can't do it, I say to her.*

*"Aw," she says, "Is there anything I can do to help?"*

*"Well," I say, "I'm always able to go after I orgasm..."*



*"OOOH!" she squeals in delight,  
"I can certainly help you with that!"*

*And we walk in into the bathroom together.*

*She gets down on her knees and puts her arms around my legs...*

While fantasizing, instead of masturbating, I repeatedly punched myself in the bladder. Hard. I felt a tingle... That tingle turned into a rumble... I thought about the immense volume of liquid in me and grabbed the cup not a second too late. A mighty stream erupted from me and blasted into the puny cup, making me lose both the grip on my cup and my balance. Pee ricocheted everywhere. Off the cup, off the toilet, off the floor, off the mirror... it was a real mess. I caught some in another cup and zipped up. I looked around the wet room. It looked like one of those Woodstock II portapotties. I was thoroughly embarrassed and I almost burst into tears. I opened the door a crack and slipped out quietly, shutting the door behind me very quickly. I gave the nurse the cup and got the hell out of dodge.

After I rushed home and changed my clothes, I thought about that horrifying ordeal. Being forced to pee is a terrible thing, and I hope I never have to do it again. It's a cruel job that asks you for urine, and perhaps it was foreshadowing of the cruel job ahead. Or maybe they figured that if I wanted to work at Parade Of Shoes, I must be on crack.

*Originally printed in READ #13 as "Rudy Takes A Drug Test"  
Image by Bryan Kremkau*



## You Can Account On Me

During all my teen years of retail hell, I also held long-term part-time jobs doing two completely different things—hard manual labor for a delivery service and monotonous data entry for an accountant. Strangely, my respective bosses—Big Bob and Barry—were the most eccentric people I've ever worked for.

Barry, the CPA, worked out of his basement, and I think the amount of time spent cooped-up at home fried his brain. A former marathon runner, he quickly developed the common "accountant frame" — big, fat, and hairy.

Working at home has its advantages—you don't have to commute, you can take a shit without public shit anxiety, and you can wear whatever you want. In Gary's case, that meant not much. In the five years I was in his service, I never saw Barry in more than boxers, which scarred me for life. Except for when clients came over, in which case he threw on pants and an undershirt, I worked in close quarters with a frighteningly hairy, naked older man.

I had to deal with other unpleasantities—a musty, moldy basement, a big smelly Springer Spaniel, constant doo-wop, and my desk, which was an uncluttered end of a very cluttered ping-pong table. My work also changed drastically day-by-day. Unlike most accountants, Barry didn't favor simplicity through consistency. Most accountants stick with one accounting software, one method—that's what makes them so boring. But Barry needed to change shit around, try out new things. As a result, in 5 years, I had to teach myself and use a dozen completely different accounting programs, and since my work included everything from payroll taxes to income taxes to all manners of data entry, analysis and codifying, I had to continuously stop and change direction every time Barry introduced new software.

Yep, I was doing corporation payroll taxes, income taxes, you name it. Chances are, if you were Barry's client in the mid-90s, your taxes were done by a 15-year old. One day, Barry also decided to branch out into financial advising. So now this 15-year old was reviewing prospectuses, choosing mutual funds and pension plans, analyzing trends, and developing diversified portfolios. I wasn't just playing around with someone's tax return—I was managing their life savings, their kids' college funds, their retirement. All for five bucks an hour.

I enjoyed it, though. I was learning a ton, and I became sincerely interested in business, enough to take accounting classes in high school, become president of the business club, work for another accountant, take on other accounts payable work, and pursue a degree in accounting at Baruch. And although I ended up getting my diploma in marketing, my experiences in accounting has left an enduring soft spot in my heart for that art of numbers.

If there's one thing I love more than accounting, it's music. I was cursed with being born around Tax Day, and for four years, I dutifully sacrificed my birthday plans to help Barry with the mid-April rush of filing tax returns. But on my 19th birthday, my friend Nick and I decided to throw a ska show to celebrate. I asked for and got the day off, and Nick and I made our plans.

The night before the party, Barry called me up. Listen, he said, I'm drowning in returns. I need your help tomorrow. I can't, I said, I've already made plans. Barry shouted into the phone: "YOU DON'T HAVE BIRTHDAYS DURING MY TAX SEASON!! YOU DO THIS TO ME AGAIN AND YOU'RE FIRED!!" I called him a fucking baby and hung up on him. That ended my long stint as a junior accountant.

Barry wasn't a bad guy though. He was a patient teacher, he put up with my flatulence, and, as a Baruch alumni, he wrote me a recommendation that helped get me into the school. Because maybe his own sons alienated him, he kind of took me under his wing. He was a half-naked, fat, hairy freak of an accountant, but he was also one of my early mentors.

## The Myths Behind Accounting

Many people have misconceptions regarding accounting. As a junior accountant and accounting major, I feel it is my duty to dispel any rumors. Here are the most common remarks I hear:

**1) Accounting is boring.** Not so! People believe that sitting at a desk all day, under florescent lights with lists of numbers in front of you, is not as exciting as say, being a doctor or secret agent. Rubbish! I remember once, this was back in '95, the copier in the office broke down. This was at 9 PM, the night before Tax Day (April 15th). Everyone panicked. We had to get these returns done and mailed in three hours, or else our clients would have to file for extensions and pay late fees. I recall the intensity and frustration in the air as my boss screamed and kicked at the machine and I brainstormed solutions. I finally suggested we go to Kinko's, which is what we ended up doing. We got there around 10, and worked our asses off to get it done in time. I'll never forget the excitement of racing against the clock, our bodies chock full of adrenaline.

**2) You need to be great at math to be an accountant.** Ha! If that were the case, I'd be the worst junior accountant in the world. I failed math in school so many times, I finally passed out of pity. Accounting has nothing to do with math; it has to do with money. All you need to know is addition and subtraction, and you've got an adding machine right in front of you. I've never needed any higher math—trigonometry, algebra, calculus, geometry, or statistics—for counting rows of numbers.

**3) Accountants are geeks.** Oh, really? I went to work everyday in khakis and T-shirts and listened to metal and ska while I did major companies' payroll. Unless my boss was there, in which case we listened to doo-wop. Point is, I don't wear glasses, I enjoy drinking and goofing off just like the next guy. I am also well-groomed and I haven't played D&D in a good six months.

**4) Accountants have small penises.** Ppff! I'd like to find the person who started this nasty rumor and look at the size of his penis! I wouldn't say all accountants are well-endowed, but the ones I've seen have ranged from.. umm, forget it.

**5) Accountant all have big asses.** Hogwash! Agreed, a good amount of accountants get chubby from sitting behind a desk all day without exercise, but I myself am skinny as a rake. *[Note: this was written a long time ago]* In fact, I'd say a good 10% of accountants aren't overweight. And the ones who are a tad obese did not become that way from filing returns or entering cash disbursements data, but from having the money to buy good, unhealthy foods. That's right, no matter what the occupation, if it makes you rich you can afford the luxury of twinkies and goobers at every meal.

So you see, ladies and gentlemen, accounting is so much more than tedious office work. It involves and creates enthusiasm, studliness, and machismo. That's why almost all accountants are male—it's a career that revolves around masculinity! I have to go now because Days is on. Until next time, remember, if you see an accountant on the street, don't spit on him! He might just help you with your taxes and advise you to write off more deductions!!

—from READ #13



## Freestyle Accountin'

I stepped into the posh Manhattan accounting firm, just two blocks south of Penn Station. The head CPA, Peter, led me into my new office, a small closet with a chair and desk.

"Barry says you're one of the best junior accountants around," he said. "I don't normally give jobs to teenagers, but my assistant April is overwhelmed with work right now, and I'm hoping you can help her out."

"Yes, of course," I said. "I'd be happy to."

"Great. I spend most of my time making house calls to clients, and I have an appointment now, but April will give you work to do." Peter was halfway out of the office before he finished his sentence.

"Quick question," I said, trying to be as agreeable as possible. "I'm not sure of the payment arrangements?"

"Ten dollars an hour. Make your own hours. You'll be paid in cash. You can get your money at the end of the day, end of the week, whenever you want. See April about it." And he turned and left, and I never saw him again.

I was working for April now, a cute petite Latina with absolutely gorgeous eyes. Unfortunately, she only put on the cute act around Peter and others above her. To me, she was as an ice queen. She brusquely came into my office, and by way of introduction, dumped a bundle of folders and papers on my desk.

"Listen," she said. "I know you're just a kid, but maybe you can make some sense of this. I've been working on this bank rec for months and I can't look at it anymore. I can't get these numbers to add up and I'm going to set fire to the whole fucking pile."

"Yes, of course," I said. "I'd be happy to."

Within minutes I saw the problem. Not because I'm some accounting prodigy, but because the mistake was so glaringly obvious. It was something anyone with half a brain could've figured out.

I went to April's office. "Umm, April?" I said. "Confusing, huh?" she said with a nasty smirk. "Actually, I found the missing number. You forgot to include the closing balance from last year. When you carry it over, the books balance to the penny."

Her eyes smoldered with hate. "Yes, I know... I must've just been tired when I tried working on it late last night. Wait for me in your

office and I'll bring more work for you. And don't disturb me again while I'm working."

I went back to my office and waited and waited. I ended up reading a book for five hours. It was 9 at night when I knocked on April's door.

"Oh yes, I didn't have any more work for you. Come back next week." She reached under her desk calendar and handed me a fifty. Then she turned her back to me and continued working on a spreadsheet that I could've done in a coma.

I came back the following week, the week after that, and so on, and it was all the same. April handed me a stack of papers that she "didn't have time to work on" or "couldn't figure out; why don't you take a stab at it?" I discovered all of her mistakes, real moronic mistakes, actually, corrected them and handed it all back to her within the half hour. At the end of the night, she'd reach under that calendar, and hand me a dead president without a word of thanks, and I would be on my way.

April became more and more hostile toward me. After a month of me, a high-schooler, correcting her mistakes and doing her work for her in the fraction of the time it took her to screw it all up, she called me into her office. It was the first time I saw her smile. Her smile said, "I would love to see you dead."

"I'm sorry, Adam, but Peter doesn't need your assistance any more."

I was taken aback. Even after years of being shat upon by management in retail, I was still young and naïve enough to think that people, especially professionals, appreciated and rewarded good work.

"W-Why?"

"Peter and I feel that I can handle everything here just fine. And, frankly, he's concerned about entrusting all this sensitive information to a young kid."

And he's not concerned about entrusting it to a fucking idiot? Instead, I said, "Can I talk to Peter about this? I think I've proved myself over the past month..."

She slipped her hand under the calendar, handed me a fifty, smiled at me, and that was that.

Maybe she was just protecting herself. Maybe she perceived me as a threat to her job. Maybe in a world of incompetence, the few competent people are resented. Or maybe, it's simply that some people just won't like you no matter what you do.

**Dance Lessons** As far as really short-term jobs go, that accounting firm wasn't the worst. The worst was handing out flyers for a dance studio. I was maybe 12, and a friend's mother's friend heard about me and offered me the job. Sure, I thought, sounds like a cinch. She gives me the flyers, I throw them in the first garbage pail I see. Easy money. So I go to the lady's house, and she was this huge fat lady, I mean, her owning a dance studio is like Gandhi heading the NRA. We walk to her car, the backseat of which is FILLED with flyers. Turns out, I had to walk door-to-door, personally handing residents flyers, while she drove slowly behind me to make sure I wouldn't bolt. Worse, she drove us to this awfully blighted, lower-class neighborhood on the Queens-LI border. When someone actually bothered to answer their door, they looked at me like I was either nuts or mocking them. Dance studio? Get the hell off my property before I stab you in the face! More than one person sic'd their rott on me. It was horrible. I walked for about six hours while that fat bitch stayed in the safety and warmth of her car, slowly dogging my steps. And just when I got through a huge pile, she handed me another. At the end of the day, when there were none left, she drove me home and handed me five dollars. I don't think I've ever wished death on someone like I did to that woman.





I never had a job in my life. I never wanted one and I still don't. But one day my twin brother Matt, our friend Paul, and I were asked to dress up like Big Bird and Barney. This was the grand opening of a local deli and we were the big stars of the day. (We were desperate for some cash and free food.)

One person had to dress up in the cheesy costume of Big Bird, and the other had to put on the big suit of Barney. We decided I would go after Matt. So I decided to try the Big Bird suit first. I put it on and the helmet was so freakin' uncomfortable! It felt like putting a chair on your shoulders and holding it for a half hour.

As soon as I got outside, after tripping and falling through the store to get to the exit, I had kids running and giving me hugs. After five minutes, the crowd dispersed and went to Paul who was Barney. So I decided to go by the road and wave at cars. I had a few fingers thrown at me but I kept waving. Then after awhile, I got bored and I started to breakdance in the Big Bird suit. That got the kids smiling again. I got a tap on the shoulder to go back in the store. I stumbled my way through the store while my brother (who was out of costume) guided me through the aisles. I took off the suit and took in some fresh air. That suit makes you sweat up a storm! After Matt and Paul got back, I decided what the hell, I'll be Barney.

I would soon regret those lines.

I put the suit on, and it was worse than the Big Bird one. It was bigger and hotter. I stumbled through the store again

to get outside and face all the little maggots. As soon as I got outside, kids ran up and hugged me. This time they wanted me to sing. "Sing the Barney song!!!" shouted the kids. I shook my head no. No way in hell am I singing that damn song. Then I hear most of the parents laughing at me saying, "Oh look, Barney got a lot shorter all of a sudden." I was like fuck you!!

So I was slapping five with this one kid, but I was a smart ass and pulled my hand away. This little shit kept hitting my hand, hard. So then I kept being an asshole back to him by pulling my hand away. That just made it worse. The kid grabbed my tail, or should I say Barney's tail, and was forcing me to go the way he was pulling me. Plus other kids were kicking me. Then Paul came to the rescue as Big Bird and took the kid's hat and put it on his (Big Bird's) head. I escaped from those little maggots and went back into the store. After that we got free deli food and 20 bucks for an hour's work. Not bad I suppose. And I guess this will be good to put on a résumé.

From issue #15. Check out Bryan's awesome site at [skapunkandotherjunk.com](http://skapunkandotherjunk.com)

# I Hate You, You Hate Me

Bryan Kremkau

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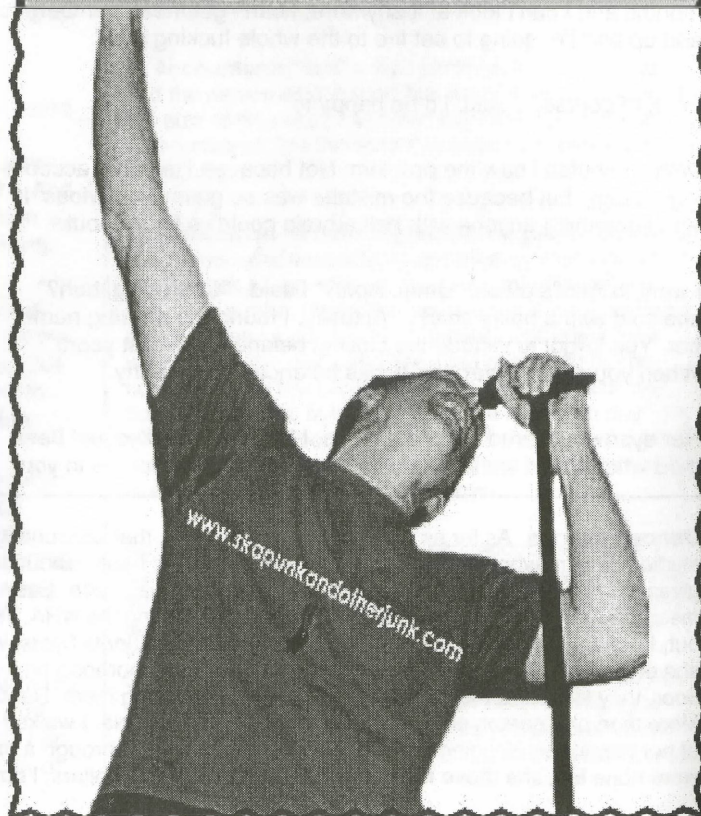
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## SKA, PUNK AND OTHER JUNK

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2002 marks a dozen years of  
"working in the real world" for me.

In that span of time, I've been a bus-  
boy, pizza delivery boy, salesman,  
screenprinter, shipping clerk, factory  
worker, department manager, and  
(most often) a retail drone.

All meaningless, menial jobs.

I've had health insurance only  
once and rarely have had more than  
a thousand dollars to my name.

Besides a few perks here  
and there and meeting some  
cool folk, I wouldn't call any  
job I've ever had "rewarding."

And now I'm  
getting older.

And I wonder, how long can I put up  
with this? How long can I stomach  
bouncing from one dead-end job to  
another? Will I ever have anything  
resembling a "career"?

I don't want to end up like  
my parents, who've worked  
their entire adult lives and  
don't have a damn thing  
to show for it.

Where will I  
end up?

shawn granton \*dec 2002



# I Was a Teenage Dominatrix

by  
Kimberly  
Warner-  
Cohen

**M**

y decision to enter the deep, dark world of professional domination at nineteen was fueled by the dual need everyone else has—more free time and extra income. I had been working my ass off three days a week at a law firm and going to university for two. I was making decent money but between school and work I barely had time to breathe, and my entire paycheck went to tuition. After one particularly hard day of running between the courthouses and the office in midtown, I was asked to stay late to prepare for a case in the morning. I tried to explain that I had a philosophy exam that I hadn't studied for because of said case, and I was told that it was the exam or my job. I collected my pay and went home.

My anger wore off on the subway ride home and my next thought was, "What the fuck am I going to do?" On the phone with my best friend, she'd told me that a mutual friend had worked her way through school by working as a *prodomme*. Given the scene we hung out in (goth—see my article in *READ*'s issue #15, "Eulogy for The Bank" for more on that), it wasn't the most outrageous thing to mention. I started to think about it, and thought, "Fuck it, why not?" Bills were due yesterday, and while I knew it was sexual work (which I didn't have a problem with), it wasn't prostitution (which I did). I opened the back of "The New York Press" and flipped to the "Adult Help Wanted" section. Before my eyes read: "Tired of working 9-5? Call us! House of Domination—Best Pay in the Business."

Image by Bryan Kremkau

I gave them a call the next day. The woman on the other end of the phone was very curt with me. Just told me to come in the next day for an interview with a photo ID proving I was over eighteen and a photo for my application. The next day, armed with both (the only decent photo I could find was my senior picture from high school), I took the "F" train to the Chelsea address. It was a non-descript loft building that shared block space with a chic restaurant, a deli and a framing place. I went up the rickety elevator that opened onto a dark blue hallway with gilt doors and tasteful paintings.

Before I could look around, the door closest to the elevator opened and a heavyset woman in black pants and chunky sweater poked her head out. "Kim?"

I was ushered into a brightly lit, cream-colored office with a desk and computer lining the wall in front of a heavily curtained window.

I filled out the application Vanessa\* gave me: Name, Address, Stage Name (I left this blank), Restrictions (also blank, I couldn't think of anything), Specializations (ditto), Physical Description, Previous Pertinent work. While she was perusing my application, I looked around. On the wall opposite that were those plastic pull-out drawers marked "Dildos," "Harnesses," and "Rope." There were whips and cat o' nines lining the rest of the wall. While I'd seen this stuff before, I'd never actually used them.

Vanessa assured me that it was all right that I'd never worked in the business before. Then she asked, "Do you have any restrictions?"

"Um, like what?"

"Golden Showers. Fisting." (If you don't know what these are, look it up).

Nervous about getting the job, I told her I didn't.

Vanessa picked out a pseudonym for me (Carolyn) and gave me my work schedule—four shifts a week, five hours each.

The boss was an aging porn star who owned the dungeon to keep her name out there, and whose definition of training me was telling me not to hit the clients on the spine or kidneys; as it could kill them. I quickly learned that each session was so different, it would be impossible to fully prepare for what would transpire until I was



already in there. A good prodomme needs to change personalities as quickly as she changes outfits in order to become that client's particular fantasy woman. No session, even with the same client, is ever the same.

Every walk of life came up that elevator. Mostly in the higher tax brackets, since the fees can add up; though I had a regular who was a construction worker that liked to tickle me for an hour (not fun). The clients were mostly suits who, after a long day of being, as Tom Wolfe would call, a "Master of the Universe," needed to be pushed around. There was the cop who liked to be tied up and teased with a bottle of amyl nitrate wafted under his nose. The priest who wanted to be a schoolboy. The guy who just wanted me to piss on his face, give me a huge tip and leave. The Brit on vacation with his family that I had a cross-dressing session with, who got so turned on by the chitchat at the end of the session (nineteenth century lit—I was going through a serious Thackarey kick at the time) that he paid for another hour. Most of the men who paid for a session with me wanted me to fuck them up the ass, which was weird the first time and then afterwards I really got into doing. (It's extremely powerful to have a penis. I'll admit it, I have penis envy.)

One of the biggest perks for me was that there was enough downtime for me to study. In between sessions, I would kick off my stilettos and read my assignments.

And I was making so much money at nineteen, I didn't even feel the need to do any catty backbiting some of the other mistresses would pull in order to sabotage coworkers. One girl glued another's locker shut with all her outfits, makeup and equipment inside for an imagined slight. I was getting paid all cash, and I kick myself now for having spent eight hundred dollars on a latex ballgown with fishtail hem. It still looks fabulous, and at the time the money seemed never ending. I couldn't put most of it in the bank because of taxes - I actually had a small dresser drawer with a pile of money in it.

Coming from a fairly strict middle-class home, I couldn't tell my parents how I was earning. When they eventually asked what I was doing, I lied and told them I was working tech support at an internet chat room, which explained my late hours.

Why am I still not in the business? Well, like any high-paying job, it had a price higher than any "tribute" to pay for being worshipped all day - my sanity. I had to pry open the client's brain, and pick out his deepest darkest secrets, secrets no one else knew. I started equating it with being a jailer, because I was seeing the worst of society. It also damaged, at

the time, my entire concept of relationships. I'm sure most of the wives of those clients would love to do with their beloved what I was getting paid to do, to be let inside. I started believing it was impossible for anyone to have a healthy relationship.

Also, I completely stopped wanting to have sex with my boyfriend, much to his dismay. At the end of the day, the last thing I wanted to see was another penis. He was very understanding about the whole situation, but it definitely took its toll.

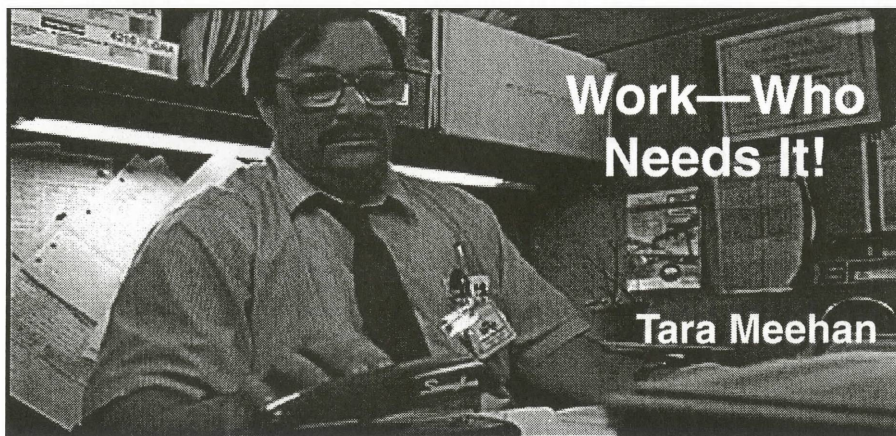
When I felt I was hitting my breaking point, I spoke to a few of the other women who worked with me. Each of them agreed that there was a time in which one keeps at it or calls it quits. For those who stay, many start being attracted to the same sex, almost all lose themselves in "the life". If you don't, and start really considering all the levels of madness, you can and will lose your mind: believing everyone is a sub or a dom, getting lost in the split personality that arises from working the job. On the job, I put on the Carolyn mask and all traces of Kim went away.

I stopped working in the dungeon, and started doing fetish modeling for a few magazines so I didn't have to deal with clients anymore. I was a lot happier since graduating as I only model occasionally for extra money and have given in to getting a "real" job for the comfort of a steady paycheck.

Professional Domination is not one I usually include on my resume. It's made for some great writing, though, and even though it wasn't pretty, I was privy to psychic depths most therapists could only dream of. The experience I had is something I don't regret. It's a lot better than sitting here now thinking, "I wish I had."

*\*Names have been changed to protect READ and myself*





I am a firm believer in life metaphors, moments that take on symbolic importance whether you are aware at the time or not. A few days after ushering in 2003, I arrived in my office to find the roof had caved in. This is hardly a new occurrence.

Several months earlier, the ceiling gave way due to heavy rains and poor construction. The stench of mildew, carpet cleaner and mold was palpable. To make matters worse, my office is hardly your standard cubicle infested Office Space prototype. It is a bunker. Located underground, the halls are damp and presumably asbestos ridden. If I die of some rare disease in about ten years, I guess my suspicions will be confirmed. The windows are constantly stuck which is hardly tragic considering they offer a gorgeous view of brick Allston apartments and dirty alleyways.

While my rebuilt office is not exactly aesthetically pleasing, it does provide needed separation from everyone else. As I coughed to catch my breath from the dust emanating from my office, a co-worker rushed in, breaking down the pros and cons of every cold medicine known to man. He also made it clear that I keep a safe distance of 30 feet away from him at all times. With a clear view of my boss doing his regular stroll around the office to keep from falling asleep at his desk, I am able to quickly minimize the Boston Globe crossword puzzle and give the illusion of doing actual work in progress. Still, one can only surf the web for so long before losing her mind to the unfortunate reality: I'll be sitting here hoping for the rest of my life that the light fixture above me doesn't collapse, killing me instantly.

That Sunday, fending off the hopelessness of knowing my obnoxious alarm clock was looming on the horizon, I had my revelation. This is not unusual. Sundays often awake in me a desperate cry for help and release from the monotony that is full time employment. Suddenly depressed by my lack of screen-writing success, I did a random search using the word film. The first site that popped up was for an intensive filmmaking workshop in the area starting this summer. I had seen this before and never gave it much thought considering I'd have to quit my job to enroll.

But this was different. This wasn't one of those manic moments I would regret later on. It was the light leading me out of the dark, dank bunker. My escape from a hypochondriac co-worker, a nosy boss and a vision of my future consisting of me at fifty wondering where the hell my life went. Without giving it a second thought or giving myself time to talk myself out of it, I grabbed my checkbook, filled out the application and mailed everything out Monday morning.

Suffice it to say my office attitude has changed from moody to nearly pleasant which is a huge step up. Knowing my last day is not too far ahead is a big reason why. I never thought I'd be selfish enough to quit my job. Every now and again, I feel guilty, like I'm letting down those I actually like by leaving. Then again, I'm amazed how overly work-conscious we are in this country. You're lucky to get a week's vacation let alone personal days. People literally overwork themselves to death doing jobs they can not stand.

Movies like Office Space and Clockwatchers are so darkly comic because they are so true. I refuse to become Milton getting shut out of the VP's birthday cake and banished to the storage room clutching on to a Swingline stapler. I will jump off the newly renovated roof before I act like Parker Posey psychotically willing to do anything for a recommendation letter from her temp boss.

That said, I might never become Martin Scorsese. I may face a lengthy period of unemployment. I may end up in a shady prostitution ring to pay the rent. But for right now I'm happier than I've been in a long time. TPS reports and rubber band making, nerdy employees be damned!

## CONFESSION

### Making a Difference in Their Lives... and Mine by spankie

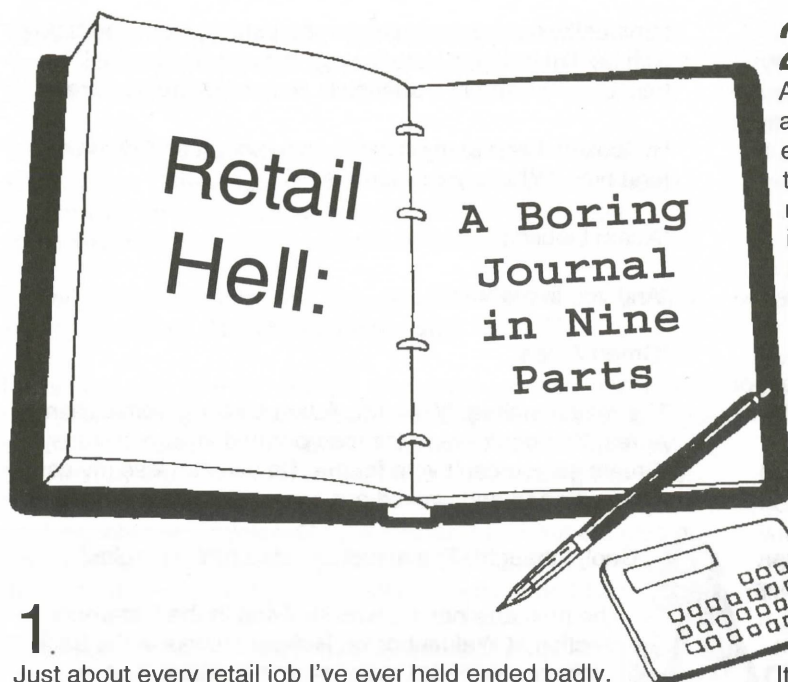
During my lunch period today, I drove to a local supermarket to pick up a container of vegetarian sushi. I stopped to look around at all the men and women on their way to surrounding restaurants: the lawyers, doctors, housewives and Mr. Moms of this world. I knew that when I finally got myself out of the busy parking lot, I'd be back at school with my special education student, a ninth grader who has autism. "Stephen" and I meet every Friday for individual counseling. I couldn't imagine anyone doing anything more exciting that afternoon.

When people ask me what I do and I reply that I'm a school psychologist in a high school, they seem to say, "Oh, God, What a job!" or "I don't know how you do it—you must be brave"... as if working with today's children is a form of torture. Of course, some days it does feel like torture. Most days I don't get to have my 42-minute lunch period. But each day I feel so lucky to work with my 720 students.

Let me get back to Stephen. Although he has significant difficulty relating to his peers, Stephen is the smartest, most interesting student I have ever worked with in my seven years at the school. His superior IQ forces me to open the dictionary at the end of every session. His vocabulary, creativity and insight are outstanding. Each week, I believe he teaches me more than I could ever teach him.

There's a special excitement about working in a school. There are no two days the same. It was only 13 years ago that I graduated from high school and it's wonderful being on the "other side." My goal each day is to make a child happy. The power of a smile. Try it, it's contagious.





2

A few days later, I was a Waldenbooks employee. I actually loved it there. Books are a great thing to sell. Your clientele is, for the most part, literate, so already your customers are a few rungs higher up on the food chain. Also, my coworkers were a fun group that made bookselling interesting. There was Keith, an industrial kid who made his own metal mesh jewelry and wrote drunken poetry that I still think is really good. There was Maggie, an adorable pixie-ish vegan who I crushed on for nearly three years—I actually went vegetarian for two years just to impress her. There was Max, a drag queen, whose side job was acting (as a drag queen). There was Dan the communist, Merrillyn, whose nephew roadied for Rush, Brendon, a soft-spoken gent who held a doctorate degree in Medieval medicine (and did stock with me), and many other weirdos and outcasts that you would expect at a small homegrown bookstore but had no choice but to work at the mall chain equivalent.

1

Just about every retail job I've ever held ended badly.

The first one was a stock boy position at B. Dalton Booksellers in the local mall, when I was 14. When I was interviewed, they asked me if college would be a problem. I said no.

After a month of "forgetting" to bring in my identification, they figured out my age and I was canned.

After a summer stint of hawking yogurt (see article on TCBY), I came back to the mall, this time to Suncoast. In case you don't know, they're the company that sells overpriced video tapes. I was hired as a holiday temp, and from October through January I was a "greeter." That is, I stood at the gates and greeted people as they came in. Besides instantly annoying every person that walked in, it was to deter shoplifting. Not that it mattered, because 1. We were located in a mall with the dubious distinction of having the highest crime and theft rate, 2. The merchandise was ridiculously expensive and easier to stick under a coat than pay for, and 3. We weren't allowed to stop shoplifters. It sounds crazy, but most retailers prefer not to confront the people stealing from them. It looks bad, I guess.

It got to the point where I would greet people by saying, "Welcome to Suncoast, everything is free!" and say goodbye to them with a helpful, "Did you steal everything you were looking for?" Most of the time, though, I would just lean against the façade and watch one of the movies we would show on our screens. Since we could only play G movies, I have probably seen A Harry Connick Jr. Christmas Special and Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas more times than any other human being, alive or dead. (I'm actually sort of proud of that.)



"You don't like Emmett Otter? I'll cut you, pally!"

A few days after the New Years, the manager kept on all the hot holiday temp chicks and I was canned.

We never had a stable management crew, though.

It turns out that our store was the "punishment" store. We were where district HQ sent managers who underperformed in their own stores, or simply managers HQ didn't like or felt needed discipline. As a result, in three years of being a stock boy, and then senior bookseller, I had over 10 managers, including Steve—a guy who spent the whole day on elaborate displays, so elaborate that nobody wanted to buy the books in fear of ruining the symmetry of his geodesic designs; Linda, who was so flaky that she would leave her headlights on all day, killing her battery (I spent many long hours jumpstarting her); David, an egg-head Bill Gates-type and unbelievable prick; Larry, a complete sleazebag (as most Larrys are); and Caroline, a super-cutie with a black belt, who was so worried about telling her parents that she worked at our dangerous mall that she told them she was stripping instead. Our district manager through all of this was this incredibly hot 25-year old named Siobhan, who I asked out to my prom (she almost fired me).

To give you an idea of the idiocy of our management, one bright idea David had was to have one cute employee read Pat Conroy's "The Beach" while laying on a beach chair in sunglasses and a bikini. After three near sex assaults (and no spikes in book sales), the idea was nixed.

I enjoyed my work immensely. There's something Zen about doing stock, the act of unloading and scanning boxes, putting security strips in all the sex books and Bibles (the biggest theft items), and throwing those books on the shelves in their proper order. I could've done that forever.

However, when I started helping people find books, I would charm them into signing up for the Preferred Reader card—some dopey discount card, I'm sure you've heard the spiel. Anyway, soon I had the largest percentage of cards sold in our district, and I was moved from stock to cashier, where I would interact with more people and therefore boost both my percentage and the store's.



I truly feel that retail wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the customers. Their nastiness, their impatience, their sense of entitlement... It was demoralizing. Soon my percentage of Preferred Reader cards plummeted and I was hearing it from the manager of the week.

3.

I might have stayed with Waldenbooks regardless, but one experience that spring told me it was time to move on.

The story begins at one of my other jobs—high school. School is sort of a job, you punch in, you put in your hours, you clock out. The only difference is that you don't get paid and your "coworkers" are even bigger assholes than the ones outside school.

One day, I believe it was in May, our Social Studies teacher, Ms. M, had a surprise guest—the mayor of our town. Whoop-dee-fuckin-doo. The class promptly fell asleep while the mayor talked about the importance of youth involvement in civic participation. Finally, he shut his yap and the teacher asked for any questions. The class was in a sleepy stupor, so I decided to screw with the guy a bit, to be a clown and liven the audience. I raised my hand.

"Mr. Mayor, is it true there are bats in Valley Stream?"

The mayor blinked a few times and said, with a slight stutter, "Y-yes, but th-they're not harmful. They only come out in night, and th-they have yet to harm anyone."

Jesus! I was just kidding! There were really bats in Valley Stream?? HO-LY SHIT! Okay, next one:

"Mr. Mayor, why are you fighting the adult shop on Sunrise Highway? Don't you believe in mom-n-pop businesses?"

More blinking and stuttering. "I w-w-will not allow that f-filth right next to a, a, an elementary school. She has no r-regard for zoning laws, so we have no regard for her. And w-we will do everything we can to m-make her move out!"

Wow, hit a nerve there. I decided to push it. "Well, I think there should be more porn shops and less elementary schools!" I said, receiving some applause and hoots from my peers.

The mayor just stared daggers at me. Ms. M tried to wrap things up, but I struck my hand up once again.

"Serious question this time, Mr. Mayor. Is it true the Masons run everything in town? You know, fix the elections, do all the legislation and economic decisions?"

There was a long pause while the mayor chose his words. "It is true that the Masons are still around..." he said carefully, "but they're not as powerful as they once were."

Oh my god. I pulled that one out of my ass and struck oil. I sat their dumbstruck until the bell rang. Everyone ran out, but I lagged behind. As Ms. M thanked the mayor, I went up to him.

"Hey, thanks for playing along with me. I know I threw you some

curveballs, but I do appreciate you coming here and talking with us. I'm going to vote for you in the next election!" I held out my hand in a sheepish, reconciliatory gesture.

He looked down at my hand for a moment, and didn't extend his. "What's your name, son?"

"Adam Liebling."

"And you live where?"

"Green Acres."

The mayor smiled. "Well, Mr. Adam Liebling from Green Acres. You don't live in the incorporated village of Valley Stream so you can't vote for me. So you can kiss my ass." And he turned and walked out.

Cool, I thought. The mayor insulted me! He rules!

The next afternoon, I was shelving in the Reference section at Waldenbooks. Reference was in the back right corner of the store, near the military history books and biographies. It was an isolated, quiet area where few people browsed.

I'll never forget it. I was stocking the blue New American Heritage dictionaries and the black and white Bantam Spanish-to-English dictionaries, when suddenly I felt this eerie presence.

It's hard to explain, and I don't know if you've ever felt this way, but it's like your blood just suddenly chills and you feel in your heart that something really bad is about to happen.

I looked up slowly and standing there, for god knows how long, was a tall, dark man, whose ethnic origin was hard to determine. He could've been Hispanic, light Black, middle eastern, or Sephardic Jewish. He was dressed in black jeans and a striped sweater, and wore sunglasses.

For some reason, I couldn't talk. I finally croaked, "Can I help you?"

He continued to stare at me, which was freaking me out. I waited a little longer, then went back to shelving the dictionaries, the hairs on my neck standing up. Finally, he spoke.

"I hear you've been asking about the Masons."

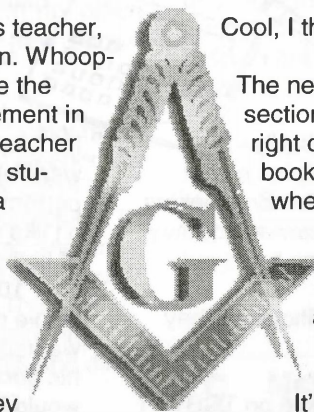
My head jerked up. "No, no, no..." I stuttered.

"I hear you know a lot about them, Adam," he said slowly and evenly.

"CAN I HELP YOU WITH ANYTHING?" My voice broke in an almost-shriek.

"Are you interested in joining?"

"I HAVE TO GET BACK TO WORK. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH??" My heart was racing.





"We'll be seeing you around." He turned and walked away. I ran into the backroom and sat down, trying to catch my breath and slow my heart.

The next day, as I walked into work, my coworker Kenya stopped me. "There was someone in here about ten minutes ago looking for you." I panicked. "WHO?" "I don't know... some weird guy. He said he would be back."

I faked a stomach ache and soon went back home. I tried making sense of it all. The Masons were after me? ME?

I was filled with so much anxiety and nervousness—hell, I'll admit it, I was scared shitless—that I actually started feeling physically ill. I started getting feverish; I felt like I had the flu. It got so bad, that by the end of the week, I was hallucinating like mad, thinking I saw Masons everywhere. At night, I thought they were peaking into my windows. On the streets, I thought the cars going by all had the Masonic symbols on the trunk. In school, I thought they were hiding in my locker...I was in real bad shape.

Turns out, my wisdom teeth had begun impacting, and gone unnoticed, infected my mouth, spreading the infection throughout my body. While I was delusional with fear, I was also delusional from a 104 fever that I was nursing for days, without any medical attention.

That week was a blur, so I can't remember how I ended up at the oral surgeon's office. I remember only two things, and both happened just before the anesthesia overtook me: The first was that I looked into the nurse's eyes and said, "Hey baby, do you dig philosophy?" And the second was looking at the surgeon's hand as it descended toward my mouth. In my last split second of consciousness, I recognized the Masonic symbol on a thick ring on his index finger. Then everything went black.

Later that day, I started feeling normal. Still sick and in horrible pain, yes, but my mental faculties were back. But maybe it was the antibiotics for the infection, or maybe it was the codeine for the pain, but I felt tired and spent and wanted nothing but my bed and a can of soup.

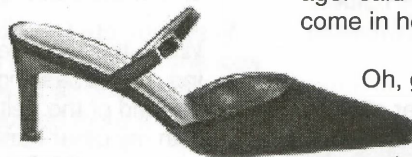
I said to hell with it all, and in what seemed like a moment of clarity, called Waldenbooks and quit. And, as if they never existed to begin with, I never heard from the Masons again.

4.

When I recovered, I was still out of a full-time job. The babysitting and delivery service gigs were sporadic, and my free-style accountin' with Barry was only one or two days a week. I was 17 but didn't have a car, and the closest large employer in walking distance was still... the mall.

Before I knew it, I was once again leaning against the entrance of Suncoast, watching Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas for the umpteenth time.

The sleazy boss, Mark, had been canned in my absence and the new boss immediately hired me. He ended up being this incredibly cool, laid-back boss who rarely showed up. A year later he would be caught embezzling \$150,000 in cash and merchandise, but at the time we thought he was a godsend, considering the uptight managers we were used to.



The job required a laid-back manager, due to the fact that there was NOTHING to do. Very few people came into the store, and much fewer bought anything. We had to be creative to keep from dying of boredom. Norbert worked on his hentai comics, I worked on Two Left Feet (my ska zine at the time), Shon aka Geniasis (no one knew his real name) scoured the mall for customers for his various harmless black market enterprises (imported cigarettes and Prince bootlegs), and everyone else took turns either napping or having sex with their respective others in the backroom. Even our boss couldn't bear the oppressive boring atmosphere, and spent most of his time two stores down, flirting with the manager of Parade of Shoes.

Most people would be happy earning minimum wage to do nothing, but school had instilled a firm hatred of boredom within me. Parade of Shoes always looked busy, and I heard through the grapevine that they paid a quarter over minimum. I put in my application and told my boss to put in a good word for me.

5.

Parade of Shoes was by far the worst job I've ever had, and that includes the time I worked (unknowingly) for a cult.

First was the lengthy and humiliating pre-hiring process, where I had to take a drug test (via urine), and answer this long, moronic morality quiz, with questions like:

Your friend really wants a pair of spaghetti-strap high-heels, but can't afford them. Do you:

- A) Steal them for him
- B) Scan them in at a discount
- C) Buy them using your employee discount
- D) Apologize and tell him he must pay the actual price

There were a HUNDRED questions that were all variations of the above. The manager was actually IMPRESSED that I aced it. It's like, between the drug test and the quiz, they immediately think that if you want to work at a women's shoe store, you must be a crackhead or a criminal. And to add insult to injury, upon hiring me, the first thing the manager said was, "And Adam. NO DRUGS! You can not come in here on drugs. You will be immediately dismissed."

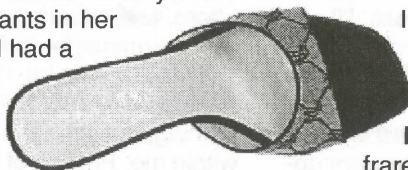
Oh, gee, what a killjoy. But I soon figured out their obsession with drugs. You needed some sort of tranquilizer or mood enhancer to work at this place. The customers were ANIMALS! I had never seen anything like it. The place was self-service, meaning I didn't have to measure fat women's feet and cram the shoes on for them, but this independence turned these women into beasts! Boxes were thrown everywhere! Shoes were just tossed into a pile! Nothing was put back!

I don't know about you, but I was raised with manners. I pick up after myself. Each customer was like the Tasmanian Devil—slobbering, starving maniacs that would spin furiously in, turn the place higgledy-piggledy, and spin back out, leaving the store looking like it was hit by a tornado. Now picture 30 women in the store at any given time...



My job, of course, was to clean up after them. I BEGGED for the cashier job, but they only wanted attractive women manning the register. So I was stuck running after these women, trying to put the shoes and boxes back faster than they could pull them off the shelves. By the end of the night, I would spend TWO HOURS trying to match up stray shoes—lefts to rights, this size to that. It was insane. I seriously believe that most of our customers must have had two right feet, two sizes apart.

Besides being rudely messy, these women were MEAN. Inexplicably, this Parade of Shoes only carried sizes 6 and 12, and practically nothing in between. Well, hell hath no fury like a woman who can't find the shoe she wants in her size, and I took the brunt of that fury. I had a system: when a woman would demand a shoe in her size, I would say, "Let me check the back for you," and I would hide in the backroom for fifteen minutes. Usually it worked, but woe be unto me if the woman was still there, waiting for me. Let's just say I'm lucky to be alive today. (And of course, fifteen minutes in the back meant that when I came out, the store was in shambles again.)



And something strange happened—I didn't get my paycheck. I was working 60—yes, 60—hours a week (on top of high school and side jobs, mind you), for almost a month and I had yet to see a paycheck. When I asked my boss, she said, "Yes, yes, I know. We have a new payroll system and they're still working out the kinks." "You're keeping track of my hours, though, right?" "Of course, Adam, stop bothering me."

Asshat customers and asshat management are bearable if you can commiserate with your fellow coworkers. Unfortunately, my coworkers barely even spoke to me, giving me a wide berth and constantly treating me with suspicion. It was weird: they refused to talk bad about the job or the manager to me. I would hear them complain amongst themselves, but to me, everything was completely fine.

"Rod, aren't you pissed that we haven't received our pay yet?"

"Oh, no. I'm sure we'll get it soon. They're just working out some kinks."

"But they're working us 60 hours a week and they'll probably stiff us the overtime! We're fucking being exploited!"

"Oh, no. Everything is fine. I'm very happy here."

It wasn't until the end of my tenure that a coworker confided in me the truth. That me being the only white person on staff, everyone thought I was a manager from another store, sent there to SPY ON THEM!

How anyone could think I was a manager is beyond me—besides being 17, I was a ranting, raving lunatic. Around this time, I had been working for five weeks without a paycheck and I was freaking out. I wanted my fucking money!!

Finally, the checks came. I looked at mine. I looked at it again. And again. I started shaking. I totally went fucking nuts.

I ran into the backroom and screamed at my boss, a fiery Jamaican who ordinarily would've out-screamed me any day. But I was beyond fired up. My paycheck was for TWO, not five,

weeks. 40 hours each week, when I was working 60. And I was getting 5 dollars an hour, when I was promised \$5.25.

I shouted that I was being exploited, that she fucked me out of overtime, that why would I accept 5 an hour when I was making 5.10 at Suncoast, that she wouldn't get away with this, etc, and she took it all cool and calmly, and said shit like, "You're responsible for your own time sheets, Adam. I only put in what was on the schedule, and my schedule has 40 hours a week. As for your wage, every new employee gets \$5 an hour. Don't you dare call me a liar."

I was never so close to punching anyone, man or woman, period. I was being screwed out of hundreds of dollars, and she was coolly telling me to shut up and get back to work. I was beyond furious, I was beyond seeing red... I was seeing fucking infrared. I swung my arms and pushed rows of shoeboxes off the shelves. I kicked over stacks of shoes. I beat the shit out of any shoe in my path.

Meanwhile, the manager stood there coolly and said, "Go ahead, act like a baby, Adam. Throw your tantrum. I'm not firing you and you're still working until closing time."

The thought of having to spend overtime hours picking up after these fugly women and matching piles of shoes with their lost brethren, and not even get paid for it, put me over the edge. I was so angry, I ceased being angry. A wave of eerie calm came over me. For the first time, the manager looked frightened.

I looked at her. "You're not going to fire me? I'll walk out."

"You do that, and you'll just be screwing over your coworkers. You want to leave on really bad terms with them?"

That was true... Even though I shouldn't care about what they thought of me, I did, and I didn't want to look like the bad guy in this. Especially after I had finally gained their trust and respect, which meant a lot to me.

Then, it dawned on me. I slowly took off my belt. It freaked my manager out. "Adam, what are you doing?" I ignored her and tightly tied the belt around my arm. I put the other end of the belt in my mouth, and walked onto the floor.

When the manager caught up with me, I was already walking around, asking customers to help me find a vein. I had the end of the belt in my mouth, and I was tapping my wrist with my other hand. "Vein! Vein! Hep me fin' a vein!" I said with a mouthful of belt.

"Excuse me, do you work here?" asked a customer.

"Yeth, I'm a Parade of Shoeth employee. I reprechent Parade of Shoeth and their affiliath. Pleath hep me fin' a vein. GOD HAVE MERCY, I NEED A FUCKING VEIN!!"

