

GO METRIC

#21

In this issue:

CAN EVEN
SUPERMAN
BLAST LOIS LANE'S
SUPER-CRUSH ON
SUPER-CROONER

Perry Como?

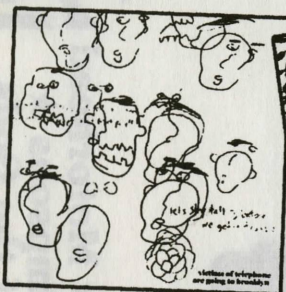


The Case Files of Raffles, Gentlemen Shoplifter ★ Motorhead
★ The Germs vs. Green Day ★ NOFX & The Simpsons ★
U.S. Air Guitar Championships ★ Downsizing of the Gods

PLUS REVIEWS | COMICS | NEW JERSEY

HEY, KIDS!

Here are two brand new records i wanna tell you about. One of 'em is poppy, indie-ish, and maybe a bit quirky. It's by a band called Victims of Telephone. The other is by a band called The Itch, and it's more aggressive (but equally catchy, adventurous, and wonderful). The funny thing is that they're both on Wee Rock Records, outta Springfield, Missouri. Okay, i know, i know...you've never even heard of these bands. That may be true, but there's nothing wrong with taking a chance every once in a while. You may be pleasantly surprised. If you need samples, visit our website and download some mp3s. It's www.weerockrecords.com. Best of luck!



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Table of Contents

Brian Wallace, Brian Cogan, Mike Faloon: The Aristocrats: Franz
Kafka, Vladimir Lenin • 3, 53

Brian Cogan: Ragnarok: The Downsizing of the Gods • 4

Bill Florio: Interview with Craig "Hot Lixx Hulahan" Billmeier, U.S. Air
Guitar Champion • 7

John Flynn: The Scariest Night of My Life • 10

Jennifer Whiteford: Open Letter to Prince • 12

Mike Faloon: Gary Shouldice for Board of Education • 14

Ken Wohlrob: • Let the Altar Boys Loose • 16

Tim Hall: Daddy Nose Best • 19

Joe Keller: Those Were the Days That Filled My Nights: A Brief Tribute to
Dirt Bike Annie • 20

Chris Gethard: Insider's Guide to Diffusing Middle Class Rage • 23

Maddy Baran: Green Day vs. the Germs • 24

Brian Cogan: From the Case Files of Raffles, the Gentlemen Shoplifter • 28

Duncan Wilder Johnson: Jawbreaker; You Gotta Be Shitting Me • 30

Jesse Mank: Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ • 32

Mark Hughson: NOFX and *The Simpsons* • 36

Rev. Norb: • Anatomy of a Band Photo • 38

John Ross Bowie: Illegal Music • 44

Tim Hall: Big Marie • 45

Matt Barber: When It's Loud It's Good: A Beginner's Guide to Motorhead • 46

Gary Pig Gold: To Catch a Falling Star: Perry Como • 50

Mike Faloon: Interview with Ben Sturgis, Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp • 54

Brian Cogan & Mike Faloon: Rejected Ideas: Vol. 1 • 58

Josh Rutledge: 20 Essential Power Pop LPs • 60

Mike Faloon: Interview with Sass Parilla • 64

Wred Fright: Interview with Leopold McGinnis • 66

Tim Hinely: I Wanted a Pacer or Yugo But All I Got Was This Damn
Pinto—The Cars I've Owned • 70

Various writers: Record reviews • 71

Dick Rowe: Overlooked Letters of Rejection • 84



And now a word from our publisher, Terry Sheldrake, overheard upon returning from another four-martini lunch. He is flipping through and referencing titles of articles before the new issue is sent to the printers...

Terry Sheldrake: Well, it's time to earn my salary, haw haw. As if they deserve me! Hhmmph, well at least Henry mixes a mean martini! Let's see, hmmm, what's this, what are these articles about, eh? (*Sips drink*) Jersey, where is that anyway? Wait a second, one, two three, articles referencing Jersey! Who told us there should be three articles on Jersey? Do people in Jersey buy zines? Is that really in our target demographic? I thought they didn't read there, they just listened to Bruce Springsteen all day, singing about being born on the, well, sometime in July, whenever it is that you ingrates celebrate your impetuous revolution. Ah, wait, these I declare all have a theme. (*Telephone rings*) Oh, hello mum! No, no, never a bother hearing from you. Really no bother, I'm just working, just totally completely overwhelmed with work that absolutely *not* one of these incompetent monkeys can help me with. What? Mother, you can't be serious, you can't throw out my old Beanos? My Arsenal trading cards? Certainly not? Yes, yes, as a matter of fact I do want my old Arsenal scarf! I know I haven't worn it in years. I know it takes up space, but, mother, seriously? Yes, it'll be just me for crumpets on Sunday. Yes, yes cucumber sandwiches are fine. All right-oh then, toodles. (*Hangs up*) Stupid git! Sell my Beanos will she? I'll have her in a convalescence home before she can say "What's all this then?"

Mike Faloon sticks his head in the door.

Mike: We're ordering lunch from Louie's. Can we get you anything? And the art department...

Terry: Oh bugger, don't gallop my maggot!

Mike: Ok, I'm going to leave slowly now...

Terry: Balderdash, you just came in here to flash the dickey!! Tell the tarts in art I'm on the case!

Mike: Ok, but hurry, or you'll miss the flying fornicator!

Terry: Right-o.

(Mike leaves)

Terry: Wait, how did he know that phrase? (*Resumes perusing the issue*) I remember the good old days in Eton, caned with the best of them and flogged, the way a boy should be. So why is it that when I raised my hand to my son the other day my wife looked at me as if I was some kind of monster! The impertinent cur spilled my libation! Why in my day we didn't mind a good beating, we actually enjoyed it! It made us empathetic as well, made us think of how we as a nation used to inflict quite a little tanning on India or Ireland!

(Brian Cogan walks past the door, he is in full Mets regalia with a hat, jersey, and stirrups. He carries a beer, a hot dog, a program, and a "Let's Go Mets" banner which is adorned with a drawing of Mookie Wilson.)

Terry: Cogan, ah, there you are, good to see you. Have you finished the record reviews section?

Brian: Umm (*Takes a bite of hotdog*) it's taking a little longer than usual.

Terry: Did you sneak out to see those Metropolitans again?

¹ In attempting to reconnect with his British heritage Terry has taken to browsing Eric Partridge's Supplement to the first edition of *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English: Slang-including the Language of the Underworld, Colloquialisms and Catch-Phrases, Solecisms and Catachreses, Nicknames, Vulgarisms, and Such Americanisms as have been naturalized* (London, Routledge & Sons, 1938),

Brian: Well, El Duque was starting, umm, I mean no.


Terry: Who is that with you?

(Mr. Met enters the room and does a victory dance.)

Brian: I think he is the FedEx guy

Terry: All right, good show, carry on. (*Returns to computer*) Right then, time to drop the curtains on this issue. Wait, better bring up that internets thing. Hmm, this isn't in the issue. A question for me? Why yes, I wouldn't mind my Johnson being a bit larger, although it is impertinent of you to ask! Hmmm, a Nigerian wants my help with transferring some money? Always glad to help a former colony. Ah, open this attachment from a complete stranger for dirty pictures? Hmm, I don't see any dirty pictures. Funny, now my computer won't shut down! Blast it all! Another cursed virus! I'll wager it's someone at Razorcake again. You'll pay with your non-profit status, Todd Taylor!