I scared the shit out of her. She slowly backed away, and then literally ran out of the place. The manager shrieked: "ADAM YOU'RE FIRED GET OUT OF MY STORE!"

I took the belt off my arm, smiled at my coworkers, and walked out.



6

"So then I took the belt off my arm, smiled at my coworkers, and just walked out," I said.

Behind the counter of The Nut Stand, Charlie laughed. "No way! You're crazy! So, what, you're out of a job now?"

"Yeah, you guys hiring?"

"Actually, I think Billy is looking for a week-end guy. I'll ask him when he brings the deliveries. Come back around 5."



Charlie gave me a free cone and after inhaling it, I went to kill time at The Tobacconist. That place was like Cheers. I would walk in, everyone would yell "ADAM!" and Webb would slide a pack of Marlboro down the counter for me to be put on my imaginary tab. The two Daves would invariably be hanging out, discussing philosophy, and the usual stream of lotto regulars would once again choose their same numbers.

I shared the Parade story to every regular that stopped by until Webb threatened to throw me out. I smoked half my pack, and headed back to The Nut Stand. Charlie and Billy were waiting for me.

Billy was a big guy with a Cliff Clavin mustache and an addiction to Diet Coke. He was a laid-back family man, who only stopped by his stores (he also owned The Pretzel Place) to bring over supplies. He believed in the old-school notion of giving jobs to high school kids, just to give them their first jobs. He once pointed to all the wall tiles and said to me, "Adam, I've had more kids work at my stores than all the tiles you see here." He was that kind of guy. He trusted kids to run things on their own, and eat as much as they wanted.

I especially liked that perk. Like TCBY, I did little but eat. Sure, I filled the ice cream machines and nut bins, added sprinkles when the sprinkles ran low, hooked up the soda machines to those weird soda syrup plasma bags, roasted cashews, and occasionally swept and mopped. But the mall wasn't exactly a tourist destination, especially not after all the highly-publicized stabbings and robberies and whatnot, so I wasn't exactly swamped with customers.

Boredom plus free food is a bad combination. I ate pounds of nuts, cones of ice cream, cups and cups of King of Corona ices (seriously-best ices in New York), washing it all down with Coke mixed with lemonade. I could've worked there forever.

While I was enjoying the lull brought about by disappearing customers, my neighbor and former employer Waldenbooks was not. Separating our stores was a tiny calendar kiosk owned by the bookstore. Since not many people buy calendars in the summer anyway, Waldenbooks parted with the space, which was rented to a telecommunications company. As if cell phone companies aren't annoying enough, this one decided to do some construction.

Living snugly between the walls of our stores for god knows how long was a brood of rats. The construction awoke and frightened the scourge who ran into our store, a shop full of open, unprotected nuts, and suddenly I had a new line on my job description—hitman.

7

"Sorry, pal. Ya shoulda stayed home with your mamal!" Billy said cheerfully while I scooped up the mouse trap, slipped it into a brown bag, and dumped it into a nearby garbage bin in the mall corridor.

"Hey Billy, maybe we should get someone to come in here. You know, an exterminator or something."

"Nahh, there can't be many of them. I'll just clog up the mouse holes with brillo pads."

But at this point, the rats had gotten so fat and plentiful that they rammed their fat rodent asses against the pads and knocked them out of the walls. Steel wool was not going to stop these beasts from enjoying newly-roasted cashews and bedding down in the comfy, shredded napkins.

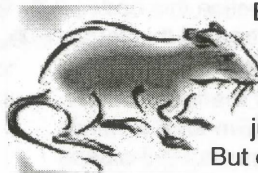
It was two weeks since we had seen our first rodent, and now we were overrun. Billy wasn't too worried. So long as the customers didn't see them, a peaceful coexistence was possible. Except that he also wanted me to kill them every chance I got.

Now, I'm a pacifist and an animal lover. I read Kahlil Gibran and listened to the Dalai Lama speak. I watch Animal Planet like it's my job. And I was of the belief that even filthy, disease-ridden, red-eyed, hairy-tailed vicious harbingers of pestilence deserved happy lives free from sneaky guillotine-like mousetraps.

And, the thing is, I love rodents. At one point, I owned two dozen gerbils and twice as many hamsters. Is there nothing cuter than a guinea pig? Does nothing warm the heart like a rabid kangaroo rat?

But at the same time, I had responsibilities. I was a manager. I had to keep the store in tip-top shape. I had to protect the customers from tainted food, or napkins with rat urine on them. (I didn't do a very good job of that, by the way.)

But was that justification for the horrible acts I was committing? I felt like a nazi, you know, "just taking orders." To my credit, I switched the traps to glue traps, thinking they were more humane. They ended up being even more horrible...



Every night, I laid out the glue traps and sprinkled some nuts in the middle of each. Every morning, I would open the gate and turn on the light, and rats would jump out of nut bins and scatter like crazy.

But on the ground would be three or four unfortunate ones, paralyzed in uncomfortable ways to the glue trap, crying and whimpering... It was so sad. Little baby mice, too stupid to avoid the traps, were now on their backs, their limbs all over the place, impossible to move and scared out of their minds. It was absolutely horrible. It was a nightmare. But I would conjure Billy's jovial personality and say "Sorry pal. You shoulda stayed home with your mamal!", slip the traps into brown bags, and throw them into the mall's garbage. And walking away from the dumpster, I'd still hear them crying from the darkness, and be haunted by it for the rest of the day.



Meanwhile, my coworkers were enjoying the change of pace. They got a kick out of seeing sleepy rats jump out of nut bins. See, at night, the rats would climb into the bins, eat until they passed out, and slept on the bottom until we opened the store. But sometimes, a rat would be so fat and lazy, it couldn't get up until a coworker prodded it with a nut scooper. Then it would freak out and explode out of the bin with a bolt, nuts flying everywhere.

My wiseacres employees would tease the unknowing customers—they would put up signs that said stuff like, "Free pet rat with every pounds of almonds!" "Ask us about our honey glazed rat droppings!" "You gotta be NUTS to eat here!" I wasn't much better. Usually, when I'd find a rat in a bin, I'd throw out those nuts and clean the bin. But, hey, I only have so much of a proactive temperament. After awhile, I stopped cleaning out the bins, and stopped throwing out the shredded and urine-soaked napkins. And instead of throwing out the rat shit left all over counters, I'd just flick 'em onto the floor.

I may have started becoming nonchalant about the store's upkeep, but I still couldn't stand killing the rats. Hearing their cries, god, it wrenched my insides. I couldn't sleep at night, I dreaded going in. And, of course, I stopped eating all that great food. The only safe food, I thought, was the ice cream, since rats couldn't get into the machine. But this wasn't TCBY—we cleaned the machines like twice a month instead of every day. On one of the few days I cleaned the machine, what was on the bottom of the liquid yogurt scum, but a family of silverfish.

The Nut Stand was no longer a fun place to work at. And things got worse. First I noticed my throat was bothering me. It hurt when I swallowed, it felt raw and inflamed. Then my arms and legs started rashing out. I was getting migraines and dizzy spells. I didn't go to the doctor until my third or fourth day with a 104 fever.

"Adam, you have an awful bacterial infection. We need to get you on some strong antibiotics. If your home or room is filthy, you need deep clean it."

"No, my room is clean."

"Where do you work? Do you work with dirty animals?"

"Aw, my coworkers aren't that bad."

"No, I mean literally. I haven't seen an infection this bad in 30 years when I was working in Kansas and treated this farmer who spent his life packing and selling fertilizer."

"Well, my workplace is overrun my rats..."

"That's it. You can't work there anymore, or until they sanitize the place. If you continue to work there, you'll keep getting infections, and this is so bad it could kill you."

I weighed my options. I liked my job, but I couldn't eat the food anymore. I liked my coworkers, but I didn't like killing rats. I spent most of my work hours reading the paper and listening to the radio, getting money for nothing... but I didn't want to die.

Retail sucks, but once it becomes life-threatening it's time to call it quits. Luckily, I was meanwhile interning at two record

labels—Imago Records and Moon SKA Records. Imago would soon go under, but Moon would expand. With expansion, they needed a new manager for the storefront. A week after quitting The Nut Stand, I was offered a position at the world's largest distributor of ska music, and a mecca for rudeboys and rudegirls worldwide.

8.

I fell in love with ska music the moment I heard it. I was a 15-year old metalhead, and my friend Nick had an extra ticket to the Bosstones. Comparing them to Metallica with horns, I was intrigued enough to accompany him. What I experienced at the show was shocking... People dressed like dorks, instead of trying to look cool; girls moshing along side guys; the moshing quickly turning into a funky sort of chicken dance; the music unbelievably upbeat, putting smiles on the faces of all the moshers and dancers. I had never felt such positive energy from a band and from a crowd. The music was infectious, and even me—a tough guy metalhead—found my feet and hips moving in ways I never thought possible. All my life, even though I'm a drummer, I've had no sense of rhythm. And here was a music that fit perfectly with my off-kilter internal clock. I could dance like a fool, and be no different from the other off-beat fools.

The next day, I went to the Wiz and bought anything that said "ska." By complete chance, and this is true, my first three CDs were the perfect embodiment of the three waves of ska: The Skatalites, The Specials, and The Toasters.

At this time, ska still had years before it became big, and there was practically no information on it. The scene was like this secret club. All information was misinformation—you had to wear plaid. Ska was reggae meets jazz, and sometimes punk. Girls had to dress like diner waitresses from the 50s. It took awhile before I became a jaded, cynical ska expert and elitist, and in the meantime, I enjoyed everything I heard with the sweet naivety and enthusiasm of a newbie.

I soon shaved off my beautiful tresses, replaced my black jeans with khakis, and sang Specials' lyrics through the halls of my high schools instead of Cannibal Corpse. I began going to any ska show in the area, even though I was still scared of skinheads and couldn't figure out why they would be into reggae with horns.

In late 1995, my friend Nick visited the Moon store. Moon was this mythical place. Moon was putting out the only ska records—the first Scofflaws, The Toasters Dub 56, Pie-tasters, Skarmageddon... Moon was also responsible for sponsoring many of the shows we were attending. Everyone talked about Moon in awed tones. "I heard the singer from the Toasters owns the place." "I heard ska bands hang out there." "I heard there are huge fights between skins and rudies, and it's totally crazy."

Nick came back from the store. "Dude, it sucked."

"IT SUCKED??"

"Yeah, the place is fucking tiny. You could barely fit in there. And you have to know what you want, cuz everything



is behind the counter. And they're fucking mean, man. If you just stand there, they look at you like you're an asshole. Still, it was pretty cool."

Nick gave me some zines he picked up from the store. I didn't even know what a zine was. The zines were Denver Skabeat and The Gathering, two ska zines from Colorado. I read them over and over again. And two things struck me: I could do this. Maybe not as well, but I could do something like this. And, two, actually I forgot the second thing.

And so, in late 1995, I began work on Two Left Feet, the first issue of which came out in early 1996. It was a shitty, xeroxed zine in an unreadable Times New Roman, font size 7.5, with badly xeroxed pictures that looked like black blobs. I began handing it out at shows, and suddenly I was a scenester. People came up to me, people knew who I was. I was talking to bands, meeting girls, and began writing for other zines that started springing up.

My second issue had just come out, and I thought, "What better place to drop it off than at Moon Records!" At that point, I had never been there. It was located in Alphabet City, and even though I was 17, I was also from suburbia and too nervous to venture to those unknown parts.

Gathering my courage, I went to Moon. Nick was right—it fucking sucked. It was the tiniest store I had ever been in. If you were fat, you'd have to leave the door open to fit inside. The only one there was Noah Wildman, without a doubt the most famous ska scenester in New York, if not the entire worldwide ska scene. Noah mc'd every ska show, he wrote for every zine. He wrote the Moon newsletters, album liner notes, and his name and 4-year old scatological humor touched everything in the ska scene.

I was so nervous to be in his presence, I warbled something like "Mind if I put these here?" Noah nodded, and I dropped them on the counter and started to run out. He stopped me. "Hey, what are you doing right now?"

"Umm, nothing, I guess."

"Can you help me out here?"

I spent the rest of the day putting mailing labels on catalogs. By the end of the day, I had inky fingers, a free CD for my work, and Noah offered me a weekly internship.

I couldn't believe it. I was now working at Moon—THE place for ska. My job was the usual retail stuff—I helped customers, took and filled mail orders, stocked up inventory, cleaned, got the mail, etc. Meanwhile, Two Left Feet was taking off. Nothing I have done since then, including any issue of READ, was as popular as the third to sixth issues of Two Left Feet, which was garnering between ten and fifteen letters a day. But the more known I became in the scene, the less I liked the scene. Most newbies become jaded scenesters, but I was beyond that. I started to actually hate the music. By 1997, I stopped going to shows, stopped listening to the music, quit the zine, and even began getting into ska's antithesis—goth music.

I was also getting annoyed at Moon. I was there for a year, doing a great job, and a position was never offered to me. I had

other jobs during this span—accounting, delivery service, The Nut Stand—and was considering cutting all ties with ska by ending my internship.

But in one week I had quit The Nut Stand and was offered a job at Moon out of the blue. See, in 1997, ska started getting big. In a blink, the crowd's makeup went from old-school fans and skinheads to high school kids. I went from being the youngest kid at the shows to being the oldest. The industry was taking notice of ska's marketability, and mainstream pop acts were suddenly being labeled as ska. Labels were scrambling to sign bands, and chains were scrambling to create a full ska section. Wholesale and retail sales at Moon skyrocketed. They decided to move into a bigger location, which meant hiring more people. And I was tapped to be weekend manager.

If you ever entered the new store in 1997 or 1998, you probably would've seen me there drinking beer and listening to the Cure. My disgust of ska grew into an utter hatred, to the point where I would unplug the ska jukebox and tell people it was broken. We were the largest producers and distributors of ska music, and I refused to play it or let anyone listen to it. When customers would ask for recommendations I would say, "Yes, go down the street to Virgin Records and pick up some Sisters of Mercy."

Moon was a fun place, tho. It was one of those places that always had fun and crazy characters coming in and out. A place with hilarious regulars, fun coworkers, a crazy cast of revolving interns, and lots of zany misadventures, not to mention the doe-eyed newbies and tourists visiting their mecca, and who made us feel a lot cooler than we were. It was one of those jobs that was more than a job. Like all former Moon employees, I think a lot about the Moon days with mixed emotions, but I think about it a lot nonetheless.

The joyride was starting to slow down in late 1998. The bands were over-saturating the scene with mediocrity and constant shows. There would be three shows a night, competing with each other. Every high school had two or three crappy ska bands, playing out and diluting the quality of the music. Old-time fans were sick of all the kids and seeing the majors bulldoze their scene and dropped out, many going to swing or rockabilly. Newer fans were beginning to hop to the next trend. Labels were frantically looking for the next big thing to exploit. Stores discovered that their huge stock of ska wasn't selling, and returns began pouring back to Moon. Customers stopped coming. A good day at Moon meant a hundred bucks.

The atmosphere became depressing. I took the opportunity to leave it for awhile—The Toasters, whom I had been roadie-ing for locally, offered me a roadie position for their national tour in support of "Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down." I jumped at the chance, and spent the next 10-12 weeks or so on the road.

When I returned, I was sick of the Toasters, more sick of ska than I had ever been, and the store was a quiet, depressing ghost town. On top of that, three of my coworkers, great friends of mine, were fired without any notice or appreciation while I was on the road. I had no idea.

I was angry and ashamed to still have my job when my





friends were laid off without so much of a thank you. By the shabby way I was treated on the road, I knew the same could happen to me. I could walk in one day and it would just be, "Adam, this is your last day." No notice, and not even any "thank you for all your hard work."

By the look of the way things were going, I knew it was a matter of time, and I decided to preempt management. I gave my two weeks' notice.

Looking back, I do feel bad about my disloyalty towards the end. I was nothing more than a rat jumping from a sinking ship. But I am also glad I left when I did. A couple of months after my departure, more were let go, and the warehouse in New Jersey had to be closed down. Soon after, it was discovered that Noah, ska's best-known scenester, had embezzled hundreds of thousands from Moon (it was settled out of court). A few months after that, Moon closed its doors to the storefront and to the label. The party was over: Ska was officially dead, killed by forces inside and out.

Meanwhile, I had entered the shameful world of temping, but for nonprofits, and in the process, discovered my calling in life. No more retail. No more being exploited to increase company profits. I was now a nonprofit suit, doing tedious office work for the good of humanity.

## 9.

Well, there WAS one more retail experience.

I was 20 years old and doing accounts payable for a nonprofit, when they decided they didn't have enough work for me. I didn't feel like going back to the temp agency and continue the unpredictable temp cycle of fast and feast, and figured that with all of my retail experience, I could probably score a pretty cool management position. For once, I would be the exploiter, not the exploited.

In case you couldn't tell already, I love nothing more than working with food, especially if it's not in a fast food/restaurant/waiting tables setting. A Trader Joes had opened somewhat near me, in a much wealthier area, and they seemed like a laid-back, cool place to work at. And you could eat all the returned and expired food you've ever dreamed about.

I got a job without any problem. I asked for a management position and they told me something like, "We don't believe in hierarchy. We're a family, and we help each other out. But don't worry, you're not going to be bagging groceries all the time."

I ended up bagging groceries all the time. Not only that, but they forced me to wear these hideous Hawaiian shirts. And they ended up not being the chill, liberal granola heads they make themselves out to be—they were still a corporation, and still had their evil ways.

For one thing, it seemed that company-wide, very few minorities held management positions. All the managers seemed to be big brawny white guys from California and Arizona. Women were also discriminated against—sometimes the only women at the job were the free sample old ladies.

The customers were insufferable. These weren't health nuts or liberal tree huggers. These were rich, white people who wanted

to eat healthier to extend their pointless and obnoxious lives. These were people who've had everything handed to them throughout life, and still felt the world owed them something. They were people who thought nothing about dropping hundreds of dollars on soy milk, but freaked if you accidentally rang up a 59-cent bottle as 69 cents. These were suspicious, little people

who controlled the world and yet thought the world was out to get them. They were people who demanded you bring out their groceries and load up their luxury car for them, and yet would never think of tipping you. They were people who were shopping at a company that's supposed to be liberally progressive, and yet they would rather wait on a longer line than be rung up by a black cashier.

And, believe it or not, bagging groceries isn't a glamorous job. Because of the stupid short-sleeve Hawaiian shirts, I got paper cuts up and down my arms from bagging. There were so many, it looked like I had track marks. I also had to deal with the shame of running into former high school classmates.

"Oh Adam! I haven't seen you since English class in South High! You're working here now?? Oh, that's... um... cool. I'm a nuclear physicist now. Yeah, I decided to go into academia after making millions in the stock market."

"Yeah, yeah, me too. I mean, I made so much money in the past two years, but I can't just sit at home bored, you know?"

"Uh huh. Sure. Well, see you Adam."

Ugh. So embarrassing. One day my old boss Barry the CPA walked in. Took one look at me and what I was doing with my life, shook his head sadly and left without saying a word to me. The worst was when my guidance counselor came in with his wife.

"Mr. Z!" I called out to him. "Mr. Z, it's me, Adam!"

Mr. Z looked at his wife and acted like he didn't know me.

"Mr. Z, it's Adam Liebling! You were the one who told me I could do anything with my life. Thank you Mr. Z! You really helped me! You're the best guidance counselor ever!"

They walked out.

I couldn't take much more of it, and decided that temping was slightly less shameful than being a 20-year old bagger.

I went back to my temp agency and was soon placed at a nonprofit. Besides a half-year period where I left to work for a cult (great story, but I'm too scared to print it for fear of being sued), I've been with this one place for three years, and in the process, getting permanently hired and being promoted twice to my current status as grants manager. God willing, I will never have to help a customer, work a register, vacuum a store, kill a rat, bag groceries, stock inventory, collect carts, or have to sell books, movies, ice cream, women's shoes, or music ever again.



"Didn't that bagger seem a little too old and intellectual?"



# THE READER

Volume 1, Issue 2

Winter/Spring 2003

## 2002: The Year In News

### LOCAL

**New York City Subway Workers May Strike**  
New Yorkers may be forced to urinate at home.

**Bloomberg Demands Department Cuts**  
Exhausted, takes yacht for weekend getaway to his private island.

**New York Going For Olympics Bid**  
Because they really need the extra traffic.

### NATIONAL

**A Nation Remembers, Grieves**  
Then runs out to buy Grand Theft Auto III.

**Kissinger Steps Down from 9/11 Investigation Committee**  
Felt his inherent evil would be a conflict of interest.

**Trent Lott Blasted for Racist Remark**  
The 98% white Senate is appalled.

**Bush Economic Package Being Praised**  
...by the top 5% richest.

**Sniper Spreads Fear and Terror Throughout DC Area**  
Politicians jealous.

**Majority of Women Approve of Bush**  
Majority of men prefer it shaved.

### INTERNATIONAL

**Giuliani Almost Kidnapped in Mexico City.**  
10,000,000 New Yorkers charged with plot.

**200 Dead in Miss World Contest in Nigeria**  
Contestants starved themselves to death to look good.

**Iraq Targeted**  
Bush foreign policy decided by Magic 8-Ball.

**Osama's Voice On Tape**  
The dude's got more posthumous releases than Tupac.

**North Korea Developing Nukes**  
Pssh. They can't even develop a good car.

### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**Christina Gets "Dirrrty"**  
And so does my kleenex! \*fap fap fap\*

**Rush "Vapor Trails" Is Fucking Awesome**  
Especially tracks 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, and 13. Get it.

**Blank CDs Outsell Prerecorded CDs**  
Silence preferred to all the crap the industry's putting out.

### BUSINESS

**Morons Shocked By Corporate Scandals**  
Corporations are greedy and dishonest? WTF?!!

**70% of All E-mail is Spam**  
For more on that, and to see nasty barnyard sluts spread wide for horse cock, [click here](#).

### SPORTS

**Soccer Soars In Popularity**  
Then promptly forgotten about again for another four years.

**Widespread Marijuana and Steroid Use In MLB Purported**  
Batting practice to be renamed "doin' the puff n' buff."

**Jets In Playoffs**  
Hell reported very, very cold.

### SCIENCE

**Cult Claims They Cloned Humans**  
Face it—we just care about this story to see pictures in the news of hot cult orgy action.

### RELIGION

**Sex Scandal Rocks Church**  
"Wafer" just euphemism for something else being put in boys' mouths.

**Cardinal Law To Visit Vatican**  
And maybe hit those Roman steam baths.

## Recent News:

**NY'ers Buying Duct Tape For Survival...**  
...with their food money.

**Inspectors Finally Find Weapons In Iraq**  
And they say "Made in the USA"

**Bush Working Harder Than Ever**  
Sometimes even staying 'til 6!

**Americans Boycott French Toast, Fries**  
France surrenders.

**Protests Fail To Sway Bush**  
He's still not going to eat any more pretzels.

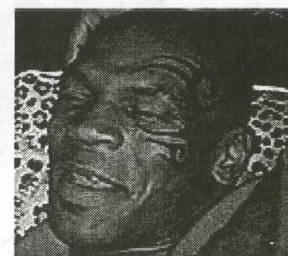
**Staten Island On Fire**  
New Yorkers ask "What's Staten Island?"

**Koufax Cuts Ties With Dodgers**  
Except for the cute players.

**Reality Shows Hit New Lows**  
Oh wait, that's FOX news.

**North Korea Threatening Nuclear War**  
France surrenders.

**Fast Food Lawsuit Thrown Out**  
But chains may drop their "Super Size Your Cholesterol Levels!" campaign.



**Mike Tyson Gets Face Tattooed**  
Cry for help received loud and clear, dude.

**Northeast Pummeled By Snow**  
Probably not the work of terrorists.

**Ridge Comforts Nation After Heightened Terror Alert**  
"Everything's okay now—Cheney is safe."

**Army Using Trained Sea Lions To Warn Of Underwater Terrorists**  
There's a joke somewhere here about Bush's misinterpretation of the term "Navy Seals."

**Boston Church To File For Bankruptcy**  
Moral bankruptcy.

**Great White Guitarist Missing In Fire**  
Better to burn out than fade away...\*

**Fred Durst Kisses Then Disses Britney**  
France surrenders.

\*Yes, I'm going to hell.

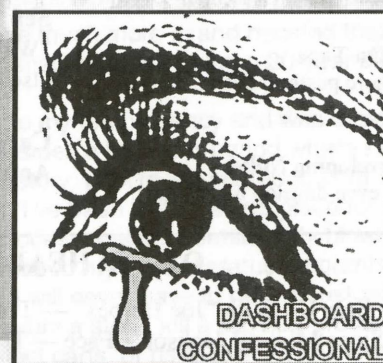
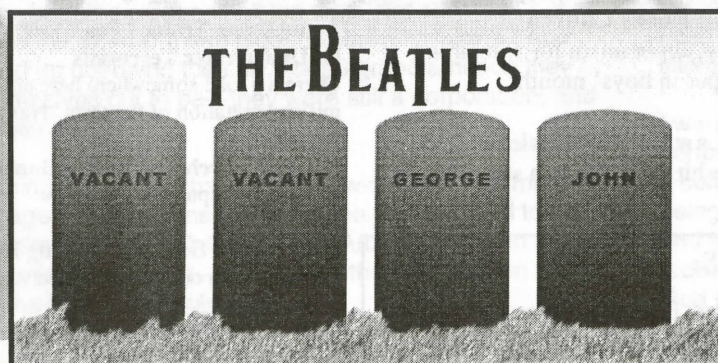
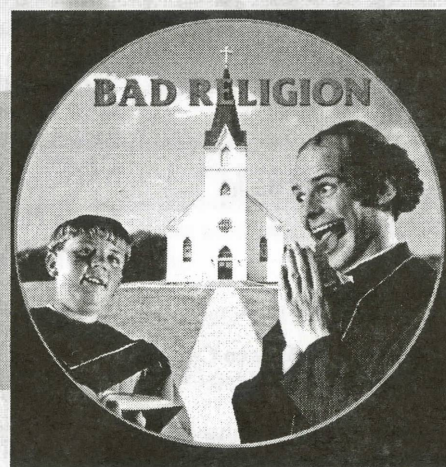
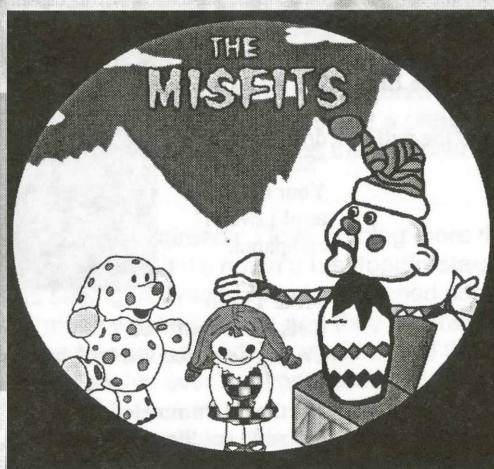
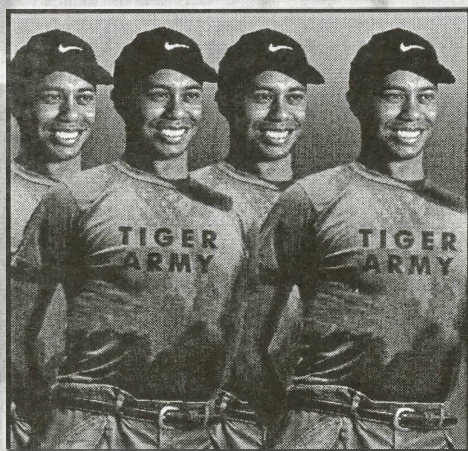
### OTHER HEADLINES:

FOX To Follow Up With "Joe Herpes" — Teen Organ Transplant Worst Hospital Botch-up Since Michael Jackson's Face — Drinking Banned From NYC Bars — FOX Drops "What Would Jesus Watch?" Campaign

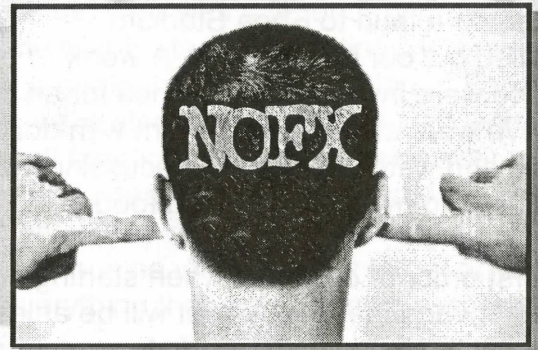
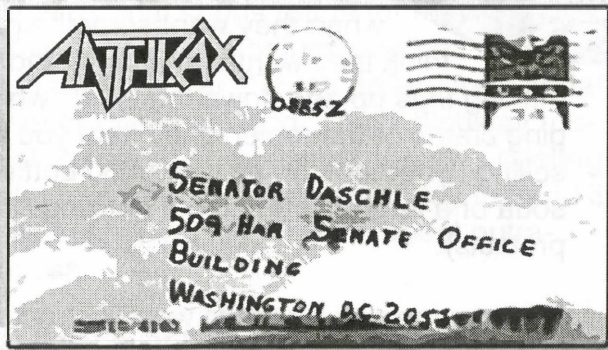
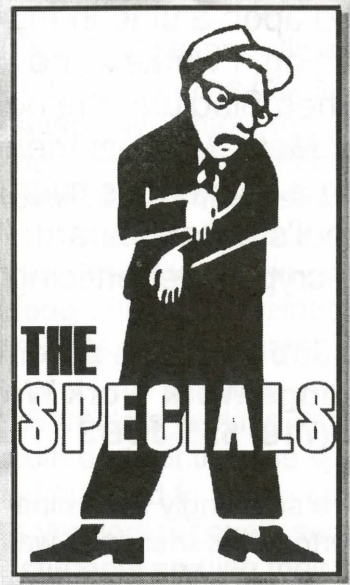
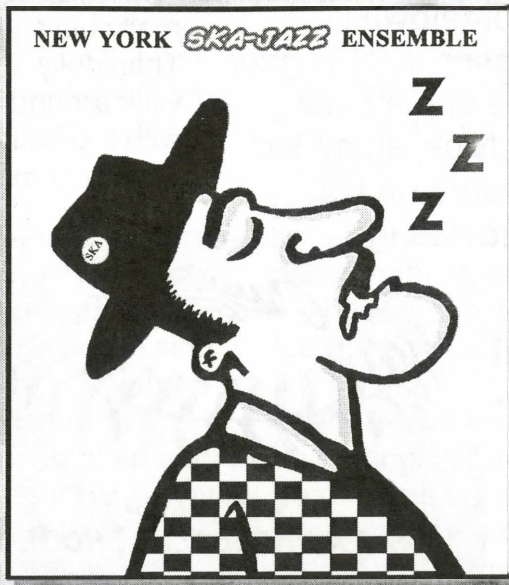
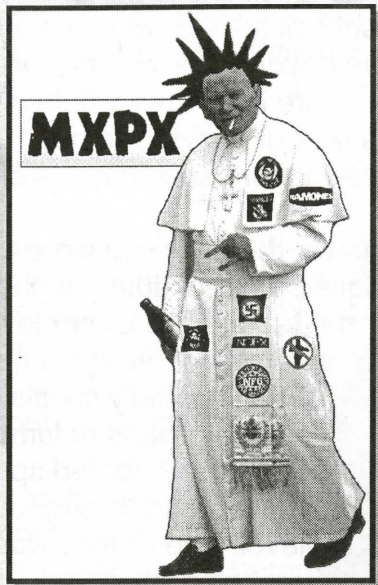


# Band Logo Rejections

CONCEPTS BY: BRYAN KREMKAU & ADAM LIEBLING • ARTWORK BY: BRYAN KREMKAU









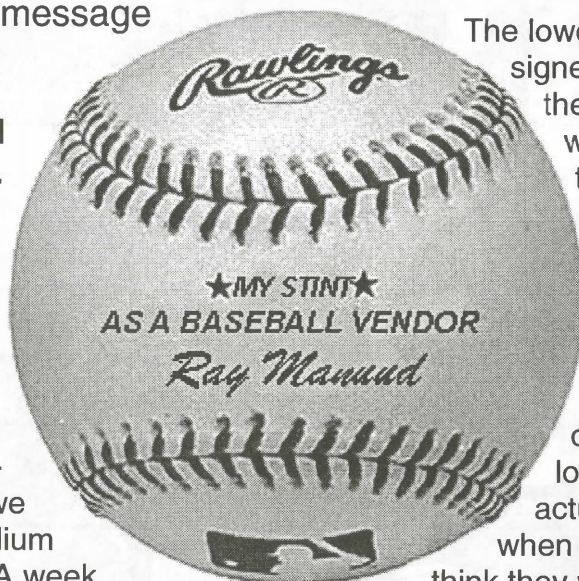
Once upon a time in my hometown of Flushing, I worked one season as a vendor at Shea Stadium, the home of the New York Mets. My best friend, Nick, stumbled upon a mysterious flyer posted on his school's bulletin board. Its message was cryptic, yet enticing:

**Job Job Job High potential earnings Work Work Work. Call (718) 555-JOBS**

With a seemingly subliminal undertone the message was clear enough. We both decided to check it out. After calling the number and following the orders of an answering machine that offered few details, we hopped on a train to Shea Stadium and filled out our applications. A week later we were invited back to Shea for an orientation. We were stuffed into a room with dozens of people and watched a video discussing the necessary steps to hygienic handling food.

The first order of business when starting out as a vendor means that your wallet will be at least \$40 lighter by the time you're ready to start your first official day. It was mandatory for everyone to pay for their own uniform. This included vendor pants, vendor apron, vendor cap, and vendor tennis shirt. Every game, an employee was issued an item to sell, unless you worked there for more than a season or two, in which case you got your pick. A good day for a vendor was often determined by the item you sold. In vending, the earnings are essentially based on commission, ranging from 13-16% of the total items sold. The most popular sellers are undeniably beer, soft drinks, and hot-dogs. Cotton candy, popcorn, pretzels and ice cream bars are also popular sellers, though people tend not to buy ice cream when it's freezing cold or cotton candy when it's pouring rain. Regardless, you wouldn't want to be stuck trying to sell those giant foam rubber hands that say "we're number one" or those wooden sticks with the cheaply made polyester flag that says Mets, or even those plastic blow up balloons of a giant baseball bat. Who

really buys those!? I'll tell you who. No one! Thankfully, I was never stuck with having to walk around an entire level for a whole game with the tedious task of convincing people who usually completely ignore such trinkets of junk.



The lower the level you were assigned to work during a game, the better. The Upper level was almost always a ghost town. It usually consisted of sparse groups or lump patches of seated spectators spread throughout that level. The routine was grabbing your item, walking from one end of the stadium's seats to the other, a lot of yelling so people can actually know you're around when they want something or

think they want something, and usually making trips up and down the levels while lugging crates of the replenished item you were selling (whether it be a crate of 30 bottles of soda or a large hot tin box of hot-dogs and pretzels).

Every game day, vendors were instructed to call a number and listen to a recorded message. A color indication determined how many, all, or none of the vendors were needed. If a color such as green was announced, the vendors would then know that everyone was required to come in and work a game. If it was, let's say yellow, then it would mean that the weather was bad or that only a small outcome of spectators were expected, and therefore only a limited amount of vendors would work for the day.

Despite wanting to catch an eyeful of a free game, it was almost impossible to do so, since vending always kept your feet moving and your attention focused on something other than the game going on below you. The seventh inning stretch meant the end of selling. Normally anyone considers this the opportune time to stand around and sneak a peak at the remainder of the game (which wasn't impossible), but secu-



rity guards always behaved to everyone including vendors as if they had something stuck up their assholes. After the seventh inning, vendors call it day, count their money, and submit it to the clerk who eventually translates those earnings into a commission check.

To be an effective vendor, a loud audible voice that attracted attention always did the trick. Many vendors had their own catch phrases and methods down. There was even a guy who would sing his item as if he was Opera Man. Another vendor called out hot-dogs with its description of "hot, plump, and juicy" with the verbal speed of an auctioneer for Sotheby's. Stadium vendors have their own accent down, especially if we are talking east coast. It's almost an inherent or natural dialect amongst vendors. If you work there long enough, you will develop this idiosyncrasy of speech.

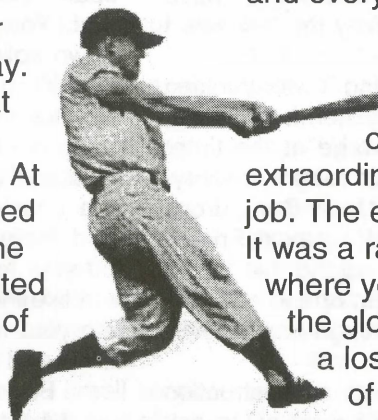
Everyone who has ever been to a baseball game, or any professional sports game for that matter, knows how expensive stadium food and drinks are. Often I would hear, "Three dollars for a soda!" or "Four bucks for a hot-dog! That's highway robbery!" Yet the same shmoe's are already fingering their dollar bills from their wallets, ready to hand it over while continuing to complain about outrageous prices.

The best day I ever had as a vendor was working on Jackie Robinson Day. It fell on a weekday night. Every seat in the stadium was filled or sold out. President Clinton was even present. At the time, he was temporarily paralyzed due to a knee injury. He walked to the center of the field to make his expected speech, crutches and all, amid yells of "Gimp!" or "Assassin on the upper deck!" I sold soda that night. I must have went through ten crates, plus I was working the level closest to the box seats. Security even padded down vendors or took a quick eye inspection of whatever we were handling. You would think that they were expecting to find a silencer or a rifle hidden among the crate of soda.

The vendors were given a special baseball cap that said "Jackie Robinson Day" with his team number placed beneath it. People were asking

about my hat all night, wanting to buy it from me and even offering money for it. I am a sentimental person so I refused. I especially made sure to keep it after a friend of mine mentioned he worked "Tom Seaver Day" almost ten years earlier and that the hat they gave him had a collector's value of over \$200 (I never saw that hat ever again after I moved from Queens... damn motherfuckin movers!! I know they stole my bucket of hats along with my Playstation too!!). As I recall, the Mets won that game.

There were tons of characters working as vendors, ranging from both ends of the age spectrum. Some were middle aged to senior citizens who worked as vendors for every season. Others were simply students earning their first buck. There was some guy that considered himself to be some sort of hot shot veteran of vendors because he apparently worked every season for decades. He even called new guys rookies (as if he was a legendary pro in the pastime that is stadium vending). It reminded me of a geeky low budget version of Fonzie. There were also lots of vendors who were baseball fanatics. They would wait after a game and sneak down to the locker rooms or try to catch any of the Mets walking out to their car or limousine in an attempt to get anything and everything they had on them autographed.

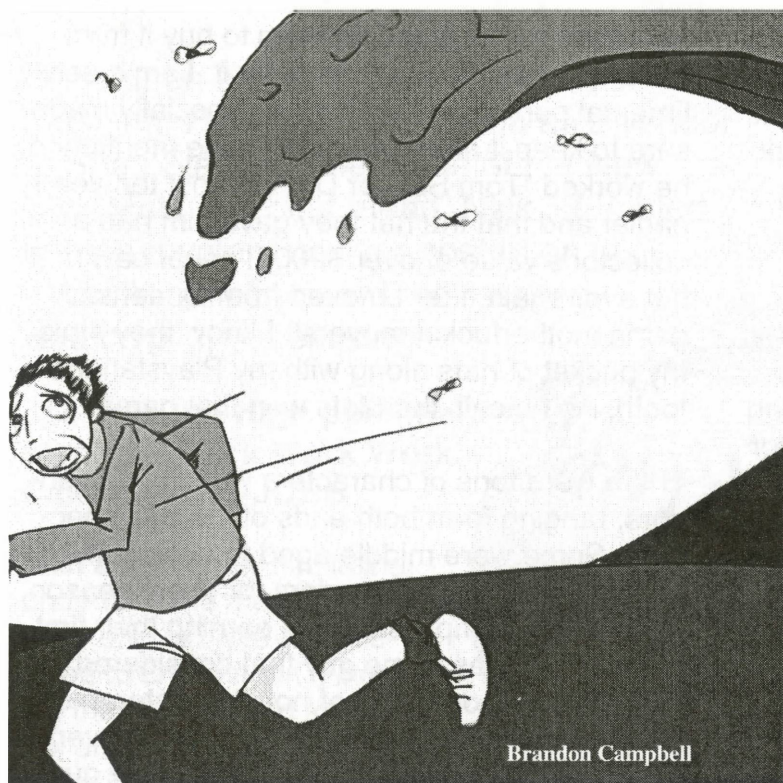


Though I only worked there for one season and subsequently moved on to the world of copy consultant extraordinaire at Kinko's, it was a memorable job. The earnings were decent for what it was. It was a rare chance to work in an environment where you could feel the pulse of the game, the glory of a win, or the disappointment of a loss, all while surrounded by the echoes of the stadium announcers and the chorus of thousands of spectators.

That season the Mets played 162 games, won 88 games, lost 74, and finished out 1997 in third place.

*In case the image doesn't come out clear, that's "My Stint As A Baseball Vendor" by Ray Manuud.*





## Face the Flying Sewage

by Sean Carswell

So that was me, Bo Dunbar: the high school kid swinging a sixteen-pound sledgehammer against the lid of a septic tank. Not thinking about anything significant—not thinking about what I was doing at all, in fact—just whacking away at the lid of the septic tank, watching the concrete chip and fly away and the cracks spider towards the edges.

When I look back on that day and what I was doing, I have to ask myself: what the hell was I thinking? Why the hell was I even there in the first place?

I actually do remember what I was thinking. I was thinking about money. Running numbers through my head. Thinking, okay, I'm making \$3.35 an hour (minimum wage at the time) and this job will take me eight hours, so that's roughly twenty-seven bucks, minus about twenty percent for Uncle Sam, drops me down to about \$21.50. I'll pick that check up next Friday, dump ten bucks worth of gas into the truck, spend five bucks taking Michelle and me to a movie—if I can get up the nerve to ask her—and still have some money to get through next week.

So that's what I was thinking.

As for why I was there, well, my dad was a construction contractor. From the time I was thirteen until I went off to college, I spent most of my summer days and a lot of weekends and some after-school hours working odd construction jobs. Whenever I needed money or my dad had a job that he just couldn't talk anyone else into doing, I went to work. Usually, I hauled construction trash to the dump, scraped old shingles off of a roof, laid sod, ran a jackhammer or a compactor, that kind of thing. All very highly skilled, mind challenging work.

On this particular day, my dad couldn't talk anyone else into busting open a septic tank and filling it with crushed rocks. So that was me swinging the sledge against the lid of the tank. And as I hammered away, I asked myself why the old man couldn't talk anyone else into doing this job. It was then that it

finally occurred to me that pretty soon, I was going to break through the lid, and two or three hundred pounds of concrete were going to cannonball down into a tank full of raw sewage. All that raw sewage was going to come splashing up, and I'd have no chance to get out of the way in time.

Oh, fuck, I thought. Shit. Literally. Goddamn it. What did I get myself into?

I started swinging the sledge gingerly, barely tapping the concrete with dainty little dinks until I finally stopped swinging the sledge altogether. Fuck this, I decided. I'm going home.

I put the sledgehammer in my truck and started to drive away, resolved to forget about the septic tank and the rocks and the \$21.50. To forget about Michelle and the movies and my job and the hot summer day and just go home. To spend my day in air conditioning, reading a book or something. But I hadn't even left the property before I realized that if I went home, my dad would be there. He would ask me if I had finished the job. I couldn't tell him no. I turned back around.

I got back to work thinking, fuck it. Fuck it all. Time to face the flying sewage.

I was determined to get this over with. I crashed the sixteen-pound sledge into the lid of the septic tank again and again. Banging away. It started to crack and give. I could hear chunks from the underside of the lid splashing down into the tank. I even made myself believe that the lid would come apart in small pieces and that the shit wouldn't splash too high. Then, it happened.

It's funny how time can seem to go by in slow motion. How you can watch things travel through the air and a million things run through your mind in a span of time that you know can only be a split second. You can watch the head of the sledge crash down solidly on a widening crack. Watch two giant chunks of concrete give way in the middle and fall. See the septic tank open itself up to you. Smell decades of crap. Realize it's time to run. Pull back the sledge. Turn and step and never take your eyes off the chunks of concrete belly-flopping into the shit and the shit flying up in big, viscous globs. Launch off your left foot and run just as those big globs unfurl like the head of a cobra, then strike, barely missing your right leg and barely splattering across your shoe and shorts.

Fucking-A.

A little shit got on my shoe. A chunk stuck to the hair on my legs, but didn't actually touch my skin. A decent-sized gob stuck on my right hip. Luckily, though, I had an extra pair of baggies in my truck. I took off the shit-covered shorts, tossed them into the septic tank, and put on the baggies. I rinsed off my leg and shoe with water from my water jug, and I got back to work, thinking, was that all? That wasn't so bad. Not nearly as bad as I thought it would be. I don't know what I was so worried about.

But that wasn't all.

I busted up cinder blocks and tossed the small chunks into the tank until it was filled past the sew-



age line. I shoveled dirt in until I couldn't see any shit at all, then broke up the rest of the lid and filled the tank with more dirt and concrete until it was all level ground. When I was done, I drove my truck over the spot where the tank had been. I did this a couple of times, just to make sure that the new ground wouldn't cave in on itself. It didn't.

Over the course of the next month, a mason poured a concrete pad, and a carpenter set a load-bearing post over the spot where the septic tank had been. The pad and post and old septic tank eventually held up the corner of a new front porch and a small section of roof. But I didn't care about any of that. I just cared about finishing the job right the first time, getting paid, and going home.

I left the job site that day, pulled out onto North Tropical Trail, felt the wind through my t-shirt cooling my sunburned shoulders, and I let out a little laugh. Barely missed that shit, I thought. All that worrying about concrete and raw sewage, and it didn't amount to anything except a little extra dough. I ran the figures through my head again and thought about where to spend that money and decided to stop at a convenience store and grab a drink.

Michelle was walking out of the convenience store just as I pulled up to it. How convenient indeed, I thought. I had just earned enough money to take her to a movie and here she was, waiting for me to ask her out. I parked and stepped out of the truck feeling a little more confident than usual. Because I'd been out in the sun all day, I knew my tan was a little darker than usual. Because I'd swung a heavy sledgehammer for eight hours, I knew I looked a little stronger than usual. And, though I was a bit sweaty and probably didn't smell too great, I felt like it was a man's sweat and a man's smell, and I was a man who had just done a man's day's work. I felt like, for the first time in my life, I wasn't going to be all jittery when I asked a girl out. I strolled over to Michelle and said, "Hey. What's up?"

"Hey, Bo. Not too much," she said and looked up at me. "What're you up to?"

"Just got off work," I said. I looked Michelle in the eyes. They were such a light blue that they were almost gray in the sunlight. Michelle didn't look back into my eyes, though. She glanced around the parking lot behind me, like she was trying to find someone.

"You're doing carpentry, right?" she asked.

"Not today. Today I worked demolition. I'll work for the carpentry crew tomorrow," I said. Michelle kept checking out the parking lot. I turned to look behind me, but nothing was out of the ordinary.

Michelle finally looked up at me. "Do you smell something funny?" she asked, taking in a deep breath and glancing around again. "It smells like someone shit their pants."

I didn't catch on quickly enough. It can't be me, I thought. I didn't shit my pants. "I don't smell anything," I said. Michelle crinkled her nose. "I definitely smell something."

I shrugged my shoulders and thought to myself, it's probably best to change the subject. Talking about something stinking wasn't a good way to segue into asking a girl for a date. I tried to think of something else to say. Nothing came to mind, and Michelle was distracting me, sniffing around like that. I took off my baseball hat. It was kind of an unconscious nervous habit. My hair fell onto my forehead

and over my ears. I knew I probably looked like hell, so I tucked my bangs into my hat again. As I was doing this, I let my hand graze across the hair on the back of my head, where I felt a chunk of sun-hardened mud. Strange, I thought. It wasn't muddy where I worked today. Then, very slowly, I realized: that's not mud.

Suddenly, all of my confidence crumbled. I wanted to find a dark hole somewhere—a dark, clean hole—and crawl into it. Don't do it, I told myself. Don't freak out now. Just act like it's really mud. Believe it's really mud. Work through this one, too.

"I can't really stick around and chat, Michelle," I said. "Sorry about that. I'm, uh, in kind of a hurry." I picked the chunk out of my hair and tossed it onto the sidewalk, trying like hell to be nonchalant. She didn't notice. "I'll call you later, though. Maybe we'll go to a movie or something this weekend."

"I'd like that," Michelle said. She walked towards her car. I headed for the convenience store bathroom.

I was pretty pissed off at my dad when I got home. I wouldn't talk to him at all. I didn't talk much to anyone for the rest of that week. I just went to work and toted lumber or banged nails or picked up trash, came home, sulked, and went to bed. The whole time, I was grumbling inside. Thinking to myself: this is me. This is who I am. In the whole grand scheme of things, I'm the guy who gets the shit job. This is my station in life. I didn't stop grumbling until my date that Friday night.