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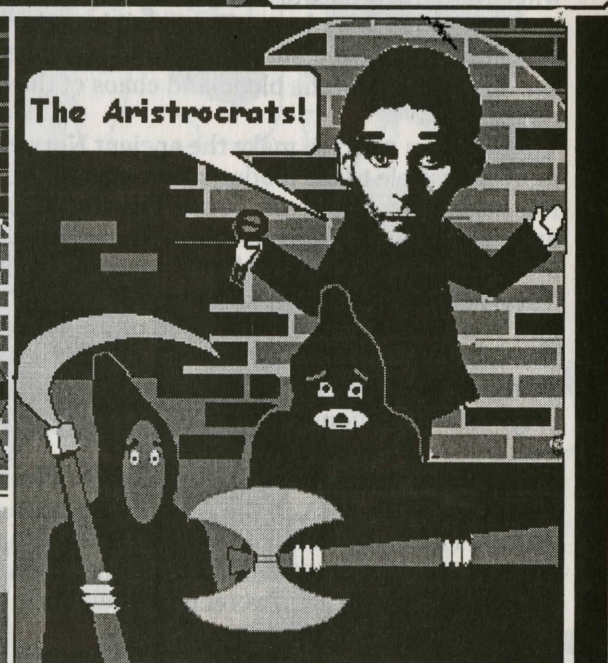
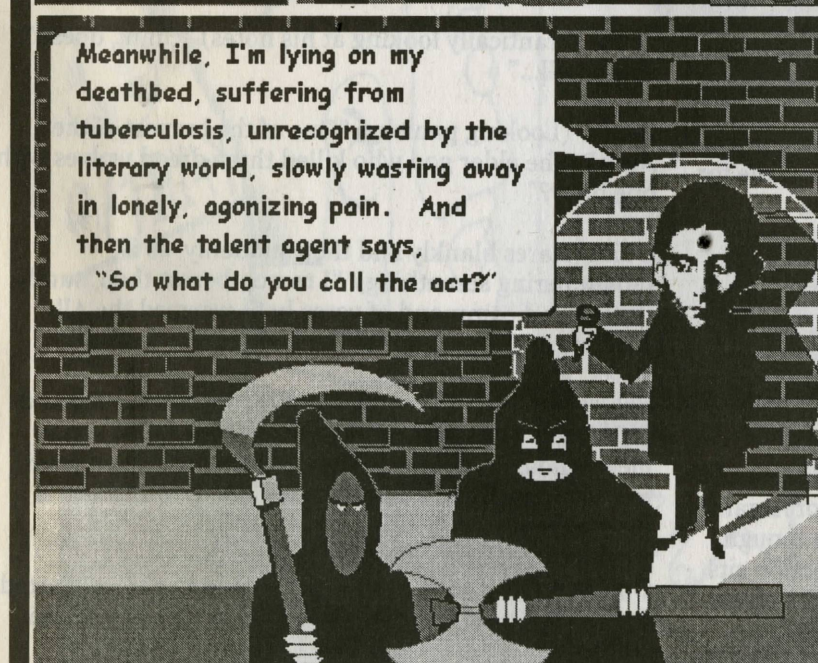
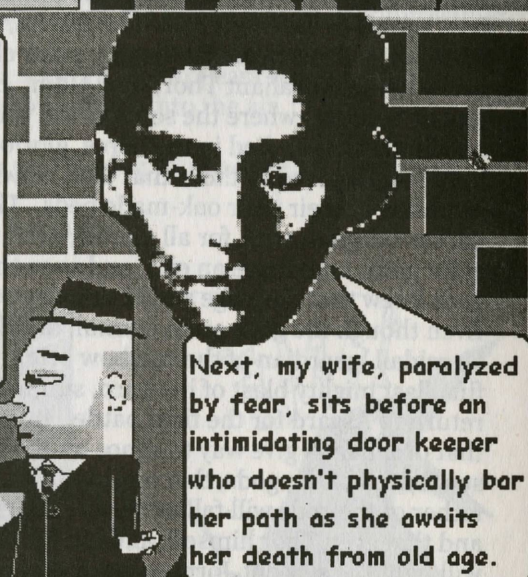
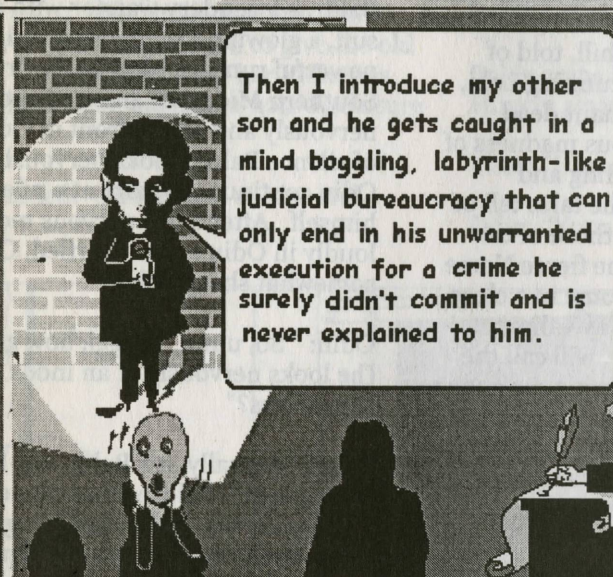
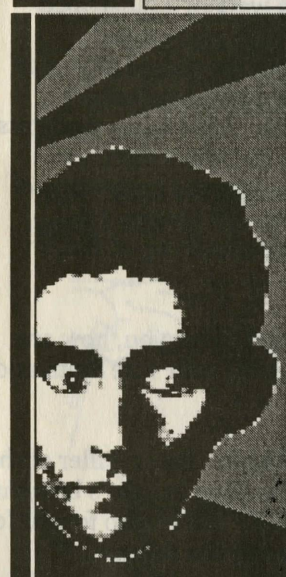
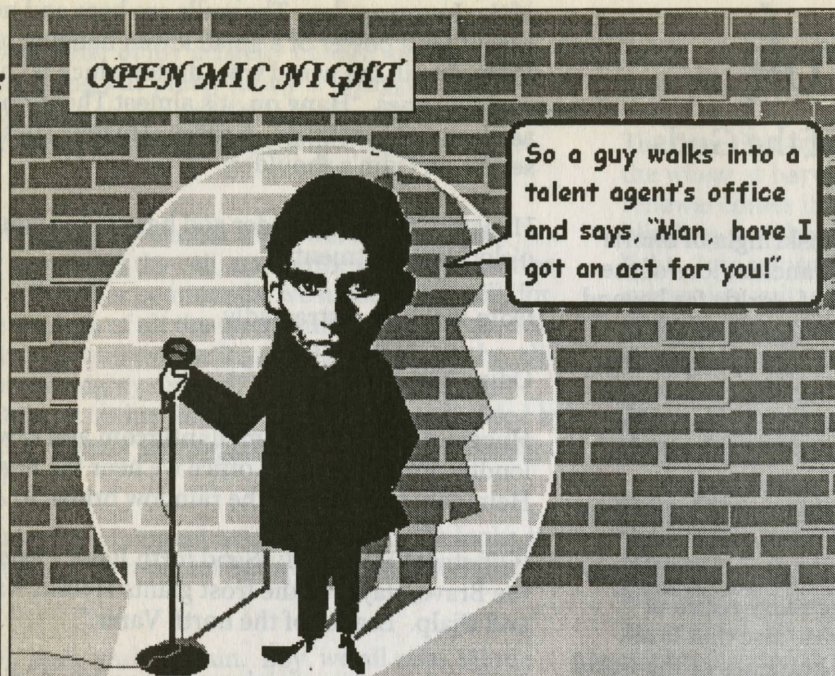
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OPEN MIC NIGHT



Ragnarok

Or, The Downsizing of the Gods

The Elder Edda and the Heimskringla of Snorri Sturluson, the revered and forbidden ancient lore of the Germanic and Norwegian tribes, tell of worlds far beyond the knowledge of modern man, they tell of cruel and terrible frost giants, of dwarves who could spin gold from thin air, of elves, fair and terrible to behold, elves whose laughter could free the lands of the season's frost. The tales tell of the Valkyries, the gatherers of the dead, the Berserkers, running to combat, their naked bodies painted crimson, echoing the blood that would soon stain the valleys and mountains.