I showed up at Michelle's house with my hair still wet from the shower. (I'd wanted to make sure I was clean. The shit was still on my mind.) Michelle opened the door and said, "Hey, Swoboda." I melted a little because she called me by my full first name—Swoboda—and because I could tell from the cracks in her voice that she was as nervous as I was.

She wore a dress that I'd never seen her wear before, but the cotton looked soft and worn. "Is that a new dress?" I asked.

"Yeah," Michelle said. "You like it?"

"I like it a lot," I said, but I didn't tell her that I thought it was especially cool because it was second hand. Something about the notion that she wanted to impress me so she bought a new dress made me feel cool. Something about the fact that she had to buy that dress at a thrift store relaxed me. And, suddenly, the shit that had bothered me all week didn't bother me at all.

We went to a movie, but it wasn't very good. We ended up leaving halfway through, going to the dollar store, buying a bunch of candy, and going to one of the houses I'd been working on. We sat on lawn chairs on the back patio. The moon shone down through the bare trusses. Michelle talked and stuffed her mouth with candy, and I talked and stuffed my mouth with candy. When we got sick of eating candy, we talked some more, and after a while, we started to make out. I didn't think about shit the whole time. I didn't think about shit until Michelle and I were in the middle of making out and she ran her hand through the hair on the back of my head, right where the chunk of crap had been. For a second, I felt ill. Then I told myself, fuck it. Fuck it all. That sewage is buried for tonight.

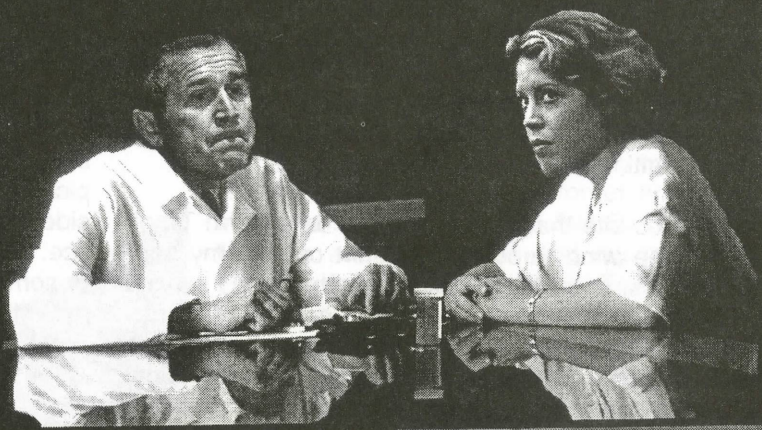




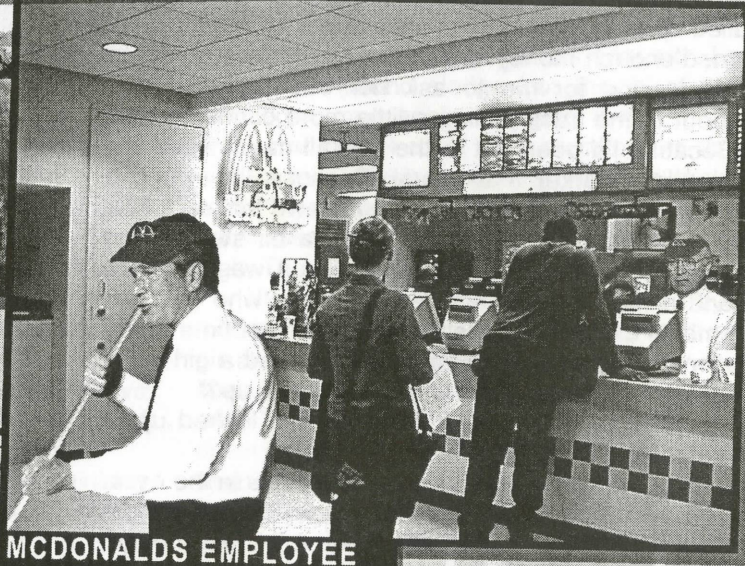
# WHAT GEORGE W. BUSH WILL DO WHEN HE'S NOT PRESIDENT



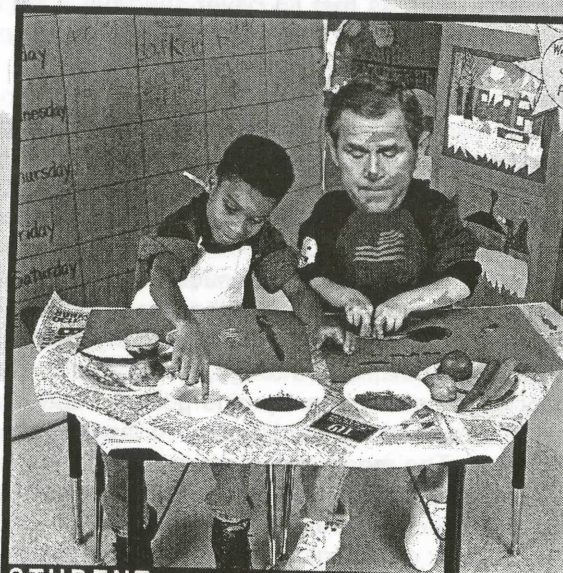
CATTLE RUSTLER



DRUG COUNSELOR



MCDONALDS EMPLOYEE



STUDENT



HUNTER

© BRYAN KREMKAU



## Matt Ruff is the best author you've never read.

His first novel, **Fool On The Hill**, quickly became a cult hit on college campuses nationwide, and put a new spin on fantasy. Set in the present at Cornell University, the book features the crisscrossing adventures of a dog-and-cat team looking for pet heaven, a straggly band of students called the Bohemians, an insane Swedish chef, a killer blow-up doll, a secret race of pixies battling an evil army of rats, and at the center of this universe, a writer-in-residence named Stephen Titus George (an allusion to St. George), an unwitting hero who must face a deadly paper-mâché dragon on the Ides of March.

**Sewer, Gas & Electric: The Public Works Trilogy**, one of my favorite books of all time, is a masterpiece of satire and science fiction that features elements of mystery, philosophy, and comedy. It's even considered a companion piece to Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. As I can't explain it well enough to give it justice, this is lifted from his synopsis:

"The year is 2023. High above the canyons of Manhattan, a crew of human and android steelworkers is approaching the halfway point in the construction of a new Tower of Babel. The Tower is the brainchild of billionaire Harry Gant, who is building it as a monument to humanity's power to dream. Meanwhile, in the streets and tunnels below, a darker game is afoot: a Wall Street takeover artist has been murdered, and Gant's ex-wife, Joan Fine, has been hired to find out why. Accompanying her is philosopher-novelist Ayn Rand, resurrected from the dead by computer and bottled in a hurricane lamp to serve as Joan's unwilling assistant. While Rand vainly attempts to tutor her in "the virtue of selfishness," Joan discovers that the murder is the key to a much larger mystery, one in which millions of lives may hang in the balance.

The world of *Sewer, Gas & Electric* includes such characters as eco-terrorist Philo Dufresne, an environmentally conscious pirate who stalks the East Coast shipping lanes in a pink-and-green submarine designed by Howard Hughes; Philo's daughter Seraphina, who lives in the walls of the New York Public Library; newspaper publisher Lexa Thatcher, whose Volkswagen Beetle is possessed by the spirit of Abbey Hoffman; Kite Edmonds, a one-armed, 181-year-old Civil War veteran who joins Joan and Ayn in their quest for the truth; and Meisterbrau, a mutant great white shark running loose in the sewers beneath Times Square—all of whom, and many more besides, are caught up in a vast conspiracy involving Walt Disney, J. Edgar Hoover, and a mob of homicidal robots. The story also has lemurs in it."

Matt Ruff's style is similar to two other Cornell alumni—Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pynchon. His books feature tons of unforgettable characters that find ways to interact with each other in imaginative ways, and the books are broken into chapters that are more like short, fast-paced, hilariously delirious vignettes.

Superficially, Ruff's books are engaging and fun, but they're also filled with satirical insights at not just our society and beliefs, but the genres themselves that he writes in.

I spoke with a very candid and humble Matt Ruff at length about his past works, as well as his ambitious new one, **Set This House In Order**—a romance between two victims of multiple-personality disorder.

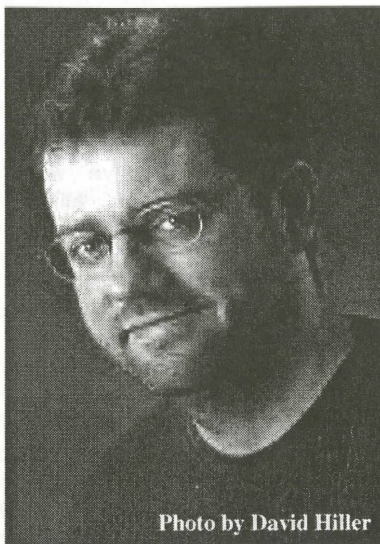


Photo by David Hiller

**I notice there's not a lot of info about you on the Internet, and that's a complaint many fans have—that they don't know much about you.**

I don't know why that is, but I guess it's because I publish books so infrequently. There wasn't a big tour attached to *Sewer, Gas and Electric*, and I don't think I made a lot of appearances elsewhere, so there just haven't been a lot of opportunities to be interviewed.

**There's a lot of interviews with you on the 'net in German, though.**

It's weird, I'm actually very popular in Germany, maybe more than I am here. When the German editions came out, I went there, and Switzerland and Austria as well, to do extensive touring, and I actually made it onto TV and radio. The whole scene is a lot different there. Readings are taken more seriously in Germany, for whatever reason—we get much bigger crowds coming out. That was sort of my taste of what it would be like to be a rock star, because in Germany, people knew who I was, so that was kind of neat.

**How did you communicate?**

Everyone there speaks English very well, and for the last book tour they hired an actress, Franka Potente. This was before Run Lola Run, when she was still up-and-coming, and they hired her to tour with me for part of the tour, and I would read in English and she would read in German. Between the two of us, we went over really well and it was a lot of fun.

**So why the popularity in Germany?**

I think they just like my sense of humor and style, or maybe the translation works really well. But it caught on, and other than that, I can't really explain it.

**You grew up in Queens, right?**

Grew up in Queens, moved upstate for college. After college, I moved to Hartford for a year, then seven months in Seattle, then in Boston, eventually made my way up to Portland, Maine, stayed there for about five years, and finally came down to Philadelphia to get married, and now I'm back in Seattle.

**Why did you move around so much?**

I think at the time, when you're not married and young, you CAN move around a lot. And I had the portable job—I can basically live where I wanted.

**Have you held any other jobs between books?**

I've been lucky enough to be able to survive by writing. There have been some pretty lean times between books, but now I've got enough—especially with the German publishing—that I'm able to write full time.



**You wrote *Fool On The Hill* while a student at Cornell, right?**

Yeah, that was my senior thesis project for English. I was in the MA program for creative writing, and we had to turn in 80 pages of fiction. As far as I know, I don't think anyone had ever tried doing a novel before, which surprised me when I heard that. But my thinking at the time was that I had reached a point where I either had to get established as a writer or get a real job. I really wanted to write for a living, so it seemed like the time to do it.

**How did you get into writing?**

It was just something I always wanted to do... I can't explain it. From the time that I could write, I did. And by the time I was in college, I had been at it for over a decade, and I felt it was time to sit down and do something that could be published. The guy who ran the thesis committee was actually pretty horrified when I brought in the book, because the manuscript was 450-500 pages, and you had to bind them in hardcover and submit six copies. So I'm bringing this huge stack of hardcover things, and he's like, "What is that?" And I said, "It's my thesis." He said, "Your thesis advisor is going to read that. I'm not reading that." I believe they've changed the rules now so that you can't hand in novels anymore—it can be portions of novels, but not entire novels. I think I was the first and the last to do that.

**Cornell had to change their rules because of you?**

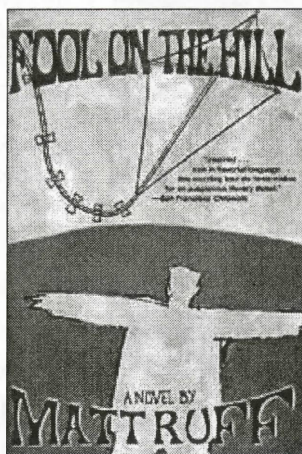
I'd like to think so. It's one of those rumors I never inquired about too closely, because I'd like to think it was just because of me, but it probably wasn't.

**You wrote the book in one semester?**

I started working on it the summer between sophomore and junior year. The first book I ever finished was called *The Gospel According to St. Thomas*, a very autobiographical religious novel that I started writing in high school and finished in the first semester of freshman year. It was basically the first work I had finished, but it wasn't good enough to get published. By junior year, it was time to start working on a book that I thought could get published, and I gave myself two years to finish it. I squeaked in under the wire—I finished it over Easter vacation of senior year, which gave me just

enough time to hand it in for thesis submission.

**How did it go from thesis project to publication?**



I just got lucky. One of my teachers in the creative writing program, Allison Lurie, liked my work enough to suggest sending a copy to her agent Melanie Jackson in New York, and to see if she would like to represent me. And I did, and she did, and that was basically how the book got sold so quickly. So it was finished by the time I left

Cornell, and then I submitted it to Melanie, and by the end of the year we had sold it. So it worked out really nicely.

**That book has probably become one of the most read books at Cornell.**

Is it really? I don't really get that sense... I hear from people from Cornell who have read it, but I don't really have a sense of how popular it is there, or whether anybody knows about it or not. So that's great to hear if it's true.

**Have you ever been asked to come back to Cornell to give a speech?**

I came back twice. The first time was a couple of years after I graduated—I came back to talk to a creative writing class, and that was a great experience. And then I had a really disastrous appearance in '91 or '92. I was asked to give an address to the graduating class, I think it was to give away the senior class gift on behalf of an alumni association... What should probably have been a 15 minute speech went on much longer, to the point where the natives were really getting restless. At one point, there was a pigeon circling the auditorium, and I realized the audience was more interested in the pigeon than in me, so finally I decided to quit while I was behind. I got off relatively easily, but it was a mortifying experience.

**Were you ever asked back?**

I don't know if has anything to do with that, but, yeah, I haven't been invited back since. (laughs)

**Since Cornell is the backdrop for *Fool*, you must have really enjoyed your time there. I hated college—I would**

**never write about my school other than to bash it.**

I guess it depends on where you went and what you wanted to do while you were there. I was very impractical—I chose the campus solely on the basis of how it looked. I didn't really look into the academic program or anything, I just spent an hour walking around the campus and decided, hey, this would be a really cool place to live for four years. And on that basis, I went for early admission and never applied anywhere else. But, yeah, I loved the physical location, and actually enjoyed my classes a lot and had a good time there, but I didn't really take a practical approach to college, in terms of studying. If I hadn't made it as a writer, I would've been totally screwed. Creative writing isn't much useful except for teaching, and I'm just not the type of person who'd make a good teacher. But the '91 debacle notwithstanding, I have good memories of Cornell.

**Between the eight or nine years between *Fool* and *Sewer*, I know you wrote another book...**

After I finished *Fool*, I started a book called *Venus Envy*. Which, at the time, was an original title, but since then three or four books have used that pun. But, yeah, I haven't actually sat down to reread it in awhile, but I still think the story is pretty good, but my publisher at the time didn't feel it was a good follow-up. It was a... (pause) lesbian vampire story. Today, people would probably be all over that, but at the time I guess lesbian vampires weren't that chic.

**Now you have lesbian vampires on *Buffy*. The time is ripe to release it!**

Yeah, but one thing I have to be careful about is that, looking back, it's always easy to view a book as better than it was. I still like the story and there might be something to rewrite, but I have a feeling that if I actually pulled out the manuscript and looked at it, I would find other reasons why my publisher decided to publish it—that it just may not have been that good.

**Do you keep it under lock and key, or can people look at it?**

I would definitely like to look at it myself before showing it to anyone. There's this part of me that's worried that I'm going to read it and it's really going to suck.

**Aww!! No way, man!**



No, don't feel bad. Even if that's true, it's not a tragedy. In the very least, I think *Venus Envy* would require revision, but I would rather rewrite it in my current style than try to revise something that I wrote ten years ago. I guess I'd be willing to look at it, but even if it's good there would be a lot of work to salvage it, and there are other books I'd rather work on instead. So, it's not necessarily gone forever, but it's low priority right now.

**Well, I for one would love to read the book about the lesbian vampires.**

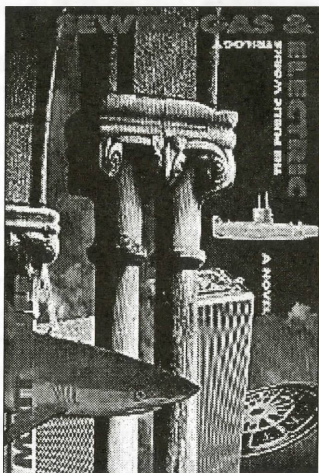
(laughs) Well, then I'll definitely go back and look at it one of these days.

**You mention other books you want to write. Can you tell us about them, or do you keep it hush so people won't steal your ideas?**

With my books, it's less of a risk. Even if I told someone what *Fool* or *Sewer* was about before they came out, I don't think anyone but me could write them, or would want to.

**Do you have in mind the next book?**

I've got a couple of different ideas. I think the new book (*Set This House In Order*) is easily the best thing I've ever written, and I want to take my time in deciding what to do next. Because it was very hard to write and very satisfying to finish, I want to pick something that's going to challenge me as much as this one did. I have a couple ideas for books that would be easy to write, but for that very reason I may not do them next. One of my ideas is a book called *King of the Cats*; it would be a fantasy novel set in Seattle. There would be parallels to *Fool on the Hill*, since this is the first place I've lived since Cornell where the landscape could really be a character in a book. And it has a lot in common with Cornell—it's a hilly, wet, enchanted kind of city, with lots of animals running around. And while hiking around here, I came up with the idea for the story, which will be different from *Fool*, but the theme and the feel will be similar. It would be an easy book to write, and I think it would be a good book, but I would be hesitant to make that my next project. I think I would rather do something that makes me use different muscles, that would be more of a stretch.



**Do you ever write things simultaneously? Like, how Stephen King writes ten books at once?**

I constantly wish I could do that and I tell myself I should try, but in practice it would be very hard for me to do more than one thing at a time. And every book has its stylistic quirks that make it distinct, and I wouldn't want signature phrases from one book bleeding over into another.

**The new book sounds like it's got quite a few stylistic quirks.**

Yes. *Set This House In Order* is told from the point of view of two multiple personalities. One character knows he's multiple at the beginning of the book, and is dealing with it fairly well, and his part of the story is told all in first-person past tense. The other character doesn't know she's multiple at the beginning of the story and slowly comes to terms with it as the story continues, and her parts of the story are written in third-person present tense. And there are a lot of other little things I do to distinguish the viewpoints, and keeping that straight and consistent... Well, if I tried writing another book at the same time, I would probably end up borrowing the same bits, and it would end up with two books that sound too much alike.

**Keeping books distinct is something you've done. You're not a traditional genre author; you purposely go in different directions with each book. How do you describe yourself? Where do you like seeing your books shelved?**

It's funny, I don't have a strong opinion about that. The genre vs. non-genre debate is interesting to watch, but I sort of feel bad for people who spend too much energy worrying about it. The main thing I want is to have the freedom to work on whatever book I want to work on. I don't want to get pigeon-holed into having to do the same thing over and over again. But beyond that, I don't worry too much about how it's categorized. Maybe being tagged as a mainstream author gives you more room to maneuver, but I wouldn't get offended if you called me a science fiction or fantasy writer. I just wouldn't want to get into a situation where everything would have to be marketed that way, where I'd decide to do a book that isn't genre, and somebody tell me, we're not going to publish that. That would be bad.

**The new book seems much darker than the others...**

Yes and no. It deals with some very dark subject matter, but... well, the subtitle is *A Romance of Souls*. It's got a sort of romantic view of even the most horrible stuff, so I managed to talk about dark subject matter without totally destroying the reader. It seems to have worked well... It may be the most mature book of the ones I've written, but I don't know if it's darker. I guess I'll have to see what people think once it's out.

**What inspired *Set This House*?**

I guess it was ten years ago. I was talking to my friend, Lisa, who is now my wife, and somehow we got on the subject of multiple personality disorder. I think I either reread *Sybil* or maybe I had just read *When The Rabbit Howls* [by Truddi Chase], and we began talking about MPD. Lisa mentioned that she had a friend named Michael who was multiple. And the thing that was interesting about Michael, as Lisa described him, was that he had rejected the standard treatment of attempting to reintegrate into a single personality. Which I now know is a fairly common response, but at the time, every narrative I had read about MPD the story ended with them fusing into one personality again.

**And Michael?**

Michael didn't do that. The original Michael had been so badly abused that he basically didn't exist anymore. Michael and his other people talked about the original Michael as someone who was dead, and had been dead for a long time. And they created this system of living as a multiple personality, and he had this imaginary house in his head, this imaginary landscape, where all of his people could live and cooperate with each other. It was run along the lines of a benign dictatorship, where there was this one personality, or soul, whose job it was to maintain order inside, and make rules about who could come out and when, and just keep people from making trouble. And there was Michael, the guy you actually met, whose specific job was to deal with the outside world. And I thought, jeez, this is really fascinating. And Lisa mentioned something else. Michael began dating this woman, and it turned out that SHE had multiple personalities too, but she hadn't been diagnosed yet. Michael had figured out she was multiple personality, and this woman hadn't wanted to admit it, and basically, it ended very badly.



**Wow.**

I had my own schizophrenic reaction. On the one hand, jeez, poor Michael, this sounded like the relationship from hell. But at the same time, I'm thinking, god, this is a really great idea for a novel! That was basically the original inspiration, but I was working on *Sewer* at the time and still had to finish that. But when it came time to think about what to work on next, the idea stayed with me. A number of things changed as the book evolved. Originally, when I started pitching it to people, I said it was a love story between two multiple personalities. But as I wrote it and the characters began taking shape, it didn't work out as a love story; it became more of a "friendship with potential." So the main story is about a stable multiple who meets an unstable, undiagnosed multiple, and she ends up asking him for help and dealing with her condition, and wackiness ensues.

**You don't think this will be confusing to the reader, do you?**

No, actually, so far the reaction from readers and editors have been positive, and they've been able to follow along. I haven't gotten any reviews yet, but I'm optimistic that people won't have any trouble at all.

**Your books have this sprawling quality to them—tons of characters and side stories—and yet everything comes together so smoothly. Do you do a lot of prep work and mapping before the actual writing?**

I just have a good memory and I'm able to keep it straight. I tend to be pretty lazy when it comes to things like outlines. I never write them or do any mapping in advance. Some people would go crazy without an outline, but I don't have any problem in keeping straight who's who and what's what. I have a knack for that.

**Even in *Set This House*?**

The big joke for this book is that there are fewer characters, but the characters who are there are many characters. But people who have had trouble keeping characters straight in my previous novels, this should be a cakewalk. This one is much easier to follow, I think.

**Well, I just hope one of the personalities in your new book isn't Ayn Rand.**

(laughs) Yeah! I said what I had to say about Ayn Rand. The other nice thing about this book is that politics doesn't

enter into it at all; that's something I was happy to get away from for a book.

**Did the Objectivists attack you after *Sewer, Gas and Electric*?**

It was a mixed reaction, kind of what I expected. There were a few people who hadn't read the book who were terribly incensed. There's a usernet group called Humanity Philosophy Objectivism, and there was one guy who was just so incensed—and he hadn't read the book and wasn't going to—but he felt I really slandered Ayn Rand's name, so he did a series of posts in which the subject head was "Matt Ruff—Child Molester?" And he would write, "You may wonder why I used this subject line. It's so that you could feel what it's like to associate your name with something awful, like what you've done to Ayn Rand." (laughs) But for the most part, people were more restrained than that, and there was the inevitable: "Well if you don't like Ayn Rand, obviously you just don't understand her. You weren't paying enough attention." But I also got a lot of private communications from Objectivists who read the book and really loved it, but didn't want to say so out loud. So it was a mixed reaction, but I felt that the people who actually took time to read it enjoyed it a lot. So that was a gratifying response.

**Objectivists don't seem like a humorous lot.**

They're not really as monolithic as they or their detractors would like to think. But the way my book differs from *Atlas Shrugged* is that I didn't try to take sides politically. It was less a book about who was right, and more about how do you get on in a world where everybody thinks they're right and everybody has a different opinion. The book does have good guys and bad guys, but almost all the villains have some redeeming qualities, and all the good guys have their moments of abject stupidity. What was interesting was that certain people didn't catch on to that, and wanted to know what the author's political beliefs were, trying to guess where I stood on different issues. It really became a Rorschach test, because you can't really tell from the book. Like, the *Village Voice*, taking the dedication way too seriously, decided that I was an Objectivist, and *Liberty Magazine* said that I

was an environmentalist. So it was interesting watching the political people try to figure me out.

**If Ayn Rand were alive today, would you debate her? Or just throttle her?**

I think she would throttle me! I think she was a very interesting person, and I can understand why so many people subjected themselves to her company, because she must've been a difficult person to be near; she was one of these people who are very demanding on the people close to her. And, unfortunately, she had a very dim view of humor. I would probably strike her as very flippant and unserious, and she would very rapidly get disgusted with me.

**Both Rand and Tolkien have been big influences on your early work... just**

**as they were for power rock trio Rush. So... are you a Rush fan?**

(laughs) Yes, actually, or at least I was back in the day.

**Wow. You're the first interviewee who has admitted to being a Rush fan. (choked up) That is special.**

Well, I like a lot of stuff. I'm all over the map. I also like ABBA.

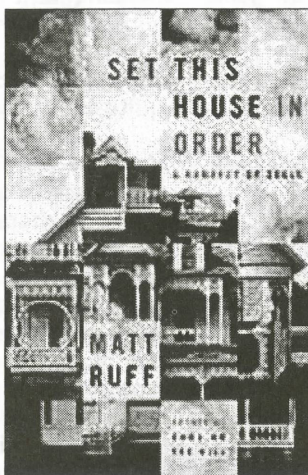
**Oh. (pause) Oh. So what do you enjoy doing besides writing?**

I like to go on long, rambling walks around the city. I'm a fairly introverted character, so I like to spend a lot of time walking and talking to myself. I do a lot of gardening on my fire escape. We discovered kayaking since we moved to Seattle. We play a lot of board games.

**Not very exciting for a cult icon.**

I don't know how big a cult icon I really am, though. It's like being pegged as a sci-fi writer. It wouldn't bother me if it's true, but it's not really something I think too much about. My main hope is that there's enough people who like the books, so that I can keep on doing it. And if cult icon status lets me do that, then hey, that's fine.

**Matt Ruff's new book, *Set This House In Order: A Romance Of Souls* is published by HarperCollins and is in stores now. Visit the author at [www.bymattruff.com](http://www.bymattruff.com).**





# **KNUCKLESANDWICH**

**You guys have a fun, peppy punk sound, kinda like Bouncing Souls, H2O, Murphy's Law... Is it because you're from Canada?**

We love all three of those bands, but our real influences are Bad Religion, No Use For A Name, Suicidal, Avail, Sick Of It All and the Crue. We are not from Canada, we are from NJ. Being that I read ahead and saw that this interview has a Canada-based theme, and I am a chronic ballbuster as well, I will play along. The irony of this all is I am actually doing this interview from my laptop with cellular internet access (through our merch girl Erica-she works at Verizon when not on tour with us) from Canada. I decided to spend the Xmas holidays up here snowboarding and right now I am in a beach chair enjoying Niagara Falls (Canada side).



Knuckle Sandwich gets hot punk chicks by pretending to be Avail

**You guys strike me as having conservative, suburban political views. Was your ideology molded from growing up in the wilds of Canada?**

I write all the lyrics, so this question is all mine. Nah, my Dad is a Union Pipefitter and my Mom is a homemaker. My brother Jason (guitar) and I grew up in a middle class home in Piscataway NJ. Rap and Hip-hop was the rage in our hometown so we had to drive into beautiful Trenton NJ or Brooklyn or NYC to see punk/hardcore/metal shows. We both followed our Dad's trade and became welders/construction/union men. We lived the whole NJ workin class life so that is probably where I get my political views. I love enjoying the freedoms of being an American, but if ya read deeper into the songs you will see there are a lot of things I bitch about as well. I am no bandwagon patriot. but I am not a "live and dress the punk ethic" just because I love the music either. My opinions land on both sides of the fence on most of the big issues. I am more of a Hardcore kid than a punk rocker. NYHC is what drew me into this scene.

**Do you guys receive any negativity from being straight-edge vegans? Or from being from Canada?**

None of us are straight edge or vegan.

**Do you ever wish you had gotten into hockey instead of music?**

No, none of us like hockey. We are all really good basketball players, though. I have an awesome outside shot, Avi can drive to the lane like Jordan, Jason can rebound like Rodman, and Mike can jump so high his nickname is "The Space Chicken."

**I really enjoy your chord progressions and sense of rhythm. Did living near the hometown of Rush influence you?**

I cannot stand Rush. One time a bigwig at Johnson and Johnson was breaking my balls on my lunch break at work. We had just gone over a big job I had to complete, and when he found out I was in a band he started going on about his favorite band "Rush". He asked me, You like Rush right? When I told him I could not stand Rush he said, your band must suck then, "you must suck if you do not like Rush." What do ya expect from a yuppie suit right?? Anyways, The next day he came into work and saw me in the cafeteria eating lunch with my crew. He walked up to us, with his other executive mucky mucks, and handed me a Rush CD. He said, "Go home, listen and learn these songs and then get back to me. Maybe then you guys might play 'real' music, not that punk shit you guys do."

They all started laughing at me. "Hahahahaha." I looked at the CD and it was one of Rush's newer releases. "Test For Echo" was the title of the record. From across the crowded cafeteria I saw a wide mouth metal garbage receptacle, I said, "Test for echo huh??"... I then stood up, and chucked the CD across the room and swish!!! cuclank cuclank cuclank right into the garbage can!!! His mouth along with everyone else's hung completely open for a second and then he yelled! What the hell do you think you are doing!!! I smiled and replied "Testing for echo." Hahahahahaha, needless to say my company lost that account. That's why I am now making a go of music career.

**While your songs are fast and infectiously fun, I can distinctly hear the love and longing for your native land of Canada. Is Canada a mother-figure to you, a comforting womb so to speak, or is it simply a place you choose to lay your head?**

Right now it is just a place where they give me \$30 for every \$20 I cash in. This place rules!! Tons of snow...cold though. I already broke two snowboards and the Canadian record for most girls hit on in one night in a casino. They let me cash in my chips before they kicked me out. I love Canadians.

**Any final words of wisdom?**

Nah, just please check us out on the web at [www.knucklesandwich.com](http://www.knucklesandwich.com) and buy our new CD, Nice!! We go out on our US tour this Feb. A tour of Ireland in April and possibly Canada after that.

*Knuckle Sandwich recently released "Nice" on Resurrection AD. Check them out at [www.knucklesandwich.net](http://www.knucklesandwich.net)*





Above: The Get Up Kids unleash their dorkdom on unsuspecting MTV viewers.

**James Dewees** is the puppet master behind the mysterious indie band **Reggie and the Full Effect**, as well as keyboardist for the nefarious **Get Up Kids**. He's also hooped up on goofballs and I gave up correcting his punctuation and grammar early on, so do your best.

**Listen, bub. I don't know nothin' about you. Fill me in.**

My names is james, I don't know what else to say.

**What's the story with Coalesce? Are you rejoining them or what? Not that I've ever heard them or anything.**

Coalesce has already gotten back together and broken up again. I don't know why I try anymore. It's like one of those kids you see on Springer who they do a follow-up show for, and he comes back from Florida all fucked up still. So they do another follow-up show, and he is still fucked up, then they release a Led Zeppelin cover record and he still comes back all fucked up. Do you know what I mean?

**How did you go from Coalesce to Get Up Kids? And you play like fifty instruments, what's up with that? Who are you, Prince??**

This question should really be three questions or one of those a. b. c. questions. Coalesce to getups was easy. I just went down the street to Matt's house, stuck a gun in his mouth and said, I want to milk the emo cow and goddammit you gonna milk her for me. Just kidding. I can play 47 instruments but so can everyone else so it's not a big deal. And if I could be a prince... I don't think I would be in a band if I was royalty. Do you think prince harry has a band, I bet he does, he smokes pot. They probably sing about how you should love your gramma and be a taxpayer cause they're the coolest. Oh yeah, and conquering france

**So the recent GUK stuff has been super mellow, but it's also the most intelligent and well-written stuff from you guys. How have the fans reacted to the transition from emo to lo-fi indie?**

I have no clue what to say, I like talking about prince harry and the pages, that hip garage rock band that sings about lovin your grandma, and payin' taxes and conquering France.

**GUK has totally exploded in the past couple years. You guys have probably toured all over the world with millions of rockstars and shtupped incomprehensible amounts of groupies. I want to hear all about it. The sleaze. The debauchery. The dirt. Give it to me, I can take it. And don't pussy out, fucko!**

Macaulay culkin has no chest hair, likes whip-its, pot and other stuff, but so does everyone else so it doesn't matter. Some of us have chest hair, though, and birthmarks shaped like america if you outline it and look at it in a mirror. Word on the street is corey haim is all shtupped up to use your word, or so I learned on E! truehollywood coreys. I really like E! It lets me know who's hot and who's not. They always have an all access pass to the dream factory where the rivers of fame seem to go on forever, and the lighting and make-up is always Swayze. I love you Hollywood!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**You guys are gaining popularity without doing some hideously cheesy MTV Unplugged or something along those lines. Or is that in the near future?**

I have performed approx. 6 unplugged concerts in my bathroom for my dog and his penguin chewie guy. So I don't really need the exposure you get from the 900 billion people who watch T.V. all day. I like paying my bills though and it is nice to splurge on a mexican pizza from Minsky's on 51st and main where josh from "the full effect" works.

**To be honest, I wasn't into the early Reggie stuff because it seemed too eclectic and I wasn't into the gimmicky fake history and stuff. But the new album is REALLY good. So I'm thinking, hey, the music's really great and stands on its own, so why resort to gimmicks? Your comments, sir.**

Lets change that question to I wasn't into the early Reggie stuff because I WAS CRAZY, and didn't realize I was missing out on musical anarchy that runs on 6 AA batteries. Okay, now my answer, You are forgiven and given another chance to go buy the record. The gimmicks just make it weirder and more confusing so nothing ever becomes boring, if the gimmick is boring that is my fault and I apologize, I will try harder the next time to impress you so hard you will shit out a diamond...how's that sound?

**What would be your ideal job, non-music related?**

Stripper or a teacher or a teacher/stripper/superhero known as Professorundresser!!!!

**Who would be your ideal woman?**

Well she would have to be horny, but at the same time some sort of superpowers like professorundresser maybe not the same powers but similar maybe we would be each others nemesis but live together and do it and stuff. Sounds like a movie I would go see.

**What questions would be in your ideal interview?**

would you like me to give you some money? That would be an easy question to answer. "would you like to talk about prince harry's band?" easy as well "do you think our president is goofy" easyagain "would you like to be taken out for a banana split?" stilleasy. "do you get the general point of what I am like now?" notsoeasy to everyone else but me, and my mom.

James Dewees' bands—Reggie and the Fizzle and The Get Up Kizzizzle—are on Vagrazzle. Check em out on vagrant.net.



# kittenpants

www.kittenpants.org  
SPECIAL INSERT!

Once again, READ Magazine brings you the very best of kittenpants. In this special eight-page insert you'll find just a few samples of the awesome hilarity available online at [www.kittenpants.org](http://www.kittenpants.org).

Hey kittenpants-ers!

Thanks for checking out another READ Magazine exclusive KP insert.

The staff here at kittenpants has been ecstatic lately. First, two of the most ultimate rock bands have granted us an interview: **Tenacious D**, and motherfucking **DEVO**! Keep watching the website for their interviews. Or, check out the **kittenpants archives** for interviews with:

- o Comedian/Actor **David Cross**
- o EVIL DEAD star **Bruce Campbell**
- o Rock legends, **SPARKS**
- o Drive-In Movie Maestro, **Joe Bob Briggs**
- o **Pat Mastroanni** (DEGRASSI JR. HIGH's "Joey Jeremiah"!)
- o D&D Inventor, **Gary Gyga**
- o Sex Advice Columnist, **Dan Savage**
- o And more!

PLUS: a recent interview with one of our favorite comedians, **Todd Barry**, is being published here in READ before it even hits the internet (see page 7 of this insert).

You lucky bastards!

I can see you still want more: more articles, more laffs, and more bad-assness. Check out the next few pages of material and if you like what you see, check out **kittenpants.org** for the most ultimate brain party you can possibly imagine.

Hey, Hot Shit! Got something to say? Why don't you share with the rest of the class? Send an email to **kittenpants@hotmail.com** with your stories, letters, ideas, lists, or amusing anecdotes, and maybe it'll appear in the next issue!

Ask about the Jimmy Fallon import section man huddle.  
xoxo,  
kittenpants

The KP contributors  
in this insert are:



Dan Burt



Brooke  
Glass-O'Shea



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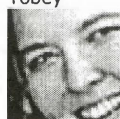
Uncle  
Sloppy



Mr. Lawyer



Corn Mo



Kittenpants

You can also write the staff for advice on everything from hot dogs to poop. Our **Letters Forum** is filled with tech support for the troubled soul.

**Dear Corn Mo:**

Where did you put my shoes? It's very cold out. I need to buy the new issue of Gene Simmons' TONGUE and it's too far to walk on my hands.

And why did you put oatmeal in my socks?

Fresca C. Tab

\*\*\*

**Dear Fresca:**

The shoes are in the hamper.

I love Gene Simmon's TONGUE magazine.

That's not oatmeal in your socks. I didn't know they were your socks. I couldn't find any tissues and I found those glorious socks right next to my free hand.

You shouldn't leave socks next to old TONGUE magazines and expect to wear them outright. Put them in the hamper next to your shoes. Swish! Nuthin' but net!

Love,  
Corn Mo



## MOVIE TRIVIA MAYHEM

By Paul Fisher and Dennis Proctor of Haypenny.com

### STAR WARS

It is rumored that George Lucas originally asked grunge-rockers Soundgarden to do the voice of Darth Vader.

Robert Redford turned down a chance to play "all the Storm Troopers" in the first film.

In the scene where Luke and Han stop for gas on Rezille Vex, the clerk is reading a tabloid magazine called *The Space Enquirer* with a headline that reads "Mark Hamill Involved in Minor Car Accident (and Gay)."

During the motorcycle battle in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, an unborn Christina Ricci plays Evil Luke.

Robert Redford played "all the Ewoks" in RETURN OF THE JEDI.

### JAWS

Brody's dog in the first film is Spielberg's blood cousin.

In the novel and the original script, Quint escapes by painting a door on the side of the boat, opening it and never being heard from again.

Robert Shaw paid to be in the film.

A pre-teen Rob Schneider was the stunt double for actor Roy Scheider, who plays Chief Martin Brody. Scheider later legally adopted Schneider only to eventually give him up for adoption.

In the scene where Richard Dreyfuss dresses up as a girl shark in an attempt to lure "Jaws" into "the trap," his left shark-breast is slightly larger than his right shark-breast.

### BATMAN

"The real Batman" was director Tim Burton's first choice for the role of Batman.

In the original 1966 Batman movie, the "Shark Repellent Bat-Spray" that the caped crusader uses to

fend off a gigantic, hungry shark is actually "Whale Repellent Bat-Spray," and therefore, should not have been effective at all.

Tim Burton created most of the architecture with his mind. The technical crew then hooked up an elaborate series of wires to the director's head and downloaded the plans to a robot, which, in turn, built everything.

Michelle Pfeiffer was specifically asked to "not speak" during the filming of BATMAN RETURNS. When the actress refused, Burton hired actor Howie Long to dub all of her lines.

Batman is actually heterosexual.

### BILL AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY

The Good Robot Us's were played by then-not-dead Beatle George Harrison and then-nine-years-dead jazz great Thelonius Sphere Monk. It was the antepenultimate time the two musicians would work together on screen.

Rumor had it that the original title for this film was BILL AND TED GO TO HELL, but in reality, the working title was BILL AND TED GO TO HELL AND PARTY WITH ALL OF THEIR FRIENDS AND SOME HOMOSEXUALS AND THE PRESIDENT.

During the chess-playing scene, a television screen over Death's shoulder is showing the gay-orgy scene from the first Bill and Ted Movie.

Due to a busy rehearsal schedule with his band Dogstar, Keanu Reeves wasn't able to be on the set as much as the director would have liked. That's why in some scenes Ted is played by actor Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

### FORREST GUMP

Making Sally Field look old wasn't all that hard—but making her look Jewish took six to seven hours of makeup every morning.

In an attempt to keep the film from becoming too long, executives 86ed the scene where Forrest's adorably non-retarded son explains to him that his entire life has been an elaborate television hoax.

There are over 600,000 characters in FORREST GUMP, and they are all remarkably played by funnyman Eddie Murphy, except for two of the guys on the football team.

Producers ran ads in *Variety* before Academy Award nomination time suggesting that actor Tom Hanks, "really is retarded," to try to win sympathy votes. It worked; that year actor Tom Hanks took home his 17th Academy Award for Art Direction.

Only Richard Nixon had to be exhumed for the making of the film; director Robert Zemeckis couldn't remember what he looked like.

### JACK THE BEAR

This movie was actually written, shot, edited and released in theaters in the early nineties.

A 15 year-old Reese Witherspoon had to take over directing duties when a distraught Marshall Herskovitz fled from the set mid-shoot never to be heard from again.

Everyone knows that the character of Norman Strick was played by Gary Sinise, but few know that Gary Sinise was played by kickboxing champion Louis Neglia.

Danny DeVito's sideburns from Jack the Bear are still on display at Madame Tussaud's in London. They are not part of the official collection, however, having not been made out of wax; somebody just keeps forgetting to remove them from the sink in the first-floor Men's room.



## ASK MR. LAWYER

by Dave Barringer

People come to me. They say, "Hey. Mr. Lawyer. Get off my porch. It's midnight. Can't you read the sign?"

I usually say, "Of course I can read the sign. I'm a lawyer. You think I got through law school without being able to read? What do you think we did in law school? Let me tell you. It certainly wasn't sleeping all night long."

And they say, "Listen, you idiot. What does the sign say?"

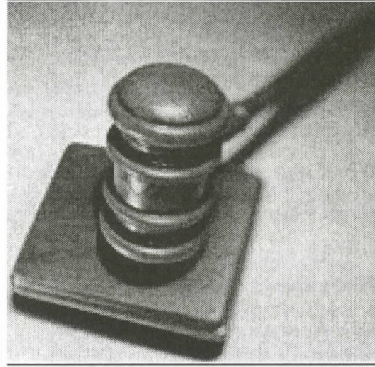
I usually switch my briefcase to my other hand at this point because the briefcase is heavy and I've usually been leaning on the doorbell for fifteen to twenty minutes waiting for these people to wake up and open the damn door. Then I step forward and peer at the sign and confidently report my findings.

"It says, 'No Soliciting.'"

I usually let the homeowner stand there in silence for a moment or two, letting the sweet smell of my victory inhabit his nostrils and permeate the cavity of his teeny brain, and then, when I can take the suspense no longer, I say, "Yeah, Sign Guy. I read it. I read it good. 'No Soliciting.' Been there, done that. Now what? You want me to read something else? Bring it on, Bozo."

The door is usually slammed shut by this time, but often I keep talking because it has always been my conviction that homeowners like to know who's doing what and for how long and why on their front porches, and so, imputing that motivation to individual homeowners, I conclude that, more often than not, the homeowner is listening on the other side of the door or perhaps peering down from an upstairs window. Eventually, my commitment to our relationship will shame the homeowner for not reciprocating in kind, and so, invariably, the homeowner will participate by shouting additional questions, such as, "What the hell are you still doing here?" or "How many shoes do I have to throw before I cut you with my wife's stiletto heels?"

All this genial banter aside, I, Mr. Lawyer, am here at midnight on your porch only to help. The following homeowners, as you'll read, were quite eloquent in posing their queries to me, and I, Mr. Lawyer, am always (rest assured) eloquent in my responses.



### SUBSTANTIAL SEXUAL PERFORMANCE

**Underachiever:** *My girlfriend complains that I can't perform sexually. I mean, I do fine. I have no problems. It's just her. I can't make it pleasurable for her. I go all out, I try hard, but I'm done and she's not and she's all, "Again with this shit? Fuck," and I'm all, "What the hell, you're not even trying," and she's, like, "Try this, I'm gonna sue your ass for breach of contract," and I'm, like, "What the fuck," and she's, like, "Breach of motherfucking sexual contract. If I'm not getting laid, then I'm getting paid." I mean, Jesus Christ, Mr. Lawyer. Can she really sue me?*

**Mr. Lawyer:** In contract law, parties can be deemed to have fulfilled their contractual obligations if they have substantially performed their duties according to the contract. This doctrine is called "substantial performance." Its purpose is to protect people who have acted in good faith from being sued by mean-spirited people for maybe missing a few things, forgetting to do this or that, leaving a last little bit undone. It's a threshold requirement for getting into court. The courts don't want to deal with piddly stuff in every contract under the sun, and usually it's more expensive for both parties to go to court than to just say, "To hell with it," and move on.

What constitutes substantial performance in your case? You'd first have to establish that there was indeed a contract, a meeting of the minds. If you said, "I'm gonna make you come," and she said, "Make me come, make me come hard," and you said, "I'm gonna make you come hard," and she said, "I'll fuck you good, I'll make you come," and you said, "Wait, not yet," and she said, "Come on, do it," then I think it's obvious there was a contract because both of you promised to make the other come, and everyone knows that even if a guy says, "Wait, not yet," he's pretty much almost there already. It's a done deal.

But the woman, that's a different ball game. As a guy, you gotta pay to play. You made a promise to get the job done. You had work to do.

For the sake of argument, let's say there was a contract. What's substantial performance? If you had said, "I'm going to make love to you," we'd just run down a checklist of things you did toward that goal: positions, behaviors, actions taken. Even several small spastic movements in quick succession would have, arguably, constituted "substantial performance," although getting a good ruling on that mostly depends on the gender of the judge.

However, because you promised to make her "come," we need to look at her subjective experience. We need to search for evidence (verbal, physical, or otherwise) of orgasm. An "ooh" or "aah" is clearly not enough. "That's good," is probably indicative of pleasure, but we're looking for pleasure that rises to the level of orgasm. That's a high pleasure standard. Guys are in a tough spot. In situations where it's a close call, a guy often has to take the woman's word on her subjective experience because there are so few reliable objective indicators.

Given that, in your case, she voiced her dissatisfaction in no uncertain terms, you have to determine whether your performance induced substantial pleasure, if not quite orgasmic pleasure, or, alternatively, whether your performance induced pleasure substantial enough for a reasonable woman to have called it a night and faked the orgasm. While a reasonable woman cannot experience an actual orgasm and remain reasonable, a reasonable woman can fake an orgasm and still get to sleep at a reasonable time.

Should you ever get your act together and make a reasonable woman come unreasonably, you will probably endure blows to the head, lacerations to the back and buttocks, and perhaps even ferocious bites to the neck and biceps. This is clear evidence of decidedly unreasonable behavior, as well as clear evidence of an induced orgasmic state. That your performance in this case induced in your girlfriend a desire to sue is, instead, evidence of decidedly reasonable behavior.

So you're screwed. Because she wasn't.

(MORE LEGAL ADVICE FROM "MR. LAWYER" ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE)



## ASK MR. LAWYER (continued)

### CREATIVE COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT

**Curious:** *I heard rumors about all the weird ways civil attorneys serve papers on the parties they're suing. What weird things have you done?*

**Mr. Lawyer:** While every maverick attorney would prefer that a memoirist report in epic terms his feats of ingenuity, I will take the task upon myself and divulge a short list.

I once painted the text of a complaint on a used car and had it delivered to a used-car salesman a client was suing for fraud.

I once rolled up a complaint and stuffed it in a steel-toed boot and had it delivered to a shoe salesman a client was suing for sexual harassment.

I once had a complaint lasered onto the surface of a generic aspirin tablet, the tablet capped in a bottle, and the bottle delivered to a pharmaceutical company a client was suing for failing to warn her of certain debilitating side effects. I had the bottle's label printed to read, "Take This Rectally. No Refills."

I once had a complaint tattooed on the back of a child laborer who worked for an athletic-apparel company a client was suing for child-labor violations. Unfortunately, that fact was used against us in the suit. My client thought I should've seen it coming, and she retained another attorney. Creativity just isn't rewarded in today's world.