But most of all the tales tell of the gods, the Aesir and Vanir, and their ancient and legendary realm of Asgard, located in the midst of the vast disc that is all reality, supported for all time in the branches of the world tree known as the Yggdrasil. The stories, first told around firesides to divert from the deadly polar chill, told of brave deeds, of valiant Thor, wise Odin, cunning Loki, and of Valhalla, where the souls of the valiant dead reside, those that died in the fierce, glorious madness of battle, as opposed to those that died mewling and toothless in their poor oak-made beds. The tales tell of darker things as well, for all stories, even those of the elder gods, must have an end, and even the fierce Norse gods knew that their age would one day come to a close. Even though the gods seem eternal, one day valiant Hemidail, guardian of the rainbow bridge, will call the final last mighty blast of his horn, summoning the gods to return to Asgard for the final battle. It is said at that time that order shall give way to chaos and that the world shall see the fall of the gods, that mighty Odin, wisest elder father of the gods will fall to Fernir, the grave fire wolf and that even Thor himself, and his fierce mallet Mjornir, will fight the serpent Jormungandr and die. The end times will come and the world will fall into chaos, or, as some will say, the few survivors shall forge together a new age of heroes out of the blood and chaos of the end of all things.

In an effort to make the ancient Norwegian sagas more accessible to the modern Norwegian, just in time for Norwegian Heritage week, comes this compelling dramatized version, by acclaimed Norwegian Under-Minister of Commerce and Tariff control Ulig Svenson. This version is available in a pamphlet entitled "Ragnarok and You: How the Tales of the End of the Gods Can Increase Office Productivity By at Least Fifteen Percent By the End of This Quarter." (*Translated from the original Norwegian by Brian Cogan.*)

The scene—a small non-descript office in one of the offices of the gods, in the downtown region of Asgard. The All-Father, Odin, sits behind a desk ruffling through papers. A computer with dial up internet connection sits on his desk. There are several paperweights in the shape

of the Iounn apples. The walls are bare and non-descript, except for a poster of a small kitten hanging off a branch of Yggdrasil, the world tree, under which is carved in ancient runes, "Hang on, it's almost Thors-day." Outside, as always, it is raining. A raven, Hugin, flies in and settles on Odin's shoulder.

Hugin: "There's an elder god here to see you, your three-o'clock appointment."

Odin looks up distractedly

Odin: "Oh, send him in."

Hugin flies over to a small intercom and caws into it loudly. From the outer office we hear the horn of Heimdail, guardian of the rainbow bridge to Asgard.

(Off-stage) Heimdail: "Send forth Baldr. Known also as the Brave, slayer of the frost giants Hymir, Narfi, Thrym and Gjalf. Leader of the north Vanir."

Baldr, a legendary warrior with a warrior's pinstriped suit, a glowing sword encrusted with ancient and powerful runes, a blackberry (from the sacred groves of Southern Midgard) and a mighty comb-over enters nervously and sits in front of Odin. After a few moments of silence Baldr looks nervously in Odin's direction. Odin continues to stare at a pile of papers muttering to himself. After a few nervous moments Hugin caws loudly in Odin's ear. Startled, Odin looks up at Baldr somewhat sheepishly.

Odin: "So, umm, Braggi, how good to see you, how are (he looks nervously at an index card) your wife Sjofn and three elves?"

Baldr: "Actually, it's Baldr, All-Father. Baldr, killer of the frost giants? Baldr whose name is sung at light's break in villages across the land of Midgard? Baldr who fought for three weeks and ten against Hrungir the fire giant?"

Odin: (Frantically looking at his notes) "Umm, doesn't ring a bell..."

Baldr: (Looking panicky) "One of the bravest of the Aesir? The elder god who killed three dread wolves with one blow?"

Odin: (stares blankly and then suddenly, as if remembering something) "I rememberest thou, surely, thy wit and command of verse hath warmed the All-Father's heart, perhaps at the last solstice festival?"

Baldr: "I, umm, well, at the last spring solstice me and Loki, well, verily and in truth, after consuming much mead, did use the sacred copier of the forbidden grove to... well, remember, All-Father, that your half-son is a trickster god!"

Odin: "Who? Oh, that son of mine, don't get me started, but at least he answers to the sacred horn of Heimdail,

unlike some other of my progeny I could mention. Say that copier thing was pretty funny ... (Huggin digs his claws into his shoulder and Odin grows serious.) Ah, now you've probably been wondering why I called you here today?"

Baldr: "When the All-Father calls, we, his sons and servants must heed the call, no matter what. No matter what the All-Father commands, we must do his will, for his is the wisdom of all the ages. Surely, did not the All-Father give his very eye for knowledge? Did not the All-Father create mighty Asgard? Does not, even now, mighty Odin sit on his throne in eternal Asgard, aided by Huggin the raven of knowledge, and Munin, the Raven of memory?"

Odin pauses for a moment as if in thought. He looks at Baldr blankly for a moment before Huggin claws his shoulder.

Odin: "Oh yeah, yeah, Munin. Boy, we all miss Munin around here, that was a loss. But times are tight, my friend, times are tight. I would have loved to give the old boy a proper send-off, but Brunhilda and her Valkeries are sticklers for security, and he did sign a non-disclosure agreement."

Baldr looks at Odin puzzled. Odin stares at him and smiles slightly.

Baldr: "It is not for us to question the All-Father, but I must ask..."

The door flies open and a golden light, as if the light of the wheat at harvest time itself, the glow of eternal renewal comes in though the door, at first the light is blinding, but then a figure can be glimpsed though the light. It is colossal and awe-inspiring figure in a seersucker suit, one wearing the mighty Megingjord Belt and a snazzy power tie. His long blonde locks are tied in a ponytail and compliment his neatly trimmed beard.

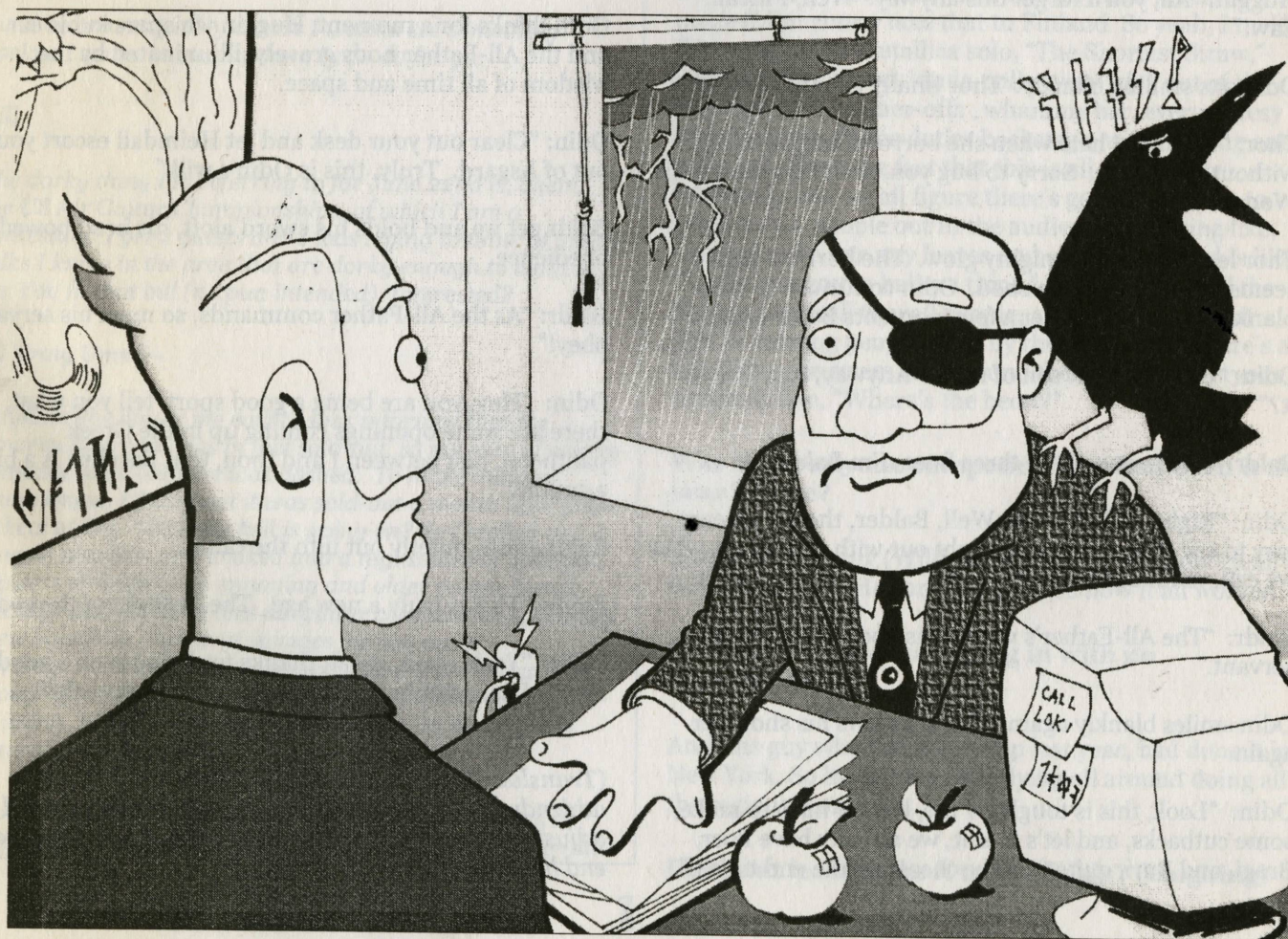
Thor: "Hail to thee, All-Father, the grove nymphs themselves sing your praises!"