I once published a complaint in a newspaper owned by the company we were suing for defamation. Our published complaint spawned three defamation lawsuits of its own. We settled all of them. The settlement papers were, in fact, signed in the blood dripping out of the pen my client jabbed in my forehead. The next year, that client and I got married, and it's been happily ever after ever since. More or less. You can read about our relationship in her mother's diary, the entries pounded out in Morse code with a gavel once owned by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg, the percussive strikes echoing through the cold blue sky of justice covering, from sea to shining sea, the America that I love.

## THE GREATEST AMERICAN GYRO by Brooke Glass-O'Shea

Have you noticed that the U.S. economy is going to hell in a hovercraft? I'm no economist, but I've figured out three (3) things about this:

1. When things seem good, they're really bad, because of inflation. Inflation makes things cost more and more.

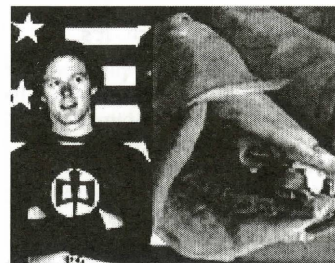
2. When things seem bad, they're bad, because people get stingy and try to put their money into banks instead of spending it the second they get it.

3. Europe doesn't have this problem. They still sit around speaking European and eating ancient and expensive cheeses. This is somehow related to them having recently converted all of their currency to Euros.

In light of these indisputable facts, it seems obvious to me that America needs a change. I propose a simple one, and hear me out: We should convert all of our currency to gyros -- delicious Mediterranean pita sandwiches. This would have a least three (3), and possibly up to thirty, advantages:

1. Inflation wouldn't really be possible. I'm figuring the average consumer could carry around five (5) gyros, maybe up to ten (10) if he or she had a box. Thus, nothing could really cost very much. Little things, like buttons and kittens, could cost half a gyro, or maybe a few bites. Maybe really cheap things could cost a gyro that fell on the floor.

2. Workers would be paid every day in hot, fresh gyros, which they would want to spend within about forty-eight hours, before the sauce started to smell funny. No one would even think of putting their gyros in a bank.



3. Scenes involving money would become inherently entertaining. Stick-up men would empty bags of gyros onto their hotel beds and roll around in the meat. A leering, drunk businessman could, with some difficulty, tuck a gyro into the g-string of a gyrating stripper.

These amazing changes would in turn eliminate countless other problems and annoyances, such as spare change, embezzlement, college, and real estate. Also, those creepy magnetic strips they put in denominations bigger than five now. Gyros could have several denominations, including beef, chicken, soy product, and lamb.

Like I said, I don't know much about economics, and I sure don't pretend to have all the answers. Should the gyros have shredded lettuce, to ease the transition from paper money and provide fiber? Should the new currency have a standard, or should it float? Floating seems like it's always a good thing, but a Lamb Standard is also compelling. Anyway, these questions will likely resolve themselves once we make the basic change.

We must change. We must have gyros. Now.

### CORN MO'S TALES OF WONDER: DEAR YOU, LOVE ME

Dear Diary,  
I mailed you a response to my previous entry about the dollar movie theater closing down. I enjoyed the cathedral-like air conditioning and the smell of coke syrup in the dark. My room should have no windows but it does. Two. And I can't watch "SINGLES" properly with the curtains drawn as such. I can listen to the new Ritchie Blackmore with a warm, wet, washrag across my eyes. Perfect.

Love,  
Me  
PS. I'm going to borrow "DONNIE DARKO" tomorrow. On DVD.



## MY INTERVIEW WITH "CHRISTOPHER WALKEN" by kittenpants

My interview with "John Travolta's characters" left me inspired and far from satiated. I thought, "Who could top Travolta?" Then I answered myself: "Walken."

So I met up with some of Christopher Walken's most quotable quotes at a fine eatery nearby. Below is the conversation that took place between me and:

**DH:** Duane Hall: (ANNIE HALL)  
**JH:** Johnny Smith: (THE DEAD ZONE)  
**MZ:** Max Zorin: (A VIEW TO A KILL)  
**BW:** Brad Whitewood Sr.: (AT CLOSE RANGE)  
**ST:** Sgt. Toomey: (BILOXI BLUES)  
**VC:** Vincenzo Ciccotti: (TRUE ROMANCE)  
**CK:** Captain Koons: (PULP FICTION)  
**G:** Gabriel: (THE PROPHECY, I, II, & III)  
**P:** Peina: (THE ADDICTION)  
**MS:** Mr. Smith: (NICK OF TIME)  
**UR:** Uncle Ray: (EXCESS BAGGAGE)  
**CB:** Charlie Barrett: (SUICIDE KINGS)  
**CC:** Colonel Cutter: (ANTZ)

**Wow - I'm a big fan of yours. Thanks for letting me interview you.**

**CB:** I'm going to give you an opportunity: get out of this. Now. Before it gets so fucked up nobody could ever recover.

**Umm.. No, I really want to do this.**  
**MS:** What's your point?

**Well, I guess I'll just jump right in.**  
**JS:** The ice is going to break!

**What advice do you have to an aspiring actor?**

**G:** Study your math, kids. Key to the Universe.

**Do you mind if I ask you a few questions about your career?**

**G:** That's a long story.

**Oh. Do I have time to go to the bathroom?**

**ST:** You can't do that. We don't have "bathrooms" in the Army.

**In the Army?**

**ST:** I'm tellin' you, we don't have any "bathrooms" on this base. Do you doubt my veracity?

**I...**

**ST:** You've got a problem because you don't know Army terminology. The place where a U.S. soldier goes to defecate, relieve himself, open his bowel, shit, fart, dump, crap, and unload, is called the latrine. The la-trine, from the French.

**We're at a Denny's. They have bathrooms. They've always had them.**

**ST:** Not bathrooms, they didn't.

**Okay, "la-trine" - whatever. I just need to pee. Can you wait a few minutes?**

**CC:** Time stands still for no ant.

**Kp: Forget it. Let's just get on with the interview. Why did you get into acting?**

**G:** I'm an angel. I kill newborns while their mamas watch. I turn cities into salt. And occasionally, when I feel like it,

I tear little girls apart. And from now till kingdom come, the only thing you can count on in your existence is never understanding why.

**What the fuck?**

**ST:** Are you having trouble understanding me, Jerome?

**What?**

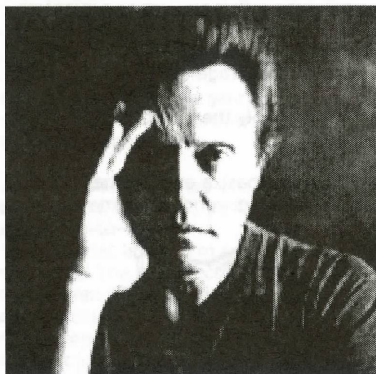
**ST:** Do I make myself clear, Jerome?

**Why are you calling me Jerome?**

**ST:** Do I make myself clear, Epstein?

**My name isn't "Epstein" either.**

**ST:** Then you've got a problem, don't you Epstein?



**Oh my God. Listen, I thought we could talk a little about acting, maybe talk about dancing. You dance in all your movies, right? I'm a dancer, too. Let's talk about that.**  
**ST:** Hey, Fred Astaire, you tryin' to tell me something?

**No, I'm just trying to relate.**

**P:** I'm not like you. You're nothing. That's something you ought not to forget. You're not a person. You're nothing.

**I'm nothing?**

**MS:** You're like a worm on a hook, trying to wiggle free.

**I don't understand.**

**VC:** You're a cantaloupe!

**I'm a cantaloupe. What are you?**

**G:** I've turned rivers into blood, kings into cripples, cities into salt. So I don't think that I have to explain myself to you.

**You're insane. You would need two promotions to be an asshole.**

**ST:** You would need three promotions to be an asshole.

**Good one.**

**DH:** Can I confess something? I tell you this as an artist, I think you'll understand. Sometimes when I'm driving on the road at night I see two headlights coming toward me. Fast. I have this sudden impulse to turn the wheel quickly, head-on into the oncoming car. I can anticipate the explosion; the sound of shattering glass; the flames rising out of the flowing gasoline...

**It would be hard to survive something like that.**

**P:** You can't kill what's dead.

**So you're already dead.**

**CB:** I'm bleeding to death. Humor me.

**I am so confused.**

**ST:** Right. I'll be honest with you, Jerome. It was my intention of getting Epstein in here, and putting this pistol to his ear, and blowing a tunnel through his head. But you'll do just as well.

**Jesus Christ!**

**G:** He doesn't talk to me anymore.

**You talk to Jesus?**

**CK:** Five long years, he wore this watch up his ass. Then when he died of dysentery, he gave me the watch. I hid this uncomfortable piece of metal up my ass for two years. Then, after seven years, I was sent home to my family. And now, little man, I give the watch to you.

**I don't want your watch. I do want to get some food. Have you looked at the menu?**

**G:** Don't eat that. Trust me.

**We've been here forever. I'm starving.**

**P:** You know how long I've been fasting? Forty years...You can never get enough, can you? But you learn to control it. You learn, like the Tibetans, to survive on a little.

**Okay. Listen, I should probably go. I have some things to do...**

**ST:** Just give me one Goddamn ho!

**Ho?**

**ST:** Ho what?

**Is that a trick question?**

**ST:** One more time.

**Ho Ho?**

**ST:** You shittin' me, Jerome?

**Again with the "Jerome". My name is Darci.**

**ST:** But I heard more than one Ho.

**Yeah - you said "one more time" and I said "ho ho".**

**ST:** You bet your ass, "ho ho." You know why you've got a problem?

**No...**

**VC:** What we got here is a little game of show and tell. You don't wanna show me nothing but you're telling me everything.

**I'm telling you everything?**

**ST:** Are there two Arnold Epsteins in this company?

**What is wrong with you?**

**UR:** Am I such a bad guy? Have I hurt you? Have I shot you? In the groin?

**No, I guess not. I just want to go. Please don't follow me. I will hurt you.**

**MS:** I told you I'd make a killer out of you.

*Mr. Walken continued rambling incoherently as I left. My lawyer says the restraining order should be enough, but if I don't answer my phone for a few days, please dial 911.*



## CONCISE ADVICE

by Dan Burt

If you believe the crap about experience being the best teacher, I offer this condensed guide. Not only does it contain insightful clichés for today, but also solid, useful advice for dealing with life's little obstacles, all offered experience-free to the readers.

Some of the advice is so simple and obvious you will want to hit yourself in the head with a hammer for not realizing immediately the depth and wisdom contained in each seemingly puerile adage. Prepare yourself for enlightenment and awesome epiphanies. Read and heed, you hammer heads.

And now, some things I've learned:

The horse wears the reins but the monkey's gonna swing.

You seldom help a friend in need by throwing rocks in trees.

Beware of the person wearing clothing sewn with pine needles.

A person with a bucket is prepared for rain but not drizzle.

Always be prepared to ignore your instincts especially when it comes to sandwiches.

Remember 'user friendly' not only applies to computers but also to underwear.

The next thing you know, old Jed's a millionaire.

Avoid the person who takes heed of tsunami warnings in Kansas.

If you are feeling low, stay there until you can pull your head out of your ass and get on with it.

Underneath every paved road is a muddy, dirty road leading straight to hell.

Next time you find yourself in an untreated, contaminated sewer, naked, being eaten alive by starving, rabid rats, remember to ask yourself what's the worst that can happen.

Always cover your manhole.

Life is like a bad car accident, so slow down and take a good look.

If it is a job worth doing, hire a contractor and don't let the bastards cheat you.

Make sure you get everything in writing or be prepared to receive a fucking bill for five times over the agreed upon estimate.

Shoddy work should not be tolerated when having your bathroom remodeled. There is no fucking way water should flow horizontal out of all the faucets even if the contractor is Houdini Plumbing.

Dan Burt is a member of the kittenpants staff, when not preparing for Grad school. The Haypenny.com staff are also regular contributors. Plus they fill a whole other website with content! Please visit them online.

Ask the assholes to correct the plumbing problem but remember the phrase 'no hair off my ass' doesn't mean shit to a bare-assed, red-butt'd baboon.

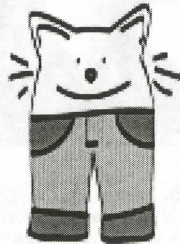
When you have your day in court and the wannabe Judge Judy warns you to sit down and shut up or you will be held in contempt and thrown in jail, she's really serious.

Always try to see the best in people, especially your cellmates.

Whining, sniffing, and begging in a high-pitched, girly voice will not help if your new friends Lex and Jake want to use you like the inflatable, sex toy (Tina) you keep in your attic hidden away from your adulterous whore of a wife. In fact, it seems to encourage them.

This is probably the worst that can happen.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of covering your manhole.



\*\*\*\*\*

(more Fact Snacks!)

- \* There is no word in the English language that rhymes with "myth".
- \* In the movie SAVING PRIVATE RYAN, the word "the" is never uttered by any character.
- \* The world's youngest-ever oldest person was only 71 in 1903 when he gained that title.
- \* Lettuce is a fruit.
- \* Easter is not celebrated on Easter Island. But Arbor Day is!
- \* Before becoming a nun, Mother Teresa was treasurer of the Calcutta chapter of the Hells Angels.
- \* When this movie ends, we're going to go smoke a fat one in the parking lot.
- \* Origami is more popular than Tetris or shoes—by almost 25%!
- \* Neil Simon has never learned to read.
- \* In Chinese, there are seven words for 'thunder,' but there is no way to make an interesting point by expressing another language's lack of a particular word.
- \* Thomas Edison was allergic to light bulbs.

## FACT SNACKS

by the Editors of Haypenny.com

Every once in a while, we at Haypenny like to take a break from the funny business to offer our readers something they can actually use: knowledge. Packaged into delectable little packages, they're nourishment for the mind, nutrition for the soul and tacos for the body. We call them Fact-Snacks. Dig in.

- \* Because of a simple typo, Puerto Rico received 176 electoral votes in 1980.
- \* For the first six weeks of their lives, baby elephants can speak French.
- \* The homeless were originally invented to cure Athlete's Foot.
- \* Tina Turner has 18 toes.
- \* Panda Bears are not bears at all; they're actually a type of bird.
- \* What's the most popular sport in Portugal? You guessed it: Jogging.
- \* More people are shot with guns than any other object.
- \* I'm going to eat your soul.
- \* 75% of nickels are counterfeit.
- \* There are over 600 miniature tigers roaming around on your scalp right now.
- \* The proper word for a collective of dogs is 'dogrageous,' as in, 'There was a dogrageous of dogs running around outside.'
- \* The recipe for tennis balls was lost in 1987. Once we run out, that's it.
- \* Rock 'n' Roll was invented by the ancient Greeks who sought an explanation for the changing of the seasons.
- \* The answer to the very first crossword puzzle clue, published in the New York World in 1912, was 'bikini wax'.
- \* The age of consent in Iceland is 45.
- \* Gerald Ford is the only person to ever have the number-one album while president.
- \* Irony predates Sarcasm by almost four million years.
- \* The loudest noise ever recorded by scientists was the sound of a scientist dropping her science microphone.
- \* Mice don't masturbate nearly as much as they think they do.
- \* The H in H<sub>2</sub>O isn't actually hydrogen, but ham.
- \* The human body excretes between 11 and 14 gallons of urine per day.
- \* Richard Maxwell House Nixon was our nation's first four-name-having President.
- \* Charles Lindbergh was retarded.
- \* My ex-girlfriend is a total bitch.
- \* Macaroni and Cheese is the only edible palindrome in the English language.
- \* Alan Alda has a license to kill.
- \* Before saline replaced silicon, rats were used as breast implants for a short time.
- \* John Wilkes Booth had a secretary named Oswald and Lee Harvey Oswald was bi.



# INTERVIEW: TODD BARRY

by kittenpants

Todd Barry is funny, which is good for him, considering his career choice. The Bronx-born stand-up comic is now part of a new weekly show in NYC called TINKLE, co-hosted by fellow funnyman David Cross and Jon Benjamin.

I asked his co-hosts to let me in on some secrets: what is Todd Barry really like?

**Benjamin:** Todd Barry, to me, is like that coat you bought years and years ago that has been sitting in your closet, all moth-eaten, but you refuse to throw it out, probably just out of laziness, but maybe a little bit of sentimentality. That's Todd to me....you can never throw him out.

**Cross:** What nobody knows about Todd is that he is an awesome ventriloquist. Really! He doesn't like to do it onstage (for obvious reasons) but if you ever see him in the street or at a restaurant, you've got to make him do a little bit for you. It'll blow you away. He's amazing.

**Benjamin:** Todd's neat.

I spoke to Todd about some crucial issues: books, pie, and scoring with the ladies. Neat.

**Who are your comedy heroes?**

I don't like that question.

**Okay. Tell us about TINKLE - what do we have to look forward to?**

Well, I have since seen you at Tinkle. It's a comedy show started by David Cross, me and Jon Benjamin. It features a wide variety of acts for all tastes and seasons.

**Have you heard this joke before?**

**Q: What's white and goes up and down in a crib?**

**A: My ass.**

No, but that shows how a joke can be SUPER POLITICALLY INCORRECT while still being SUPER HILARIOUS.

**Tell us about your role on "Aqua Teen Hunger Force".**

I played a character named Romulox. It was a voice over. It wasn't really me. It was just my voice.

**Do you ever look yourself up on the internet?**

You clearly are not aware of my one-man-show called ICKY. It's about a woman who trashed me on alt.fan.conan-obrien. Do a search on www.deja.com and find out all about it!

**Do you have any plans to work with Clint Howard?**

Plans? Try "dreams."

**Are you related to Fred Berry? Can you at least dance like Re-Run?**

Am I related to a black man who spells his name differently than me? AHAHAHA! LOL! That's a funny question, KITTENPANTS!!! WOOOOOO!

**You're so mean! Awesome.**

**What is the first record you ever bought?**

I don't know what my record purchase was. But my first "cool" records were "London Calling" by THE CLASH, and "Repeat When Necessary" by DAVE EDMUNDS, a guy who you probably don't know about.

**First concert?**

It may have been BOSTON at the Hollywood Sportatorium in Hollywood, FL. My first "cool" concert was BLONDIE, with opening act ROCKPILE at the Sunrise Musical Theatre, in Sunrise, FL.

**What instruments do you play?**

I play drums. I'm the best drummer in the country right now.

**Your website said you are currently reading *White Noise*, by Don DeLillo. Is that up-to-date?**

I finished that book. I'm now reading a book called *The Unexpected Salami* by Laurie Gwen Shapiro. It's about a rock band. I also bought a book about prostitution called *Brothel*. I haven't started it yet.

I've read over 500,000 books because I'm a serious intellectual.

**What song gets stuck in your head?**  
"Complicated," by Avril Lavigne.

**What's the best tattoo you've ever seen?**

I know a woman who had a tiny rose on her shoulder. CRAZY SHIT!

**Once on 6th Avenue I saw a 500-lb guy wearing a t-shirt that said "ARE YOU GOING TO EAT THAT?" He had really embraced it, you know?**

I once saw a 100 lb woman wearing a t-shirt that said: "ARE YOU GOING TO EAT THAT? GOOD, BECAUSE IT'S YOURS AND I WANT TO RETAIN MY PERFECT FIGURE." She embraced it, too.

**Have you ever gotten any crazy fans, or scary fan mail? Tell us a story!**

I've had a handful of people who appreciate what I do more than they should. But I'm a GIGANTIC, HUGE star, so it comes with the territory.

**Are there lots of comedy-groupies? How much ass do you get?**

I get some ass, but I could always use more. Thanks!

**I have a brother named Todd. Coincidence?**

Astonishing, mind-blowing synchronicity.

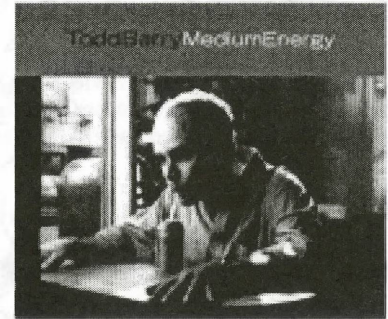
**What is the cheesiest showbiz offer you've received?**

Ten million dollars to write and star in a movie. NICE TRY!!!

**What is the best kind of pie?**

Any pudding-based pie. Fruit pies suck, except for Key Lime, which is more like a pudding-based pie. Key Lime pie is great. And real Key Lime pie should have a yellowish tint rather than green.

**Key Lime pie is, in fact, the best kind of pie. You are the first person to ever get that question right, although you are wrong about fruit pies in general.**



You can buy Todd's CD and find more info on his website, [www.toddbarry.com](http://www.toddbarry.com)

**Describe your feelings on the following subjects in two words:**

**Boobs**

oh yes

**DEVO**

good band

**the David Cross CD**

good CDs

**sarcasm**

yeah right

**sports bars**

they rule!

**Nicolas Cage**

he rules!

**email interviews**

fun FUN

**kittenpants**

awesome FUN!

**Will you sing karaoke with me? Can we sing "Peaches" by THE STRANGLERS?**

I will not sing karaoke with you, even though you have "hip" musical taste.

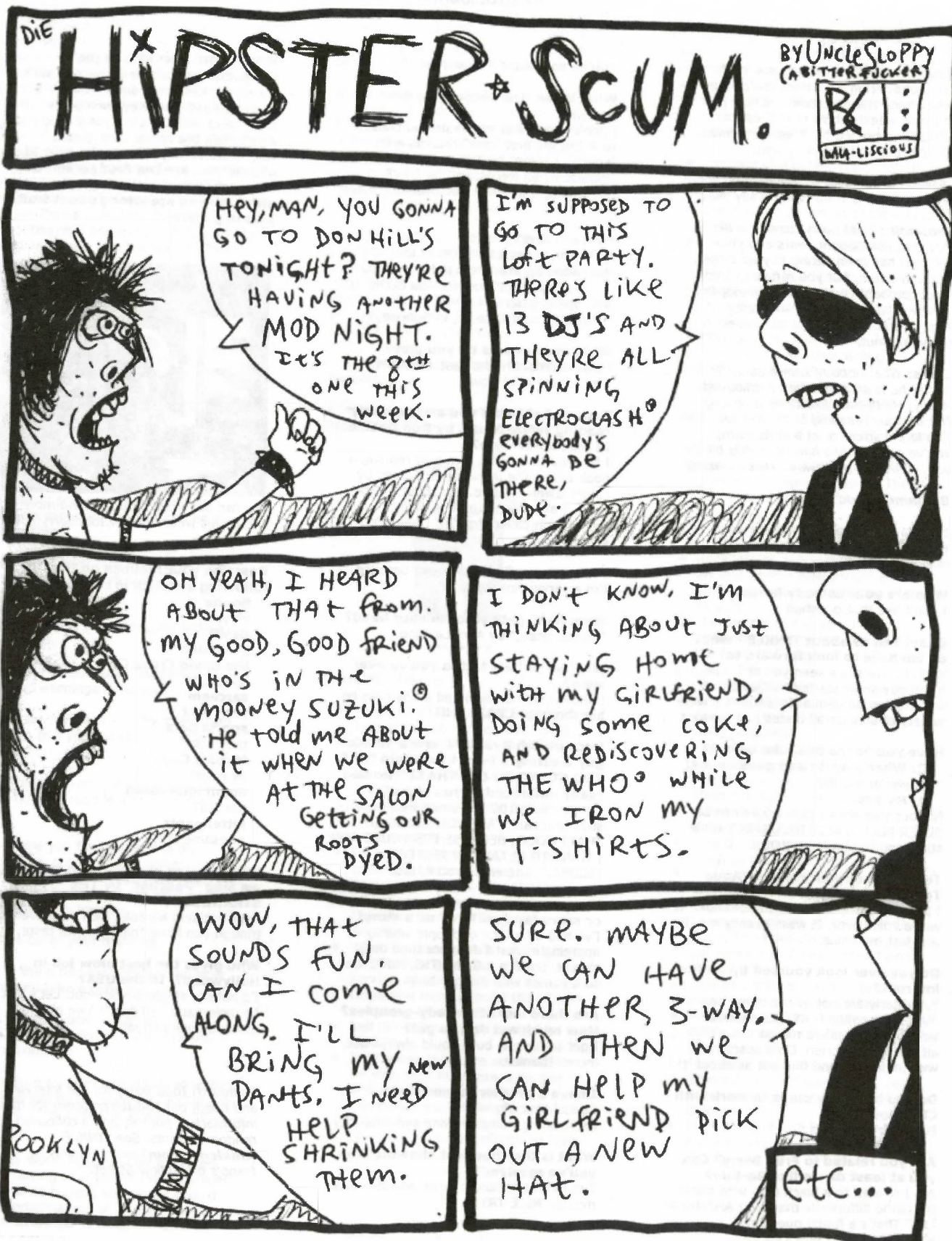
**Who gives the best blow job in Hollywood? In the USA?**

I'd hate to single anyone out. Let's just be diplomatic and say "I love all the blowjob givers equally!"

Thanks to Todd Barry for the interview, and check out [toddbarry.com](http://toddbarry.com) for more information, photos, and a collection of random receipts. See TINKLE ([tinklenyc.com](http://tinklenyc.com)) every Sunday at Piano's on Ludlow Street.



UNCLE SLOPPY PRESENTS





# Joe Satriani

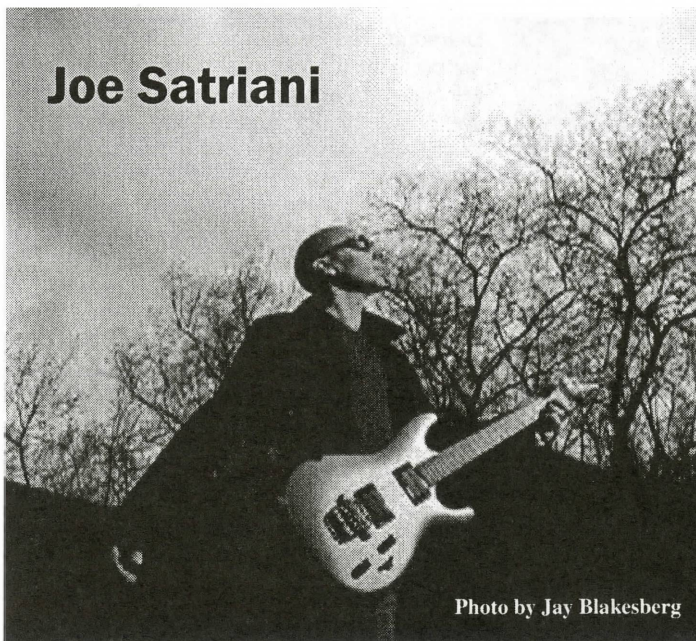


Photo by Jay Blakesberg

**Hi Joe, thank you for taking time out. How were your holidays? Any new years resolutions?**

The holidays were snow filled and fast, I had a blast. New years resolutions? To play better, write better, and have a better time trying.

**Could you tell us what you've been up to lately?**

Rewiring my studio. Working on my guitars. Writing songs for the next CD. Generally getting geared up for part two of our Strange Beautiful World Tour.

**I heard you've done work for Playstation 2. What should we look out for? How do you feel about soundtrack work?**

I was working on the Playstation 2 game called "Bots", but the producer left to work for George Lucas, and then the game was put on hold. After initially being interested in that kind of work, I found it not too satisfying in the creative department. Soundtrack work seems like it would be more up my alley. Given some kind of freedom to freely associate with the scenes, and working with talented directors, I could see it as something I would really enjoy.

**Like Zappa in his later years, you have embraced digital music as a method of creation that may not have otherwise been possible. Did you have misgivings that long-time fans may not "get it"? Did they give you grief?**

Recording the trance/techno CD 'Engines of Creation' was so much fun. Very liberating to work outside the usual r'n'r structure. Recording it in a house was as opposed to a studio was cool too. Grief? Who cares? It really is all about the art you know. You should have heard what I didn't put on the CD!

**Okay, stupid question time. We always hear that Joe Satriani tutored guitar to Kirk Hammett, Steve Vai, Larry LaLonde, Charlie Hunter, etc., but what exactly does that mean? Did you physically teach them to play guitar in a music lesson setting, like, ten bucks an hour? Do you still teach? How does one become a Satch student?**

Yeah, that's about it. They came in, sat down, tuned up and said "Teach me some cool stuff." I loved teaching those guys. They were so motivated, and so very talented. By the time I finished

teaching in early '88 I was charging around \$30 an hour. Peanuts by today's standard. But I don't teach anymore...maybe when I can't take the touring I'll turn into a teacher again. That would be cool.

**Who was most fun to teach? And who was the most, errr.. challenging?**

The 'young and hungry for knowledge' types were the best, it was always fun and energetic and full of discovery. The older, jaded musicians were the hardest 'cause they just wouldn't move on. Like pulling teeth! In a way they were all challenging. It was my duty to make the lessons work for them, and I tried my best.

**I really dig the G3 stuff - who else would you like to work with that you haven't already?**

I would love to get Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Brian May, Keith Richards and Ron Wood, Billy Gibbons, John McLaughlin, Kirk Hammett, Tom Morello and Eric Capton to name a few!

**Steve Vai plays with a clinical precision and Yngwie Malmsteen is just dorky cheeseball metal, but you have this very human, emotional approach. Is this something that's consciously done?**

I can only play by way of expressing my feelings. I've often thought of it is a liability of sorts, but, thank god people like it when I do it! It's not the most professional way to play, it's just the most rewarding for me.

**What would you be doing now if you had never picked up guitar? Professional snowboarder?**

I love snowboarding! But, I'm probably more suited for nuclear biology or something like that. Or, maybe ...nah!

**Do you ever get tired of the dorky technical questions from guitar magazines? You know, "When you did that augmented D7 chord off the pentagonal minor scale with the '87 Ibanez, was your index finger slightly muting the A string?" Don't you ever wish someone would just ask you about your favorite movies or authors?**

I love those questions! Where are they?...By the way, I WAS slightly muting the A string. Good call!

**What are your favorite movies and authors, anyway?**

Favorite movie: "Dr. Strangelove".  
Favorite author: Dan Simmons.

**I know you prefer staying solo, but if Rush asked you to fill in for Alex for a tour, would you do it?**

Let's see, I've played for Mick Jagger, Deep Purple...Rush? Hell Yeah! When is my flight? Why can't me and Alex do it together?

**What do you think about today's metal scene? And, out of curiosity, are you into punk rock at all?**

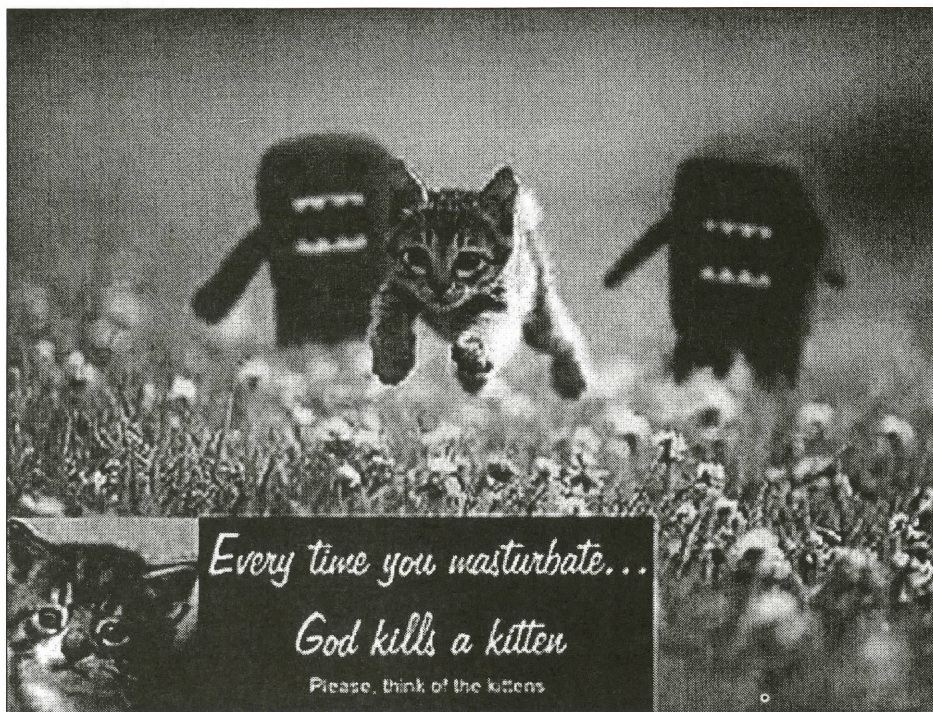
I like quite a lot of what's out there today mainly because it seems to have arrived on the scene with a diverse set of roots and influences. From metal to punk, or, the other way around, it sounds fresh and clearly is all about being alive in today's world.

**What are your plans for the rest of the day?**

What else?...I'm going to play my guitar!

Visit Satch at  
[satriani.com](http://satriani.com)





Note: I couldn't find a picture of the band, so I used the Cliché Kitty from Fark.com

## THE FEUD

**I read on Epitonic that you were brought together by a love for Sonic Youth. What's to love?**

Larry Hess: Noise, buddy, noise. Where we grew up there was a really big hardcore scene, and a lot of cheesy pop-punk, but although we all loved punk, we never really got into this (except the warped weeble wobbles, they kicked ass). Sonic Youth was a revelation to all of us, because it was punk but it was also smart. Plus, Lee Renaldo is from Oyster Bay. Props.

Jeff Newman: Steve Shelley's arse.

Seth Diamond: That's not necessarily the most accurate statement. But Sonic Youth showed us that you could be experimental, noisy, dissonant, and super melodic-catchy at the same time. You don't have to be Stockhausen or Joan Jett, you can fuck all worrying about what a critic will define your music as and just see how far you can push yourself. Also Kim Gordon is pretty fucking hot.

**Math-rock, post-punk, prog-punk, indie rock. Do you like any of those labels, or do you just consider The Feud to be Rush with horns?**

Hess: Fuck Rush. If we are like Rush, we are like Rush with taste.

Newman: I like the IZOD alligator. That's a nice looking label. We're more like Rush without the suck.

Diamond: My favorite labels are "May cause drowsiness" and "Controlled Substance, use only as directed". Although I love what Rush does, I might consider ourselves Rush without the silliness. I like being labeled prog. We don't have solo sections or 30 minute keyboard interludes with ballet dancers prancing on stage, but our music definitely doesn't come full circle. It keeps branching out through different paths over the course of a song, it sort of, you know, progresses.

**Does your name come from some beef you had with another band? Or are you just big Louie Anderson fans?**

Hess: Louie Anderson sucks, it's all about Ray Combs. When he hung himself, it dealt a huge blow to every "feud" loving person. He will be missed.

Newman: (It) has more to do with Stanley Tucci and getting free promotional swag from this movie he was in called The Feud, way back when we were in high school. We weren't even writing music back then and basically thought it would be funny to get on stage and make as much noise as possible while wearing these bowling jackets and t-shirts that said The Feud on them. The idea was to get whoever was watching to think, "Who the fuck are these stupid assholes and why the hell do they have their own god-damned embroidered jackets?"

Diamond: The Feud is against the impossible odds this band faces to be heard. We will smack your ass down with rock, make you put on lipstick, and call you our bitch. We are the last gang in town; don't fuck with us.

**No joke, you guys are from mother-fuckin' Sysosset! Valley Stream in da house!!! How has being from Long Island shaped your outlook on life?**

Diamond: Anyone else want to answer this?

Newman: Forced a bunch of us to drift towards each other and create our own sort of creative outlet. It's the same in any suburb, I suppose. Though we were fortunate enough to have NYC at our disposal. With that came Sonic Youth and dime bags from Washington Square Park. The rest is history.

Hess: Long Island is probably the stalest and most boring place on earth. The only good thing I can say about it is that we got great drugs. I think the mixture of boredom and drugs is the reason there have been so many great bands come from LI. The Velvets, BOC, Kiss, uh, well that's all I can think of right now, but I'm sure there are more.

**Sarah Hughes - would you do her?**

Newman: Is she related to Langston Hughes? I can't say that any of us would fuck him. Well, maybe the mole.

Hess: I don't know who she is, but if she breathes, you could probably pawn her off on Seth.

Diamond: Who turns legal first, her or the Olsen twins?

**Is "Language Is Technology" a reference to Speak N' Spell? That scary voice used to haunt my nightmares.**

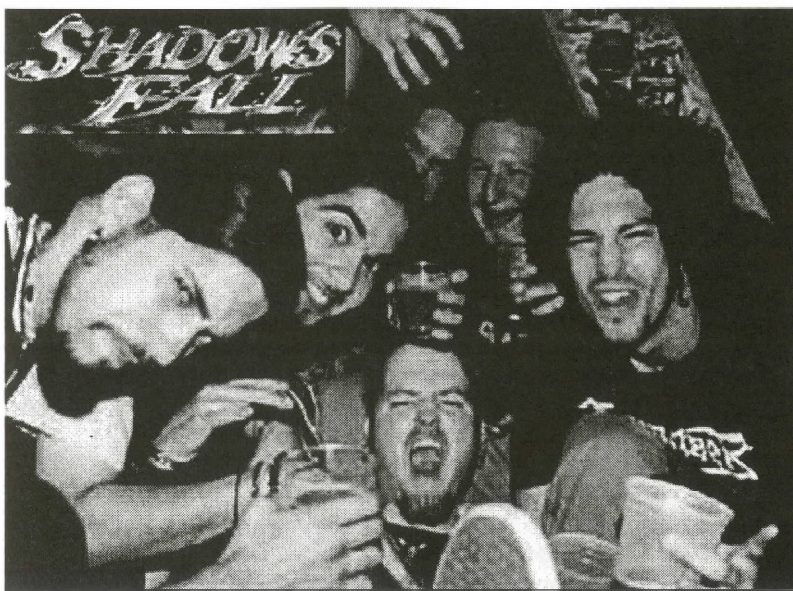
Hess: Language is Technology is reference to taking too many mushrooms. Although I found out yesterday that Speak N Spell in England has an American accent but spells things like "Colour" in the English way. Pretty fucked up, if you ask me.

Newman: Mushrooms, then yes, this is exactly what "language is technology" is a reference to.

Diamond: Anyone else want to answer this?

**The Feud recently released *Language is Technology* on Insidious Plot Audio (<http://www.insidiousplot.com>)**





Above: the band celebrates their first interview in READ

**The new album is covers a lot of bases – there's something here for everyone into any facet of metal or hardcore. Were you going for a more inclusive approach, or is it a result of your own diverse musical interests? (Do you get this question enough to be sick of it?)**

[Brian Fair] I think it is definitely a result of the various styles of music that we have all listened to growing up. It is impossible to avoid personal influences on your music shining through. All of us listen to so many different types of music that we just end up covering a lot of ground within our sound. We also never limit ourselves based on style. If a part of a song works than that is all that matters. We never question if it is to this or to that. If only matters if it works and fits the song. We definitely get this question often but we were hoping for that reaction so I guess it worked.

**This album took a bit over two years to come together – were there any difficulties or obstacles during the songwriting process? Is it true you guys were drunk out of your minds in the studio?**

The thing that slowed us down the most was the fact that we toured in support of "Of One Blood" for nearly two years straight. We were writing music the whole time but we were never able to rehearse and work on it while we were on the road. After Dave left the band that slowed things down further. I was actually playing drums for a good portion of the songwriting for "The Art Of Balance". Once Jason joined the band things picked up quickly and we got in the studio and nailed it all down. Zeus, the producer, was cool about letting us take time to get everything right. The scene in the studio was very laid back but productive. We did drink excessively during most of the recording. My routine with Zeus for vocals was to wake up around eleven, pound a Red Bull, go to the liquor store to pick up a thirty-pack of Busch, crack the first brew at noon and start tracking vocals. By the third or fourth hour we were good and loaded but getting great tracks. I think we could have paid for half of the recording with the redemption from returning empty cans.

**Shadows Fall and Hot Topic sounds like a match made in hell, but apparently you guys are selling a line of clothes or something?**

Hahahaha. No, there isn't a Shadows Fall clothing line, they are just selling our shirts and CDs. We did a photo shoot for their website but that was about it. It was us wearing what we always do, Down and Slayer shirts and Dickies. They have been a huge supporter of a lot of underground bands and it is one of the only places that younger kids that have no local metal music store can pick up this type of music.

**Speaking of fashion, I noticed on your web site one of the band members wearing a Yankees jersey. Aren't you from Massachusetts? Isn't that sacrilege?**

That is a touchy subject!! Jason, our drummer and the Yankees fan, lives in Albany. Paul and I are huge Red Sox fans, I used to live a block from Fenway Park, and we have battled with Jason about this constantly. It has caused many a drunken argument.

**What do you think about today's metal scene? About nu-metal?**

The metal scene in the states is great right now. You have lots of US bands making amazing music. Bands like Lamb Of God, Killswitch Engage, Darkest Hour, Unearth etc. have really been expanding the definitions of metal and influencing new generations of bands. Even the European bands have been able to tour here more often because kids are really supporting metal shows. As far as nu-metal, I think that a lot of the original bands associated with it helped to break down some doors and make heavier music more acceptable in the commercial music world. I am not much of a fan of the music itself but I think that it has definitely benefited bands in the underground. Especially when some of the bigger bands bring out smaller metal bands on tour.

**What do you think of the new Rush album?**

It is a pretty good album. I was stoked that Neil decided to open the album with some ragin drum work. I haven't had a chance to really pick it apart and get to know it yet. Our drummer Jason is the Rush fanatic. He could have fielded this one better.

**Would you have sex with Courtney Love if she paid you?**

How much \$\$ are we talking about?

**Your thoughts on world events?**

I have been fairly uninformed about most world events. I used to obsess over the news and try to remain politically informed until I realized that I was spending too much time sifting through mis-information and bullshit. I have decided to focus my energy on improving myself and remaining focused on the moment and how I am affecting the world personally.

**What's in the future for Shadows Fall? You guys should totally put out either a straight-up punk album or cover Rush's "Hemispheres". Your thoughts?**

The immediate future is to tour like crazy to support the new album. We are heading back to Japan with Killswitch Engage at the end of February then hopefully to Europe after that. As far as a straight up punk album or a cover of "Hemispheres"... anything is possible. But I think if we cover an entire album it would have to be either Iron Maiden "Killers" (Paul Dianno rules!!!) or Boston's self titled debut. That Boston record was the original blue print for melodic death metal.

**Check out the tremendously good "Art of Balance" on Century Media. Visit the band at shadowsfall.com.**





**Lo-Hi** is a killer garage punk band from NYC that features the sexy and multi-talented Hollis Queens from Boss Hog. Their latest album "Say It More" is on Tiger Style Records, and it rocks my ass raw. We spoke with Hollis and she told us a hot lesbian story!

**Your name isn't really Hollis Queens, is it? Does that confuse the post office?**

No, actually, I get mail for Hollis Queens and Hollis Yungbliut, my real last name.

**How do you feel that Scandinavian-style garage punk is the big marketable sound right now? You guys are obviously not bandwagon jumpers, but do you ever feel you have to defend your authenticity?**

I did at first when we had a few reviews implying that we copied the White Stripes, the Strokes, and the Hives, and saying that we wished we were as good as them. I do wish we were as good as these bands, but they did not influence us as far as sound or songwriting. There is nothing ground breaking as far as I can see, they just do it really well.

**Do you enjoy life on the road? Do you get lots of groupies? Can you tell us any bawdy groupie stories?**

I've got one that I've told before, but it's funny. Baltimore 1995, some older woman decides she's going to go out and get her rocks off. Drunk and straddling my monitor while we are playing, she sticks her hand down the back of my top and undoes my bra (with one hand mind you). Her hand then heads down the back of my pants under my underwear to my butt. I'm bewildered, but the best part is no one else in the band even knows it's going on. The audience is looking at me in wonderment,

too. Eventually she stops and after the show tells us she has a limo waiting to take us to her house, with a promise of drugs...

**Whoa... that's hot. When are you going back on the road?**

We will be on the road for a week in November, opening for the Anniversary in Texas and then playing our way back to NYC.

**What's your favorite Jewish holiday?**

Tu B! Shevat.

**Oh my god, the Jewish Arbor Day! That's my favorite one too! If you could only play drums or guitar for the rest of your life, which would you pick?**

Guitar, and just bang on my body for the drum sound.

**What about rice or pasta?**

Potatoes.

**I notice that your voice sounds eerily like Geddy Lee's during one of your songs. (I don't remember the song name, but it sounds like something off of "Fly By Night"). How else will you be incorporating their sound into your music?**

I think we will take a hint from their record cover art.

**Let's lay the cards on the table.**

**Boss Hog = Suck.**

**Jon Spencer Blues Explosion = Triple Suck.**

**Lo-Hi = Good stuff.**

**Why don't you ditch those suckas for good and stay solo?**

How can you not like a band [Boss Hog] that covered the Dark Brothers theme song for the porno, Black Throat? JSBX suck? The pendulum will swing and everyone will say I knew them when. Check out Crypt Style, only available on vinyl, it might just be juvenile enough. Stay solo? I'm not making music with them anymore so it's a mute point, but I'm not solo, Lo-Hi is a band with Tadayuki Hirano (now replacing Martin Owens), Jens Jurgensen, and Justin Holub.

**Thanks Hollis!**





**Jesus, are you guys okay? What happened with the van accident?? Give me the deets.**

Yeah, we're alright. It was totally fucked. I was asleep on the first back bench and I woke up and Brad was yelling SHIT! Next thing I knew, I saw the back of the semi coming at us and all we could do was sit and wait for the impact. It was like a fucking roller coaster or something except there was blood everywhere. Apparently there was another wreck ahead because it storming like crazy, and the semi in front of us made an extremely abrupt stop. So we hydroplaned and hit it. Imagine hitting a brick wall going 55 mph. I broke my collar bone, our tour manager had a few teeth knocked out and he had a fractured and dislocated hip. He had to have surgery and stay in the hospital three days longer than the rest of us. And Brad (bassist) fucked up his ankle and his arm but nothing was broken.

**Damn! Has the accident impaired you guys in any way? If I were in your shoes, I wouldn't be able to tour again for like a year.**

Well, we're still pretty freaked out by the whole thing. Because everyone at the scene told us that we should have died. Chris from Elliott and my friend Sam came down to help us get all of our shit out of the van and trailer and to give us a ride home. It was really freaking us out to be in a van again so soon. To top it all off, it started raining the way home and at one point there was a semi in front of us. Or at least it appeared to be a semi; I was pretty drugged up. But we're more than ready to hit the road again. We leave for tour with Glassjaw and Boy Sets Fire in ten days.

**So your music's been called hard to digest, complicated, and chaotic.**

**Why does it have to be so complex? What's wrong with simple 3-chord melodies?**

We really just do what flows. We write songs and we kind of just let it flow. We don't follow any sort of formula. Some people say it's really abstract and some people say it's really catchy. We just let our songs write themselves.

**Hey, don't get me wrong, I love complex. I'm a Rush fan. Anyway, do you think your name leads people to believe you're a Christian rock band? Or is that the idea? Y'know, like win them over and then take them down from the inside?**

We hate our name. We're totally stuck with a shitty band name. There isn't much that we can do about it at this point. The best we can do is try to have nice artwork on CD layouts and t-shirts and have good record titles to distract all of you people.

**What's the worst job you've ever had?**

I worked at a place installing signs. It was horrible. They treated me like shit because I was the youngest employee and I'm black. I was being oppressed by the man.

**Well, glad to hear you're not dead. Any advice for people who get into van accidents?**

Yeah, don't get into van accidents.

Christiansen's Forensics Brothers and Sisters! is available on Revelation Records ([www.revhq.com](http://www.revhq.com)). You can visit the band at [christiansenonline.com](http://christiansenonline.com)

## POULAIN

**I take it you've seen the movie Amelie. What would you sacrifice for a date with Audrey Tautou? (fingers, toes, family members, a goat, etc?)**

Hmm. Well, I'm not sure. We should go on a date though. Tell her I say, "what's up?!"

**Like the movie Amelie, your music is so damn cute and charming, it makes me want to explode in rainbows and warm fuzzies and kill people. Can I take you home and feed and clothe you?**

I'm a bit under-the-weather right now. So, if you can promise me some chicken soup as well-I'm in. Poulain is like an uber-adorable equivalent of the Vaselines taking a Sunday stroll with Magnetic Fields at Galaxie 500 speed. How did you get so cute? Do you take snuggly wuggly bunny injections? Baby panda pills? Are you really snuffly wuffly puppy-pups?

Every Magnetic Fields comparison makes me feel like exploding in rainbows. I'm serious. I'm a big fan. But anyway, back to the panda pills. Yes, yes. Every day.

**A band as cute as you guys must have definitely done some seriously evil shit in the past. Since I know very little about your history, fill me in. Were you once Satanic, pedophilic cannibals? What's the worst thing you've ever done?**

When I was around the age of ten, I broke my cousin's two front teeth with a metal baseball bat.