Odin: "Thou art indeed welcome, my son, what bringest thou to fair Asgard, so far from thy home in the palace Bilskirnir in the far off land of Thrudvand? Has the fernal wolf itself, ferocious Fenrir been unleashed at last from his prison? Has Ratatosk, the Squirrel who lives in mighty Yggdrasil, brought tides of Helga leading the legions of giants from the frozen wastes of Jotunheimer?"

Baldr grabs his sword and appears ready for battle, Huggin shrieks and flies into the air.

Thor: "Um, I was hoping you had seen my hammer?"

Odin: "Your hammer?"



Baldr: "Famed Mjonir? The hammer of the gods, has been stolen? Surely this is the work of evil Loki, the eternal trickster! I say that we visit upon him the vengeance of the Gods, I call a blood vengeance upon him, we shall not rest until..."

Huggin, who has been growing more and more annoyed till now finally speaks instead of cawing.

Huggin: "It's in your kitchen, Sif has been using it to tenderize the goat for tonight's feast of the fates."

Odin stares at Huggin.

Odin: "Wait a minute, could you always talk?"

Huggin sighs and puts a wing over his eyes.

Huggin: "Yes, we've been over this a thousand times, I... Never mind, I just wish they hadn't fired Munin."

Odin: "Yes, I do miss, um, the other Raven... the one who was in charge of...um"

Huggin: "Memory! Memory, idiot! I'm the Raven in charge of knowledge; he was the one in charge of memory. Asshole!"

There is a pause, as Thor and Baldr look on aghast.

Huggin: "Ah, you'll forget this anyway. Well, I mean, Caw!"

Odin sits smiling blankly. Thor finally coughs nervously.

Thor: "Damnit, I hate when she borrows mighty Mjonir without telling me. Sorry to bug you, dad, I'll see you this Wodens-day."

Thor leaves amidst a mighty glow. The horizon itself seems somewhat diminished. Odin continues to stare blankly into space. After a few moments Baldr coughs.

Odin: "Oh yeah, that son of mine. Anyway, um, Urd, is it?"

Baldr: "Urd is one of the three fates, I'm Baldr."

Odin: "Right, riiiiight. Ok, Well, Balder, there's no easy way to say this, so I'll come right out with it: You are what we call, redundant."

Baldr: "The All-Father's wisdom is above his eternal servant."

Odin smiles blankly again. Huggin claws his shoulder again.

Odin: "Look, this is tough for me, but we have to make, some cutbacks, and let's face it, we already have Borr, Bragi, and Buri, quite frankly, these are the end times."

Baldr: "The end times! Do you mean!?!"

Odin: "Yes, my good and faithful servant, it is indeed the time of Ragnarok, and that means, well, that cutbacks have to be made."

Baldr: "Cutbacks, but this is Ragnarok, you will need every available sword against treacherous Loki and the fire giants."

Odin: "Um, yeah, that's the point, see, the whole final battle thing, that's not going to happen."

Baldr: "I am confused, All-Father."

Odin: "Well, the truth is, a major Japanese pantheon bought us out. I'm not in charge anymore, but Amaterasu, she's the big shot there at their Assembly of the Gods, well, you know how much more efficient the eastern pantheons are."

Huggin nods gravely. Baldr looks down defeated.

Odin: "Hey, this is as uncomfortable for you as it is for me, I mean, we had to let the dwarves go, all of our smithing and delving has been subcontracted out to Ireland. I mean, it's hit us hard."

Baldr: "What does the All-Father wish his servant to do?"

Odin thinks for a moment, Huggin whispers in his ear and the All-Father nods gravely, illuminated by the wisdom of all time and space.

Odin: "Clear out your desk and let Heimdall escort you out of Asgard. Truly, this is Odin's will."

Baldr get up and holds his sword aloft, his head bowed in obedience.

Baldr: "As the All-Father commands, so must his servant obey!"

Odin: "Hey, you are being a good sport, tell you what, there are some openings coming up in the Greek pantheon, just between I and thou, that Bacchus is a bit of a rummy."

Baldr stares quietly out into the rain.

Baldr: "This is truly a new age. The Twilight of the gods!"

Odin: "Yeah, yeah, great, thanks for being such a good sport. Um, send in the Fates on your way out, ok?"

(Translator's note: At this point there is a fifty page addendum about how all Norwegian workers should adjust to new fiscal realities, and I thought it better to end here.)

Craig "Hot Lixx Hulahan" Billmeier: U.S. Air Guitar National Champion



I ran into... let me rephrase that, I trekked out into the far reaches of a netherworld known as Crown Heights, Brooklyn, to talk to Craig Ums Billmeier. I've been lucky enough to know him for awhile and he invited me to witness his stunning victory over other dorks from all over the nation. Air Guitar, something most people are guilty of doing in the confines of their bedroom when they're home alone. It's a close third to masturbation and trimming pubic or arm-pit hair when it comes to things one wants to do in private. But who knows, a few more years and we may see crowds gather for the Curly-Hair Tweeze-Off 2017.

Let's start at the beginning. I woke up one morning to this email...

Bill,

For reasons absurd I'll be in Brooklyn June 21-23. You gonna be around? You busy June 22? You interested in seeing something INCREDIBLY dorky?

--} Craig Ums {--

Craig

I will be around and of course I wanna see something dorky. Lemme know anything I can do for ya.

Bill

The dorky thing I'm referring to for June 22nd is, ahem, the US Air Guitar Championships, of which I am a contestant. I get 2 guests and I was trying to think of which folks I know in the area that are dorky enough to want to go. You fit that bill (no pun intended). Interested?

--} Craig Ums {--

Anyhow, the day of the event I was informed that the Bowery Ballroom was in fact sold-out, so my idea of asking someone to go with me was dashed. To make matters much worse, I found out it was sold-out a month ago; 500+ tickets at \$15. What the hell is going on? So I stalled as long as possible, and walked into a nightmare of younger hipsters striving to be annoying and older people bored with life and deciding that air guitar competition will delay their hopefully imminent suicides for one more evening. What ensued turned out to be very exciting, though if my friend wasn't competing and ultimately winning, I can't really recommend going to another one. - Interview by Bill Florio

Note: To enhance your reading pleasure, we suggest, at some point, that you also "check out" usairguitar.com—Ed.

Craig Ums: When this Air Guitar Competition was publicized last year random people felt that it was one of those things that I might be interested in, which at first you're like, Hey what kind of person do you think I am? And, apparently as it turns out, that's exactly the type of person I am. So, I didn't really do anything to prepare for it. Every Wednesday night I would go to my girlfriend's house, because it's right by school. I felt, well, I'm gonna be in the neighborhood and she's gonna be at work. I'll go down there and give it a shot. The San Francisco contest was two blocks away from her house.

GM: So you didn't need to have anything prepared?

Well, I had a song. They said to come with a 60 second song that you will air guitar to. Some people just took 30 seconds of a Pink Floyd song. Some people took a 60 second part of a song, gave it a beginning and an end, whatever. I took a little flamenco piece and I melfed it into...Melfed it...

The language is being reinvented as we speak.

Do you know who I am?! I'm that guy that invented *melfed*! I'm gonna take that to Finland. So yeah, I melfed that song into a Metallica solo, "The Shortest Straw," which, as you heard, kinda pulls every trick out of the bag, tap-ons hammer-offs, whammy bar, every cheesy little trick. So all the dudes backstage, we're talking and nobody's above the fact that this is all completely ridiculous and we all figure there's gonna be 30 or 40 other drunk people out in the audience just being like, Oaayyyyy! So one guy leaves and comes back and is like, "You're not gonna believe this..." We look out and the place is just wall to wall people, and we find out that they're turning people away by the hundreds. There's a line down the street and around the block. So everyone's suddenly like, "Where's the beer!?"

Was there anyone competing who had tried it the year before?

There was one guy (William Ocean), but he didn't really talk about that. He sort of explained how it all worked.

So everyone else was going in with no expectations...

And this guy who had shown up last year, had done it in New York. So he was actually flying all around doing all the regional contests...

Did he at least make it to the finals? (laughing)

Yes he did, he was really good. He was one of these guys who felt you could be professional about something like this, he knew all the tricks, all the moves, knew how to work the crowd. He's like, here's the guy who's done this before kinda thing. That was my first inkling that this deserves a little bit of respect. Otherwise it was just so masturbatory. So we all go out and look at this huge crowd and everyone was expecting, "Oh all my friends will show up at like 8:30," but since the place was already sold out no one any of us knew could get in since no one had the foresight to think that it could actually sell out.

That's how I felt being an audience member.

They saw one guy scalping tickets for \$100 at the New York show! So we all sort of bonded in the fact, there was a high sense of camaraderie there which is pretty cool because I'm also in some tribute bands that play around the tribute band scene and I've never seen bigger egos than I've seen in guys walking around pretending to be David Lee Roth or Ozzy Osbourne.

What tribute bands are you in?

One called The Rocket Queens, which just does Guns & Roses *Appetite for Destruction* and then there's Virgin Killers, which is just like *Worldwide Live*-era Scorpions.

Very time specific.

Well yeah, there was this one band called Heaven and Hell, which was a Black Sabbath cover band. They weren't Ozzy-era Sabbath, they weren't even a Dio-era Black Sabbath. They were Tony Martin-era Black Sabbath. People are like, "Tony who?" Who fucking does that? It was horrible, and the best part, the singer he's like this tall, he's kinda puffed out like Danzig with the gut and he plucks his eyebrows, but he walks around like "What the fuck are you lookin at!" Really bizarre, right? So he's walking around with this wireless microphone, going out on the ego ramp and stuff. Anyway then there's the drummer. The drummer is a Croatian guy, his name is Elvis.

I thought all Croatian guys were named Elvis.

Or Dalmation! Rocket Queens play, and we're loading out in the parking lot and the drummer says, (in accent) "You guys were good. I was sleeping, but I can hear from out here, it sound good." Then he starts talking to our drummer, it turns out Elvis has 42 snare drums...

In the van with him?

Haha. We're like, Oh dude that's great.. He says, "Talk to me later, I know everything about snare drum, I find you perfect snare drum." And it turns out the guy plays drums for all these big acts, he plays for Bob Dylan, etc. So our drummer walks away and Elvis says to us, "but

first I get him metronome." (laugh) So, fast forward to when they're playing. They're playing a song and the bass jack rots out, so the bass cuts out, something that never just happens and the singer starts in, "What the fuck!?" Who the fuck are these unprofessionals, I can't even bear to stand on a stage with these morons. He starts walking though the crowd saying, "Can you all believe how unprofessional they are?! This is a joke!" Blah blah blah. And the whole time Elvis the drummer keeps shouting "Give me microphone! Give me microphone!" The singer's like "Fuck you guys..." So finally the singer gives in and says, "Fine, if anyone wants to hear a good joke, here's a good joke." The drummer looks him right in the eye and takes the microphone and says "Fuck you!" and throws the mic and it's like dead silence and the you hear "AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA" from the back of the room and it's my dad at the bar laughing hysterically. And ten minutes later it erupts into a fistfight in the parking lot. A Tony Martin tribute band! So yeah, the air guitar championship in San Francisco, it wasn't anything like that. So we all did our first round where we had our song prepared and six of us went on to the second round where we got a compulsory song. Everyone had to play to the same song and we didn't know what it was in advance, and right before they play it, the guy says, "It's 'California Uber Alles' by the Dead Kennedys." I'm like, "The Ronald Reagan version? The Jerry Brown version? The live version...?" And I felt like Cliff Clavin on *Jeopardy*, "You pick it, you just tell me, I'm there." There was only one other guy who even knew the song, which I found pretty strange, especially in San Francisco. It actually worked well as an air guitar song

Sorta like the guy who did the Prince song.

So I ended up winning that one, and that was sort of my first hint at Bro-Dom. "You fucking won it. You get to represent San Francisco, motherfucker!!!" Yeah it was a little put on. Although, I'm comfortable representing San Francisco in my own way. (Craig looks himself over) Short shorts pink bandana, etc. So that brought me to New York, and you can take it from here since you were there.

Were there any good behind the scenes things happening at the New York show?

The food, there was a full spread back there, breaking the seals on platters of hummus and orange juices and all that kinda stuff.

What was the prize for winning the national competition in New York?

They fly me to Finland to compete in the World Championships.

What were you thinking when you saw the first three guys compete in the final round?

When I was watching everyone in the first round, I was thinking, "Wow, these guys really got it down." They all have a shtick and a routine. It was just art, that part just got turned into a sort of performance piece. It's like there's one band that comes out and they're just learning their three chords while other bands come out and just explode on stage, fucking confident. These guys are all on top of their game. I was super nervous, and I'm thinking I don't know how I got to the second round. So the final round came and that William Ocean guy just came out and kicked total ass, landing on a beer can and crushing it with his back. Everyone back stage is like, "I'm proud, that guy is gonna represent us and I'm proud."

This was the part of the evening I found pretty tense.

Devon and I, we have this thing (Devon Morf, also was in All You Can Eat and What Happens Next with Craig) when we approach a room, before we play, we just case it out, "Ok I can climb on that, I can break that..." You just figure out what you can get away with. So when William Ocean was going on that's what I was thinking, "What can I do?" And the third guy does that flip, and I'm like, "Oh man now what can I do to top that?"

Well then the second guy did the stage dive and the third one did the weird somersault, we moved up thinking, Man, Craig may need us to carry him around or something. We were like, How is he gonna beat this?

I don't think I deserved to beat it. But honestly, that whole time when I got up there I was kinda pacing, I had no fucking idea what I was gonna do.

I mean the real problem was for that guy that went after you. He was really stuck.

That guy was great too!

He didn't wanna take his clothes off...

I was pacing with no clue what to do and I looked up at the judges (on the balcony) knowing I had to leave my mark on them, so I'm thinking, All right there's my target...

So you're saying your experience being in punk rock bands is what did it.

Absolutely. Without a doubt.

Yeah I may have done the same thing.

I would expect nothing less from you.