**Can I be in your band?**

Depends. What movies do you like?

**Can I be your roadie?**

Depends. Sometimes I need to cuddle.

**Can I stalk you?**

I actually have a stalker at the moment. But she's been sort of inactive for the past month. If this continues, I'll let you know and you can assume her position, but as for right now I'm going to have to give you a definite maybe.

**Tell me you love me. TELL ME!!!**

You had me at "rainbows and warm fuzzies." I love you.

**I hate the way you toy with my emotions. When will you stop haunting my nightmares?!**

When you admit I'm really in your dreams of pleasure.

I've only heard four Poulain songs, but they're my new favorite band. Check out their EP *With Fingers Crossed* on Soft Serve. Visit the band at [poulainmusic.com](http://poulainmusic.com).



# \$WINGIN' UTTERS\$

**So what's been shaking? What are your plans for the day?**

I'm off today, with my wife and my 18 month old. . . I'm gonna go to cinder block and work on the designs for our new t-shirts, then I'm gonna pick up my 4 year old from daycare, then I'm going bowling with Johnny and his wife and kid. I lead a very exciting life.

**You guys always struck me as political and worldly and junk. What do you think about the coming war?**

I think it's fucked up, because it's not about Iraq posing a threat to world security, it's about the U.S. becoming even bigger and badder and controlling/protecting our interests. . . It's about money and oil, it's not about saving the world. I hate Bush, I hated his father, I hate the Republican agenda, and I just hate politicians in general. They're just not to be trusted, ever. Our country is run by a dim frat-boy, who became president because of influence. He bought his way in, and it's disgusting. Ugh.

**Not many people know this, Darius, but you play like every instrument known to man. Could you give us some details on your musical background and training?**

I started playing violin when I was 5, and piano when I was 7 or so. I played pretty seriously until I was 17, when I gave it up altogether. I'd played in several orchestras and symphonies and chamber groups, etc. and just got sick of playing classical music, sick of playing other peoples music. . . and classical music is all about being a virtuoso, practicing hours a day, etc. and violin is a particularly hard and at some times painful instrument to master. . . so if I wasn't into it heart and soul, really passionate about it, I figured I was wasting my time. I had no desire to become a concert violinist or anything. I wanted to play rock and roll and write songs.

**Would you rather spend a year in prison or six months in the army?**

It depends. If I really believed in it, I suppose I'd go to war, but I don't see myself ever believing in a war strongly enough to go out and kill people. I'd probably go to prison first. I'm not fighting for any fucking politician's evil scheming.

**Would you have sex with Courtney Love if she paid you?**

How much? It'd really have to be a lot.



If these guys started playing skiffle, they'd be the Swingin' Emmett Uppers.

**I read somewhere that the Filthy Thieving Bastards are aptly named because they stole the Pogues' sound. I think that's unfair and I say we break that guy's legs. Your thoughts?**

We sort of steal a lot of sounds, but I think that's just what you do in rock and roll, punk rock or whatever. I mean, when you get down to it, everyone's ripping off Chuck Berry whether they know it or not. . . Yeah, break the guy's legs anyhow. . .

**Why do you suppose prog-rock is missing from today's punk scene?**

I don't know. Most of the music that's really huge right now sucks pretty hard, so prog-rock would kinda fit in, because it sucks pretty hard, too. Where's Emerson, Lake and Palmer when you need 'em?

**Describe what a reality show based on your band(s) would be like.**

Maybe that would show the kids out there that go to see their favorite bands that we actually do go through a lot of boring shit, like driving, etc. and endless downtime when we're on the road, and that it's not all tour buses and groupies and drugs and parties and cash. It's more like 6 guys in a van pulling a u-haul trailer listening to the same cds and mix tapes for a month and getting lost in a St. Louis ghetto a half-hour before doors.

**I've got some Swingin' Uppers pick-up lines:**

"Girl, you are Utterly beautiful!"

"Those are some mighty low-swingin' utters!"

"Wanna see my new 7"?"

"I know someone from the Foo Fighters."

**Have any of those worked for you? What are your fave lines?**

I'm the wrong guy to ask. . . I've never even been single since we've been touring. . . I'm a very domesticated gentleman, thank you.

**Anything you'd like to plug?**

Our new record comes out February 25. . . and our website is at [swinginutters.com](http://swinginutters.com). . . and we'll be on the road in March and April, so you can check the [fatwreck.com](http://fatwreck.com) or ours and check out the dates.

*Originally published on [skapunkandotherjunk.com](http://skapunkandotherjunk.com)*





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**Exit Stage Right: String Quartet Trib. to Rush**

The question mark is because there's no band or group name. I guess the selling point here is Rush, or maybe they were just embarrassed. Unlike the symphonic take on Yes, which built upon the already-great music into a new ethereal plane with layers upon layers of texture, this quartet turns Exit Stage Left into flat, boring muzak. It truly sounds like someone took the album and just fed it into a machine—every note and arrangement is identical to the original, only played by strings (and it's not really a quartet—there are seven musicians collaborating, and a dozen instruments being played at any given time). In fairness, some of it sounds pretty cool, especially on *The Trees* and *Xanadu*, where strings seem like they belong anyway. Only a couple of songs really miss, including *YYZ* which sounds like a Hungarian folk dance, but the rest of the album offers the same emotional intensity and listener reaction of muzak. That is, you stop noticing the music within five minutes and you forget it's on until it suddenly ends and you're blessed with silence.

*Vitamin*, POB 39439, Los Angeles, CA 90039

**1905****Voice**

What the hell is going on? I don't understand this. And I hate what I don't understand. Be gone with you! THWAK!

*Exotic Fever*, POB 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297

**5 Cent Deposit****We Have Your Daughter!**

Half the songs on this CD are catchy-as-hell snotty pop-punk; the other half is weaker and forgettable. Overall, the album is a keeper, mostly on the strength of rousing tunes "Bird On A Wire" and "Dropout".

*Radical*, 77 Bleecker St. #C2-21, NYC, 10012

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****A18****Foreverafternothing**

Dynamic, groove-ridden, revved up hardcore that has that 80s feel—you know, it's hardcore you can really get into. Truly excellent, and one of my fave hardcore releases of the year (even though the year is only 3 weeks old). Cover art has a gross Life of Agony motif.

*Victory*, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

**Abilene****Two Guns, Twin Arrows**

Tension-and-release post punk made interesting with Miles Davis-ish trumpet playing. Imagine if Fugazi released *In A Silent Way*. 54 40or Fight!, POB 1601, Acme, MI 49610

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****The All-American Rejects****The All-American Rejects**

Wow, very impressive. This remarkably young duo (ages 20 and 18) have put together some extremely intelligent pop songs. Some of their stuff is mall-punky, some of it is happy indie, and some has that emo tinge, but it's all exceptionally well written and executed.

*Doghouse*, POB 8946, Toledo, OH 43623

**Allister****Last Stop Suburbia**

Another sweet-natured, cheeseball pop-punk album that will definitely appeal to suburban, young punks. I play it for my neutered pets.

*Drive-Thru*, POB 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

**AMFM****The Sky Is The New Ground EP**

I normally really dig AMFM, but this 4-song EP is "eh." The second and fourth songs are good, but nothing is of the caliber I expect from these masters of mellow pop. I hold this band in high regard and they better live up to it next time!! YOU HEAR ME, YOU MELLOW POP MASTERS?!! Fools, I will kill us all.

*Polyvinyl*, POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140

**An Automotive****An Automotive**

A decent art-school indie band that incorporates synths and assorted bleeps and bleeps. I'm not crazy about the vocals (strained emo variety), the guitars are a little sloppy, and the songs are on the longish side, but overall not a bad debut.

*Six Gun Lover*, 3203 Overcup Oak, Austin, TX 78704

**Anchor / Breakdance Vietnam****Achor Vs. Breakdance Vietnam**

Breakdance Vietnam is one of the coolest band names I've ever heard in my life, next to Operation: Cliff Clavin and Jethro Tull.

But why do they have to be all wussy? Emo vocals, wussy lyrics, what's going on here? Your name is Breakdance Vietnam; start acting like it. Anchor is a more solid melodic-indie band. Average name but at least they know what they're doing.

*Triple Crown*, 331 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, PMB 472, NY, NY 10019

**Apples In Stereo****Velocity Of Sound**

Another great pop record from Apples. Awash in 60s good vibes, Husker Du-ish distortion, and sunny harmonies, this is a sonic blast of Beach Boys in a blender.

**Fave tunes:** Where We Meet, Better Days, She's Telling Lies  
*SpinART*, POB 1798, New York, NY 10156-1798

**The Arrivals****Exsenator Orange**

Sophomore release from these Chicago rockers. They have a pleasant, loud and fast sound, which seems at odds with the somber lyrics and vocal delivery, but works out well.

*Thick*, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****Atom & His Package****Attention! Blah Blah Blah**

I really love the direction Atom is going in. His stuff is now way more accessible, less noisy and chaotic, and fun instead of stupid. Maybe it's not hardcore or retro-ironic enough for the old fans, but I prefer it this way. Go Atom!

**Fave tracks:** the one about his grandma, the one that sounds like "Cecilia", and the Destroy with a Hammer song.

*Hopeless*, [www.hopelessrecords.com](http://www.hopelessrecords.com)

**Avail****Front Porch Stories**

I have like Avail amnesia. I always think they're heavy hardcore—it's this misconception I can never shake. And then I listen to them and I'm shocked at how they're the second coming of Husker Du. This happens every time they put a new album out. Luckily, their new one is so catchy, it'll definitely burn itself into my memory. This is a very strong album from a great band. Definitely worth picking up.

*Fat Wreck*, POB 193690, San Fran, CA 94119

**Backslap****Find Yourself**

Melodic hardcore from Brooklyn. Mostly old school with some cheesy breakdown parts. Call them Biohazard Lite.

*Camorra*, 3108 Central Ave SE, Alb, NM 87106

**Bad Astronaut****Houston: We Have A Drinking Problem**

Bad Astronaut have fleshed out their sound, moving away from the pop-punk-lite to a Spiritualized space rock sound. Some parts are still punky, if bogged down by synths and strings. Pretty cool.

*Honest Don's*, POB 192027, San Fran, CA 94119

**Editor's Picks at a glance**

**A18** Foreverafternothing (Victory)

**The All-American Rejects** S/T (Doghouse)

**Atom & His Package** Attention! Blah Blah Blah (Hopeless)

**Crimson Sweet** Livin' In Strut (On/On Switch)

**The Forgotten** Control Me (BYO)

**Lo-Hi** Say It More (Tiger Style)

**Matt Pond PA** The Nature of Maps (Polyvinyl)

**Patrick Park** Under the Unminding Skies (Badman)

**Poulain** With Fingers Crossed EP (Soft Serve)

**Rainer Maria** Long Knives Drawn (Polyvinyl)

**The Raveonettes** Whip It On (Crunchy Frog)

**River City Rebels** No Good, No Time, No Pride (Victory)

**Savage Republic** Compete Studio Set (Mobilization)

**Snapcase** End Transmission (Victory)

**Travoltas** Endless Summer (Fastmusic)

**Young Heart Attack** S/T EP (XL/Beggars)



## Barse

### They Said It Couldn't Happen Here... And It Didn't!

If you like authentic-sounding 70s-style British punk, you will love Barse. Pinning down that perfect Exploited, UK Subs, early Buzzcocks sound, Barse play fun, snotty, un-PC punk that you can sing or drink along to. They've even got the fuck-the-establishment attitude that's missing from today's punk. Highly recommended. *Hell Tone*, [www.lprhardcore.net/htr](http://www.lprhardcore.net/htr)

## Beatsteaks

### Living Target

It's good hearing punk bands try new things, but the Beatsteaks are all over the place. Some songs are hardcore, some are pop punk, some are alterna-metal... There's humor, emo intensity, metal punk insanity and irony. They're good but disjointed. *Epitaph*, 2798 Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026

## The Beautiful Mistake

### Light A Match. For I Deserve To Burn

Well, they got the mistake part right. This is melodic-indie-emocore-whatever, that would've sounded fine with their wall-of-sound guitars and wistful vocals. But who can leave good enough alone in an age where every indie band sounds the same? So Mistake makes one by adding random metalcore/nu-metal screeching and hardcore breakdowns. Plus the songs are too long and the guttural burps that pepper this album are a turn-off. But the second and third tracks are very good, and the band has a knack for aggressive melody. *The Militia Group*, 7923 Warner Ave, Suite #K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

## Behind The Sun

### Broken Hearts And Shattered Bones

Great metalcore from NJ with strong musicianship and surprisingly melodic breakdowns. Good metalcore from Jersey! *Too Damn Hype*, POB 63524, Philly, PA 19147

## Bellini

### Snowing Sun

Featuring the drummer of Don Caballero (who shows remarkable constraint here), and two members of Italian indie rock band Uzeda, Bellini is a fairly decent free-form, rhythm-heavy, dissonant indie band. Surprisingly, the female vox are the weakest part of the band. More surprisingly, Steve Albini produced, and didn't drown the band out in his trademark over-the-top distortion. *Monitor*, POB 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203

## Big D and Kid's Table

### The Gipsy Hill EP

I have to say, the new Big D is pretty fun. This is good, caffeinated skapunk that the kids are eating up. Though I historically don't like Big D, props to them for sticking to the sound and not going the emo route, and mega-props to them for covering The Rudiments' "Wailing Paddle." *Fork In Hand*, POB 230023, Boston, MA 02123

## Billy Clyro

### Blackened Sky

Soft indie rock from Scotland that has its nu-metal moments. *Beggars*, 580 Bdwy #1004, NY, NY 10012

## The Black Sea

### The Black Sea EP

Three songs, five (very long) minutes each, of sloppy drums, boring guitars, and vocals that are annoyingly put through an echo effect. Brooding and deep. *Lovitt*, POB 248, Arlington, VA 22210

## Black Widows

### Stops A Beating Heart

A hardcore supergroup of sorts, this Louisville band features members of The National Acrobat, Automatic, Endpoint, and By The Grace Of God. They have a whirling, chaotic post-hardcore sound, very similar to Snapcase. Great-sounding guitars and vocals, an exceptionally strong release. *Initial*, POB 17131, Louisville, KY 40217

## The Blam

### The Blam

Decent pop-rock from Brooklyn. It lacks some bite, but it also lacks that annoying Brooklynite cooler-than-you garage-rock swagger, so they're okay in my book. *Mootron*, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd #370, Los Angeles, CA 90039

## Blood Red

### Hostage

From the ashes of LIHC legends Silent Majority and Inside arises Blood Red, whose Victory-ish name is a lot scarier than their music. Silent Majority's Thomas Corrigan delivers an emo/melodic-core sound to fit this slower-tempo, mellow incarnation. However, he still sound raw, and his energy often takes his voice far off key. An ambitious, but grating, album. *Initial*, POB 17131, Louisville, KY 40217

## Bombshell Rocks

### From Here And On

Those adorable Swede punks are back with a slightly more eclectic offering. The fast-paced street punk tunes are great, but when they slow things down, as on Crossroads, On My Way, and Cheated Again, they sound really corny. Otherwise, a great release from this thoughtful n' fun group. *Epitaph*, 2798 Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026

## Bon Voyage

### The Right Amount

Husband and wife team dish out sickly-sweet indie-pop fluffy fluff. Nauseating. *Tooth & Nail*, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

## Bongzilla

### Gateway

A funny mid-tempo, sludgy metal band that writes songs in homage of the Devil Weed. They're like a modern-day Black Sabbath fronted by Woody Harrelson. *Relapse*, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082



## THE ARRIVALS

**I like your band. Do you like me?**

DAVE (GUITAR): I WILL NOT CIRCLE YES OR NO. WE'LL LEAVE THIS REAL AMBIGUOUS LIKE. THEN YOU'LL WANT US MORE.

**Will you dedicate your next album to me?**

THE ALBUM'S ALREADY DONE, SO NO. THE DEDICATION WAS TAKEN CARE OF. NO, ADAM.

**I wrote some lyrics - could you use them for one of your songs? The lyrics are:**

Adam's cool, Adam's hot  
Adam is the one we like a lot  
Adam, Adam, what a hunk  
Adam, Adam, he's so punk!  
We love Adam, he's the ultimate best  
If he was my brother, we'd have incest.  
Adam! Adam! Adam! Adam! x4  
ONLY IF IT'S ADAM! ADAM! ADAM!  
ADAM! X8

**In exactly 10 words, describe yourself. And without any word count limit, describe me.**  
ME: THE KIND OF GUY YOU'D LIKE TO HAVE SEX WITH.

YOU: ALTHOUGH HE'S A VISIONARY IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC JOURNALISM, ADAM IS AN IDIOT SAVANT. THAT MUSIC JOURNALISM THING IS ALL HE'S GOT. HE DOESN'T EVEN DRESS HIMSELF. HE HAS A LASSO OVER HIS SHOULDER GOING DOWN AROUND HIS PENIS THAT ONE OF HIS MANY ASSISTANTS TUG ON FROM BEHIND TO SHAKE HIM OFF AFTER HE PISSES.

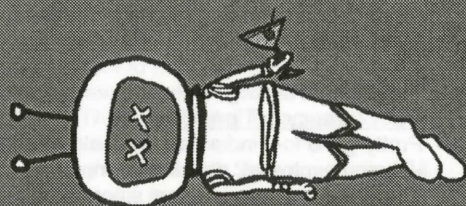
**When you're done with your tour, do you guys want to come over and hang out? I have video games and Tostitos. We can watch old episodes of Get A Life and listen to Rush.**  
FIRST, NO TOSTITOS WITHOUT SHITLOADS OF CHEESY AND SPICY TOPPINGS, BUT BESIDES THAT, YEAH. DO WE HAVE TO BRING THE WEED? BECAUSE THAT SOUNDS LIKE A STONER PARTY TO ME. IF WE DO, THEN NO. WE'RE ALWAYS BROKE.

**The Arrivals' smokin' new album Exsenator Orange is on Thick Records (thickrecords.com). Visit the band at [www.thearrivalsrock.com](http://www.thearrivalsrock.com).**

Image: Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas. Too lazy to find pic of the Arrivals.



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### **Bosco + Jorge**

#### Ally In The Sky

Bosco and Jorge is mostly Bill Lowman and Brad Gallagher, two finger-pickin', banjo-pluckin', bass-uprightin', steel-guitar stringin' nutters. The album is pretty much them playing dual guitar parts on top and against each other. Finger pickin' good!

*SixGunLover, 3203 Overcup Oak, Austin, TX 78704*

### **Botch**

#### An Anthology Of Dead Ends EP

Progressive metalcore with interesting melodies and breakdowns. Too abrasive for my sensitive ears, but big brawny men will like it.

*Hydra Head, POB 990248, Boston, MA 02199*

### **Bottomline**

#### In And Out Of Luck

Fun pop-punk, marred slightly with nasal vocals. For fans of NOFX, Vandals.

*Nice Guy, www.niceguyrecords.com*

### **Brazil**

#### Dasein EP

Props to Fearless for signing this unique-sounding band, who apparently are more influenced by Brazil the movie than Brazil the country. A lot of sci-fi techno imagery set to a multi-textured churning indie/punk sound.

*Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683*

### **Breaker Breaker**

#### Out Of Service EP

Standard new-school hardcore. Fast drums, lyrics you can't make out, monotonous guitar, same old same old.

*Martyr, POB 955, Harriman, NY 10926-0955*

### **Campfire Girls**

#### Delongpre

Awful.

*Mootron, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd #370, Los Angeles, CA 90039*

### **Capital City**

#### Am I Invisible

I have yet to find a really good band whose name is a Simpsons reference. Milhouse, Dr. Colossus, Forbidden Donut, Insane Krusty Klown Posse... there's even a band called Max Power. Capital City continues this tradition with ballady indie with pop hooks and slight 60s psychedelica and a little country twang. With the exception of the retro "The Weak Are Getting Strong" and the cute ditty "Council Emissary", the album is boring. Not the Worst. Album. Ever. But not too strong either.

*Near By Music, POB 441448, Somerville, MA 02144*

### **Cephalic Carnage**

#### Lucid Interval

For a death metal band, CC is somewhat unique. While they do have songs with the favorite death metal topics (necrophilia, sodomy, cannibalism, suicide, Satan, torture, etc.) and a fixation on all thing sperm and fecal, they also have some intelligent songs on politics and terrorism, and a GREAT speed/

thrash song called "Redundant" that tears apart the cycle of zines (how they start out as a labor of love, and how slowly, as they become bigger and more professional, the editors begin losing their enthusiasm as the zine [or now MAGazine] takes on the characteristics of any other job, and the whole point of doing a zine – saying what you want – gives way to the politics of keeping it alive by keeping subscribers and advertisers happy.). I also like the song "Black Metal Sabbath" for its lyrics "Beelzebub suck my balls, Beelzebub will suck my balls!"

*Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082*

### **Charlene**

#### Charlene

Above-average space rock in the vein of Spiritualized and Elf Power. They aren't one of those lazy ambient rock bands that rely on repetition and minimalism to avoid writing good songs; Charlene have a well-crafted sound and the talent to back it up.

*Shark Attack! Music, POB 600-466, Newtonville, MA 02460-9998*

### **The Color Turning**

#### Our Currency Is Time EP

Pretty good lo-fi indie band with slow build-ups and explosive, passionate melodies. The vocals contain a sweet sincerity, without which would make this music seem cheesed-out.

*Random Play, randomplaymusic.com*

### **Common Rider**

#### This Is Unity Music

Common Rider has tapped into a really cool sound... Not much of it sounds like Op Ivy (except for fan favorite "Small Pebble"). Instead, it's got a bouncy new wave rock sound ("Set the Method Down" has a Knack melody; "Cool This Madness Down" and "Time Won't Take Away" steals Kinks riffs) with upbeat two-tone guitars and basslines. They actually sound like a conglomerate of post-ska Madness and post-punk Clash, which is to say, very new wave-ish, fun, and smart pop, but a few shades away from being called ska or punk. The lyrics manage to be socially conscious without being preachy, and Jesse Michaels has never sounded better.

*Hopeless, POB 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409*

### **Coronet Blue**

#### Coronet Blue

Power pop rock with Southern, twangy vocals, though I think the band is from Australia. Good for what it is.

*Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

### **The Cost**

#### Chimera

Christ, now Lookout is putting out emo? Is this some industry-wide conspiracy to irritate me with staged melancholy, listless guitars, and self-pitying lyrics? If Lookout succumbed, who is left to stand against the emo onslaught?

*Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703*

### **Craw**

#### Bodies For Strontium 90

Intelligent metalcore with killer riffing and cool twists. This is the type of metalcore that works perfectly either with a vocalist or purely instrumental. Good and groovy.

*Hydra Head, POB 990248, Boston, MA 02199*

### **Creepier Lagoon**

#### Remember The Future EP

Simon & Garfunkel melodies and psychedelic distortion. Not for the narcoleptic.

*Arena Rock Company, 242 Wythe Avenue, Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211*

## **((( EDITOR'S PICK )))**

### **Crimson Sweet**

#### Living In Strut

Whoa... this rocks. Super catchy NYC glam-punk with great female vocals. It's got that perfect '77 guitar sound and explosive energy, and yet also a dark, brooding side. Definitely a necessity for anyone into old school NYC punk. I will own this band. I WILL EAT THEIR SOULS!!!

**Best tunes:** Hello New York, Airport Novel, White Heart, I Want To Live  
*On/On Switch, 780 Post Street #54, San Francisco, CA 94109*

### **The Damnwells**

#### PMR +1

Oy. I always thought The Damnwells were a punk band, but I guess I'm wrong. I hate when that happens. I mean, their name is The Damnwells. They oughtta be playing punk. What we get instead is some lazy-tempo power-pop bar rock with 60s pop harmonies. It's not horrible beyond being cheesy, but I was expecting high-octane whiskey-soaked swagger and this is like fizzy Alka-Seltzer.

*In Music We Trust, 15213 SE Bevington Ave, Portland, OR 97267-3355*

### **Dan Melchior's Broke Revue**

#### Bitterness, Spite, Rage & Scorn

Raw and dirty-ass blues-style garage punk that sounds ripped from the 70s. Fans of the Buzzcocks and the Stooges take note.

*In The Red, 1118 W. Magnolia Blvd., PO Box 208, Burbank, CA 91506*

### **The DaoSon For**

#### The DaoSon For

Jazzy post-rock that's excellent in all areas, except for keeping up one's interest. The instrumentals are actually more interesting than the vocal tracks, but overall, it's very good as background music.

*Country Club, 34-31 75th Street, New York, NY 11372*

### **Daycare Swindlers**

#### Heathen Radio

This is definitely the best album yet from these speedy, snotty pop-punkers. While they punk it out at hardcore slamdance speeds, they're able to maintain both a catchy poppiness and a surprisingly sharp musical proficiency. 12 consistently fast and fun tracks on an album that sadly ends all too soon.

*Go-Kart, POB 20, Prince St Stat., NYC 10012*



**Dead To Fall**Everything I Touch Falls To Pieces

Energetic Scandinavian-style metalcore with great guitar shredding. I know it's supposed to be all serious and evil, but I think it's cute. I dance around to it in my pajama jammy-jams. *Victory, 346 N. Justine St. #504, Chicago, IL 60607*

**Desaparecidos**Read Music / Speak Spanish

Above-average rock band featuring the singer of Bright Eyes. They have some interesting dissonant breakdowns and textured melodies, and the lyrics are well-written commentaries on American culture. I also find them more accessible than Bright Eyes.

*Saddle Creek, POB 8554, Omaha, NE 68108*

**Digger**Keystone

Although I don't like Digger's music, I do feel bad for them. They had the bad luck of spearheading the wussy emo mall-punk sound years before it ever hit TRL, and now newbies like New Found Glory are getting the accolades deserved by Digger. I guess if you're into this lame-o stuff, Digger and Weston should be the first bands to check out, not the crap on MTV2. But if you are into this lame-o stuff, God have mercy on your pathetic soul. *Hopeless, POB 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409*

**Dirty Power**Dirty Power

Rock/metal a la Motorhead or Fight with a slow and dark Sabbath guitar sound, fronted by former Pansy Division guitarist Patrick Goodwin. The band rocks really hard, especially on stand out tracks "Hey Superman", "Drag You Down", and "Gone."

*Dead Teenage, www.deadteenager.net*

**Drexel**The Inevitable Is Available

It sounds like they're not sure if they should be playing hardcore, pop-punk, or emo. Not that it matters, because they're not exceptionally good at any of those styles. It seems that in the attempt at sounding unique, instead of writing good songs they go for the eclectic approach.

*Fork In Hand, POB 230023, Boston, MA 02123*

**Drive Like Jehu**Yank Crime

A reissue of DLJ's second album with a few bonus tracks. DLJ is essential for fans of abrasive, jagged screamo. This stuff is way too challenging for me and it's impossible for me to enjoy, but if you're going to listen to it, you might as well get the best.

*Swami, POB 620428, San Diego, CA 92162*

**Dropkick Murphys**Live On St. Patrick's Day From Boston, MA

Well, what's more to say? It's pure drunken mayhem. 26 tracks, 75 minutes, lots of people singing along, faves, standards, covers, blah blah blah. Just get it.

*Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

**George Duke**Face The Music

Duke, a modern jazz great who's played with Gillespie, Davis, Jarreau, and, of course, Zappa, is back (though he hasn't really gone anywhere) with a great jazz-funk album, on his new label Big Piano Music. Duke does a great job mixing jazz and r&b without turning it into crappy smooth jazz, and I also like that he hasn't fallen in the trap of other former Zappa jazz musicians (Vinnie Colaiuta, Jean Luc-Ponty, etc.) of trying to have weird and quirky songs just to remind people of the Zappa connection. *Big Piano Music, www.georgeduke.com*

**The Early December**For All Of This

Hey, wow, this is great emo, no kidding! Crisp, powerful, moving, tight, rockin'... If emo bands sounded like this, maybe the genre would finally get some respect from me. But then whom would I pick on? Therefore, I hate this band for confusing my feelings toward emo. Viva my intolerance! However, if you're into emo, you would be a blithering idiot to not pick up this album. The band, however, loses points for also having (on Drive-Thru's web site) an acoustic version of the album. *Lame.*

*Drive-Thru, POB 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413*

**Echo Is Your Love**8 Hours

This Finnish band must be deeply inspired by Sonic Youth – they have that same creepy, expectant atmosphere, with guitars listlessly and randomly hitting unsettling notes, like the footsteps of death. That, coupled with a haunting little girl voice and the occasional sonic attacks of complete musical catharsis, reminds me why I don't like Sonic Youth: they're just not fun to listen to. *Stickfigure, POB 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308*

**EE**For 100 We Try Harder

A huge departure for Asian Man. EE play lengthy (mostly) instrumental post-rock. They do it well; this is an easy genre to be written off as pretentious and masturbatory, but EE hit the mark with great musicianship, lush melodies, and understated approach. *Asian Man, POB 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030*

**Eighteen Visions**Vanity

I'm not into nu-metal, but this is better than most of the crap out there. Plus they have some moments where they sound like a decent hardcore band.

*Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724*

**Endless Struggle**Till The End

Snotty oil and street punk from SLC with a punker-than-thou attitude, but with great music to back it up.

*A-F, 1312 Rt. 8, Suite B, Glenshaw, PA 15116*



Q  
&  
A

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## THE LOCUST

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**With so much pain and suffering in the world, why must you create more with your music?**

Justin: Well I think that music is often a direct result of the players' social background and the world events that are taking place during the existence of the band.

**Why do you think some people like listening to noise? Is it masochism or simply some sort of musical autism?**

Justin: I'm not sure. I don't think we are fans of noise for the most part. I guess it depends on your definition of "noise".

**I notice you use a keyboard, especially for your sci-fi songs. Would you say The Locust is like a 31st century Rush on speed, without melody?**

Justin: No, not really.

**You guys do LOTS of merchandising. When can we expect some Locust-brand earplugs?**

Justin: We are not really interested in making earplugs nor taking ideas for merchandise.

**When you guys break up, where can I send a thank you card?**

Justin: Post Office Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177

I actually like The Locust. Check out their releases on Gold Standard Laboratories, their future releases on Anti-/Epitaph (www.epitaph.com), and visit the band at www.thelocust.com.



### The Enemies Seize The Day

The Enemies combine the right amount of heaviness and melody, and I really dug the songs on their split with Pitch Black, but the songs on this CD are ultimately forgettable. *Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94703*

### Eyes Of Autumn Hello

Indie mood music with fluid single-note guitar playing and listless singing. Not bad. *54 40 or Fight!, POB 1601, Acme, MI 49610*

### Fairweather Alaska EP

Although sick of the emo tag, Fairweather's new 4-song EP doesn't seem to take them in any drastic new direction. They're slightly more creative than the Thursdays and Dashboard Confessionals out there, but they're not exactly reinventing themselves or the genre. I'll pass. *Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534*

### The Feud Language Is Technology

Funny album title for a band that lacks a vocalist. They don't play that mind-numbing boring instrumental-indie crap though—these guys rock out somewhat rockingly. They're jazzy enough to not need a vocalist, but straight-forward enough to know how to rock. *Insidious Plot, 412 E. 11th #2RB, NY, NY 10009*

### The First Step Open Hearts And Clear Minds

Generic straightedge hardcore about how painful life is, but we can overcome it if we all stay together and work it out, yadda yadda yadda. Not to belittle your tortured existence, but you're a teenager from the suburbs. *Livewire, POB 007, Mendham, NJ 07945*

### Flashlight Brown All That Glitters Is Mold EP

Fast-paced SoCal-style punk from Canada. Three songs; the first two are fun, the last one is hokey. I'd be willing to hear more. *Double A, info@doublearecords.com*

## ((( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### The Forgotten Control Me

Damn, these guys just keep getting better with each release. They've got that perfect melodic singalong street punk style that I love—I wish every punk band sounded like this. They're easily comparable to Let's Go-era Rancid, but they throw in an unpolished '77 NYC guitar sound and British oil! attitude that gives them credible punk points, especially for a band from the Bay Area. This band totally gives me a boner.

**Fave tracks:** Listen, Never Accepted, No Way To Live  
*BYO, POB 67609, LA, CA 90067*

### Get Hustle Dream Eagle

Experimental indie with the usual listless spoken word over dark poly-rhythms and circus music. Silly in its seriousness. *Three One G, POB 178262, San Diego, CA 92177*

### Otis Gibbs 49<sup>th</sup> and Melancholy

I'm probably a dick for not appreciating folksy, country singer/songwriter crap-pola, but oh well. This is music to listen to while standing on a desert highway, thinking about some missed girl or town or devil woman or what have you. Few can do stark, melancholic, wrenched-from-the-gut, sad songs from the heartland, and their names are Johnny Cash and Tom Waits. So I'm a dick. Write a song about it. *Flat Earth, POB 30497, Indianapolis, IN 46230*

### The Girls Live At The Rathskeller—5.17.79

The Girls were a late 70's Boston art-punk band that, like the Sillies, is remembered well but with little to show for it—they only released one 7". But now you can check out this quirky experimental band in their live, noisy, Pere Ubu-meets-Richard Hell sonic glory. For collectors of post-punk, this is a gem. *Abaton Book Company, 100 Gifford Ave, Jersey City, NJ 07304*

### Glasseater Glasseater

With the drummer now on lead vocals, Glasseater has thankfully cut down on the hardcore screeching and is now a more straight-up emo-pop-punk band. While I'm still not a huge fan, this is definitely their most melodic and accessible one yet. *Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683*

### Good Clean Fun Positively Positive 1997-2002

I have a hard time believing that this band is for real. They play "positive" – ultra positive hardcore that pokes fun at veganism, straight-edge, and tough guy Earth Crisis-style hardcore in general by exaggerating their doctrines to the point of ridiculousness (i.e. songs about the joys of sharing, the evils of sugar, and the importance of doing well in college). It's tough to figure out when they're serious and when they're satirical, but there seems to be some hidden truth in their mock Mormon philosophy. In any case, the music IS fun – it's hardcore you can both rock out to and laugh along with. Plus they taught me how to share. *Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534*

## AVAIL

Questions answered by Tim Barry.

**Avail, you are one of the early pioneers of late 80's hardcore punk. Your music has been enjoyed by millions. You have touched the lives of so many. So what have you gotten in return? Don't you think you deserve something special, like a meeting with the President or an ambassadorship title?**

Ha, a meeting with the President? Boy I'd love that. I'd probably get kicked out of the "honkey" House within minutes. Seriously though, we've gotten a lot in return by playing in this band. We've had the chance to see all kinds of places that we never dreamed of going to. Shit, we've been to Australia, Japan, Canada (of course) Brazil, toured Europe 7 times, and crossed the States more times than I can count. And along the way we've made good friends and played really fun shows. All that, in itself is

rewarding enough. Ambassadorship? Beau has got to be some sort of ambassador at this point.

**What's the WORST experience you've ever had with a groupie?**

AVAIL really doesn't have any groupies. I have a "stalker" though. And that stalker is a "he." Pretty fucking scary.

**Do you have any tattoos that you regret getting?**

All of my tattoos suck and I don't regret any of them.

**I've heard you guys talk about punks revolting. Wouldn't that be kind of dangerous? I mean, I like punk music and all, but do we really want punk rockers causing havoc in the streets, terrifying our families? And let's face it, punks aren't very bright. They can't even come up with a definition of "punk" they can all agree on, and**

**yet you want them running things? I'll tell you this, bub. You create a punk revolution, I will find a way to crush you and your minions. My family has survived the Bolsheviks, and they will also survive the punk rock. Mark my words.**

Ha, ha, ha! Punks revolting. You are right, punks are revolting. They are disgusting, dirty people. A simple flock of sheep. You got the wrong band. I can't recall any of us AVAILers talking about "punks" revolting-other than them being revolting, respectively.

**If the punk scene was one giant salad, what vegetable would you be?**

Turkey burger.

**Avail's new album is *Front Porch Stories*, available on *Fat Wreck Chords* ([www.fatwreck.com](http://www.fatwreck.com)).**





**You know, I've always known Long Island was punk rock. Where you guys from exactly? Are you in da 516?**

John L: I'm in da 631, formerly 516.

Chris K: Nope, 718 baby!

Lieber: Same as John L. - 631.

**Who's punker: you guys or drunk Islander fans on the LIRR?**

JL: Sports, what are sports?

CK: Definitely drunk Islander fans.

L: Well, I'm not very punk, so I'd say the drunk Islander fans.

**Would you rather have a 3-way with Amy Fisher and Lizzie Grubman, or spend the day with Tony Danza?**

JL: Sex is good, Tony Danza is a guy...I'll take the threesome please.

CK: I'll take the 3-way please.

L: Do you actually know Tony Danza? Could you really make this happen?

**Would you rather play a gig in the Hamptons or play a gig at the Amityville Horror house?**

JL: The horror house without a doubt.

CK: The Amityville house.

L: Definitely the Hamptons with Muffy, Buffy and Tad...no the horror house of course.

**Do you have any good spooky Long Island stories?**

JL: Long Island is kinda spooky in itself.

CK: Fuck Long Island.

L: Read the Montauk Experiment, I thought that was kinda spooky.

**What are some jobs you've had before becoming punk stars?**

JL: I didn't know we were punk stars but, pizza delivery, bartender, sprinklers, shit like that.

CK: Fast food, retail sales, mechanic, gigolo.

L: Internet porn.

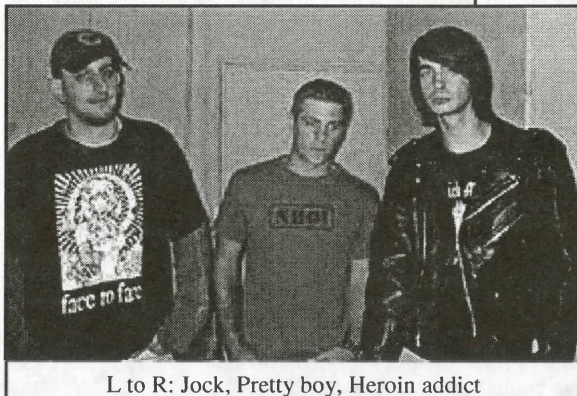
**Now that you're on Radical and you've heralded a whole new era for Long Island punk, what is left for you to do?**

JL: Your mom

CK: Have the 3-some with Amy Fisher and Lizzie Grubman.

L: Take over the world of course.

Check out their debut album *We Have Your Daughter!* on Radical Records ([www.radicalrecords.com](http://www.radicalrecords.com)). Visit the band at [www.5centdeposit.com](http://www.5centdeposit.com)



L to R: Jock, Pretty boy, Heroin addict

## Wafflehouse

**Has Waffle House sued you yet? I'd imagine they're pretty punk rock and have given you their blessing.**

Nope, not yet. They haven't figured it out, although the same can't be said of Waffle House patrons. We get countless emails from people thinking we're the restaurant.

**How do you respond to the negative comments directed at you by the punk band Denny's?**

Why are they talking bad about us? We haven't done anything to them. But seriously, people can say what they want. we don't really pay attention. We're doing our thing no matter what.

**I have said once that your music is like hash browns - scattered, smothered, covered, chunked, topped, diced and peppered. What do you suppose I was talking about?**

I would imagine you were referring to the fact that we draw from a very wide range of musical influences. Also, that we take these influences to create our own original sound. That at many times in any given song there are upwards of six or seven different things going on at once. We're not afraid to let loose and try new ideas.

**Actually, I was just hungry. Speaking of which, are you a bacon guy or sausage guy? You can tell a lot about someone by their breakfast meats...**

I don't understand how this is relevant to our music.

**How does your music help the war on terrorism?**

It doesn't really. we're just a band. If someone chooses to find some comfort in our music, then that's the best we could ask for. I am not really suited to answer this. We're not a political band. We all have our own beliefs and I can't speak for everyone else. So I think I will leave it at that.

**If your album doesn't do well, will you be working at Waffle House?**

Nah. All of us have jobs that we work when we're home. I love my job and besides, there aren't any Waffle House's in Michigan and I'm not moving.

Check out Wafflehouse's *Olympia* on Forge Again Records ([forgeagainrecords.com](http://forgeagainrecords.com)). I don't think the band has their own web site. I also couldn't find any pics of the band... hence Emmett Otter.



Wafflehouse and fan



## Halo Friendlies

### Get Real

You can't go wrong when you're managed by Elyse Rogers, produced by Kim Shaddock, and you're four hot girls playing sugary sweet pop rock. Since they're on Tooth & Nail, I scoured the lyric sheet for references to the Big J, and I'm happy to report that except for the potentially evangelistic "Sellout", they keep their spiritual side private. Not that I feel religious bands ought to be censored, but it would really ruin the image I have of these sexy rockers (rockettes?).

*Tooth & Nail, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111*

## Hayden

### Live From Convocation Hall

A few years ago, Hayden was heralded as Canada's next big singer/songwriter. I guess mooney, depressed Canadian folk music didn't catch on, because I haven't heard anything from this guy since he wrote the please-kill-me music to Trees Lounge. But Badman has just released an impressive double live CD from a March 2002 gig, which hopefully will garner some new attention for him. He's a sadsack, but a good sadsack.

*Badman, 1388 Haight No. 211, San Francisco, CA 94117*

## Heidnik

### Nothing

Grindcore/noisecore from Philly with a strong Relapse sound. Fast and angry.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

## Hello From Waveland

### Strangeways

Like a cross between Sugar and REM, Hello From Waveland bring back the radio-friendly pop of the early 90s that we all love (or don't). *Mt. Fuji, POB 71855, Seattle, WA 98107*

## Helms

### McCarthy

Helms is an interesting lo-fi indie band with Dillinger 4-style song titles, frenetic and bubbly (though sometimes annoyingly repetitive) guitars, and lyrics done in a spoken word delivery (which is kind of a waste because the singer sounds like Frank Black when he sings). Interesting in snippets, but the songs aren't strong enough to carry through. Still, I look forward to future releases.

*Kimchee, 6 Sagamore Road, Ipswich, MA 01938*

## Herod

### Execution Protocol

Noisy, growly thrash metal with good lyrics you can barely make out.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

## The Holy Ghost

### Color Sympathy

They sound too old to be called emo, so I'll say they're wussy bar rock. They do have talent, but it gets lost in the self-absorbed sludge.

*Clearly Records, 314 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215*

## The Hope Conspiracy

### Endnote

Is there any Boston hardcore that isn't in-your-face aggressive? So THC plays (of course) high-energy, explosive hardcore that makes me cringe but will have all you frat-bos moshing. They're not bad, just too aggro. Smoke some doobies, guys.

*Equal Vision, POB 14, Hudson, NY 12534*

## Hot Rod Circuit

### Been There Smoked That

An odds-n-sods collection that is surprisingly strong. I like these guys to begin with, and I'm happy that their early demos and incarnations hold up to their music now. Fans rejoice—it may not be a new album, but it's still the energetic, hook-laden, melodic indie rock (don't you fucking dare call them emo) that you're down with.

*Triple Crown, 331 West 57th St, PMB 472, New York, NY 10019*

## Hot Water Music

### Caution

I always ignored HWM, so I can't really remember what their previous albums sounded like, but I feel confident in saying that this album is by far their most poppy and melodic. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think I recall these guys being bad emocore, which is why I never paid them much attention. Caution is more Face To Face-ish with a slight emo tinge. Maybe I'm wrong about that too because I don't listen to Face To Face. I'm really out of the loop with today's music. *Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

## Denise Hradecky

### To Jimmy With Love

Hradecky is a singer/songwriter with a breathy, young girl voice. This is Christmas night music. The sort of music you'd listen to sitting near a fireplace while watching snow gently fall on cedars. Or something. Very pleasant.

*Intelligent, www.intelligentrecords.com*

## The Hunches

### Yes. No. Shut It.

They have a great sound, like retro garage rock twisted into dark noise. It's the soundtrack to nightmares the Hives might have.

*In The Red, 1118 W. Magnolia Blvd., PO Box 208, Burbank, CA 91506*

## III Lit

### WACMusic

Twangy urban folk over a bed of very soft electronica. It's too country for me, but has pretty good harmonies and lyrics. I would've preferred a more pronounced and lively electronica accompaniment, though, as folk + ambient = zzzzzzz.

*Badman, www.badmanrecordingco.com*

## The Immortal Lee County Killers

### Love Is A Charm Of Powerful Trouble

How do you take a simple blues chord and make it sound like complete shit? I'm not sure, but the ILCK have it figured out.

*Estrus, POB 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227*

## The (International) Noise Conspiracy

### Bigger Cages, Longer Chains EP

Pretty good, slightly funkier and more 70s-influenced than their previous, but with the same strong socialist rhetoric (it's also got video excerpt of a Noam Chomsky speech—jeez, do political bands know anyone else besides Chomsky and Zinn?). Plus four videos and a psychedelic cover of N.E.R.D.'s "Baby Doll." You get a lot from this EP, including a very chic romanticism of socialism. *Epitaph/Burning Heart, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

## The Jazz June

### Better Off Without Air

Wow, the Jazz June are just great. Their new one is more mature and full-sounding than their previous releases, which had a simpler indie-pop sound. On Better Off, they're hitting lots of cool rhythms and melodies with a very forceful, powerful sound—other bands that try to sound like this get bogged down their wussiness and pretentiousness, but JJ just rock it out. They're the Rush of indie-pop.

*Initial, POB 17131, Louisville, KY 40217*

## John Brown's Body

### Spirits All Around Us

Taking their name from the Battle Hymn of the Republic, JBB play a One World-style of positive vibe reggae-ska, as if they were once Deadheads who caught the rasta bug. They use some spacey keyboard effects and electro drum beats to keep it interesting, but the horns don't stand out much, and the vocalists sound eerily like King Django. Overall, they're pretty good in a dubby, trippy, Jah-love, sickly positive way.

*Shanachie, www.shanachie.com*

## The Jumbies

### By The Light Of A Blue Moon

A feel-good band, The Jumbies utilize sugary, lush female vocals atop bubbly indie rock. They have a deep, melancholy sound that avoids being pretentious and superficial, and the vocals have a way of hooking into you. I also think "jumbies" is a great euphemism for gazoombas.

*Intelligent, 203 Washington Street #102, Salem, MA 01970-6500*

## Junction 18

### Heroes From The Future

Good pop-punk with bright melodies and crisp production. Much more memorable and much less wussy than their debut. A strong release.

*Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683*

## The Jupiter Watts

### Short Wave Signals and False Alarms

Top notch straight-up pop rock from Atlanta. They have a Monster-era REM sound, and they're extremely proficient and catchy. The whole album is solid, but check out the songs "Over and Over," "Magic City," and "Speedway."

*Florine, 232 Camden, Atlanta, GA 30309*



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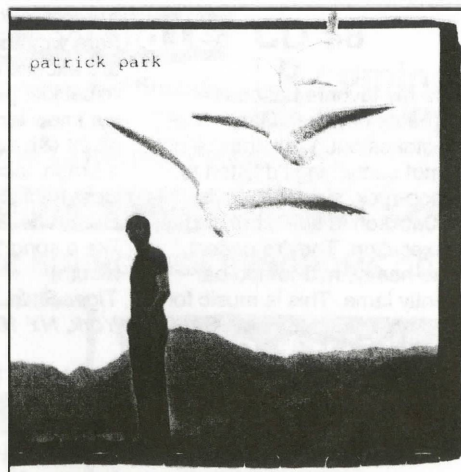
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The Red Thread - After The Last

"Hidden in the laser cut grooves of After the Last are nine perfectly crafted, ethereal, country-tinged pop tunes." -Real Detroit Weekly



Patrick Park - Under The Unminding Skies

"Take the astrogliding slickness of John Denver, the cross genre ingenuity of Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and the fashion sense of the Silverlake retropolis and you've only begun to glimpse into the world of Patrick Park" -LA Weekly

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## Kicked In The Head

### Salita EP

5 new tracks from KITH, who I thought were skapunk, but I guess are now watered-down hardcore mixed with MTV2-style emo-metal. Whatever.

*Resurrection AD, POB 763, Red Bank, NJ 07701*

## The Kills

### Black Rooster EP

A decent garagey male-female duo. The guy sounds exactly like Lou Reed, and they do a cool cover of Beefheart's Dropout Boogie, but are otherwise just okay. This sound is a little too hipster for me.

*Dim Mak, POB 14041, Santa Barbara, CA 93107*

## Kimone

### Meres Of Twilight

Mesmerizing, ethereal indie rock from Boston reminiscent of Galaxie 500, Luna, and Promise Ring. Bubbly melodies, dripping basslines, effortless and non-pretentious instrumentalism, and passionate vocals slowly converge into a powerful and touching sonic experience. Stop mocking me. Jerks.

*Silverthree Sound Recordings, POB 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038*

## Knockout

### Searching For Solid Ground

Sappy power-pop-punk, similar to Allistar, only more emo and less mall-punk. Younger punks will be KO'd, but I'm holding out for something with more punch. Those are boxing puns because I'm so witty and clever. Thank you, I also do Bar Mitzvahs.

*Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest #545, Westminster, CA 92683*

## Koufax

### Social Life

Although Koufax is my favorite baseball player of all time (beats out even Gary Carter), the band strikes out. Well, they're not bad - they're just not something I'd listen to. They play smart pop-rock, similar to Elvis Costello and Joe Jackson in spirit, but closer to a bar band in execution. They're decent, but I just find piano-heavy, mid-tempo bar-rock music inherently lame. This is music for people who were born around the time Sandy pitched his perfect game.

*Vagrant, 2118 Wilshire Blvd #361, Santa Monica, CA 90403*

## Lanterna

### Sands

Psychedelic soundscapes, like early Floyd with a modern, indie approach. Nice to put on while counting sheep. Or humping sheep. It soothes them.

*Badman, 1388 Haight No. 211, San Francisco, CA 94117*

## Lemon Jelly

### Lost Horizons

Cute, semi-jazzy, sublime soundscapes. Reminds me of Christmas.

*XL/Beggars Group, 580 Broadway, Ste 1004, New York, NY 10012*

## The Librarians

### The Pathetic Aesthetic

Short and fun rock songs that combine sloppiness and dorkiness. They sound like a really nasal Elvis Costello fronting an art school 80's mod rock band. Or if They Might Be Giants were a little punkier. It's a little too dorky for me - the horrendously off-key vocals sound smart-alecky, and the songs, while short, need to be quicker and chunkier to pack a punch.

*Pandicide, POB 2774, Petaluma, CA 94952*

## Jason Liebman

### The Driest Of All Seasons

Heeey, someone with almost the same last name as me! Now how can I give him a bad review?? Okay, so we make it painless: Mr. Liebman is a pretty good singer/songwriter with a surprisingly good vocal range and great pop sensibilities. Not my thing, but coffeehouse chicks will eat it up like a latte.

*For The Artist, PO Box 718, Lynbrook, NY 11563*

## Little League

### Through Our Ears. Through Our Hearts

Through my ass.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

## (( ( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### Lo-Fi

#### Say It More

We've had garage rock crammed down our throats the past year, so I thought I'd have an aversion to this supergroup of Boss Hog and Speedball Baby members. But after a few minutes, I realized that Lo-Fi is one of the best bands on the planet. The vocals are a little PJ Harvey-ish, but it works well here with the poppy garage punk. The tunes are excellently constructed - this ain't your usual just plug-n-play raw-ass garage rock we know too well. Lots of pop sensibilities, a slight r&b sound on some of the songs, and a brash, iconoclastic Le Tigre attitude. Best tracks: Leopard Skin, Three Fish, Light Up, White All Around (which totally sounds like a song that could be on the first Rush album)

*Tiger Style, 149 Wooster St., 4th Fl, New York, NY 10012*

### Lorelei

#### Our Minds Have Been Electrified

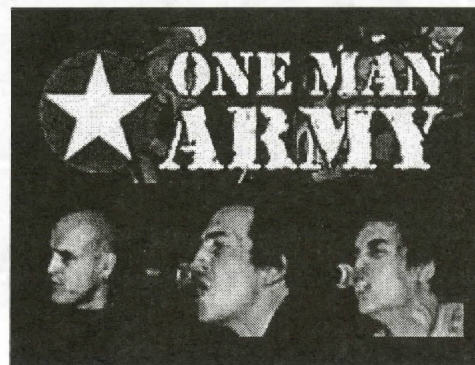
This Pittsburgh trio plays extremely cool twisted pop-rock. Their lineup is two basses, drums, and female vocals, and the result is this dark, distorted, driving sound that's rocking and spooky. They sound like Blondie covering Joy Division in a swamp. It's a really neat sound. Give it a listen.

*Ice-Made, www.ice-made.com*

## The Lyndsay Diaries

### The Tops Of Trees Are On Fire

A one-man indie band that plays slow, depressing power-pop. It made me kill myself. The Militia Group, 7923, Warner Avenue, Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647



**Please tell me you didn't take your name from that awful Roger Corman movie... Or is it a euphemism for masturbation?**

I know of no such movie or Roger Corman....THE name comes from my best friend's dead grandmother...Or a comic book, I can't remember...It may come back to me the next time I slam the ham, if you pardon the euphemism.

**Your last two albums were on a label owned by Billie Joe of Green Day. Did he approach you with a giant roll of cash? Does he own your souls now? Is it true he tortures kittens? How do the Stern brothers (owners of your current label, BYO) compare to the Green Day crew? Which label is more punk rock?**

D—All of the above.

**Wouldn't it be cool if women grew breasts on their backs instead of their chests? What would your ideal woman look like?**

The question is, what would your ideal man look like? Would he have a dick on his back?

**What sort of jobs did you guys hold, before becoming international superstars?**

Jack ran a secondhand flower shop in San Francisco. Chip owned a distillery in Pride, Louisiana until local enforcement forced its closure. Heiko was coming to grips with his new life as a female German porn star.

**Is there no greater force in this world than the power of a hug?**

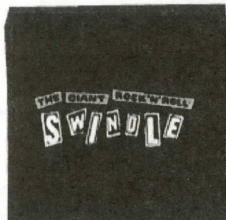
Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

**The latest from One Man Army, Rumors and Headlines, is out now on BYO Records (www.byorecords.com). Visit the band at www.1manarmysf.com.**



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## Madcap

### East To West

These guys continue to impress. Comparable to, if not better than, their debut, Madcap continues to write kick-ass singalong punk anthems, along the lines of Bouncing Souls and Rancid. This is how punk should be.  
*SideOneDummy, POB 2350, LA, CA 90078*

## Manda And The Marbles

### More Seduction

Female fronted power-pop with a dangly-bracelet-pink-jacket feel. The vocals are surprisingly good, and the music is bubblegum.  
**Great tracks:** "Left Behind," "Hey!" "Dead By Dawn," "Sudden Attraction," and the Go-Go's-ish "Seduction".  
*Go-Kart, POB 20, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012*

## ((( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### Matt Pond PA

#### The Nature of Maps

A truly brilliant indie album—from beginning to end, it's a nearly flawless display of how lo-fi indie rock should sound. For fans of The Shins and Elliott Smith.  
*Polyvinyl, Post Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140*

### Mclusky

#### Mclusky Do Dallas

Rumor has it, Epitaph wanted to sign these guys and tried to entice them away from Beggars. Why? These guys blow. Their sound is grungy, but their approach is annoyingly cocky and ironic. And it's produced by Steve Albini so it's distorted to the point of muddiness.  
*Too Pure/Beggars Group, 580 Broadway, Ste 1004, New York, NY 10012*

### Meshuggah

#### Nothing

Meshuggah can do no wrong. Every album is intense Scandinavian metal, mid-tempo and well-crafted, with vocals you can actually listen to. Another solid one.  
*Nuclear Blast, 2323 West El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250*

### Midstates

#### Shadowing Ghosts

Groovy lo-fi with bright hooks, textured melodies, and a bubbly electric piano undercurrent. A pleasant album.  
*www.mentalmonkeyrecords.com*

### Roger Miret & The Disasters

#### Roger Miret & The Disasters

Fronted by AF's Roger Miret, The Disasters play melodic street punk that seems to be borrowing shamelessly from Rancid and every British oi! band on the planet. "Run Johnny Run," "Give 'Em The Boot," and "Radio, Radio" reference Rancid so much, I'm almost wondering if Roger Miret is either purposely blowing sunshine up their asses, or mocking them by exaggerating their most recognizable clichés. Some of the other tunes, especially "It's Alright" and "Smash It Up" feature the most ridiculously run-of-the-mill fighting-drinking-fucking lyrics that you'd expect

from a low-IQ skinhead group. The music is good – they do play with a lot of melody and catchiness – but I'm disappointed in the lack of originality by one of the founders of a whole subgenre of music.

*Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd, CA 90026*

### The Mishaps

#### Get Away Volume EP

Awesome street punk with a finger-snapping upbeat rhythm section similar to Tiger Army (without the psychobilly) or CIV (without the hardcore). Great stuff.  
*Scissor, POB 206512, N. Haven, CT 06520*

### Guest Reviewer: Ray Manuud

#### Pete Miser Radio Free Brooklyn

The package is Radio Free Brooklyn, a tribute of sorts. One might say it is a tribute to New York. Another might call it a tribute to hip hop. It is actually both and perhaps more. The deliverer is Pete Miser, producer of independent hip hop music and former tour DJ of popular recording artist Dido. Radio Free Brooklyn is the culmination of a time spent and absorbed in the cultural center of the world. The Portland native, now transformed New Yorker, has used the influence of the city and its music to display the effect it had on him as well as the joy that comes with self reflection and hip hop. Influences in Miser's music and rhymes can be heard from the likes of Gangstarr, Tribe Called Quest, Erik B and Rakim, De La Soul, and Pete Rock.

This is a post-9/11 album. In such an album there are politics to be discussed, the politics of style, music, and a world of condescending views. The strength of hip hop music lies in the celebration of culture and the ability to be socially conscious. Miser exhibits these characteristics and in the process attempts to remind listeners how modern rap can maintain a unique quality when not tainted by the persistence of commercial music mediocrity to dominate the airwaves.

"Might Be" paints a picture of one confusing day that in some form or another affected everyone who watched the news, listened to the radio, or stepped outside their homes. "Central Park" is proof that Miser has acquired the New York state of mind that Billy Joel once spoke of. Miser's content touches on the complexity of female relationships, the endurance of hip hop culture, and the changing world around him while the New York City more or less reverts back to business as usual. The pay off of Radio Free Brooklyn is the homage it consistently gives towards life, love, unity and culture. *Ho-Made Media, POB 1108, NY, NY 10113*

### Misura

#### The Subtle Kiss Of A Sledgehammer

Decent Victory-style metalcore along the lines of Hatebread, All Out War, Buried Alive, etc. Somewhat melodic and the vocals are good for this type of music.  
*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philly, 19147*

### The Modifiers

#### Secret Frequencies

Satisfying power pop. The tunes are well written and delivered in a hi-energy, poppy-indie style (check out "Haywire"). But there are some misses, like the cheesy faux-punk "Sight Unseen" and the wussed-out "Anonymous" and "Rootless". They're good but not something I'd listen to often.  
*Intelligent, 203 Washington Street #102, Salem, MA 01970-6500*

### Moral Crux

#### Pop Culture Assassin

I'm ashamedly one of the billions of punk

fans that aren't too familiar with this classic political pop-punk band. Hopefully with re-releases on Panic Button, as well as this great new one, they'll gain more exposure. They might be too political for the pop-punk fans, and too cutesy for the militant politipunks, but I think they're great. I like what Ink 19 said about them: "They have a way of singing songs like 'Assassination Politics' the same way other bands sing songs about their new girlfriends." Man, I wish I wrote that.

*Panic Button, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 94712*

### Moreland Audio

#### Turbogold

Cool-sounding instrumental post-rock that's sinister and brooding and yet fun to listen to. They use solid backbeats that they don't stray too far from, but they don't get repetitive or boring. I definitely like these guys.  
*54 40' or Fight!, POB 1601, Acme, MI 49610*

### Moving Units

#### Moving Units EP

Did somebody say Moving Pictures? I wouldn't put a Rush allusion past this band, given that they're into 80s retro. They have a dark new wave death-to-disco sound, PiL drums and vocals with New Order guitars and Cure bass-lines. It's a sound I like, but the bipolarity and overlong song lengths might exasperate some.  
*Three One G, POB 178262, SD, CA 92177*

### Chris Murray

#### Raw

The appropriately titled new album from ska man Chris Murray continues his quest for the grittiest, barest recording possible for him and his guitar. Unhappy with the polished sounds of the four-track used on previous albums, Chris settled for taping himself on a Walkman. (What's

next – an Edison phonograph?) I'm not sure if Murray is going for authentic 60's production levels or if he just wants to save Asian Man some money, but the end result sounds cheap to the consumer, too. His previous lo-fi albums worked because of the strength of his songwriting and lyrics and his crisp rich voice, but Raw is raw in all aspects—it sounds more like an old, dusty demo than the next step in his career's progression. Some songs stand out like the hand-clappin' group singalong "The Higher The Monkey Climb" and the cute ditty "The Penny Song" – but the overall album is a bore. And in some cases, downright embarrassing, such as a poorly done white-guy-singing-about-Babylon tune "Rastaman". I'm not a Murray hater – I've loved his stuff in the past and I'm down with the kumbaya approach to ska. I just don't think that less is better this time around.

*Asian Man, POB 3585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030*



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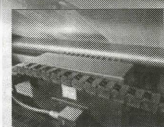
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## Mustard Plug

### Yellow #5

I've only been a fan of their debut album Big Daddy Multitude, an album that proto-typified energetic, goofy Midwest third wave ska. That album benefited from strong and memorable songs, but I found their follow-ups lackluster and weak. And really, there's nothing worse than quirky third wave ska that falls flat. But their newest, Yellow #5, is surprisingly solid, with bouncy guitars and crisp horn riffs, that aren't just filler but help carry the song. Gone is their silly humor (which didn't age well, anyway, especially with such nasal vocals), but songs like "You Want It, We Got It", "Not Enough", "Already Gone," and "Just A Minute" show that a band can mature lyrically and still rock hard. It took me some listens to get into this album, but I'm glad I gave it a chance.

*Hopeless, POB 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409*

## Mutant Press

### Mutant Press

One-man band that does a blues take on '77 junkie punk. It's not boring, but the tempo is too slow for me.

*500 Lb. Weasel Records, 23400 McAllister, Southfield, MI 48034*

## Near Miss

### The Gentle Art of Making Enemies

Harmless mall-punk from ex-members of Bigwig. Tasty but without much flavor.

*Fearless, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683*

## Neva Dinova

### Neva Dinova

A sweet, gentle indie band with winning, simple ambient melodies. It's nice to day-dream to.

*Crank! 1223 Wilshire Blvd #823, Santa Monica, CA 90403*

## Nile

### In Their Darkened Shrines

Nope, sorry, don't like Nile. Unimaginative speed guitar and drums, dorky growling vocals, spooky lyrics... There's not much to them. And if you disagree, you're in da' Nile. *Relapse, 1720 State Rd, Upper Darby, PA 19082*

## No. 2

### What Does Good Luck Bring?

Neil Gust, who used to co-front Heatmiser with Elliott Smith, is now the frontman of No. 2, a surprisingly good indie pop band with superb songwriting and tight musicianship. A mellow gem.

*In Music We Trust, 15213 SE Bevington Avenue, Portland, OR 97267*

## Northstar

### Is This Thing Loaded?

At first, I was like "Ugh, not another Thursday clone," but I was surprised with intelligent songwriting, powerful rock moments, and booty-shaking blasts of energy.

*Triple Crown, 331 W. 57<sup>th</sup> St. #472, New York, NY 10019*

## Marianne Nowotny

### Illusions of the Sun

Another twisted pop fantasia from this multi-talented young woman, who breathlessly sings brooding lyrics over a bed of harmonium melodies and Casio effects. It's haunting, bubbly and sexy, almost like a kitchy take on goth or vice versa.

*Obscura, POB 5069, Brunley, VIC 3121 Australia*

## 5 Questions With NORTHSTAR

**Okay, obvious question first. You got your name from anime classic Fist of the Northstar, right? I never would've thought emo kids would be into anime... You don't hear many emo songs about tentacle rape.**

is this a question?.....i guess the answer is "yes"

**So what's the appeal of emo? Why should anyone care about your emotions?**

im from alabama. i listen to a lot of Bruce Springsteen. i really have no idea what emo is. im guessing its some sort of fashion trend?

**What's the worst thing you've ever done?**

a couple of vocal tracks on our first demos....other than that im pretty much perfect.

**Have you ever been betrayed?**

i have been de-railed once or twice, but never by somebody who, in the end, really truly matters. Trust is something i have found in a small, select group of people. I'm trying not to set myself up.

**Tell us about the one that got away...**

i really dont think she deserves it..... but..... for the record..... she was very pretty.

Get Northstar's *Is This Thing Loaded?* on Triple Crown Records ([www.triplecrownrecords.com](http://www.triplecrownrecords.com))

## Oneida / Liars

### Atheists. Reconsider

Oneida and Liars are two similar-sounding bands from Brooklyn. Both have a garagey sound, weirded up with strange distorted vocals, electronic bleeps and bleeps, and faux-space keyboard and guitar effects. It's weird for the sake of being weird, but they pull it off with good humor.

*Arena Rock Company, 242 Wythe Avenue, Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211*

## The Oranges Band

### On TV

Great indie-punk with a fantastic, heavily melodic driving garage sound with great vocals. Best Lookout! release in awhile.

*Lookout! 3264 Adeline, Berkeley, CA 94703*

## Over It

### Timing Is Everything

The title is kind of ironic, because the only thing I don't like about this band is that their timing is off. The rhythm section seems too fast for the vocals and guitars. The drums and bass seem to want to be punk and the guitars and vox are more on the melodic emo tip. Besides that, I dig these guys.

*Lobster, POB 1473, Santa Barb, CA 93102*

## Owen

### No Good For No One Now

Another cute one from Mike Kinsella. Very pleasant on the ears. This is sort of like if Coldplay came from America's heartland.

*Polyvinyl, POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826*

## The Paper Chase

### Hide The Kitchen Knives

It's been awhile since we've heard from Beatville, but The Paper Chase isn't what I had hoped for. They're a moody and experimental indie rock band that would be okay if it wasn't for the vocals, which are very herky-jerky, irritating and pretentious. (The singer kind of sounds like a cross between the guy from Rage Against the Machine and Richard Hell, but not in a good way.) You can also tell that they're trying hard to sound different, though they're not as unusual or interesting as their contemporaries.

*Beatville, POB 42462, Washington, DC 20015*

## ((( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### Patrick Park

#### Under the Unminding Skies EP

I'm normally not into alt-country or singer/songwriter folk, but there's something about this album... I have to admit, it's sweet, beautiful, well-written, and the vocals are some of the strongest in this genre. If I became a fan, so could you.

*Badman, 1388 Haight St. No. 211, San Francisco, CA 94117*

## The Parkinsons

### A Long Way To Nowhere

Loud stripped-down snotty '77 punk rock from Portugal. Their music and attitude are so classic, they sound more vintage than retro, and I'm not sure if that's a case for their passion of this era, or for their irrelevancy. Lack of creativity aside, the songs are fun and the energy is as riot-inducing as a Miss World pageant in Nigeria.

*Elevator, POB 628, Bronxville, NY 10708*

## The Pattern

### Real Feelness

Maybe I shouldn't dis Lookout! prez's band for fear of never again receiving an ad check, but I must admit I'm disappointed that they're yet another 60s garage band. They got it all down: the tinny distortion, the strained, jerky vocals, the sloppy rhythm section. I don't know where anybody's been for the past 40 years, but the Kinks have already done this. To the Pattern's credit, they're better than most other bandwagons. But I'll be happy when this trend dies.

*Lookout!, 3264 Adeline, Berkeley, CA 94703*

## Pele

### Enemies

The fifth from Pele is more of the same. Above-average instrumental indie, neither boring or exceptionally gripping. I like Pele, but sometimes I wish they'd just let everything hang and rock out with their cocks out.

*Polyvinyl, POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826*



**Plain White T's**Stop

Yeah, really. Stop trying to sound like Jimmy Eat World.

*Fearless*, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****Poulain**With Fingers Crossed EP

I'm assuming Poulain got their name from Amelie, as their music reflects the adorable, feel-good fuzziness of that excellent movie. Their music sounds sort of like the Vaselines' "Molly's Lips" or that cute last song on the last Selby Tigers album – narcotic and sugary sweet but totally rocking. They have a male-female vocal duality, which is done really well here with crazy layering and rounds (check out "Hollywood"). There are only four songs on this EP, but it's still worth getting because it's REALLY strong and catchy. Highly recommended.

*Soft Serve*, 137 Golden Beach Drive, Miami, FL 33160

**Pressure Point**To Be Continued

Excellent street punk from Sacramento. A little bit thuggish, but not ridiculously so. If you're into River City Rebels or Dropkick Murphys without the Irish twist, check out PP or their side band Whiskey Rebels.

*GMM*, POB 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

**The Promise**Believer

Straight-edge new school hardcore from Syracuse (they're better than it sounds). So much of their fans put X's on their hands, the band should receive a commission from Sharpie. But don't marker fumes get you high, thus destroying your Edge?

*Indecision*, POB 6052, Garden Grove, CA 92846

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****Rainer Maria**Long Knives Drawn

Normally this wouldn't be my thing, but I don't know... they really appeal to me. They're an indie rock band fronted by a female vocalist whose voice isn't sugary sweet, but strong, confident, and genuine. The lyrics are poetic without being eye-rolling or overly melancholy, and the music drives the songs, rather than accompanying them. This is what I wish every female-fronted indie band sounded like.

*Polyvinyl*, POB 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140

**Raised Fist**Dedication

A more metallic take on DC hardcore, Raised Fist mixes up RATM vocals with a Pantera rhythm section while maintaining a brutal, chant-along hardcore identity. Don't resist the Fist.

*Epitaph*, 2798 Sunset Blvd, LA, CA 90026

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))****The Raveonettes**Whip It On

If I was overdosing in an Amsterdam opium den, this is the music I'd hear in my head as the tunnel of light overtook me. This Dutch male-female duo plays cool garage rock with a dark, psychedelic hook, effecting this spooky uber-Velvet Underground vibe without the pretentiousness. Well, without a lot of pretentiousness. I'm as sick as you with this garage rock thing, but check out this band—I have a feeling they'll get big.

*Crunchy Frog*, [www.crunchy.dk](http://www.crunchy.dk)

**Reaching Forward**Complete Discography 1998-2000

Only in hardcore do you find albums called "Complete Discography" and it spans a whopping two years. I actually think Reaching Forward are good, and I guess if you're a rabid fan you would appreciate all their stuff in one neat place, but I dunno... I personally would reserve "Complete Discography" for bands that are a wee bit more essential.

*Martyr*, POB 955, Harriman, NY 10926-0955

**The Red Thread**After The Last

Soft, somber singer/songwriter indie rock with some impressive guitar work. Not my thing, but it does endear itself after a few listens.

*Badman*, 1388 Haight St. No. 211, San Francisco, CA 94117

**BLURBS Releases That Arrived After Deadline:**

**Bluebottle Kiss** *Revenge Is Slow*  
In Music We Trust, [inmusicwetrust.com](http://inmusicwetrust.com)  
*Beautifully mopey Australian lo-fi indie-pop.*

**Bright Eyes** *Lifted or the Story is in the Soil, Keep Your Ear to the Ground, A Nod is as Good as a Wink to a Blind Horse*  
Saddle Creek, [www.saddlecreek.com](http://www.saddlecreek.com)  
*Pretentious claptrap.*

**Clem Snide** *You Were A Diamond*  
spinART, [www.spinartrecords.com](http://www.spinartrecords.com)  
*Folky mope-rock.*

**Count The Stars** *Never Be Taken Alive*  
Victory, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)  
*Proficient emo-punk, cute girl on the cover.*

**Crazy Mary** *Knucklehead*  
[www.crazymary.com](http://www.crazymary.com)  
*No comment.*

**The Delgados** *Hate*  
Beggar Banquet, [www.beggars.com](http://www.beggars.com)  
*Excellent if you like being depressed.*

**Icons Of Filth** *Nostradamnedus*  
Go-Kart, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)  
*Not death metal, but good street-punk.*

**Jett Brando** *Jagged Junktion EP*  
Go-Kart, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)  
*Uniquely rhythmic, cool indie-punk.*

**Magstatic** *Country Vs. City*  
POP Sweatshop, [www.popsweatshop.com](http://www.popsweatshop.com)  
*Sunny Day-ish indie-pop.*

**Merauder** *Bluetality*  
Century Media, [www.centurymedia.com](http://www.centurymedia.com)  
*Thrashy metalcore from the bowels of rock!*

**The Mighty Rime** *The Mighty Rime*  
Caulfield, [www.caulfieldrecords.com](http://www.caulfieldrecords.com)  
*Organic, rootsy indie.*

**New Wet Kojak** *This is the Glamorous*  
Beggar Banquet, [www.beggars.com](http://www.beggars.com)  
*Slower Simple Minds with moog action.*

**Pretty Girls Make Graves** *S/T EP*  
Dim Mak, [www.dimmak.com](http://www.dimmak.com)  
*4 tracks from this Bikini Kill-ish band.*

**The Rocket Summer** *Calendar Days*  
Militia Group, [www.themilitiagroup.com](http://www.themilitiagroup.com)  
*One-man pop band from Bryce Avary.*

**Saint Etienne** *Finisterre*  
Mantra/Beggars, [www.beggars.com](http://www.beggars.com)  
*Artsy eurotronica.*

**Ted Leo & The Pharmacists** *Hearts of Oak*  
Lookout! Records, [www.lookoutrecords.com](http://www.lookoutrecords.com)  
*I don't like Ted Leo.*

**Thundercrack** *The Crack*  
Estrus, [www.estrus.com](http://www.estrus.com)  
*Fun swirly noise-punk.*

**Turbonegro** *Ass Cobra/Apocalypse Dudes*  
Epitaph, [www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com)  
*Reissues of two excellent, evil punk albums*

**Various Artists**

**Go-Kart Vs. the Corporate Giant 3**  
Go-Kart, [www.gokartrecords.com](http://www.gokartrecords.com)  
*30 tracks. Decent songlist.*

**Mollie's Mix**  
Kill Rock Stars, [www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)  
*The ladies of indie punk. 21 tracks.*

**Obey: The Giant Rock N' Roll Swindle**  
Fork In Hand, [www.forkinhand.com](http://www.forkinhand.com)  
*Excellent tracklist—great comp!*

**A Slight Touch of Grace**  
Release, [ReleaseEntertainment.com](http://ReleaseEntertainment.com)  
*Minimalist electronisnooze.*

**Stepping Stone Vol. 1: The Best Bands You Never Heard Of**  
The Militia Group, [www.themilitiagroup.com](http://www.themilitiagroup.com)  
*Never heard of 'em.*



**Reggie & The Full Effect**  
Under The Tray

New one from the eclectic Get Up Kids side band. This one's a lot more cohesive than their previous, and the Weezer-ish songs are excellent, and even the 80s retro stuff is very done well. This album really took me aback - I'm not into the gimmicks and fake histories and in-jokes surrounding the band, but the music they produce more than redeems them for the image they produce.

*Vagrant, www.vagrant.com*

**Rescue**  
Volume Plus Volume

Hey, these guys are pretty good! They're jerky stop-go indie with equal parts math rock and emo. Normally I'm not into the masturbatory, whiny stuff, but Rescue is very proficient at making this work. They combine complexity and melody in a way not seen since Rush's Hemispheres.

*Dead Droid, POB 68061, Grand Rapids, MI 49516*

**Retisonic**  
Lean Beat

Featuring members of Bluetip and Garden Variety, DC's Retisonic is an interesting mix of indie and ass-shaking rock n roll. This stripped-down duo is able to play cool Damned-style rock with a melodic indie undertone and vocal approach. It's simple tunes with an underlying complex current.

*Silverthree Sound Recordings, POB 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038*

**The Reunion Show**  
Kill Your Television

As far as Weezer-ish emo bands go, TRS put forth a lot of energy and passion, which will endear them to many emo fans. Unfortunately, their songs aren't strong enough to appeal to fans of other genres, plus they're plagued with the emo curse of having unbearably bad lyrics delivered by cheesed-out, overly wistful vocals.

*Victory, 346 N. Justine St. Ste 504, Chicago, IL 60607*

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))**

**River City Rebels**  
No Good. No Time. No Pride

Another excellent album from RCR. Again, I think they'd be perfect without the horns, which waters them down. They don't need brass to differentiate them from other street punk bands - their sharp songwriting and refreshing, positive vibe does that for them. But the sax does take a back seat on this release, playing along with guitar melody lines so as not to get in the way. Which is a good thing, because this album is fantastic: 12 nearly flawless singalong punk tunes that straddle the line between pop-punk and street punk. Definitely recommended. And take heed of my recommendation, because normally I hate everything.

**Best tunes:** Aborted, Life's A Drag, No Time, Rotten Brain, No Pride  
*Victory, 346 N. Justine St, Ste 504, Chicago, IL 60607*

**Rocket From The Crypt**  
Live From Camp X-Ray

Another effortlessly good album from RFTC, though probably their least edgy. It's breezy - 10 songs, 25 minutes long - and although the lyrics are a bit dark and embittered, the rock flows cleanly and calmly. This is a band that knows all too well how to rock.

*Vagrant, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90403*

**Rooney**  
Rooney EP

While the real-life Rooney gets arrested, the band plays arresting full-bodied, mid-tempo pop-rock. They have the perfectly tussled, moppish hair of any Williamsburg hipster, with faux-dorky Weezer approach to match. You can tell they love their classic rock, but the influence comes across as ironic, which is pretty lame.

*Geffen*

**Running Like Thieves**  
Same Time Next Year

Noisy hardcore. Muddy production. Hoarse vocals. Still, something made me sit through it. *Livewire, POB 007, Mendham, NJ 07945*

**Sanbox**  
Rocks

It's not just a clever (if overused) album title. Sanbox rocks. And few people know. It's my little secret, tee-hee! I'm not even gonna say another word about them.

*Umbral Records, POB 31, Belle Mead, NJ 08502.*

**((( EDITOR'S PICK )))**

**Savage Republic**  
Complete Studio Set (4 CDs)

Absolutely essential box set for fans of post-punk experimentalism. These CDs span all their songs from 1982 to 1989, including B-sides and rarities. Savage Republic, I feel, was the only band that could make hours of guitar-driven free-form instrumentalism enjoyable to listen to. They made art punk far more accessible than Pere Ubu and the like, and while bands like Fugazi and Drive Like Jehu took a more abrasive approach and became better known, Savage Republic not only laid the foundation, but the standard by which no post-punk band has surpassed. Recommended.  
*Mobilization, POB 460951, San Francisco, CA 94146*

**Serene**  
Serene

Decent lo-fi indie with a Christian slant. The instrumental stuff is serene enough to put you into a coma, but the vocal harmonizing is very nicely done and the lyrics can be considered either poetic or gay, depending on your level of cynicism at the moment.

*Arena Rock Recording Co, 242 Wythe Avenue, Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211*

**Shadows Fall**  
The Art Of Balance

Continuing their direction away from death and into more progressive metal territory, the new Shadows Fall is downright brilliant. It is a bal-

ancing act between death, Maiden-esque metal, and thrashy hardcore, with all sorts of cool progressive songwriting, and all that comes with progressive songwriting, such as soft background keys, occasional acoustic guitar, and a killer version of Floyd's "Welcome To The Machine." This is REAL modern metal. Not nu-metal. Not metal-rap. Not scary guttural death metal screeching passing itself off as hardcore. Just straight-up excellent metal, like Maiden or old Metallica, but modernized without the nostalgia. If I were Kerrang, I'd give these guys a shitload of K's.  
*Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250*

**Sick Of It All**  
Live In A Dive

This is the third installment of Fat's live series, and the best in terms of capturing the live energy of the band. SOIA play their hearts out over an hour, offering up 23 blistering tracks of NYHC. Also comes with a silly comic book.

*Fat Wreck, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119*

**Since By Man**  
We Sing The Body Electric

This unique hardcore band is dissonant and screamy, but also has a progressive musical quality and talent, similar to Converge, Snapcase, and Christiansen. Fired up and passionate, but without the overboard, frightening intensity of most screamo bands.

*Revelation, POB 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615*

**Matt Skiba & Kevin Seconds**  
Split CD

A split - 5 songs each - from the singer of Alkaline Trio (blech) and the singer of the legendary, kick-arse 7 Seconds (Whoop!). By golly, I thought, the Kevin Seconds songs will surely reimburse my ears for the pain they will suffer from the Matt Skiba songs. How could one man be so wrong?? The Matt Skiba songs are EXCELLENT: perfectly crafted, high-energy acoustic songs packed with authentic passion and clever hooks and lyrics. Matt Skiba's deep and romantic voice is perfect for acoustic stuff, and, I have to admit, it melted me. I can now see why every 14-year old girl loves AK3. His five songs put me in a great, pensive mood. Then Kevin Seconds kicked in, and I wish I could've kicked him. Mr. Seconds can shout lyrics hardcore-stylee with the best of them, but I seriously recommend he see an allergist before attempting to be melodic again. Nasal City. Maybe not as bad as Bob Dylan or the dude from Mustard Plug, but pretty bad. With the exception of the charming "Yesteryear", his contributions fall as flat as his tone. And so, today I learned a valuable lesson about assuming. Which is to say, I assume you care about my review.

*Asian Man, POB 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030*



## Missed it the first time?



### READ #21: The Fear Issue

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## Neva Dinova

### So what's there to do in Omaha on a Friday night?

Well our normal Friday nights usually include cowntipping, harvesting moonshine from local stills, injecting the color into Indian corn with needles or going to the Brother's (bar).

### Your music makes me bittersweetly melancholic. Why must you toy with my emotions?

It's all because I love you and hate you.

### I notice your name is an anagram for Vanna Video. Are you into porn?

Absolutely. Although the name was originally my grandmother's name.

### Speaking of porn, who on Crank Records' roster/staff are you most attracted to?

The only person that I've seen from the Crank! roster/staff is Jeff Matlow, good looking man, but we still have high hopes for Fred Emery.

### Would you kiss a man for 10 seconds if it meant you could spend the day with Leonard Cohen?

You'd be surprised and disgusted how far any of us would go to spend a day with Leonard Cohen.

### What's the worst job you've ever had?

It was a blowjob. Due to unusual suction I lost my standard issue flesh peetube (R.I.P.) and of course had it replaced with a Kiln Fired hypo-allergenic Ceramic Peetube(tm).

**Check out Neva Dinova self-titled album on Crank Records (crankthis.com)**

### Slick Fifty Seven

#### The Ghost Of Bonnie Parker

Surprisingly good Texan rockabilly, or as De-lusions of Adequacy calls them "hung-over hillbilly punk" which I think is more apt.

*Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

### Slow Gherkin

#### Run Screaming

Completely gone is the ska, but then again, Slow Gherkin always had the harmless emo / mildly-retarded-but-really-sweet-moppy-haired-kid-down-the-street sound anyway. The songs here aren't nearly as catchy as on their previous, but they've fleshed out their soul-rock sound. Yet this isn't a keeper for me. For one, the vocals are more off-key and nasal than normal (they're especially painful to listen to on "Letterhead" and "Snakes"), and the music, while upbeat, doesn't pack any punch. As always, their songs are way over-long and become irritating midway. The two good tracks on here is the skanky "Oxford Way" and the soul-snappy "Baby Snake". The rest of the album falls flat.

*Asian Man, POB 3585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030*

### Slow Reader

#### Slow Reader

Surprisingly good indie-pop from ex-members of The Impossibles. They've got the breathless, lackadaisical sound of The Shins and Rufus Wainwright, where the poppiness is bright and the approach is melancholy. It's not for everyone, but believe it or not, I'm a huge Shins fan, so I dig what Slow Reader's doing. Maybe not for fans of the Impossibles, though.

*Fueled By Ramen, POB 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604*

## ((( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### Snapcase

#### End Transmission

Victory veterans Snapcase has just released possibly their greatest and most innovative work. For a genre that thrives on a lazy, almost non-existent approach to songwriting and arrangements, Snapcase stands out as THE thinking man's hardcore. Indeed, End Transmission seems to be a concept album about a bleak future society and its opposition (or maybe I'm just projecting my own 2112-loving wishful thinking). Regardless, this album is successfully ambitious in scope and vision, not just breaking through, but completely obliterating the static hardcore mold. It takes a lot to impress me, and I'm impressed.

**Fave tracks:** Coagulate, First Word, New Kata, ID/Hindsight (which sounds like a hardcore version of Pachelbel's Canon)  
*Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607*

### Snowdogs

#### Deep Cuts, Fast Remedies

Wow, this album came out quick. I still can't figure out why this band is on Victory – they play very melodic corporate rock, think Cheap Trick mixed with Offspring and then polished to a shine. They're good, just completely devoid of any edge. I actually like them... as an occasional guilty pleasure.

*Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607*

### Somehow Hollow

#### Busted Wings & Rusted Halos

Hey now. I was expecting some scary-ass death metal. I mean, c'mon. Hollow. Busted Wings. Rust. Lots of negative imagery there. But the band is actually quite wussy – well, they're not slow and whiney like most of the

emo-punk bands plaguing our lives, but it's still not exactly something I'd put on with friends around.

*Victory, 316 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607*

### Sometimes Seven

#### The Songs I Was Telling You About

I really liked the few songs I've heard on comps, but I'm not crazy about this album... Most of the songs are overlong and repetitious (especially the dopey "Let Go Rock n' Roll"), and they seem to confusedly bounce between melodic punk ("Stupid," "Backpack Girlfriend") and mid-tempo indie ("Little Dizzy," "Headrest"). There are a couple of good songs and the vocals are strong, so I definitely look forward to hearing more of their stuff.

*Round Circle, POB 96, Dyer, IN 46311*

### Son of Skam

#### Sign of the Times

Old school NYC rapcore that goes for the tough guy thug sound, but ends up kind of dumb-sounding. Features members of Subzero, Madball and Skarhead.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

### The Sound of Rails

#### Night Time Simulcast

Good post-punk from Omaha that mixes up soft vocals with abrasive instrumentals.

*Caulfield, POB 84323, Lincoln, NE 68501*

### Sport Murphy

#### Uncle

Uh, hey, I dunno. It's like Paul McCartney playing minstrel music in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. Whatever.

*Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave, PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501*

### Staring Back

#### On

Similar to Over It, Staring Back play energetic, boyish punk rock with an indie pop bent. They're tighter than Over It, but otherwise the two bands are interchangeable. They're both fairly good, though.

*Lobster, POB 1473, Santa Barbara, CA 93102*

### The Starting Line

#### Say It Like You Mean It

As far as made-for-MTV2 New Found Glory clones go, Starting Line does play some cute, catchy mall punk that will make the junior high kids bounce around with glee. Adorable.

*Drive-Thru, POB 55234, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413*

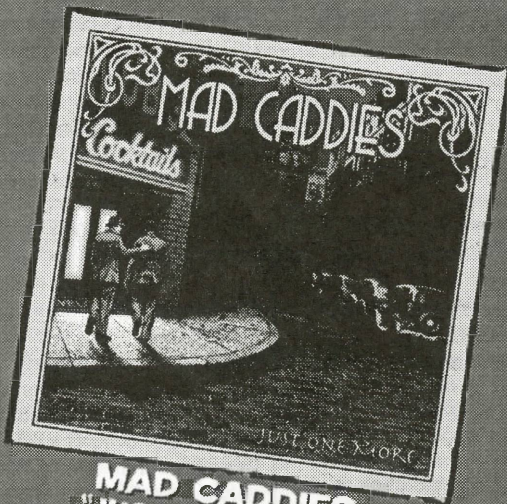
### Stay Gold

#### Pills And Advice

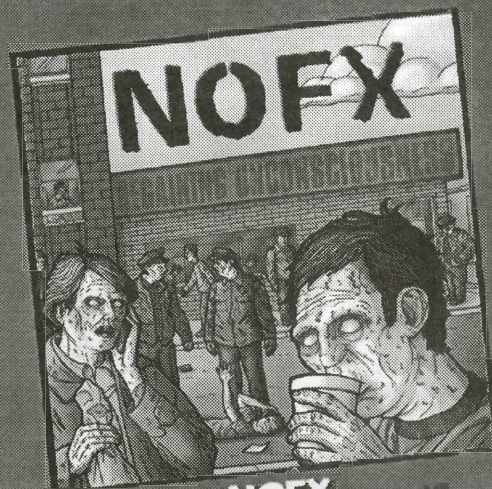
Emotional, poppy hardcore from Seattle that's melodic enough to make it work. The hardcore shouting is straight forward and cool, in an Ian Mackaye sort of way, and the guitars are crisp and rockin'.

*Indecision, POB 6052, Garden Grove, CA 92846*

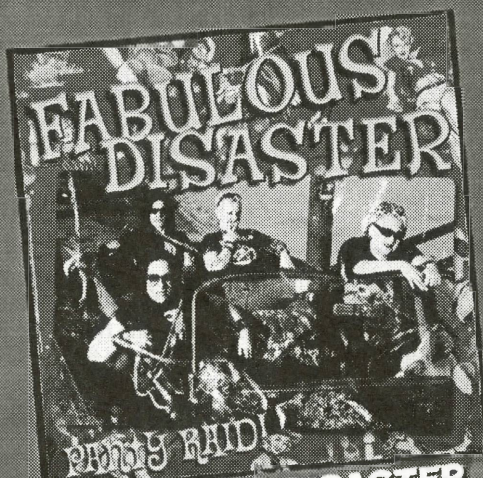




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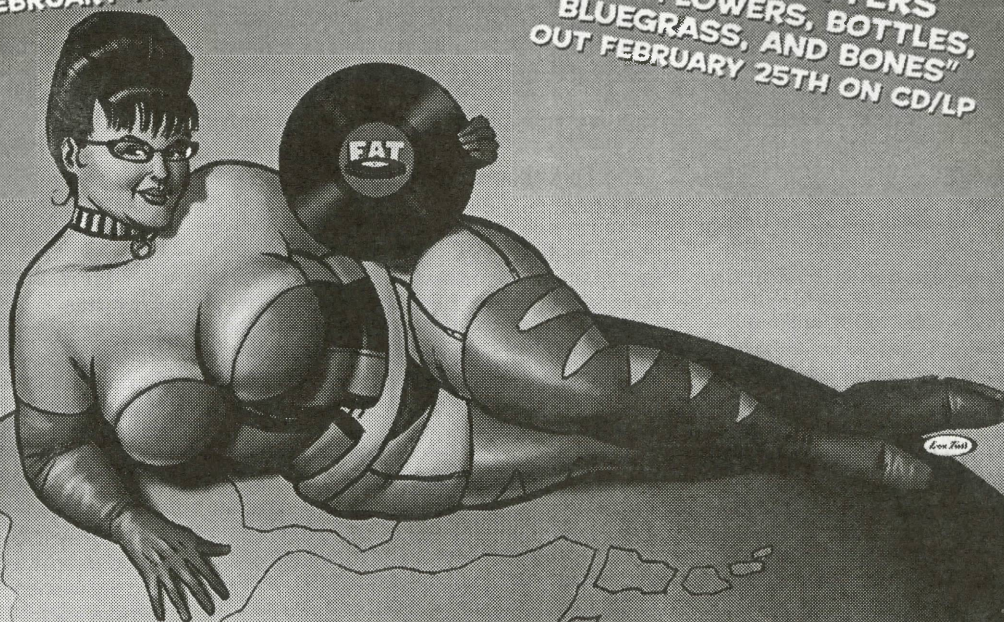
**NOFX**  
**"REGAINING UNCONSCIOUSNESS"**  
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**FABULOUS DISASTER**  
**"PANTY RAID"**  
 OUT FEBRUARY 11TH ON CD/LP



**SWINGIN' UTTERS**  
**"DEAD FLOWERS, BOTTLES, BLUEGRASS, AND BONES"**  
 OUT FEBRUARY 25TH ON CD/LP





### **A Static Lullaby**

#### And Don't Forget to Breathe

Intense hardcore/nu-metal hybrid.

*Ferret Music, 47 Wayne St. #3, Jersey City, NJ 07301*

### **Stillwell**

#### Don't Face A Problem... Burn It

Post-hardcore with emo singing over a noisy, jerky backdrop. I like the minimalism, but after time it's too grating for me. For fans of Drive Like Jehu.

*Forge Again, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614*

### **The Stryder**

#### Jungle City Twitch

The Stryder's sound is too mature to call emo. They play post-punk, tightly and melodically, with whirling guitars and a touch of experimentalism. Check out the song "Summer Coat."

*Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534*

### **Ten Foot Pole**

#### Bad Mother Trucker

Generic SoCal pop-punk. This album must be coated in Teflon cuz it don't stick.

*Victory, 346 N. Justine St. \$504, Chicago, IL 60607*

### **Theory Of Ruin**

#### Counter-Culture Nosebleed

Theory of Ruin features Alex Newport, formerly of Fudge Tunnel and Nailbomb. Their sound is if they took the two aforementioned bands, slowed them down and stripped them to their barest, darkest, and most abrasive elements, then added mercilessly repetitious melodies a la Jesus Lizard or Wire. This is definitely a rhythm-oriented noise band without the noise. They're not thrashy enough to be either rockin' or headache-inducing; but they do have some jerky, detuned melodic spurts that keep things interesting.

*Escape Artist, POB 472, Downingtown, PA 19335*

### **There Were Wires**

#### There Were Wires

Chaotic, abrasive hardcore screaming. About as fun as a colonoscopy.

*Iodine, 1085 Commonwealth Ave, PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215*

### **Tiger Army**

#### Early Years EP

I like Tiger Army and all, but c'mon, do we really need a handful of early demos? Who are we, the Beatles? Okay, to be honest, this EP is very good; I'm just a curmudgeon.

*Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

### **Tiger Mountain**

#### Analog Heads Gone French

Tiger Mountain, yeah that's a real cool name. Sounds like a roller coaster for slow children. Anyway, they play a 70s-style guitar-driven

fun rock. I hear a little VH, a little Cheap Trick, and they've got that scratchy guitar sound from Jethro Tull's "Locomotive Breath".

They're pretty good, but the prob is that they're not fast or edgy enough, so it ends up sounding lame and retro.

*Lucky Cat, Bowling Green Station, POB 251, New York, NY 10274-0251*

## **Q&A - Abilene**

Abilene's new album is "Two Guns, Twin Arrows", available on 54 40 or Fight! Records ([www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com](http://www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com)) Responses provided by the verbose Fred Erskine.

**Did you get your name from that sleazy town in Texas?**

Absolutely not.

**Since you're from Chicago, you should've named yourselves Chicago.**

**Some would say that slick musicianship doesn't belong in punk rock. How do you respond to that argument?**

There's already a Chicago.

It doesn't.

**You guys are an indie super-group of sorts. How did you all come together?**

List your guilty pleasures.

**We did just like The Beatles told us.**

No.

**You guys are accomplished musicians - was Rush an influence on your music?**

**What's the worst job you've ever had?**

Musician.

### **Time In Malta**

#### A Second Engine

Jeez, it seems like every Equal Vision band these days takes their name from a literary reference. Anyway, these guys play Intelligent and energetic hardcore with great, intense vocals and frantic metal riffing. Pretty good!

*Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534*

### **Today Is The Day**

#### Sadness Will Prevail

Two full CDs of some truly scary grindcore. Make one of their songs your answering machine message and no one will ever call you again.

*Relapse, POB 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082*

### **Tora! Tora! Torrance!**

#### Get Into It

While I'm sick to death of garage rock, TTT do some creative things to the genre, staying away from the harmless retro stuff and doing more interesting noisy, metal things and mid-tempo Dead Kennedys-ish snotty punk stuff.

*The Militia Group, 7923 Warner Ave, Suite H, Huntington Beach, CA 92647*

### **Torrez**

#### The Evening Drag

The Z stands for Zzzzzzzzzzzz....

*Kimchee, 6 Sagamore Rd., Ipswich, MA 01938*

### **Tracy & the Plastics**

#### Forever Sucks EP

I admit to liking the cheeky, ironic Casio-punk of Atom & His Package, The Capricorns, and to a lesser Casio-ridden extent, Helen Love

and Le Tigre. But Tracy & The Plastics just don't do it for me. Her voice has that annoying listless and monotone spoken word quality, and the synths sound as bored and tired as her. With the exception of "Hey Rubella," the songs are a waste of potential for Casio fun and funkiness. They don't "forever suck", but they could be a lot better than they are.

*Chainsaw, POB 1151, Olympia, WA 98507-1151*

### **Transplants**

#### Transplants

Featuring Tim Armstrong and Travis Barker, the Transplants is a band that wants to do something different but doesn't know how.

The album maintains a punk sensibility but branches liberally into metal, RATM-ish hardcore, Op Ivy-ish down-tempo reggae break-downs, and cheesy rap-rock, none of which suits them. In fact, they sound downright dokey. Some songs add to the schizophrenia with organs courtesy of Vic Ruggiero and background screeching/droning courtesy of Tim's wife. However, a handful of songs are fairly good - the punky "Sad But True" and the shuffling "California Babylon", for instance - but are bogged down by long running time

(most of the songs hover over the 4-minute mark). With their last two albums being less-than-good, one has to wonder if Rancid is simply delaying their responsibilities by spawning all these crappy sidebands. But better they get these crappy ideas and influences out of their system on the side than include them in their next album.

*Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026*

### **Trapt**

#### Trapt

One of those bands that are nowhere near as heavy as their name would suggest, Trapt play a grungy college rock a la Creed with a slight Vagrant emo tinge. Proficient and oozing with mass appeal, but too harmless and droning for me to care about.