I think I'd be afraid that I didn't know where the stairs were. But you cased out the room it

seems. What were the judges' reactions when you got up in their faces?

The Daily Show guy, when I got up there... I came at him, and I was running down the length of the balcony. It was really simple, I wanted to just get over there, get up on one of the tables, and just wave my wiener in their faces. I was in such a great big hurry to get there I came knocking over all the tables.

You got off the stage through the crowd up the stairs and into the front of the balcony within 15 seconds. It was pretty amazing how fast you got up there.

All they see is this dude jump off the stage and make a line right for them. There's people leaning over the railing like, "Oh what the fuck?!" Drinks are flying. By the time I got there they thought I was just gonna punch them in the face. I tried to climb on that table but it just collapsed. It was one of those circular tables with a circular base. I tried to climb on that but I ended up kicking it towards him and he just does this (Craig pins himself to the wall and looks terrified). Then I started hanging off the railing and he thought I was just gonna jump off the railing. Well I did slip actually.

Sort of like in *Poltergeist*, that scene where the room spins upside down and she's stuck to the walls.

That's exactly what it was like. And that vice guy, I kept trying to catch my foot on something and he kept battling it away like it was attacking him.

Well then there was tension because you got the same exact final score as Ocean did. So everyone thought it was a tie. We didn't realize they added the scores from both rounds together.

Nobody did. We thought there would be an Air Off. And when they suggested that afterward me and him looked at each other with the thought, "One of us will have to die and I certainly hope it's not me."

So now in Finland, how many countries will be competing?

I wanna say there's gonna be about 15.

Do you know how large the venue is?

It's a festival, 2500 people. And I fear all the judges will be way too far to get to. I've actually been emailing some of the past winners and they told me the audience doesn't react at all, so you can forget about playing up to the crowd. So, one, you won't be getting that energy back and, two, you have to go extra big to impress these people back, so it's going to be much harder to win.

So, I'm seventeen years old, and I'm sound asleep on a Friday night, and for no reason at all, I wake up in a state of total panic. My breathing is fast and shallow and my heart is pounding like I'm being chased. And I honestly have no idea why. Everything is totally quiet in my room, because it's 2 am, but physically, I feel like I'm in danger. And I sit up a bit and absentmindedly go to scratch my balls, and immediately I know what's wrong.

The Scariest Night of My Life

By John Flynn

It's the left one. It's bigger. Unnaturally bigger. I gingerly lower my pajama pants and underwear and look down at my junk. It's a terrifying sight. My left nut has swelled up to the size of a grapefruit. It's swelled so much that my scrotum is stretched to the point where all of the wrinkles have disappeared and the skin is smooth. My nut sack can best be described as taut as a drum. And for the first time in my life, when I need to reach out for help, I call for my dad instead of my mom.

After screaming for a few minutes, my dad finally makes his way up to my room, half asleep, confused, and angry. And now that he's in front of me, I suddenly get really sheepish.

"Dad, it's my nuts. One of them is swollen."

Then he cocks his head like a dog that thinks it's heard something. And I'm forced to repeat myself.

"My testicle, Dad. The left one, it's really swollen. I don't know what happened."

And at that moment, my father—the Marine, the Viet Nam vet, the district attorney whose legal work has brought down major crime families—completely loses his mind. First, his eyes get huge, like a Japanimation character. Then he starts to run over to take a look. But before he gets to me, he realizes that he's about to stare at his son's cock and balls, which freaks him out even more, so he runs out of the room. He comes back a few seconds later and goes to say something, but nothing comes out. So he stands there until he finally snaps his fingers and yells, "keys!" and he goes to get them.

Seeing my dad freak out like this is like throwing gasoline on a fire. I launch into a non-stop stream of "OhmyGod, ohmyGod, ohmygod..." as I begin to get out of bed *very carefully*, making sure that nothing hits, touches, or rubs against me down there. It's that throbbing pain where it feels like you could take your own pulse, but in your groin. I am alternately repulsed by my new deformity to the point of wanting to chop it off and get it away from me, and wanting to gently cradle it in my hand and sing it a lullaby, because it's still part of my manhood, and I love it.

Through all this commotion, my mom and sisters wake up and ask what's going on. My dad just yells at them to go back to bed while he runs around the house, slapping himself in the face to make him wake up faster. I meet my dad at the front door and he says, "I called your

grandfather. He said he'll meet us at the hospital." This isn't as weird as it sounds because my grandfather is a doctor, and we're going to the hospital where he works. My grandfather has been my doctor for my entire life. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized how creepy that is. Growing up, whenever I needed to get a physical, I just went over to grandpa's house. This may explain why I have a different set of boundaries than most people.

The best part about going to a hospital where your grandfather works is that you don't have to sit around in the waiting room. I'm immediately rushed to my own room where they strip me naked from the waist down and lay me down on a gurney. Then they put a curtain over the middle of the gurney so I can't see what was going on below my waist. It feels like my nuts are on stage giving a show, while my upper body is stuck backstage and can only hear how it's going.

My grandfather comes into my room, takes one look at me, and the first words out of his mouth are, "Have you been sexually active?" Technically the answer is yes, but since I have no idea what the follow up questions might be I tell him no because I know that my dad is somewhere in the building, and this isn't how he should find out. I tell my grandpa that I went to bed all normal and woke up in the middle of the night as the nut sack Elephant Man. He tells me they can't give me any drugs because they need to monitor the pain. But he hands me a brown paper bag and says, "Your grandmother made this for you." And inside the bag, she's packed a can of coke, an apple, a couple of Fig Newtons in a plastic baggie, some peppermints, and a note that says, "Hope you're feeling better, love, Me," because my grandmother is adorable.

Now, the worst part about going to a hospital where your grandfather works is that everyone wants to be friendly with you. Especially since my grandfather is the nicest man in the world. He's worked at this hospital for over thirty years, and they've named the library after him. At this point all I want to do is take a fist full of painkillers and cry. Instead, I spend the next hour enduring an endless stream of nurses telling me how much they love my grandfather, while doctor after doctor comes in and checks out my nuts. All out of some sort of professional courtesy, I'm sure. The weird part is that no one is leaving, so at one point there are six doctors standing around discussing my balls. And every so often key words pop out. Words like, "surgery," "cancer," and "we might have to remove it." I really want to focus on what they're saying, but I've also got nine nurses staring at me and smiling. Even if it didn't feel like my left ball was about to explode, I would get no pleasure from this.

Finally, what I assume is some sort of head nurse comes in and tells them all to leave. As everyone is leaving, she says, "We're going to take some x-rays, but first I have to give you a shave." Apparently my pubic hair could wreck havoc on the x-ray machine. So, while she tames the raging forest that is my candy apple bush fire, I ask her what she thinks is going to happen.

"I don't know," she tells me, "I'm no doctor, but I'll bet they have to operate. That's pretty big. I'm sure your grandfather will figure it out. He is one of the nicest men I've ever met." And while dusting away my pubes she

adds, "And you look just like him too." I can't decide which part of that is the most upsetting.

She throws a sheet over me and wheels me down the hall to the x-rays room. Then she holds up a lead mat that's about three feet by two feet, and on one of the longer sides there is a semi-circle cut out in the middle.

She tells me that they're going to put this on me and take some x-rays. Then she lifts up my junk and shoves the mat underneath so that my balls are resting on the mat and they take a series of crotch x-rays.

About twenty minutes later I'm wheeled back to my room and told that I can take a nap while they wait for the pictures to be developed. And that is the nicest thing I have ever heard because suddenly I am no longer just a slab of meat. I am emotionally and physically beyond the point of exhaustion as I drift off to sleep. All I want is to wake up in my own bed and have all of this turn out to be a terrible dream. I want to wake up to a world where all testicles, not just mine, are safe from pain and suffering. Sadly, I don't wake up in that world, because no such world exists. Instead I wake up in a world where a Mexican woman is holding rosary beads over my balls while praying in Spanish.