*Warner Bros., 3300 Warner Blvd, Burbank, CA 91505-4694*

## **((( EDITOR'S PICK )))**

### **Travoltas**

#### Endless Summer

Perfect pop punk that follows one of my favorite punk family trees (Beach Boys to Ramones to Queers/MTX/Huntingtons). Travoltas have the Ramones guitar sound and speed, but focus more on the pop than punk, with great vocal harmonizing, 60s surf and 80s keys, and Weezer-style sappi-ness. Travoltas might be too saccharin for some people, but I like my punk the way I like my women - young, fun, sweet, and without teeth.

*Fastmusic, POB 206512, New Haven, CT 06520*



**Tsunami Bomb**The Ultimate Escape

I had heard good things about Tsunami Bomb, but somehow managed to miss hearing their stuff until now. Unfortunately, they don't live up to the hype. They are, simply, boring. The monotonous and unimaginative guitars drown everything else out, including Agent M's voice, which is lovely but unbefitting for punk. The songs aren't as poppy as I had hoped; they're all sludgy and same-sounding. It's possible TB got popular solely on Agent M's good looks, because the music just isn't strong.

*Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollyw'd, CA 90038*

**Unsilent Reign**Strangers Amongst Ourselves

Putting aside the fact that "unsilent" isn't a word, I tried to give this band an unbiased review. But I really don't like growly metal-core, so I'll just say they're ungood.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

**The Used**The Used

They have a great name for a punk band, but unfortunately, they aren't one. The Used play polished nu-metal, with some occasional screeching to give them an edge. "The Taste of Ink" and "Say Days Ago" are pretty good tunes, but overall, they don't tickle my pickle. It's kinda cool though that the singer is laying pipe in Kelly Osbourne.

*Reprise, represserecords.com*

**Useless ID**No Vacation From The World

Israeli pop-punk band with tight musicianship and very bright melodies. I have some criticisms, but they've all probably served time in the Israeli army, so I'll keep my mouth shut and say they're awesome.

*Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038*

**The Vandals**Internet Dating Super Studs

People disagree with me, but I think the Vandals reached their apex with "Looked At What I Almost Stepped In," a peak at which no mortal can climb higher. Consequently, their new one is a letdown to me. Not as catchy, not as clever, not as fun. They might as well be NOFX. It probably requires more listens, so I'll give it another try. The Vandals are ai-aight.

*Kung Fu, POB 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038*

**Various Artists**Don't Know When I'll Be Back Again

Proceeds of this comp benefits the Vietnam Veterans of America. Cleverly, the indie bands on this comp cover the tunes that define that era. Bands include big-name indie bands Q and Not U, Atombombpocketknife, Cable Car Theory, and Death Cab For Cutie, but I especially liked J. Robbins' cover of John Cale's awesome "Fear Is A Man's Best Friend" and Ted Leo's version of Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers to Cross" which conveys the same quiet anguish as the original.

*Exotic Fever, POB 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297*

**Various Artists**Don't Make Me Pull This Thing Over: A Road Rules Soundtrack Vol. 1

<13-year-old girl> Yayyyy!!! No one knows punk rock like MTV and Road Rules!! And they prove it with this AMAZING compilation of punk bands!! It is sooo kewl. It features those hotties Jimmy Eat World and Thursday and - ohmygawd - Unwritten Law. I love their punk rock. That cutie Dashboard Confessional is also on here, I LOVED his Unplugged performance. He is just so fucking deep!! This CD also has my favorite punk bands New Found Glory and the Get Up Kids. They are sooo kewl. I want them to play in my mall. I don't know who AFI and Thrice are but they kind of scare me. They suck. Why do they have to be so loud? Well, I'm happy to see my favorite bands all on one CD! And I can't believe Road Rules listens to the same music as me! Yayyyy!!! </13-year-old girl>

*Roadrunner, 902 Broadway, NYC 10010*

**Various Artists**Lookout! Freakout Episode 3

Featuring the expanded lineup of Lookout! and Panic Button, including Bratmobile, The Pattern, Yesterday's Kids, The Enemies, Queens, Ben Weasel, MTX, and Moral Crux, plus unreleased tracks from The Smugglers, American Steel, Ted Leo, more. Lookout! has never been more diverse, but man, how I long for the pop-punk days.

*Lookout, www.lookoutrecords.com*

**Various Artists**Love & Rebellion

Lot of good stuff, including tracks from the Arrivals, the Gadgets, the Tossers, Vortis, Blue Meanies, and Tom Daily. 21 tracks, half of which were unreleased or out of print.

*Thick, POB 220245, Chicago, IL 60622*

**Various Artists**OIL

Very strong comp featuring Rise Against, Alk3, The Arrivals, Lawrence Arms, The Ghost, Owls, Tom Daily, The Tossers, and many more. 19 tracks in all. Not just a sampler of Thick bands like Love & Rebellion, but simply a good comp with good bands.

*Thick, POB 220245, Chicago, IL 60622*

**Various Artists**The Philadelphia Sound

Features tracks by up-and-coming hardcore bands The Curse, Paint It Black, Knives Out, and Go! For The Throat. Good stuff. Philly ain't just about cream cheese anymore. Which is actually a shame, cuz cream cheese rules.

*Chunksaah, POB 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903*

**Various Artists**Songs From The Penalty Box

23 tracks of harmless, clean cut pop-punk. Featuring Ace Troubleshooter, Bleach, Slick Shoes, Two Thirty Eight, MXPX, and lots more. Squad Five-O is my fave on here, and Sidewalk Slam is also cool. Kutless and Calibretto 13, whom I never heard of, also have strong contributions.

*Tooth & Nail, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111*

**Various Artists**Under The Influence: A Tribute to the Smiths, The Clash, & The Cure

Well, those are my three favorite bands, though I'm not sure why they were picked. You don't normally hear of a tribute comp dedicated to three (very) different bands. And they spelled "Smiths" wrong on the cover. In any case, a lot of big name bands are on board: Saves the Day blasphemes the Clash with their wussed out and pathetic "Clash City Rockers" and should be put to death. Hot Water Music, Dropkick Murphys, and Murphy's Law cover the Clash a bit more successfully. H2O does a super-punk (but sincere) version of "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now," and the Meatmen and Vision burp out more Smiths covers. Converge does an extremely creepy version of "Disintegration", and Cave In and Chimaira attempt two other Cure tunes. The only covers on here that are any good are the ones by Murphy's Law and The Business, but two good covers don't save this shamelessly gimmicky and poorly executed tribute album.

*Too Damn Hype, POB 63524, Philadelphia, PA 19147*

**Viva Death**Viva Death

This supergroup features Trevor Keith of Face to Face, Scott Shiflett from the Foo Fighters, and Josh Freese from every band on the planet (including Guns N Roses and the Vandals). An interesting mix and they create an interesting sound. It's simply two baritone guitars (whatever that is) and drums, and they tune it all down so it's all sinister-like. They play gothic punk rock with slightly surfy, bubbly rhythm lines and dark, political lyrics. The only thing I don't like about the band is that it's contrived. It's not that they're mocking goth, but more like it doesn't suit them. And instead of succeeding at the nihilistic, dance-on-the-ashes-of-the-world style, the songs are more like brooding warnings. Still very cool though, and the songs are really strong.

*Vagrant, 2118 Wilshire Blvd #361, Santa Monica, CA 90403*

**Vortis**Take The System Down

My biggest gripe with political punk bands has been that they're usually fronted by kids who have no grasp on the real world. Vortis must've listened to me and went to the extreme opposite: they're fronted by a 60-year old professor of political science. And I have to say, it works. The lyrics are actually intelligent (if sometimes anti-PC, but hey, PC shields reality), and the singing isn't whiny, but a cool warbling, yowling, sorta weird, semi-rap attack. Sort of like if Bob Mould and Les Claypool had a 60-year old child. The guitars have that cool buzzsaw sound and the drums thump away enthusiastically. They've got a herky-jerky and confrontational sound, very similar to Dead Kennedys. If you like political punk, this is the real deal.

*Thick, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622*



## Wafflehouse

### Olympia

I love Waffle House. Not the band, but the actual eatery. But just like Waffle House's phenomenal hash browns, the band Wafflehouse has a sound that's scattered, smothered, covered, chunked, topped, diced and peppered. Especially scattered and peppered: this is post-punk indie rock that's a whirlwind of noise and energy. Fun stuff.

*Forge Again, POB 146837, Chicago, IL 60614*

## The Wake Ups

### Wanna Meet...?

Pure pop rock from Australia with exceptionally good vocals and songwriting.

*Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

## Wanted Dead

### Repercussions

They play super old-school mid-tempo hardcore, a great sound that very few bands attempt to emulate. The problem with Wanted Dead, though, is that the lyrics are really clichéd and the vocals are pretty weak. Not that you need to be Pavarotti to sing/shout hardcore, but the poor-man's-Ian MacKaye-with-a-sore-throat thing is hard to digest after awhile. But if that's not an issue for you, and it's not for most hardcore fans, check them out.

*Chunksaah, POB 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903*

## The Washdown

### The Washdown EP

A slightly louder and punker version of the garage rock we've been inundated with the past year. This 6-song EP is a fun blast of melodic energy, but I'm tired of this trend.

*Lookout!, 3264 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA 9403*

## We Ragazzi

### The Ache

I'm not crazy about the nasal whining and pretentious posturing, but We Ragazzi does have an interesting sound that's part math-rock and part garage-rock (you don't hear free-form, jazzy drumming in garage rock too often). They also use a funky synthesizer to bang out the main angular melodies.

*Self-Starter Foundation, POB 1562, New York, NY 10276*

## Welcome To Your Life

### There's No Turning Back

Energetic, Scandinavian-styled metalcore that's melodic and headbang-inducing. The guitars take a page from Iron Maiden, which is definitely a positive. Great metal from a band with a crappy name.

*Indecision, POB 6052, Garden Grove, CA 92846*

## Whiskey Rebels

### Whiskey Rebels

Goofy alcohol-drenched street punk and oil from members of Pressure Point. It has a fun appeal, and it's catchy enough to avoid being generic (unless you include the lyrics). Plus their logo is reminiscent of Guns N' Roses. Not as good as Pressure Point (WR is like PP's fratboy twin), but still fun.

*GMM, POB 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333*

## Yakuza

### Way Of The Dead

I normally like experimental metal (experimental?), and Yakuza are pretty good in a Candiria-meeting-Helmet-at-the-Blue-Note-to-discuss-King-Crimson sort of way, but they seem to just miss the mark. For one, the vocals aren't very strong. Growling is at a minimum, but the vocals are a bit bland. Also, they seem to lack oomph, for lack of a better onomatopoeia. With the exception of Obscurity (which features a neat avant-garde sax duel), the songs just aren't very interesting enough. Like, they might as well just be straight-up metal songs. There is a tune on here that seemed at first glance to be ambitious enough to save the album – the 43-minute, modal-improvisational "01000011110011" which, unfortunately, is binary code for "Bitches Brew rip-off." Regardless, huge props to Yakuza for doing something different.

*Century Media, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250*

## ((( EDITOR'S PICK )))

### Young Heart Attack

#### Young Heart Attack EP

Awesome!! This is like a cross between Zepelin and AC/DC with Robert Plant-ish lead vocals and perfectly fitting female backup vox. But this isn't your shitty modern classic rock crap. YHA truly takes the sound and energy of the rockiest 70s bands and make them louder and snottier. The last tune is the most perfect example of the bridge between classic rock and punk rock – you have to hear it. This is an editor's pick solely for that last track!

*Beggars, 580 Broadway #1004, NY, NY 10012*

## Zao

### All Else Failed

Strangely enough, Zao aren't as bad as I remembered them to be. Perhaps this album is better, that is to say, not as awful, but I was actually able to listen to it. I wonder if it was all the beer I drank, or the fact I was checking out lesbian porn while listening to it, but this album wasn't traumatic to my eardrums! So if listening to Zao is normally a form of torture to you, give them another shot!

*Solid State, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111*

## Thalia Zedek

### You're A Big Girl Now EP

Another good solo album from Zedek, whose powerful voice sounds great on four originals and two covers. Yeah, it's singer/songwriter fare, but sometimes you need some easy listening.

*Kimchee, 6 Sagamore Rd, Ipswich, MA 01938*

## Zelienople

### Pajama Avenue

Hushed live-band ambient stuff. Whispy vocals, brush drummings, soft melodies on sequencers and synths, echoed production, etc. etc. Like any band that does these mellow dreamscapes, they're good at what they do, if you can stay awake long enough to listen to it.

*Loose Thread Recordings, POB 220180, Chicago, IL 60622*

I received many promos between our deadline and print date—they will be reviewed in the next ish, and also on readmag.com. Here are some:

**54 40 Or Fight! - fiftyfourfortyorfight.com**  
Sicbay "Overreaction Time"

**A-F, a-frecords.com**  
Introspect "S/T"

**ARRCO—arenarockrecordingco.com**  
Pilot To Gunner "Games At High Speeds"

**Dim Mak—dimmak.com**  
Dance Disaster Movement "We Are From Nowhere"  
Soledad Brothers "Live"

**Doughouse—doughouserecords.com**  
Sunday Driver "A Letter To Bryson City"

**Elektra—elektra.com**  
Sworn Enemy "As Real As It Gets"

**Fat Wreck—fatwreck.com**  
Fabulous Disaster "Panty Raid!"  
Mad Caddies "Just One More"  
Swingin' Utters "Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass, and Bones"  
(Note: these three albums rule)

**Fearless—fearlessrecords.com**  
Rock Kills Kid "S/T" EP

**Frenchkiss—frenchkissrecords.com**  
The Bloodthirsty Lovers "S/T"

**Fueled By Ramen—fueledbyramen.com**  
Kissing Chaos "Enter With A Bullet"

**Hopeless—hopelessrecords.com**  
Stairwell "The Sounds Of Change"

**Indecision—indecisionrecords.com**  
In Control "The Truth Hurts"  
Suicide File "Twilight"

**Iodine—iodinerecordings.com**  
Garrison "The Model" EP

**Nicotine—nicotinerecords.com**  
Gaza Strippers "From The Desk Of..."  
Trigger "Distort & Explode"  
V/A "Label Sampler"

**Pig Pile—pigpilerecords.com**  
Random Road Mother "Mother Jugs & Speed"  
Three Day Threshold "Behind The Barn"

**Relapse—relapse.com**  
V/A "Contaminated 5.0"

**Sidecho—sidecho.com**  
Fairview "We'll Dodge It On The Way Back"  
V/A "Point Break Vol. 1"

**Solid State—solidstaterecords.com**  
Soul Embraced "Immune"

**Tooth & Nail—toothandnail.com**  
Dogwood "Seismic"  
Furthermore "Sheandi"

**Wind-Up/BMG**  
Evanescence "Fallen"  
Sdtrk "Daredevil: The Album"



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## SELF-RELEASED

**David Aaron**The Patchwork EP

21-year old David Aaron plays all instruments on these six grungey, distortion-heavy tracks. His voice isn't very strong and the guitar parts don't vary much within songs, but it's otherwise a decent hard rock release.

[www.davidaaron.net](http://www.davidaaron.net)

**The Bamboo Kids**The Bamboo Kids

NYC garage rock n' roll. The vocals are like a cross between Electric Frankenstein and early AC/DC, only a bit annoying. They're best when they channel Johnny Thunders, as on "Nothing To Do" and "She Got Off", but other good songs include "Caught In NYC" and "Guns of Brooklyn". I have to admit I like them (they've also got a neat Undertones vibe going), and I normally can't stomach Brooklyn hipster stuff.

[www.thebambookids.com](http://www.thebambookids.com)

**Big Poppa E**Wussy Boy and B-Sides

It's hard for me to relate to most spoken word, because I'm not a minority, a woman, or angry at the system, nor do I like hearing people bitch about their lives in some scripted, yet breathless, faked emotional way. But then there's Big Poppa E—spoken word artist for the Everyman. BPE is every dorky, thoughtful, sensitive kid that's ever gotten beat up for listening to the Cure. He's energetic, funny, self-deprecating, nostalgic, and wistful, and he's got these two CDs to prove it. "Wussy Boy" is taken from his best-known piece "The Wussy Boy Manifesto", his self-proclaimed Stairway to Heaven and a brilliant rant against a society that breeds aggro jock fucks while belittling sensitive males. Other pieces, like "Jesus Moshpit" and "Frat Boy", also slam the alpha males that made our lives hell in junior high, but most of his pieces deal with the human condition, complicated emotions, and personal relationships for better or worse. "B-Sides" is an odds-n-sods collection of various recordings, so the content and sound quality isn't as consistent as "Wussy Boy", but it still makes for a good companion disc.

<http://poetryslam.livejournal.com>

**Crème Blush**Basket Of Bets

Refreshing synth-pop from this female duo. They're considered punk, but I get a Joy Division feel from them.

[www.iluvcremeblush.com](http://www.iluvcremeblush.com)

**Ether**Great Ocean Road

Fluid melodies, Mexican acoustic guitars, and minimalist drumming are the positives. Weak vocals and borderline cheesiness are the negatives. And it doesn't help their case that they're Russell Crowe's backing band. Overall, it's okay. It can be either boring or narcotic, like staring at the waves.

POB 35125, Philadelphia, PA 19128

**Golem**Libeshmertzn (Love Hurts)

When the infamous Rabbi Loew of Prague created a man out of clay in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, little did he know his golem would become the inspiration for both Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and, much later, a band fronted by one shayna maydala. Hailing from New York (where else?), Golem rocks out traditional Yiddish stories of love's joys and pains, topped with darkly ironic twists common to us jaded Jews. Fronted by the gorgeously olive-toned and multi-linguistic Annette Ezekiel, songs are delivered in English, French, Russian, Yiddish, Serbian, and the rare Yiddish-Spanish hybrid Ladino (those kooky Sephardim!). Behind Annette, trombones, fiddles, accordions, and upright basses churn out standard, mid-tempo klezmer with some gypsy swagger and 30's retro reminiscent of a kosher Squirrel Nut Zippers (mostly on stand-out tracks "Spitting Song" and "Black Cat White Cat"). While the musical and lyrical attempt to encompass all of European Jewish culture seems overreaching and self-kvelling, Golem succeeds at breathing life into the dead clay of Yiddish folk music.

[www.golemrocks.com](http://www.golemrocks.com)

**Hacha**Hacha

Southern rock sucks, but some bands, like the Black Crowes, have found that mixing up the Americana folk rock with from-the-gut vocals and 50s/60s blues passion can actually make this genre... cool. And Hacha takes a page from the Crowes with a stunningly good 9-track CD that features killer rock vocals, neat-sounding slide guitars, and a John Bonham-styled thumping. Some of the songs have a cool riffs-in-progress sound that brings to mind the Yardbirds and the first Sabbath album. While not a very fresh-sounding band, Hacha have mastered the classic rock that makes you blow the dust off your Zeppelin albums.

[www.hacha.net](http://www.hacha.net)

**Hilltop Distillery**...Died In The Woods

Spooky and fragmented instrumental indie rock amplified by dissonant buzzing over a competent rhythm section. As good as any band in this genre; I'm surprised this Kentucky trio haven't been picked up yet.

7408 Dixie Hwy, Florence, KY 41042

**The Numbskulls**G String

Sloppy but fun pop-punk. They have some of the probs that really young punk bands have: vocals that are goofier than they need to be, awful faux-ska breakdowns, and bad background vocals. Nonetheless, they have a cute, infectious fun sound that seems to have disappeared from the punk scene over the past few years.

[www.thenumbskulls.com](http://www.thenumbskulls.com)

**Nuts In Your Mouth**Guaranteed To Like It If You Got A Ass

A tight juggle of comedic/tragic narratives, socio-political criticism, and richly textured post-modern American imagery form the core of each Nuts In Your Mouth composition. This

is the most important music and message ever recorded. From the lips of God, through the vessel that is Nuts In Your Mouth, to your ears. Nuts In Your Mouth is the culmination of 10,000 years of Man's cultural evolution.

[www.nutsinyourmouth.com](http://www.nutsinyourmouth.com)

**Terminus Victor**Mastering The Revels

Punk-style guitars and grungey singing over fast electronic drums and breakbeats. It's a neat juxtaposition and seems to work fairly well. Not too crazy about the vocals or repetitive choruses, but good idea.

[www.terminusvictor.com](http://www.terminusvictor.com)

## VINYL

Since I live in the 21st century, my big, bulky record player is stored somewhere out of the way. Thus, for vinyl submissions, I can only review the cover art and regurgitate the press kit, and leave the rest to your imagination.

**The Helgas**The Helgas

Five tracks; "short punchy punk-rock" that has "the urgency of the Clash and the sonic gut-wrench of Social Distortion". Cool. The cover is a kid on a scooter.

1349 West Taylor #3R, Chicago, IL 60607

**Holding On / Coalition**Split 7"

Three songs from Holding On, a hardcore band from Minneapolis. Two songs from Coalition, an eclectic hardcore/punk/metal band from Michigan. The art features a cartoon likeness of the bands standing in a police line-up with looks of displeasure.

Martyr, POB 955, Harriman, NY 10926

## MULTIMEDIA

Note: I haven't watched these DVDs yet, so here are only the descriptions. I have heard, however, that the Bouncing Souls DVD is "da bomb diggity."

**Bouncing Souls**Do You Remember? DVD

Supposedly awesome documentary and behind-the-scenes stuff, tons of extras, and a live concert. I'm dying to see it, I just have to find it in my pile o' promos.

[www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com)

**Various Artists**Secret Weapons of Kung Fu DVD

Great for the money (\$7). 18 videos from the Kung Fu roster (Vandals, Ozma, The Ataris and more), plus extras like audio commentary and punk movie trailers.

[www.kungfurecords.com](http://www.kungfurecords.com)

**Various Artists**Punk-O-Rama: The Videos, Vol. 1 DVD

22 videos from the Epitaph roster (Rancid, NOFX, you name it), plus "The Epitaph Story", and live Souls and Bad Religion.

[www.epitaph.com](http://www.epitaph.com)





All reviews by  
Christopher  
Campbell

## Shanghai Knights

Let me start by saying that I loved Shanghai Noon. I also know that to have high expectations for a sequel is just a set-up for disappointment. And yet I couldn't wait for Shanghai Knights. Two of the most upsetting movies of last year were The Tuxedo and I Spy, which starred Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson, respectively. And yet I still eagerly anticipated the release of Shanghai Knights. Well, not only was I not disappointed, but the sequel is possibly even more fun than the original.

Director David Dobkin and screenwriters Alfred Gough and Miles Millar know the key elements that the actors' previous writers and directors overlooked. One of the most important of these elements is freedom. Chan is given plenty of room for creating inspired action sequences in which he emulates and pays homage to heroes Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Gene Kelly and Mack Sennett's Keystone Cops (surprisingly no pie throwing was witnessed). Wilson, on the other hand, was obviously given the freedom to improvise, resulting in some of the most hilarious lines in recent cinema (don't miss the naming of his children in a priceless throwaway).

In between Chan's choreography and Wilson's dialogue is a plot in which the characters



Jackie talks about his midwifing days.

Chon Wang and Roy O'Bannon travel to England in order to avenge the death of Wang's father. Accompanied by Wang's beautiful and talented sister Lin (Wong), the pair must retrieve an ancient Chinese artifact and rescue the royal family from being killed off by machine gun. In their pursuits, they come in contact with a number of famous Brits including Jack the Ripper and Queen Victoria, creating plenty of moments so historically inaccurate that no gaff squad could dare take them seriously.

There is surely an overabundance of cliché jokes regarding England and fish out of water scenarios in general, but the genuine humor and entertainment comes from the two stars and their incredible chemistry together. Remarkably, there is little or no recycled material from the original - a rarity these days.

Shanghai Knights is a complete blast, a welcome load of laughs and excitement after an awful year for high-end movies. Hopefully, if any of this year's blockbusters are nearly as entertaining, 2003 could be full of enjoyment.

## How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days

My plans for viewing How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days included conflicting tasks. I decided to write my review as a "How to Lose an Audience in 2 Hours: The Universal Don'ts of Filmmaking", and at the same time I bet myself that I would be charmed enough not to walk out, no matter how uncomfortable I made myself.

I attended a sneak preview of the movie on a crowded Saturday night and it quickly sold out. I thought about my bet and decided to sit in the very front row of the auditorium, but it was taken over by a slew of teen girls. The rest of the seats were all occupied and there were few options available that weren't against fire codes and moral ethics. I ended up standing against the back wall and kept my winter coat on regardless of how hot I became. After five minutes, my legs were tired and I had tremendous doubts of winning the bet.

On the screen I was introduced to Ben Barry (McConaughey), an advertising executive who wants an account so badly that he accepts a bet from his boss (Klein) to make a woman fall in love with him. If he wins, he gets the account. The woman who is picked for him is Andie Anderson (Hudson), a writer for the women's magazine Compore. Problem is, she has just accepted an assignment from her boss (Neuwirth) called "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days". In a week and a half, Barry puts on the charm to woo Andersen while she does everything she can to get dumped.

I was immediately turned off by the clichés and set ups. The only "bet" premises I've respected were dealt with more harshly and realistically in films like Dogfight and In the Company of Men. It doesn't make this film any fresher to include the twist of a reverse mission. It just makes the story doubly annoying and doubly difficult to accept a happy ending. I guess they could have told the story in an interesting way, at least, but the screenplay features nothing new, and eventually sinks low enough to introduce fart jokes two thirds in.

In spite of how bored I was with the story, I found myself smiling. McConaughey and Hudson are so beautiful and talented that I actually enjoyed watching them most of the time. Adam Goldberg and Ben Garant are also fun as McConaughey's sidekicks. I can't say I laughed out loud more than once, but I wasn't completely edging my way to the exit, either. I just wish that the actors could make better choices in their roles. Maybe this will be a breakthrough for them both to accelerate their stardom and allow them more freedom in the future.

In the end, I won my bet with myself. I didn't walk out. There were plenty of times where I honestly wanted to really badly. The makers of the film succeeded in many of the "don'ts of filmmaking" in my opinion, but the rest of the audience was not lost at all and may have even loved the whole thing. Next time a picture like this comes along, I think I would rather write a piece entitled, "How I Better Spent My Time Than Seeing This Movie".



McConaughey

## Final Destination 2

I am completely paranoid right now. I have just seen the new sequel to Final Destination and it has proven effective in scaring the hell out of me. I believe that I can die any second now and am completely aware of my surroundings, looking for signs, cautious of anything that might lead to my demise. Regardless of how good or bad the sequel is or whether or not it is a rehash of its predecessor, the fact remains that it succeeded in its goals.

The picture opens on the anniversary of events featured in its predecessor. Kimberly Corman (Cook) is beginning a road trip to Florida with some friends when she envisions a horrible traffic accident. Hoping to save the occupants of her car as well as those behind her at an on-ramp, she swerves sideways and parks, blocking entrance onto the highway. Those beholden yet skeptical of the prophecy are an assortment of characters including Officer Thomas Burke (Landes) instead of the usual cast of young adults and teenagers.

After the first of these characters dies, Kimberly seeks out the help of Clear Rivers (Larter), the sole survivor of the first film (Devon Sawa's character, Alex Browning, is explained to have suffered a lame fate between scripts). They gather up the cast in an attempt to foil death's plans with Kimberly's prognostic gift as well as a keen attention to omens in general.

Also returning to give advice is Tony Todd's creepy mortician. The guidance he provides is

both confusing and leads to some inconsistency in the storytelling. Then midway through, we are let in on an interesting yet improbable connection to the events in the last film. The worst thing the script has to offer, though, is the nugatory third act. The movie starts off with a bang, plays out strongly and then peters out rather disappointingly.

The script does have fun with itself, though. Little hints and homages show more attention to the filling than the crust. Where Sean William Scott's goofiness is missed, the picture exhibits humor in other ways through an absurd tone that does provide a crescendo in the end. Despite the uneven layout, the astounding dance of automobiles that kicks the movie off is not to be missed and the many graphic deaths which follow have more suspense, shock and flair than anything from the original. Fans of Rube Goldberg machinations will not be disappointed.

In the end, the overall theme is lasting. I can't imagine it is possible to not leave the theater even a little more wary of your surroundings and a little more concerned with how unexpected death can be. Is it necessary for more than one of these movies? Probably not. The first one was sufficient in that regard. But while Final Destination 2 isn't the freshest sequel, it is still one of the more creative and frightening follow-up productions I've seen in years.



## Confessions of a Dangerous Mind

In 1982, television game show producer Chuck Barris released his "unauthorized autobiography", shocking readers with the profession that he was a hitman for the CIA. While there was no way to prove the fact, all his connections having been killed, he described convincing yet unbelievable accounts of assassinating people around the world using prize vacations from The Dating Game as a front. He even claims that the idea for The Newlywed Game came from an interrogation demonstration during his operative training sessions.

Who better to adapt the book for the big screen than Charlie Kaufman, who has made surreal fun fictionalizing real people in Being John Malkovich and Adaptation. And yet, here, the most absurd plot points are not of Kaufman's device. According to Barris, the only additions to the film are references to his real father being a serial killer and of being raised as a girl. Everything else is supposedly true regardless of the film's deep tone of subtle mockery.

The film begins with Barris (Rockwell) describing his first sexual experience and subsequent dissolution with women. He gets whatever jobs he can that are associated with television in his hopes of becoming famous, something he seems to believe will get him laid. He meets a hippie girl named Penny (Barrymore) who is free about sex, and they pursue a comprising yet difficult relationship.

Meanwhile, Barris develops a pilot of "The Dating Game" for ABC but the show is not picked up. Feeling like a failure he jumps at a chance to serve his country when the mysterious Jim Byrd (Clooney) recruits him as a contracted killer. Then his game show is given another chance and becomes a huge success leading to other hits, including "The Gong Show". He continues to make hits for the government as well, even devising game show ideas like "Operation: Entertainment" as a cover for his trips around the world.

The idea of Barris' double life can be seen as an excuse for many problems he felt his life included, and Kaufman's screenplay makes them apparent without putting a spotlight on the deductions. Did Barris make up his secret world because his accomplishments weren't interesting enough for a book? Was he making a parody out of the excuses people use for their infidelity? (When Chuck and Penny are having dinner in one scene, a spy [Roberts] who he is having an affair with shows up and he has great trouble with how to explain her.)

There is also great irony, relevance and timeliness to the story of Chuck Barris being the father of reality television. All of the current dating programs owe a lot to his conceptions and just the other day it became obvious to me how similar the American Idol auditions were to The Gong Show. In the end, many critics blamed Barris for the downfall of television and its exploitation of regular people and their desires for fame. After all, he knew the desire well, and made it easy and popular for others to claim their own 15 minutes by making complete fools of themselves. Perhaps Chuck Barris feels guilty for the death of America as much as he could feel guilty for the deaths of those he has assassinated.

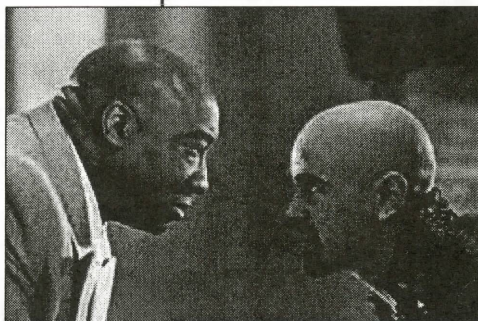
The major differences between source and adaptation are in the fine line the film takes in its belief in the material. Chuck Barris wrote his story with deadpan seriousness. George Clooney, in his directorial debut, shoots the picture as if it's a dream with a bit of uneasiness and unevenness in Newton Thomas Sigel's photography. And yet the performances seem completely serious as do the documentary interviews with Dick Clark, Jim Lange and others. In contrast with last year's Oscar winner A Beautiful Mind, the picture might be seen as a lampoon or at best an antithetical companion. There are even slight hints at skepticism in the way that infamous urban legends are displayed, including the infamous episode of The Newlywed Game in which a young woman misunderstood a question about the strangest place she's ever had sex.

Confessions is probably Kaufman's most accessible and commercial script so far. On the surface the plot is straightforward, entertaining and funny. Underneath we still see signs of his genius and spot other levels to his humor, though this film is not nearly as hilarious as Being John Malkovich nor as brilliantly crafted as Adaptation and is thankfully not as absurd as Human Nature.

## Daredevil

The process of adapting a comic book to film doesn't seem that difficult. Most comics are like well-drawn story-boards and much of the visual imagination needed to bring a novel to screen is unnecessary with such a pictorial media. Yet with Mark Stephen Johnson's new film Daredevil, the real differences between comics and movies become far too apparent.

Based on the Marvel Comics super-hero, Daredevil follows the story of Matt Murdock (Affleck), who, as a boy has both the misfortune to be blinded by toxic waste and then witness the murder of his father



A tender moment.

without the opportunity to see the killers. Years later, he has honed the rest of his senses to superhuman degrees and also become a pro-bono lawyer. At night, Murdock dresses up in red leather, becoming judge, jury and executioner for those criminals who slide innocently through the legal system because of their connection with a corrupt businessman known as the Kingpin (Duncan). He becomes torn with his reputation as a vigilante which gets even worse when, thanks to a crazed hitman called Bullseye (Farrell), he is blamed for the murder of Nikolaos Natchios (Erick Avari), who happens to be the father of his new martial-artist girlfriend Elektra (Garner).

With his script, Johnson shows a great understanding of the Marvel Comics super-hero and the universe in which he resides, showing familiarity even with past writers and artists of the series which he references throughout the movie. Daredevil doesn't tell the greatest story, ever, but I was far more interested in it than other recent attempts at the genre. Maybe because I am less familiar with the characters, here, or possibly because there seems less attempt to make them more real than they need to be.

Nearly every shot in the film seems lifted from the pages of the comic, with stylish framing and in-your-face allegory. Take, for instance, the metaphor implied when Natchios is killed, shot overhead, laying atop a scattering of newspapers as reporter Ben Urich (Joe Pantoliano) arrives. Then, there are the scenes focused on Murdock's POV with figures becoming more "visible" through his senses of hearing or touch. Johnson has even come up with some interesting imagery both with his use of rainfall and use of a heart-beat.

Unfortunately, while the story and visuals would make for a great comic book, the cinematic elements of Daredevil are a disappointment. The shots, while great on their own, rarely cut well, particularly in the awkwardly choreographed fight sequences. With each battle, I became confused in my attempt to follow the action. The worst fight scene, though, is actually the most fluent, with Murdock and Elektra slowly showing off their moves to each other on a playground in what would seem like a badly staged rehearsal.

The acting, too, leaves much to be desired. Casting hot young stars is a good move for the studio in order to sell the lesser known characters, and they aren't the worst actors in Hollywood today, but comic books usually sound laughable when read aloud, and that seems to be the case here. Only Farrell knows how to have fun with his character, maybe because Bullseye is the least developed in the picture.

I did enjoy Daredevil. I had low expectations, though, and found myself far more entertained than anticipated. There are some memorable scenes and some decent photography, just sloppily directed. What would make the picture better, perhaps, would be a slide show with voice over, leaving out all movement whatsoever. Actually, maybe it would just be better as a comic book.

Check out more reviews on Christopher Campbell's site at [www.geocities.com/cameroncaul](http://www.geocities.com/cameroncaul)



# Snap Judgments of Movies We Haven't Seen

Adam Liebling & Bryan Kremkau

**About Schmidt**—I saw a trailer and it featured Kathy Bates in a bathtub. My eyes shall never be clean.

**Against the Ropes**—Sounds like a kinky s&m flick.

**Antwone Fisher**—I liked this movie when it was called Men Of Honor. Oh wait, no I didn't.

**Biker Boyz**—Something tells me this movie will do really well in San Francisco.

**Blue Collar Comedy Tour: The Movie**—You might be a redneck if you have something called the Blue Collar Comedy Tour.

**Catch Me If You Can**—Leonardo DiCaprio is a man of many disguises - spoiled actor, haughty recluse, bratty man-child...

**Charlie's Angels 2**—Just how far can Hollywood go in insulting our intelligence? Oh yeah, Scooby Doo 2.

**Chicago**—Richard Gere in a musical? How does he dance so well with rodents stuffed up his ass?

**Confessions of a Dangerous Mind**—Directed by George Clooney? GONG!

**Dark Blue**—No idea, but good to see Kurt Russell working.

**Darkness Falls**—Ooo, spooky. NEXT!

**Drumline**—Drum roll please... straight to video.

**Eight Crazy Nights**—Yes, it was crazy, those eight nights this movie played in theaters.

**Final Destination 2**—This would be my final destination. Like, I would go anywhere possible first before stepping into a theater to see this.

**Gangs of New York**—Shouldn't this movie feature Christopher Walken as a psycho pimp?

**Gods And Generals**—They made a prequel to Gettysburg, while there still isn't a sequel to the Goonies? What the hell is up with Hollywood??

**The Guest**—I think this is a movie about my tapeworm.

**A Guy Thing**—Julia Stiles and Selma Blair fight over Jason Lee. Yeah, this thing happens to most guys.

**How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days**—Take him to this movie.



**Cuz sometimes you don't need to see it to know it sucks.**

**The Hunted**—Tommy Lee Jones is an FBI agent... chasing after a killer... for the sixteenth time...

**Just Married**—The Nick Cage-Lisa Marie Presley story.

**Kangaroo Jack**—Jerry Bruckheimer proves once again that he'll put his name on any piece of crap that passes his desk.

**The Life of David Gale**—Kevin Spacey on death row. I think for being in K-PAX.

**Maid In Manhattan**—I heard she demanded body doubles to do the cleaning scenes.

**Max**—John Cusack is such a cutie. And that Hitler friend of his...!

**Narc**—I liked this movie better when it was called Training Day. Oh wait, no I didn't.

**National Security**—Has anyone noticed that Martin Lawrence is about as funny as a child dying of leukemia?

**Old School**—Luke Wilson, Will Ferrell, and Vince Vaughn in this poignant documentary on Agnostic Front.

**The Pianist**—Vicktor Borge finally gets a movie about himself. I hope they leave in the scene where his piano seat has seatbelts on it.

**Pinocchio**—Roberto Benigni shames his country once again.

**The Recruit**—Al Pacino teaches Colin Farrell the ropes. "No, it's not Woohoo, it's Woohaa!"

**Shanghai Knights**—I wonder if Shanghai Mourning will be about Jackie Chan dying of old age?

**Sonny**—I think this is about that Bono guy who boned Cher.

**Star Trek: Nemesis**—The crew faces their greatest nemesis—osteoporosis.

**Terminator 3**—Instead of "I'll be back!", it's "Ow, my back!"

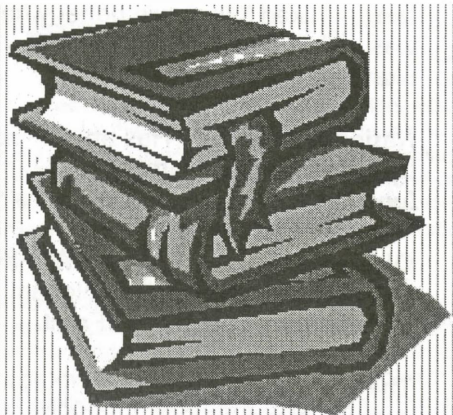
**Till Human Voices Wake Us**—Guy Pearce and Helena Bonham-Carter. It seems like it couldn't possibly suck, but suck it shall.

**Treasure Planet**—A pirate walks into a bar. Barkeep says, "Hey mister, you got a steering wheel attached to your crotch!" To which the pirate replies, "ARRR!! And it's driving me nuts!" Sorry, I got nothin'.

**Two Weeks Notice**—Miss 28 Days meets Mr. 9 Months for two weeks in the theaters. And the title's the worst grammar I've seen since Eight Legged Freaks.

**View From The Top**—"This is the story of a young woman (Paltrow) from meager beginnings who dreams of becoming a flight attendant as her chance to see the world." In related news, real flight attendants willing to trade places with Gwyneth Paltrow.





# READING LIST

## EDITOR'S PICK

### **Lords of the Harvest: Biotech, Big Money, and the Future of Food**

Daniel Charles

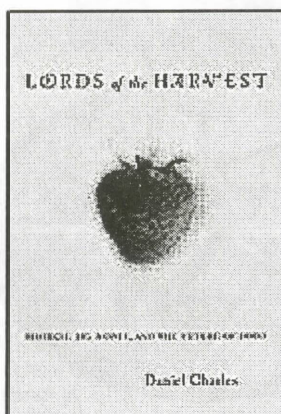
Perseus Publishing, 368 pages

I found this one of the most gripping books I've read in a while. It's ironic, considering that both agriculture and genomics seem like boring topics. But Daniel Charles, a former science reporter for NPR, tells the background and history of the agricultural biotech industry in such a fascinating and fluid manner that it's no surprise when he reveals in the epilogue that he considers himself more of a storyteller than reporter.

He means that in the sense of sharing a story—not spinning one. While biotech foods have bred only ardent supporters and passionate protestors, he manages to stay completely center, offering the most realistic and balanced account I have read on this issue.

Charles' subjects aren't black-and-white/good-and-evil, and neither is agriculture biotech. At all levels, Charles offers even-handed perspective on the scientists, corporations, investors, farmers, government officials and regulators, consumers, and protestors that are involved in this controversy.

At the center of the story is Monsanto, one of the country's largest chemical company, whose scientists in the 1980s started turning towards biotech for ideals both utopian and commercial. Excited, scientists at the dawn of biotechnology thought anything was possible. For instance, if a plant's DNA could be altered so as to kill the insects that feed on it, there would be less need to spray massive amounts of pesticides. Or perhaps a gene could be spliced into a fruit to make its shelf life longer. Or a potato that can be enriched with nutrients to feed developing nations. Or as Calgene had hoped, a perfect tomato that could be grown in the off-season and in chilly climates.



The result would be beneficial to farmers—bigger and better yields; to food retailers who can keep their products on the shelves longer; to consumers who could enjoy their tomato or strawberry year-round; and to the companies and their investors who would be reaping the commercial benefits of the seemingly infinite amount of new technology and markets. And, ideally, the world could benefit with a food supply that is designed to withstand disease, pests, and weather conditions.

Over twenty years have passed since the first successful genetic modification (not counting traditional agricultural practices, like cross-breeding), and utopia has not been realized. Part of it is the science itself, which took years to learn, understand, and test. Part of it is public suspicion at genetically-engineered food and the corporate patenting of the building blocks of life. And part is government bureaucracy. But most of it was caused by Monsanto shooting themselves in the foot with their Microsoftesque greed—demanding farmers to only use their products, forcing them to not replant their own seeds (and the consideration of using a “Terminator” gene that would sterilize seeds to ensure farmers can’t replant), and finally, attempting to take over and control the seed industry. In effect, what has been considered a gift from nature—seeds—would come under the jurisdiction of one company. Our basic right to create our own food would no longer be free.

Fortunately, that nightmare scenario never happened, but the negative publicity created by these actions have fueled people's mistrust of corporations tampering with food and the environment, which in turn has slowed down the scientific progress in this field.

But though biotechnology could potentially be the key to ending world hunger, those who hold the patents, money, and know-how aren't the most philanthropic lot. And there's always the chance that investor impatience and corporate hubris will more likely unleash Frankenstein's monster before perfecting that perfect tomato.



## A Drink With Shane Macgowan

Victoria Mary Clark  
Grove Press

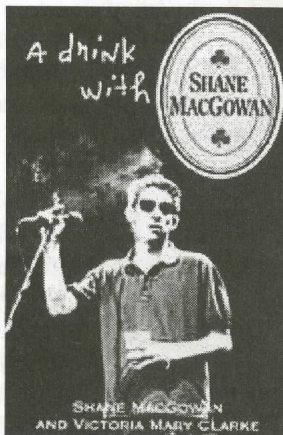
A year ago, I had never heard of the Pogues and now they are one of my favorite bands, combining rock and traditional Irish music and making it accessible for pop audiences. As evinced in this book, Shane Macgowan, their legendary Irish singer and songwriter, truly lived the true rock star life: drugs, sex, alcohol, and rock n' roll, all in huge excess.

This book is broken up into eight chapters and is written by Shane's then-girlfriend and writer/journalist Victoria. This isn't a typical biography book because it's done like an interview.

Victoria poses a question and Shane answers it in depth, and most of his answers are entertaining and shocking at the same time. One thing that shocked me was that he started to drink at least once a day when he was five years old!

The Pogues broke up in the early '90s when they realized that it wasn't the same without Shane, who was kicked out of the band for missing so many gigs because of drugs and apathy. (Interestingly, Joe Strummer of the Clash would sometimes fill in for him.) Shane also talks about growing up in Ireland and London, his time spent in the loony bin, Pogues stories, world history, and Buddhism, plus lots of miscellaneous tidbits. (I was surprised to learn that he was a huge reggae fan, and now I can notice it in some of his songs.)

This book is really good because, in a sense, it is one long, fascinating interview. If you would like to know about Shane Macgowan, this book is both informative and fun. —Bryan Kremkau

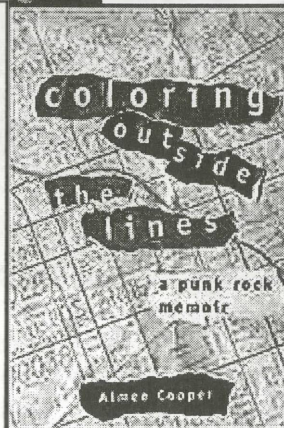


## Coloring Outside the Lines: A Punk Rock Memoir

Aimee Cooper  
Rowdy's Press, 132 pages

This autobio covers the usual punk rocker journey: alienated high school kid discovers the utopia that is punk rock ("I finally belong!"), enthusiastically joins the scene, becomes a scenester for awhile, becomes disenchanted with the "utopia" and eventually leaves the nest ("I am my own person!").

Aimee Cooper is one such average punk. Her stories are surprisingly banal for someone who spent time in the early 80s LA punk scene. The only interesting things that happen in her life as a punk, that piqued my interest and made me think of something other than "so what?" are unfortunately given only short passages: getting arrested, hanging out with Black Flag, and being the recipient of a lesbian crush.



While her punk experiences aren't worth writing about, her writing itself is very well done. She stays away from clichés, name-dropping, and exercises in punker-than-thou self-indulgence, and writes in a personal way that's easy to relate to. There is also a surprising, and seemingly unintentional, honesty in her writing. You can tell she's a bit dorky — she was of graduate school age and her best friends were in their early teens — and that, deep down, she was still an outsider even when she belonged in the group. As a reader, you get the feeling

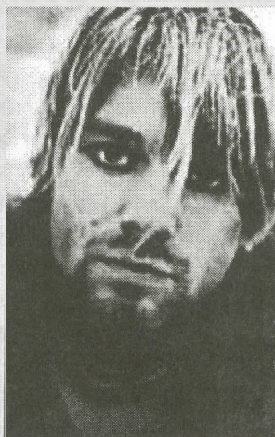
that the punk rock scene didn't really suit her, that she outgrew it before she really tried it on, and it's no shock when you discover on the last page that she bowed out of the scene within a year and a half of entering it. While not a good book to reflect the early hardcore/punk scene, it is a good reflection of one girl's inner journey to maturity and self-esteem.

—Adam Liebling

## Journals

Kurt Cobain  
Riverhead Books, 304 pages

Putting aside the obvious moral corundum of disrespecting a dead man's wishes by invading his privacy to make an easy buck off him, Journals is an interesting read. I'm not a huge Nirvana fan, but I did get a voyeuristic kick out of perusing his handwritten rants, unsent letters, drafted lyrics, rambling diary entries, and assorted recipes, scribbles and doodles.



Above: A tortured soul.

That is not say Journals is essential in understanding Kurt — his music was just as effective in that regard. There's nothing in this book to shed any new light on his complicated personality, though time will tell if that's just a result of Courtney Love's selectivity.

Journals is put together nicely and works as a really morbid coffee table book. But to ease your guilt of exploiting Kurt's death to make Courtney's wallet thicker, while still satiating your curiosity, I would recommend simply borrowing it from a library. —Adam Liebling



## The Dragon Seekers: How an Extraordinary Circle of Fossilists Discovered the Dino- saurs and Paved the Way for Darwin

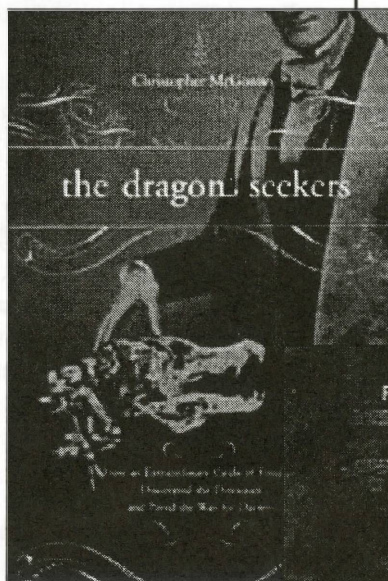
Christopher McGowan  
Perseus Publishing,  
254 pages

This is an interesting account of the first fossil findings set against the backdrop of pre-Darwin 19<sup>th</sup> century England, when discoveries of long-extinct animals supported antediluvian theories instead of evolution.

Christopher McGowan, a Canadian paleontologist, succeeds in breathing life into the understated and unappreciated pioneers whose discoveries and insights in the fossil record contributed to Darwin's theories that completely modernized our knowledge and attitudes on science and religion.

While the book contains excellent character portraits, it is written with the layman in mind, and I found it too breezy. Fossils are described only to the extent to move along the story, and I would've preferred a more in-depth approach to the fossils themselves and the way in which they were excavated and analyzed. Also, because McGowan's focus is on a select circle of fossilists, you don't get a feel for the large scheme; where they place in the chronology of archaeological findings, and how their discoveries fit within the social context of the setting. Perhaps this would have added extraneous length to the book and taken away from the author's focus, but "The Dragon Seekers" left me wanting more.

But perhaps that is McGowan's intention. He succeeds so well in imparting his enthusiasm for the subject matter onto the reader that we feel moved to begin our own digs for more information on this age of excitement and discovery.—Adam Liebling



## Faster Than The Speed Of Light: The Story Of A Scientific Speculation

João Magueijo

Perseus Publishing, 279 pages

It is interesting to wonder whether theoretical physicist João Magueijo risks his career and reputation more by asserting his varying speed of light (VSL) theory—which goes against the fundamental law of physics that the speed of light is constant—or by revealing the unpleasantness of the academic field.

The book is divided into two parts: the first half gives a run-through of the history of cosmological physics from Einstein to present (purposely excluding quantum mechanics). The problem with this half is that this information has been re-hashed in layman terms a million times over. Magueijo is very lucid and the first 125 pages serve as a great refresher to those who haven't picked up a physics book in awhile. But you get the feeling that this half is to set the stage to better explain his controversial VSL theory, and it seems he shifted gears midway. Instead of explaining his theory and work in detail, the second half is used to describe the battle between him and the establishment in getting his ideas heard, if not accepted.

That's not the problem—the second half is interesting and funny, if often whiny and catty (he insults editors of science journals that rejected his papers, collaborators that got cold feet on him, and university bureaucrats that demanded more "practical" research). The problem is that I read 125 pages of Physics 101, only to never really hear about his ideas or be given the chance to understand how VSL, as he asserts, helps solve the Big Bang problems that have been plaguing cosmologists since Einstein.

It seems that midway Magueijo decided that ranting against the fools from whom he had to suffer made a more interesting book than his theories. Maybe he's right—the second half is a fun read, and it's amusing to hear him curse and bash other academics (science always seemed like a genteel field...). But the drastic change in direction from an academic work to personal accounts is a bit weird and disappointing, and it doesn't help him in getting his theories heard and understood by the mainstream if he doesn't bother explaining them.

—Adam Liebling

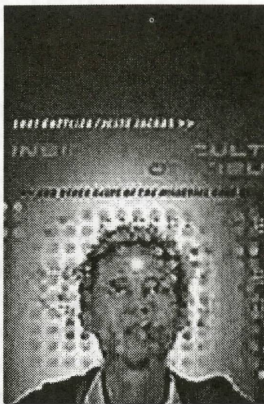


### Inside the Cult of Kibu: And Other Tales of the Millennial Gold Rush

Lori Gottlieb and Jesse Jacobs  
Perseus Publishing

Now that enough time has elapsed for us to process the roller-coaster that was the dotcom boom and bust, so begins the onslaught of books set out to analyze the phenomenon and its effects on all aspects of business and society.

But this book isn't one of them. Rather, it's a collection of anecdotes from many different players of that absurd game, including CEOs, managers, designers, promoters, publicists, venture capitalists, and New Media journalists. In fact, it's misleading to call Gottlieb and Jacobs authors—their writing only serves to slightly bridge all of the humorous and insightful stories by the dozens and dozens of contributors.



The reminiscing is entertaining if predictable—you get a very good sense of the mania that led the startup craze, the feverish Dionysian carousing that followed, the mismanagement and ignorance of reality that doomed it, and the flock mentality that powered it all. The tales feature teenage CEOs, grotesquely lavish parties, office sex, freely-thrown-about cash, and later, disgruntled employees, axe meetings and pink slip parties. Basically, everything you've already imagined, only with juicier details.

It's a fluffy book that doesn't attempt to answer the *Whys* of the dotcom craze. Instead, it focuses on the thrilling ride itself, and in that it succeeds through the amusing stories from the New Economy's winners and losers.

—Adam Liebling

### Biotech Investing: Every Investor's Guide

James D. McCamant  
Perseus Publishing, 195 pages

While the dotcoms made all the noise during the '90s, there was another industry that did extremely well, but performed much quieter: biotech. But unlike dotcoms, biotech is still around, making big bucks for those in it for the long haul.

In this thin but information-packed guide, McCamant makes a persuasive case that biotech offers the investor one of the best high-growth, low to mid-risk investments in the long term. Besides just offering advice (which anyone can do), McCamant goes the extra distance by offering the history of the field and explaining in layman terms what these companies are doing exactly. What I also like about the author is that he gives thoughtful advice in an easy-to-understand way that is far from the condescending tone you often find in investment books for beginners. —Adam Liebling

### Gonzo Marketing: Winning Through Worst Practices

by Christopher Locke  
Perseus Publishing, 256 pages

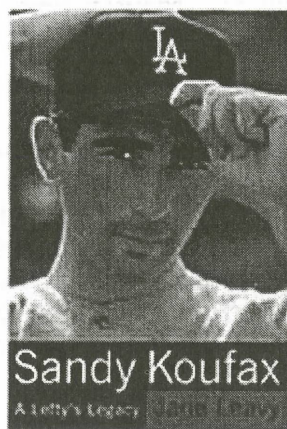
Christopher Locke is known for his online rants against traditional corporate systems, and his last book *Cluetrain* was a hit with marketers looking to engage, rather than target, potential consumers. While I haven't read his rants or his previous book, I did receive his new one, *Gonzo Marketing*, which apparently builds upon his ideas from *Cluetrain*, but adds more scattered filler.

Like his idol Hunter S. Thompson, Locke's writing is all over the place and self-absorbed. Uptight suits might find his prose amusing and cutting-edge, but to me it seemed like a lot of hot air. After almost 200 pages of random etymology, philosophy, and sociology in the vein of Robert Anton Wilson, but spliced with embarrassing dad humor, he finally gets to his theory, which is that companies looking to market on the web shouldn't think about marketing. Rather, they should build personal relationships with potential consumers, but still not push their products or services, since that would still be a form of marketing (one-on-one, or personal selling). As an example, he suggests that Ford pay employees to stay home and build web sites based on their own personal interests, such as organic gardening. And instead of linking Ford to their site, Ford would link the gardening site and encourage people to visit these underwritten – but not sponsored – sites. The hope is that organic gardeners might somehow become interested in Ford's products.

While he makes some good points about consumers' repugnance of all forms of online advertising, and the overall ineffectiveness of mass communication on the web, his solution doesn't seem to hold much water or make any financial sense. Even if a company did use its resources to underwrite completely unrelated web sites to create these micro-communities and forums around unrelated fields, consumers would STILL be distrustful of the company. No matter how much Locke tries covering it up with his "zany" writing style, the fact remains that anti-marketing is still marketing, and in the end, his theory would, in practice, appear even more dubious and dishonest as traditional marketing.

However, Locke does succeed at selling himself, and while I didn't find his "hey-look-at-me-I'm-not-wearing-a-tie!" shtick very entertaining, his charisma (or penchant for quoting dorky classic rock songs) will definitely win him over with the balding, stuffy suit set. —Adam Liebling



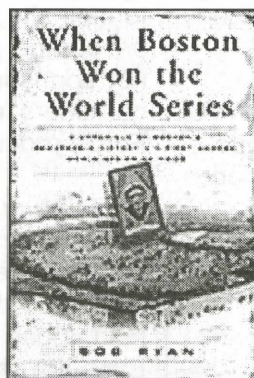


**Sandy Koufax:  
A Lefty's Legacy**  
Jane Leavy  
HarperCollins, 282 pages

Writing a thorough biography is never easy when your subject is an uncooperative recluse, but Jane Leavy does a superb job nonetheless. Speaking with hundreds of friends and former teammates, she is able to weave a beautiful tapestry of one man's unforgettable career.

Each chapter, cleverly alternating with a play-by-play account of his perfect game, paints a wonderfully realistic portrait of Koufax's ascent from wild southpaw to one of baseball's greatest control pitchers. The tale of this reluctant hero is set against the times in which he played, and this book is as much a history of baseball during the 50s and the tumultuous 60s as it is about Koufax's accomplishments.

More so, Leavy succeeds at explaining this personality, this cult icon who has been a mystery to sportswriters and fans (and even his friends and teammates!) for over 50 years. While she respects his privacy and doesn't venture anywhere near his personal life (practically nothing is written about his marriages or family, and the longtime rumors surrounding his sexual orientation is respectfully never brought up), after reading this book, you get the strong sense that you understand him better. Or at least, you can appreciate better the pain he went through—both emotionally as an outsider in a very public arena who longed for normalcy when expected to be a legend, and physically as he forced his body to the uttermost limits.



**When Boston Won The World Series:  
A Chronicle of Boston's Remarkable Victory in the  
First Modern World Series of 1903**  
Bob Ryan  
Running Press, 200 pages

Without any fanfare, it almost went unnoticed that 2003 will be the 100-year anniversary of the first modern World Series game. While there were similar championship games between two separate leagues in the late 19th century, it was the series between the Boston Americans (or Pilgrims) and the Pittsburg Pirates that set the game rules that have been in place since (well, for the most part).

The World Series of 1903 is memorable for many other reasons, one of them being the sad fact that Boston hasn't gone the distance too often since. But also, this match-up featured some of the greatest and best-loved figures in baseball, including Cy Young, Honus Wagner, and Jimmy Collins. Not to mention it was just a hell of a series.

Bob Ryan, sportswriter for the Boston Globe, takes us back to that time when fans could sit in the outfield, entry cost 25 cents, and games lasted two hours on a long day. (Heck, even Pittsburg didn't have that silent "h" yet.) To help paint the picture, *When Boston Won* is PACKED with old photographs, fliers, and news clippings. It is downright amazing all the old memorabilia that is reprinted here—just seeing all these different, very clear shots of Wagner and Young is breathtaking.

Unfortunately, the reprinted photos are probably the best part of the book. I don't read the Globe, so I don't know this is the exception or the rule, but Ryan's prose is very clunky and matter-of-fact. Perhaps he didn't want to romanticize or embellish the history, but his words don't carry much levity. The photos induce more magic and awe than his words.

The other problem is the seemingly little primary research involved in this book. Sure, the facts and stats are correct, but those are easy to track down. But the narrative is taken solely from the Globe's sportswriter at the time, Tim Murnane. In fact, Murnane's quotes show up so often (at least once a page), that you have to wonder who wrote this book.

Obviously Ryan can't speak to anyone from that era, but interviews with today's living players and former players, coaches, and owners would have been interesting. In the very least, Ryan could have tried to find other accounts of this Boston team and this series outside of Murnane. This interesting and exciting story of the first Fall Classic needs to be told from more than one perspective. —Adam Liebling

I would be lying if I said I didn't hope for more juicy tidbits. Maybe it's our tabloid/Hollywood Access culture, or our inexplicable sense of entitlement, but deep down we want to learn every little personal detail of our celebrities. Leavy, in a rare act of decency and self-restraint largely unknown to journalists, doesn't bow to our greedy desires and offers up only a classy, professional tribute to one of our classiest, most professional figures. For that reason, her book will feel incomplete to many, but for real fans of Sandy, a biography that preserves his mystery is the most honorable biography that he deserves. —Adam Liebling

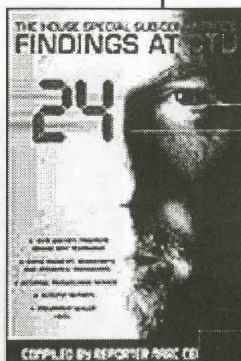


## 24: The House Special Subcommittee's Findings At CTU

Marc Cerasini with Alice Alfonsi  
HarperCollins Publishing, 239 pages

Continuing the storyline of the first season of FOX's 24, this new book brings light to some of the thought processes of Jack Bauer and CTU's staff. To briefly recap, Jack Bauer works for LA's Counter Terrorist Unit and must stop an assassination attempt on Senator David Palmer on the California Primary Election. Bauer also must stop the bad guys from killing his family. The concept of this book is that Marc Cerasini, a faux journalist, has uncovered the testimonies of Jack Bauer, David Palmer interviews, and autopsy reports, revealing them here in this book. Jack Bauer delivers hour by hour testimony of all the events that he encountered during "Super Tuesday." Jack Bauer also reveals top secret information about past missions including Operation Nightfall. This is one day Jack Bauer will never forget.

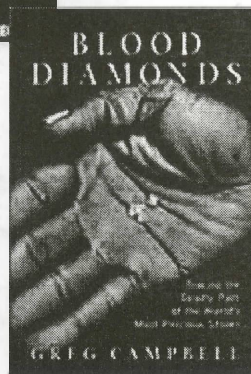
In my opinion, 24 is one of the best TV shows on the air. It brings a great storyline with end to end action, drama and suspense. This book helps to recap the first season and helps others catch up if they missed an episode here or there. 24 fans will love this book, and if you thought the first season is good, make sure you watch the second. I read the book in about a week so it's not complicated reading; it's great bathroom material. Recommended for fans of the show. Others will be a bit confused, though that's why they made the book in the first place. —Matt Kremkau



## Blood Diamonds: Tracing the Deadly Path of the World's Most Precious Stones

Greg Campbell  
Westview Press, 251 pages

When my boyfriend first introduced me to the term "conflict diamonds," or diamonds associated with armed conflicts in Africa, at first I suspected it was his way of getting out of buying me a diamond ring for our engagement. But then he received the book *Blood Diamonds* for review and within the first few pages, I was introduced to the horrific violence that the global diamond industry has wrought on the poverty-stricken country of Sierra Leone.



A book that's both hard to put down and, at times, hard to stomach, *Blood Diamonds* is a real eye-opener both for those who know nothing about the stark realities behind the diamond industry and those who are familiar with conflict diamonds and their origins.

The author, Greg Campbell, an award-winning freelance journalist, takes the reader from the killing fields of the infamous Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, a rebel faction which marauded towns and villages adjacent to known diamond fields, to the refugee and amputee filled streets of Sierra Leone's capital, to the executive offices of the De Beers Group, a company which holds a virtual monopoly over the diamond industry.

The book reveals the flaws with existing certification processes and, as if the stories on Sierra Leone (the main focus of the book) aren't damning enough, the author traces the connections between the country's diamond industry and Al-Qaeda operatives responsible for the attack on 9/11. For anyone who has ever considered buying (or being the recipient of) a diamond or, just for the socially conscious, *Blood Diamonds* is a must read. —Jennifer Kao

### Some of the Books We'll Be Reviewing Next Time:

#### Legend Of A Rock Star: The Last Testament of Dee Dee Ramone

Dee Dee Ramone  
Thunder's Mouth

#### Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution

Howard Rheingold  
Perseus Publishing

#### Despite Everything: A Cometbus Omnibus

Aaron Cometbus  
Last Gasp

#### Drawing the Line: Science And The Case For Animal Rights

Steven M. Wise  
Perseus Publishing

#### The News About The News: American Journalism In Peril,

Leonard Downie & Robert Kaiser  
Vintage



**30 Odd Foot of Grunts**

"Other Ways Of Speaking"

Now Russell Crowe can suck in musical form!

**50 Cent**

"Get Rich Or Die Tryin"

I wouldn't even buy this for 50 cents.

**AFI**

"Sing The Sorrow"

Do not expose this band to sunlight.

**Beck**

"Sea Change"

You're still a loser.

**Johnny Cash**

"American IV"

Goddamn, he's still alive?!! He's older than dirt!

**The Clash**

"Essential Clash"

Exactly how essential is this if they've already got a dozen greatest hits albums out?

**Coldplay**

"A Rush Of Blood To The Head"

I dig the Rush reference. Coldplay are ai-aight.

**Sheryl Crow**

"C'mon, C'mon"

All I want to do, is have some fun... by throwing your shitty CD off my roof and shooting it.

**Ani DiFranco**

"Evolve"

For women who don't shave their armpits.

**Celion Dion**

"One Heart"

Go back into retirement, Canuck! (No offense, Rush)

**Dixie Chicks**

"Home"

Eh, only two out of the three are fuckable. They're not getting any younger.

**Godsmack**

"Faceless"

Lyrical masterminds with such gems as "Grrr!" "Rrrrr!" and "Eeerrraahhh!"

**Norah Jones**

"Come Away with Me"

I play this for my plants when I'm not home.

**Tom Jones**

"Greatest Love Songs"

CD comes with your very own throw-away panties with Depends lining.

**Men At Work**

"Business As Usual"

Meaning, no business at all.

**Nelly**

"Nellyville"

I guess they don't pick up the garbage in Nellyville.

**No Doubt**

"Rock Steady"

Hey baby, hey baby, you're flat.

**R Kelly**

"Chocolate Factory"

Sounds like an anal sex video. Actually, it probably is.

**Rolling Stones**

"40 Licks"

Coming up with 40 good Stones songs must be like finding 40 good things about genital warts.

**Rush**

"The Spirit Of Radio"

Ugh, I hate to say it... This is the least essential Rush album ever—it's the same songs from Chronicles and the Retrospective CDs! I'll buy it anyway to prove my fandom, but I'll resent doing so. Fuckin' Rush, man.

**Bruce Springsteen**

"The Rising"

I feel my bile rising. Get a real job, Mr. Working Class.

**Rod Stewart**

"It Had To Be You... The Great American Songbook"

Do I really need to say anything?

**Various Artists**

"We're A Happy Family: A Tribute To The Ramones"

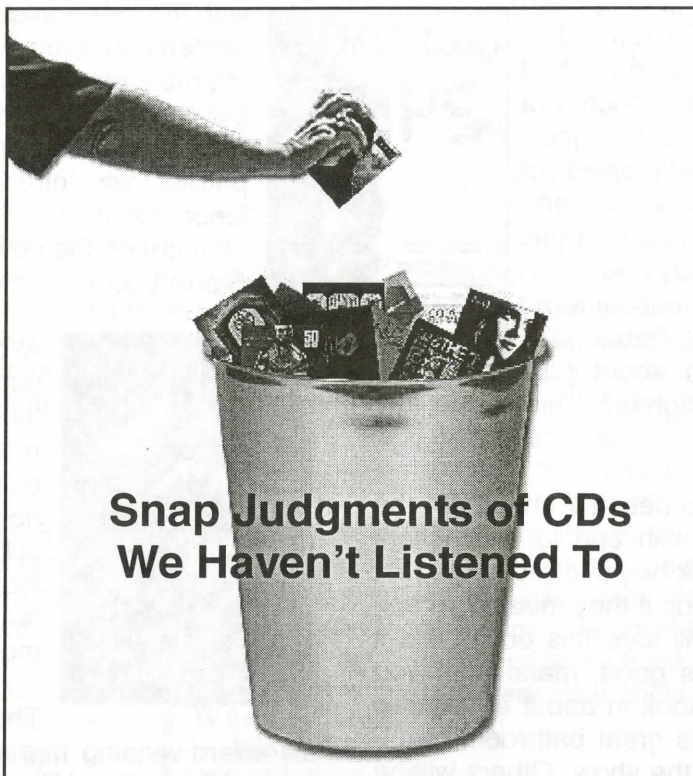
Eddie Vedder, Kiss, Marilyn Manson and Metallica... Yeah, I'm sure Joey Ramone would've loved being covered by rich arena rockers. That's exactly what the Ramones were about.

**Yanni**

"Ethnicity"

Cool, I could use a paper weight!

—Bryan Kremkau and Adam Liebling



**King Crimson**

"Power To Believe"

I can't believe someone might actually listen to this.

**Avril Lavigne**

"Let Go"

She is so punk rock. She wears a tie. Usually men wear ties. But she's like, Fuck that. She's redefining gender roles and smashing the state. I also heard she kills fascists.

**Linkin Park**

" Meteora "

I'm hoping for war, just so that this band could be drafted and get killed.

**Lyle Lovett**

"Smile"

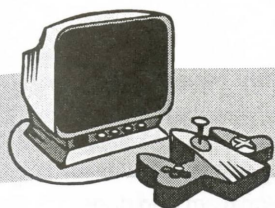
His face looks like my dog's ass.

**John Mayer**

"Room For Squares"

I've seen vaginas more manly than this guy.

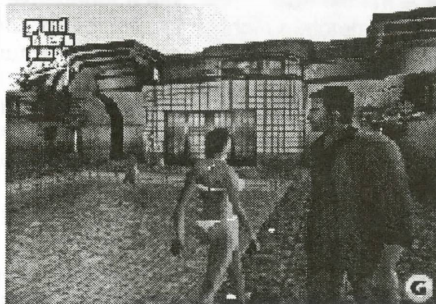




## Reviews by Bryan Kremkau of SkaPunkAndOtherJunk.com

### Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

One of the best video games EVER! Vice City exceeds GTA III in almost every aspect. You can now ride motorcycles, fly helicopters, ride more speedboats, plus it has an all-star cast doing the voices. Ray Liotta stars as Tommy Vercetti, the main character. Besides Liotta, there's Burt Reynolds, Dennis Hopper, Tom Sizemore, Luis Guzmán, Gary Busey, Jenna Jameson, and Philip Michael Thomas (TUBBS!!). This game is set in the 80s, and the radio stations are great. Along with the funny DJs and spoof commercials, you can listen to music stations featuring old-school rap, heavy metal, soft rock, and of course, 80s new wave and pop.



The game missions are fun, but can become irritating at times. But when has any GTA game been easy? Luckily, if you can't beat a certain mission, you can always go around and see how many people you can kill and blow up. You don't need to put in any cheat code to blow off people's heads this time, which is great! Along with rocket launchers, guns, and grenades, there's a variety of weapons to cut, slash, sever, explode and behead. You can use knives, swords, chainsaws, golf clubs, police nightsticks, and remote-controlled grenades.

This game is like crack; you can't get enough of it. I could go on and on about how very wrong this game is, but it's just a video game and people should know that. Just don't make the mistake I did when I started driving on curbs and running over people. Okay, I didn't do that, but that's what GTA is for, so you can do it in the game.

#### Helpful Cheats:

##### All Weapons #1

R1, R2, L1, R2, L, D, R, U, L, D, R, U

##### All Weapons #2

R1, R2, L1, R2, L, D, R, U, L, D, D, L

##### All Weapons #3

R1, R2, L1, R2, L, D, R, U, L, D, D, D

##### Full Armor

R1, R2, L1, X, L, D, R, U, L, D, R, U

##### Full Health

R1, R2, L1, O, L, D, R, U, L, D, R, U

##### Favorite Cheat:

Ladies Man (certain women follow you)  
O, X, L1, L1, R2, X, X, O, T

**Rating: 5 stars**



### Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers

This is one of my favorite games in a while (besides GTA). Peter Jackson and WETA are the ones that helped make this game, so it's director-approved and it shows by its excellent graphics and loyalty to the film storyline. The game starts at the beginning of the movie, so you're playing as Isildur and whacking and attacking Sauron's orcs. Scenes from the film interplay with the game, so one minute it will be the game, next it will be a video clip. After that, you play as Aragorn and protect Frodo on Weathertop against the Ringwraiths. The plot of the game goes along with the movie, but some of it departs from it as well. I guess they needed to add some more adventure (and enemies besides orcs and Uruk-Hai).

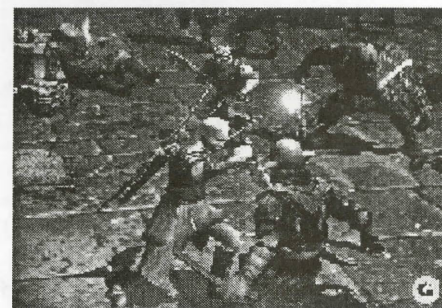
After the Aragorn part with the Ringwraiths, you can be three other characters. Besides Aragorn (the all-around best character), there's Legolas (fast, but weakest) and Gimli (slow, but strong), plus a secret character (though it's not that special since you play him first in the game anyway). I wish the secret character was Gandalf, Boromir or Eomer, but hopefully that option will be in the next video game. One cool part of the game is, once you get to a certain level, or amount of levels with one character; you can check out videos from the actors talking about the video game and even playing it. Seeing John Rhys-Davies play the video game is some funny stuff!

The game can be frustrating at parts, because if you can't get that far along in the board they will start you at the beginning of the level. It's also hard learning all the moves to kill. Maybe to a geeky gamer it will be a piece of cake, but it's hard for the average Joe Shmoe like me. Another problem is that this game is too short. I beat it in two weeks or so. But the game is very fun, and has exceptional replay value. If you like video games and Lord Of The Rings, definitely try this game!

#### Helpful Cheats:

##### Restore Health

Pause the game, then hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and enter: Triangle, Down, X, Up. You will hear the sound of a sword if you entered the code correctly.



##### Restore Ammunitions

Pause the game, then hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and enter: X, Down, Triangle, Up. You will hear the sound of a sword if you entered the code correctly.

##### Secret Character

Beat the game with all three characters and he will appear.

**Rating: 4 stars**



# ZINES, Chapbooks & Mini-comics

**\*\* highly recommended**

## 206 Records Magazine #14

*Full, 16 pages*

Surprisingly not a house organ for 206—there's no coverage of their bands here, or any label news. Instead, this short issue features interviews with Lagwagon and Smackin' Isaiah, and some CD reviews. Props to 206 for supporting the scene without tooting their own horn.  
[www.206records.com](http://www.206records.com)

## \*\* Ad Infinitum #5

*Full, 48 pages*

Unbelievably packed for a 48-pager: Anti-Bush web site directory, a piece on the health detriments of snorting crystal meth, a spooky ghost story, a blurb on cross-breeding animals, an intelligent pro-decriminalization essay, a neat piece on how to tell if someone is lying, an informational step-by-step on how to deep clean your face, yogurt reviews, a disgustingly Ayn Rand-ish praise of businessmen (note to author—capitalistic ideals are fine in an ideal world; unfortunately we don't live in one), an attack on prescription pill culture, and lots more. Plus interviews with The Fuse, Pennywise, Smile, BMX pro Rick Thorne, and duct tape artist Kevin Berger, and poetry, comics, and short fiction. Not to mention record, show, and book reviews. There's something for everyone—tons of great, fulfilling content.  
[www.aimmag.com](http://www.aimmag.com)

## AMP (American Music Press) #3

*Full, 90 pages*

Good interviews with Glenn Danzig, 5 Cent Deposit, Dillinger Escape Plan, Nerf Herder and others. A LOT of commentary on Iraq, most of it the same, but there's a hilarious piece on the topic by Rev. Norb.  
POB 1070, Martinez, CA 94553

## \*\* Aquatulle #5

*Full, 98 pages*

Aquatulle manages to be a nostalgia zine without the usual hokey, kitschy crap. For one thing, instead of the usual Smurfs and A-Ha coverage, they focus primarily on late 70s New York punk and 80s new wave music. For another, they don't just write sappy articles on how they remember loving such-and-such all those years ago. Rather, these topics are still current to them, and their passion for them is blatant and genuine. Nothing here is contrived or meant to be ironic. Besides having great content and upbeat attitude, the execution is flawless. The articles are a joy to read and the layout is extremely clean. And the interviews...! They not only managed to get very impressive interviews—Andy Summers, Ex-Banshee Steve Severin, The Go-Go's, photographer Roberta Bayley, the founder of Atari

(!!), and the Damned's Captain Sensible—but the interviews are amazing in their candidness and thoroughness. Even interviews with those I'm unfamiliar with have an engaging quality that drew me in, and afterwards, made me want to check out their backlog. This issue of Aquatulle also has a great feature on Basquiat's Downtown 81, a sweet review of Joey Ramone's posthumous birthday bash, and cool reprints of excerpts from super-old punk zines. This is a thick read (very few ads in their 90+ pages) and everything is top-notch. I highly recommend it, and I'm not just saying that because the editor owns a Rush shirt.  
332 Bleecker St #K-15, NY, NY 10014

## The Autocaust

*Digest, 48 pages*

Chapbook of angst-ridden but maturely-written poetry. Not bad.  
[www.seventenbishop.com](http://www.seventenbishop.com)

## Book of Letters #16

*Digest, 40 pages*

Another amusing installment of Rich Mackin's commentary on corporate advertising vis-à-vis a goofy and satirical letter-writing campaign to businesses. This issue doesn't have many gut-busting letters or responses, but there are some witty moments, such as suggesting to McDonalds that they change their "special sauce" to "retarded sauce", asking Slim Jim if their ingredient "lactic acid starter culture" has anything to do with hallucinogenic cows in the Mesopotamian river basin, and accusing Arm and Hammer of spreading fascism with their "Advanced Whitening" toothpaste.  
POB 890, Allston, MA 02134

## Book of Letters #17

*Digest, 40 pages*

High points from this issue include a GREAT response to an Al Gore capital campaign letter ("You, a wealthy man, wrote me, a less wealthy man, asking me for money to help elect Democratic Senators... [It's] funny when wealthy sons of wealthy men ask real, working people for money."); a letter to University of Oregon's president, asking why he refuses to join the anti-sweatshop Worker Rights Consortium; great limericks in ode of Pepperidge Farms' Goldfish snacks and Oreo cookies; and a really cute, nostalgic letter to (and response from) Crest regarding the Cavity Creeps.  
POB 890, Allston, MA 02134

## Burnt #5

*Full, 20 pages*

A short, breezy zine in cut-n-paste style. A couple of personal pieces, some blurby stuff, an article on pornography (if interested on the topic, check out the new Punk Planet's cover story), and record and zine

reviews. There are no band interviews, but instead, an interesting interview with Becky Goldberg, a filmmaker working on a documentary on feminism and porn.  
POB 5754, Parsippany, NJ 07054

## Chord #20

*Full, 68 pages*

It's 68 pages, but half are ads, so the zine breezes by. Good interviews with Sonic Youth and Dag Nasty, plus some fun stuff, like a roundtable Q&A, Theo from the Lunachicks giving her reactions to random songs, and pictures of punk members' bedrooms. They're a bit too enthused about porn, and there's too much press release-ish band coverage, but the writing is superb, the layout is fantastic, and the attitude is fun.

POB 63524, Philly, PA 19147

## Complexification Strategy #1

*Digest, 16 pages*

Shawn Granton has more comic titles than Marvel. But you have to love his comics, which tend to range between hilarious cynical commentaries on human stupidity and bittersweet personal stories. For the former, there's a funny mock ad for bands looking to create their own subgenre of music, the strange mutual attraction yuppies and punks have for overpriced natural/health food stores, and a dead-on rant about the supposed coolness and hipster popularity of Pabst Blue Ribbon. For the latter, Shawn's sweeter side comes out with a cute piece on cheap food finds, and three different pieces on the feelings of fear and insecurity—one on earthquakes, one on nuclear war, and one on jobs/careers (that one's in this ish of READ).  
POB 14185, Portland, OR 97293-0185

## Copper Press #14

*Square, 122 pages*

Professionally designed music publication with a very classy square look and coffee table book feel. Features interviews in essay form with Shuttlecock, Flaming Lips, The Daoson For, The Feud, snowboardist Erik Leines, and more, and the writing is publicist gold. Alongside the fluid writing is what really steals the show—excellent photography in a sharp, eye-catching design. Also comes with a 17-track CD, featuring the latest stars in indie rock.  
POB 1601, Acme, MI 49610

## Death Of Culture

*Full, 12 pages*

Mostly angry poems full of disgust and contempt at the idiots of our society. The lyrics read kind of like hardcore lyrics. The chapbook is nicely bound and the pages are printed on sturdy résumé paper.  
POB 5591, Portland, OR 97228



**Destroy All Monthly**

*Full, lots of pages I didn't feel like counting*  
I have two issues here, and both are similar. They're mostly very well-written pieces on bands, most of them interviews in essay form, plus record reviews and a smattering of columns. At first glance, it seems they cater mostly to publicists, but the writing is quality and it's worth checking out.  
**POB 26806, Los Angeles, CA 90026**

**Empires Fall #1**

*Digest, 28 pages*

I like Rich Mackin's Book of Letters, but this collaboration with fellow zinester Rosie Streetpixie is typical political zine fare—pieces on anarchy, boycotting so-and-so, racism/classism, etc. The most engaging piece is by Rosie about loving her period.

**POB 976, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**

**Food Geek #5**

*Pocket, 40 pages*

A GREAT article on taking a bus trip through China and the horrid foods encountered, recipes for potato burritos, pakoras, and peanut sauce, a comic by Shawn Granton on free food, and a gross piece on dumpster diving for KFC. As a chowhound, I LOVE this mini-comic/zine.  
**POB 49403, Los Angeles, CA 90049**

**\*\* Found #2**

*Full, 114 pages*

God damn, this is a good zine. And I thought the first issue was great—this one is just amazing. In case you missed the first one, this is a zine of found objects, mostly letters and journal entries taken out of some unknown context, that strikingly convey the hilarity and sadness of the human condition. This issue contains a hilariously frightening essay called "What I Know About US History"; a draft of a break-up letter written on an airplane barf bag; a disturbing flyer from a foot fetishist who's looking for "pretty feet that R slender & shapely"; a ransom note for \$3.50; a contract by a girl that promises to love her man forever, so help her god; a shopping list for an amateur dominatrix; a steamy letter from a lovelorn and lusty woman to an oblivious female coworker; hilarious teacher-course evaluations from disgruntled students (What adjective best describes this course? HORRIFYING. Comments? IF I COULD WRITE THIS IN BLOOD AND TEARS I WOULD); a so-dumb-it's-sad journal from a young girl trying to decipher famous quotes; a sad letter from a unfit mother whose daughter was just taken from her; a bizarre journal entry from a child who learned how to fly; tons and tons more. Found is a gem.  
**3455 Charing Cross Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48108-1911**

**Hoi Polloi! Skazine #7**

*Digest, 116 pages*

I could have sworn I reviewed this zine a while ago, but I guess it slipped past. The fact that this issue is almost two years old and still relevant speaks of its greatness. For a ska zine, HP is very open-minded, covering all waves with equal interest and enthusiasm. Case in point, this issue features engaging interviews with Toots Hibbert (Toots & the Maytals), Dave Wakeling (English Beat), Rob Hingley (Toasters) and Johnny Vegas (Bosstones), symbolizing Jamaican ska, 2-tone, Third Wave, and ska-punk, respectively. The only thing this zine needs is to come out more regularly!  
**POB 13347, Rochester, NY 14613-0347**

**Jersey Beat #72**

*Full, 124 pages*

Describing the contents of a Jersey Beat is like describing the contents of a dictionary. Suffice it to say, there's a lot of stuff packed in here, as usual. My fave pieces: an interesting article on how Jerseyites are flocking to Williamsburg, draining the NJ music scene in the process; a fascinating letter from a prisoner who's struggling to keep his anti-racist, pro-peace beliefs in a place of hatred and brutality; a great interview with Mike Watt; and loads of thoughtful, dead-on record reviews. Jersey Beat continues to be one of the best music zines around, and surprisingly, after so many issues, they are still 100% dedicated to their scene.

**418 Gregory Ave, Weehawken, NJ 07086**

**Keeper #4**

*Full, 48 pages*

Metal! Interviews with Agoraphobic Nosebleed, The Crown, Mushroomhead, Mortiis, Killswitch Engage, and Gryp. Plus a history on paganism, info on the West Memphis Three, movie reviews, and "evil" recipes.  
**POB 2588, Orange, CA 92859**

**Kitty Magik #6**

*Full, 56 pages*

Focusing on women in music, this zine has interviews with DIY clothing maker Debri Field, filmmaker Kerri Koch, show promoter Pearl Fish, and bands Semiautomatic, The Seconds, The Gossip, and more. Also coverage of Ladyfest and Scutterfest, a cute comic, and zine and record reviews. It's a light read, especially since it's mostly interviews with people and artists I'm unfamiliar with, but the zine also serves as a positive, supporting community for women involved in all aspects of the indie and punk scenes.  
**POB 96, Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889**

**My Fat Irish Ass #-4**

*Full, 36 pages*

Mostly Family Circus comics with altered punchlines. It's got an asshole-ish, immature humor, but you can't help but laugh. Even if you're not into dick and fart jokes,

you have to admit it's an improvement over the very unfunny Family Circus.  
**1507 East 53rd St., #1, Chicago, IL 60615**

**\*\* One Fine Mess (Spring 2002 issue)**

*Half-European, 36 pages*

Packed perzine with lucid and engaging articles on different aspects of the lives of the young married editors. Erin revisits her high school and the shitty memories it evokes; there are also great articles on getting a UTI, and her brother's coming out and how it affected the fam. Dan contributes an interesting article on attending a job fair in New York (followed by a funny sidebar of moronic student suggestions for 9/11 memorials), and both have articles on wedding issues and the cute cats that prowl their Westchester nook, Tarrytown. The style is type over cut-n-paste border collages, giving the zine a clean, but "classic zine" look. The writing itself is some of the best I've ever read in a zine—this is definitely recommended.  
**71 Storm St. #2C, Tarrytown, NY 10591**

**Punk Planet #52**

*Full, 178 pages*

Without a doubt, Punk Planet is a great zine, but I usually find it too serious and knee-jerk leftist to enjoy. But this issue really stands out. The cover story on punk porn is one of the most thoughtful articles I have read in PP, and by far the best on the topic. This issue has gotten me interested in PP again—I recommend this issue to any other jaded political punk.  
**www.punkplanet.com**

**Razorcake #11 & 12**

*Full, 98 pages & 106 pages*

It's astounding how often this huge, packed zine comes out. They put out like four Razorcakes for every READ. And this isn't just an ad-heavy music mag with some typical zine filler. Razorcake is always heavy on content, whether it be intelligent editorials to short fiction that's actually fun to read. As usual, issues 11 and 12 are very strong and take awhile to digest. Perfect for a long bus ride, stubborn shit, or rainy day.  
**POB 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042**

**Skratch #81 and 82**

*Full, 100 pages each*

Just interviews and reviews. #81 features All-American Rejects, Allister, As Hope Dies, Brand New, Christiansen, Circle Jerks, Less Than Jake, Madcap, The Muffs, Transplants, Tsunami Bomb and more. #82 features Avail, Fairview, Lost City Angels, Flaming Lips, Turbo A.C.'s and more. A zine that makes the publicists wet but leaves the reader dry, but still impressive that it comes out so often.  
**www.skratchmagazine.com**



**Substance #2***Full, 40 pages*

Substance... something this zine lacks. Just a handful of interviews (Hey Mercedes, Thrive, Taking Back Sunday, couple more) and a duh-hickey column on consumer culture. This zine could easily be 24 pages, but they love the white space – 2-page interviews are stretched into 10 with generous amounts of emptiness and size 50 font in a Wired design.

1314 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701

**Toxic Flyer #33***Full, 64 pages*

Just interviews and reviews. This issue features Kill Your Idols, Lower Class Brats, The Distillers, The Virus, The Chicken Hawks, and a lot more.

POB 39158, Baltimore, MD 21212

**Twenty-Eight Pages Lovingly Bound With Twine #5***Half, 28 pages*

Well, that's no joke. This well-crafted personal zine is bound by twine, something the editor seems to obsess over ("But don't you think that I have selected an official twine. I got some skeins of bold and exciting new twines, which will undoubtedly be binding future issues"). The first half of the issue documents a trip to a zine/comic fair, featuring a cute digressing story about a culture clash the editor witnessed between zinesters and crocheters. The second half features "The Story of Herbie Part 3", a collection of adorable vignettes about his newborn son. The zine can be formidable to

tackle—small text crammed on the pages without white space or pictures—but one you're in, you're hooked.

Christoph, POB 106, Danville, OH 43014

**Vice #9***Full, 116 pages*

I'm not into swank, professional mags that are 90% clothing ads for hipsters, but Vice has funny, if short, content. This issue features entertaining reviews of 80s books and albums, and a hilarious interview with Journey's new frontman, formerly of a Journey cover band, whom Vice takes the piss out of. There's also a good, if overly breathless, review of the new GTA (Rockstar Games is an advertiser). Vice usually has 5-10 good pages of content in each 100+ issue, but it's impressive they're able to secure so much advertising, come out so often, and remain a free service for the urban hip.

75 N. 4th, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11211

**Whizzbanger Guide to Zine Distributors #6***Full, 38 pages*

A great resource for people like me who have trouble finding good, honest zine distros. This guide features in-depth and constantly updated info on zine distros, libraries, and stores all around the world, plus a helpful list of dependable zine reviewers (Hey Shannon, you can add me to that!) The back 12 pages feature Whizzbanger's catalog, which carries tons of great zines and chapbooks.

POB 5591, Portland, OR 97228

**WHAT DOES ADAM WANT TO BE...  
REPRISE****BY JENNIFER KAO**

Adam may not be a Pisces (read: dreamer) but he sure acts like one sometimes, especially when it comes to his penchant for wanting to become the profession of whatever he happens to be reading at the moment.

I first noticed this after he read the Fountainhead and announced he wanted to be an architect. "I want to be an architect, honey," he proclaimed. "What is it about architecture that you like?" "Architects are cool," he responded. "Ok, name three architects." "Um, Andrew Lloyd Wright." "Honey, you just combined the names of a Broadway composer and a famous architect." "Well at least I got it half right..." he sheepishly replied.

The day after, it was as if his desire to be an architect never existed—he had plunged into another book and soon another professional interest sprung to mind. He went from wishing he were a nuclear physicist to a cosmologist to a flapper (he recently saw "Chicago"). Currently, he's in the middle of reading *Lords of the Harvest: Biotech, Big Money, and the Future of Food*, and walking home from dinner last week he expressed his desire to become an agricultural geneticist. "Honey, you know you'd have to go back to school for this." "No, I hate school. I'll just read a lot of books." I gave him a look. "You really want to spend the rest of your life on farm fields studying corn?" "Crops are cool—I'd be playing god with produce." I sighed but I knew he'd move on to another profession once he moved onto a new book. And deep down, I suppose, there's still the remnants of the young boy who thought he could be anything from a mailbox to a teddy bear...

## Classifieds

\$2 for 25 words. 10 cents for each add'l word. Extra \$1 for bold. Extra \$1 for font size 11.

Portland Zine Symposium is a three day conference and zine social, exploring facets of underground publishing and DIY culture, held each summer at the Portland State University campus in downtown Portland, Oregon. The 2003 symposium will take place August 1-3. For more info, visit [PDXZINES.COM](http://PDXZINES.COM)

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**WRITERS NEEDED.** Do you think you're "hot shit"? Have something to say? Will it entertain me? Enlighten me? Make me feel good inside? Does it make fun of people? People I know? Awesome. Send it to [kittenpants@hotmail.com](mailto:kittenpants@hotmail.com), asshole, and I'll publish it on my website ([kittenpants.org](http://kittenpants.org)).

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[SkaPunkAndOtherJunk.com](http://SkaPunkAndOtherJunk.com): Updated daily with music news, show listings, CD and show reviews, movie reviews, contests, and lots more. Plus tons of links to ska and punk labels and bands.

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moment...you have a chance."  
- Johnny X

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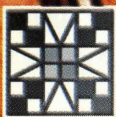


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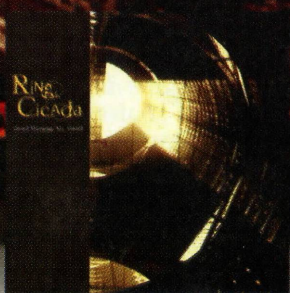
# 54°40' or Fight!



Out 05.05.03

**POLK016 Dropsonic**  
*The Big Nothing CD*

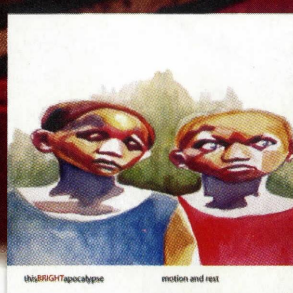
Sprawling, massive epics delivered with bravado and chops aplenty, the way it should be done. Drums so huge, we're surprised they had room to fit the guitars. But they did. Loud ones. Angular riffs and rock anthems; strapping basslines and a touch of tenderness - to keep the bruises swelling. This is a reissue. This is new. This is Bonham thundering behind Yorke, Plant, Epley and Entwistle. This is huge. This is why we do this.



Out 05.05.03

**POLK015 Ring, Cicada**  
*Good Morning, Mr. Good Day CD*

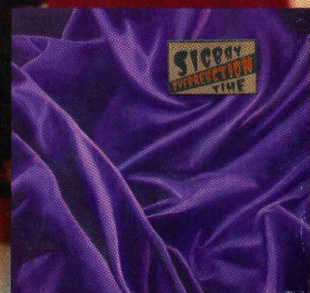
Seven years from formation to fruition. The best work Albini has done in some time. And he's done some great work. The recording of this record is everything it needed to be. Not only because Ring, Cicada waited this long for the opportunity to record this album, but because there was so much there - my God, the dynamics and the detail - that needed an expert at the controls. Muscular, complex and anthemic rock music with strong vocals to boot. Heavy on the rock. Take it.



Out 04.08.03

**POLK014 This Bright Apocalypse**  
*Motion and Rest CD*

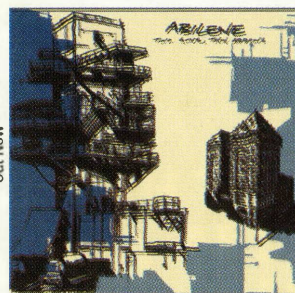
To draw on comparisons for a moment, imagine Hero of a Hundred Fights and Farquet meet Kansas. Then commence with the shivering and the delight. Melodic arpeggios, twisted math, polyrhythmic drumming/percussion, stunning harmonies and dynamics from guys who can actually sing. We're talking rounds here, people. Four-part harmonies and colliding, twining, rising vocals. If there is such a thing as post-hardcore, TBA is the standard-bearer for the intelligent set.



Out Now

**POLK013 Sicbay**  
*Overreaction Time CD*

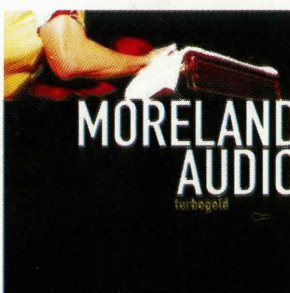
Frenzied challenge-rock with melody from ex-Dazzling Killmen, Colossamite fellers. Beautifully mangled guitars and natural arrhythmia made fluid. Organ (UK): "Some of these feelings don't have handy words to describe the only chords and sounds - it's why sane people get snare in spending their whole lives listening to sound, dragging amplifiers up and down freeways to play with the only other people in the world who have that same sound in their heads. Somehow this stirs the guts deeper than it should be. Essential, essential release."



Out Now

**POLK012 Abilene**  
*Two Guns, Twin Arrows CD*

The album for which some critics pined when reviewing their spacious debut. Abilene has upped the ante. Bristling yet atmospheric processionalists cresting atop deep grooves mined from soul, dub, jazz and rock. At its core, it's engaging ambient music for those who like it played with standard instrumentation. And no one does that like Abilene. Musical lineage: June of '44, Regulator Watts, Hoover, and Tortoise.



Out Now

**POLK011 Moreland Audio**  
*Turbogold CD*

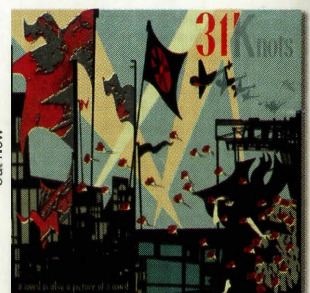
Twin guitar and drums cablings bound sturdier than a suspension bridge, and more, um, suspenseful, too. Eight riveting instrumentals from ex-The Purkinje Shift guitarists that come in many shades of pavement, several forms of perspiration, and the very best kind of cool.



Out Now

**POLK009 Eyes of Autumn**  
*Hello CD*

"Eyes tether shambling bits to snarled guitar punches, while their skittering drums and rhythmic lunges threaten to scatter everything." -excerpted review from Illinois Entertainer. "One of the best 10 releases of 2002." -says Ink19.com. On tour for rest of their lives, post-Graduation 2003.



Out Now

**POLK007 31knots**  
*A Word is Also a Picture of a Word CD*

Says Magnet: "31knots will be the flagship band when the term 'prog pop' enters our lexicon." This music moves with a nervous freneticism. Complex yet catchy drumming shifts nimbly amidst the jagged, anxious fretwork of guitar and bass and Haeg's impassioned vocals.

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