Naturally, my immediate response is to scream at the top of my lungs. This is bad for three reasons. One, screaming that loud engages your lower abs, and when your nut is swollen, you don't want to stir those muscles too much. Two, it causes the entire hospital to come running to see what's wrong. Although at this point I'm sort of numb to having an audience. The third, and worst, thing is that this freaks this lady out. So she's trying to shush me by hitting my thighs. But all I know is that she's very close to slapping my junk. So I keep screaming, until one of the nurses pulls her off of me.

They go off and speak in Spanish while I lie alone and catch my breath. After a moment, they come over to my bed and this Mexican woman looks terrified and apologetic. The nurse says, "She's really sorry, she didn't mean to scare you. She's a cleaning lady here, and a while ago her children were very sick and your grandfather took care of them. When she heard about you, she wanted to

repay the favor by praying to one of the saints over your...umm, problem." I'd been an altar boy, but I had no idea there was a patron saint of swollen balls. Then the nurse adds in a stage whisper, "She's really poor."

I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do with that, so I say, "Oh, that's okay. Here, why don't you take this brown

paper bag home to your kids? I'm sure they'll love it."

The cleaning lady takes the bag my grandmother made for me and appears to express gratitude as she and the nurse walk out. And then she turns around, looks at me with this evil eye, and in flawless English says to me, "Respect your grandfather. You've got good blood in your veins because of him. Honor it."

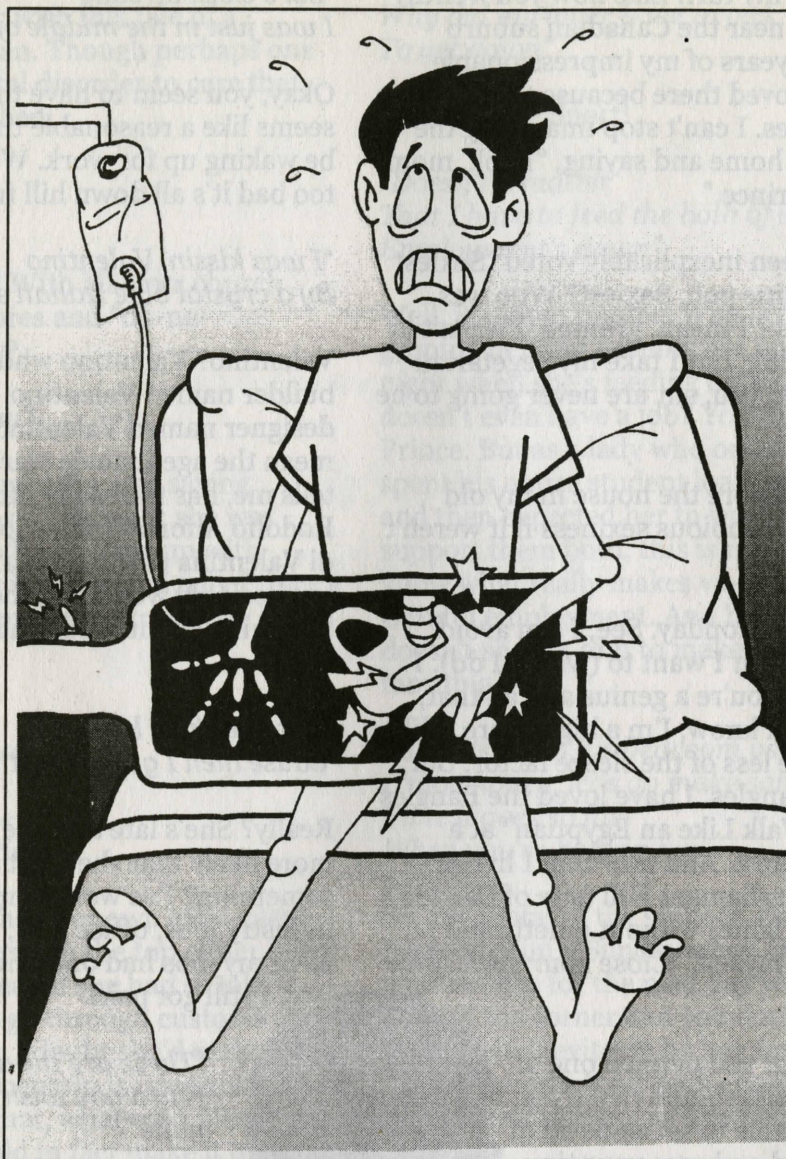
Finally my grandfather comes in. "Well, there doesn't seem to be any cancer... oh look at that. The swelling seems to have gone down. Are you still experiencing any pain?" Suddenly I realize that it's still a little sore, but the throbbing has stopped.

"You probably just torqued it," he says, "sometimes a testicle can twist on itself inside the

scrotum and the vascular tube pinches itself and swells up. It just needs to untwist itself. You should be back to normal in a few days. Take some Advil if you feel any soreness. And you should stop wearing boxers."

They remove the curtain and I'm free to check myself out. I never thought I'd be so relieved to see my scrotum in its naturally wrinkled state. I actually tear up as I touch it, and I think to myself, "Hey there, buddy. What's going on? Sorry about the hair cut. I didn't mean to make you look like a ten year old again. But at least you look like extremely well hung ten year old."

Within a few days, my balls were completely back to normal. And we've had nothing but good times together since. To be safe, I never wear boxers, I always pray to the saint of swollen nuts, and I never, under any circumstance, disrespect the blood of my grandfather.



Dear Prince (or whatever your name is),

It's true, I do have many issues with you. But I wouldn't really ever think about you if you didn't keep encroaching on my turf. Like how you weirdly bought a home right near the Canadian suburb where I lived for ten years of my impressionable youth. I know you moved there because that's where your wife's family lives. I can't stop imagining the weirdness of coming home and saying, "Look, mom and dad! I married Prince."

And now you have been inexplicably voted "Sexiest Vegetarian" in an online poll. Sexiest? Who was voting for this anyway? I mean, granted, I wasn't in the running or anything, but I take my vegetarian lust very seriously and you, sir, are never going to be the object of it.

The thing is, I could ignore the house in my old neighborhood and the dubious sexiness if it weren't for "Manic Monday."

You heard me. Manic. Monday. See, I can avoid listening to *your* music if I want to (which I do). I know that people say you're a genius and all that, but I just don't get it. I know, I'm a big square. I like my music with a little less of the sleaze factor. But dammit, I love the Bangles. I have loved the Bangles since I first heard "Walk Like an Egyptian" at a grade six lip sync contest. And now that I live in Ottawa I can't pass Parliament Hill (site of Canada's own for-real eternal flame) without quietly and reverently singing to myself, "*Close your eyes...give me your hand...*"

So I guess the fact that you penned one of the Bangles' biggest hits should make me like you. I should be able to set aside all of my petty quibbles and embrace your tiny purple self in a gesture of goodwill. Sorry, Princey, I can't do it.

Because although "Manic Monday" is a cute little song and Susanna Hoffs sings it in her delightful, husky, enthrallingly bored kind of way, the lyrics drive me totally batty. It is clear that this song is written by someone who maybe heard someone else

talking about what it would be like to work an actual day at an actual job in the actual real world. And besides, a lot of it is just plain ridiculous.

*"Six o'clock already
I was just in the middle of a dream"*

Okay, you seem to have the time right. Six o'clock seems like a reasonable time for a young woman to be waking up for work. We're off to an okay start, too bad it's all down hill from here.

*"I was kissin' Valentino
By a crystal blue Italian stream"*

Valentino? Valentino who? There's a famous body builder named Valentino. There's also a fashion designer named Valentino. I do suspect you actually mean the aged movie star Valentino who, research tells me, has the easily utterable full name of Rodolfo Alfonso Raffaello Piero Filiberto Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antoguolla. Would a young, professional woman in the mid-80s really be dreaming about Valentino, who actually died in 1926?

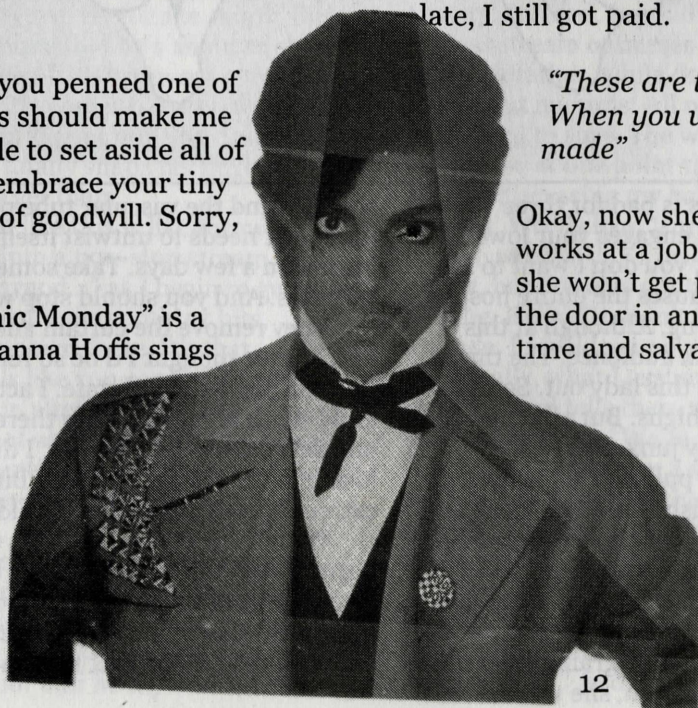
*"But I can't be late
'Cause then I guess I just won't get paid"*

Really? She's late and she just won't get paid? Isn't it more likely that she'd get a demerit point or something? I've worked many jobs, myself. Service industry jobs, office jobs, public service jobs... And all of my jobs had one thing in common. If I was late, I still got paid.

*"These are the days
When you wish your bed was already
made"*

Okay, now she's late and apparently she works at a job where being late means that she won't get paid. But instead of racing out the door in an effort to make it to work on time and salvage that elusive paycheck, she's going to make her bed. Because if she doesn't tidy up those sheets and blankets all of her furniture will immediately turn to dust...or something.

*"It's just another manic
Monday"*



I know what you're getting at, Prince. Your dictionary probably has one of those general and forgiving definitions that says "manic" means "full of frenzied activity." You know what my dictionary says, Prince? "Denoting a special type of mental disorder marked by excitement and violence." Not quite what you're going for with this tale of a beleaguered working woman. Though perhaps one *would* have to have a mental disorder to care that much about making one's bed.

*"I wish it was Sunday
'Cause that's my fun day"*

Fun Day? Sunday? Really? With all of its church activity and household chores and "oh-no-Monday's-coming" anxiety?

"My I don't have to run day"

As a younger person I thought she was saying "rendez" as in "rendez-vous." I thought she was really happy to not have to be meeting up with anyone on a Sunday. (This is not technically Prince's fault, but if I tried I could probably find a way to pin it on him.)

*"Have to catch an early train
Got to be to work by nine
And if I had an air-o-plane
I still couldn't make it on time"*

She couldn't? What if she had her own air-o-plane and there was a landing strip on the top of her office building? Because, sure, yeah if she had to take a conventional airplane and go through customs and baggage claim and all that, I doubt she'd make it on time. But since the plane scenario is imaginary anyway, can't we assume that, what with planes going fast and all, she would in fact make it on time?

*"'Cause it takes me so long
Just to figure out what I'm gonna wear"*

Me, I usually pick my clothes out the night before. What was she so busy doing the night before? Oh wait, I think we'll find out soon.

*"Blame it on the train
But the boss is already there"*

Now I'm not totally sure what city this is supposed to take place in, but I feel like any city worth its salt is going to have more than one train. Some cities, such as New York, seem to have many, many trains.

I guess that for some reason, our narrator lives in the same neighborhood as her boss and they take exactly the same train to work. I'm sure this happens all the time.

*"All of the nights
Why did my lover have to pick last night
To get down"*

"Get down"? Snort!

*"Doesn't it matter
That I have to feed the both of us
Employment's down"*

Well, it should matter! Why is this freeloader groping her and keeping her up late on a Sunday night when she's feeding both of them and he doesn't even have a job? You may think this is sexy, Prince. But as a lady who once lived with a guy who spent his entire student loan on a Fender Telecaster and then expected her to work three jobs in order to support them both, this is not a sexy scenario. You know what really makes women want to "get down"? Gainful employment. And hey, if he's got no job why doesn't she get him to make the freakin' bed in the morning?

*"He tells me in his bedroom voice
C'mon honey, let's go make some noise
Time it goes so fast
When you're having fun"*

So, the moral of the story is: Don't have sex with a freeloader on a Sunday when you haven't picked out your clothes for the next day yet and your boss lives around the corner and you don't have an air-o-plane so you will inevitably be late for work the next day and so you won't get paid enough to feed both yourself and the horny freeloader.

Thanks, Prince. It's a lesson well learned.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Whiteford

(Note: The preceding letter was edited using American grammatical conventions, in particular the period inside the quotation marks (".") as opposed to shivering on the outside ("."), which some nations would have us believe is the proper approach.—Ed.)



I like where I teach, but my commute is long. So from time to time I check out school districts that are closer to home. Typically, though, I'm teaching when those schools are in session. That leads me to attending the occasional PTA or Board of Education meeting. I like to tape the proceedings and listen to them on the way home. Last fall I happened upon the following while attending a Board of Ed meeting in the Split Rock school district. (Transcribed by Mike Faloon)

Hello. I'm Gary Shouldice, though I'm pretty sure you all know that much by now, and I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to speak tonight—parents, taking time away from your busy lives at home; teachers, staying late here at school on an already-long day; and last, but not least, everyone serving on the current board—thank you. These are exciting times for the Split Rock School District and I'd like to share with you my views, to give you a better sense of what you can expect from Gary Shouldice, concerned citizen and candidate for the board of education.

The Shouldices have a long history in Split Rock schools, some of it well-publicized. My wife, Carly, and I met as juniors at Split Rock High School and, as parents, we've had students in the district for nine years now, ever since, Bethany, our oldest, first started at Togetherness Primary. For those of you who know Bethany, she's at the middle school now, eighth grade, and doing great. We take so much from her. Carly and I call Bethany our North Star.

But this isn't about my children, it's about my candidacy. Why choose Gary Shouldice on next week's ballot? It's simple: I believe in our public schools. Carly and I like to joke that we decided against sending Bethany to Manlius Country Day so we could save \$25,000 a year in tuition. But that's not true. We are confident that our children are best served attending public schools. If money were the issue, we would have settled for the Brunswick School! Kidding aside, when you vote for Gary Shouldice you get two for the price of one. Carly and I are a team, a team that's weathered mighty storms, a team that's active in the community, and a team that appreciates what our teachers do. We don't complain when our kids don't get the roles they deserve in school plays. (Not even going to bring up last year's *School House Rock* fiasco.) We turn off our cell phones during parent/teacher conferences. And we encourage our kids to be patient when enduring questions from culturally naive teachers, like last week when Holden, our fifth

grader, was asked, "Where do you play water polo in February?"

Bake sales, book fairs, field trips; we're there. The faculty may remember Carly's contributions to last year's teacher appreciation week. Ordering smoothies for every teacher in the district wasn't easy, but Carly did it. She ordered those 350 smoothies from Soup and Smoothies, over on Gulf Road—they specialize in handmade drinks and never use mixes—and she arranged to have those smoothies delivered to the teachers in their classrooms. Carly and I stayed up nights working out a schedule to insure that every teacher, from shop to calculus, had a fruit-flavored "thank you" brought to his or her desk. A few teachers, and we won't name names, were a bit miffed when we asked to pull two dozen kids

during finals to deliver the smoothies, but you have to understand. We were on a mission to show our teachers how much we care, and Shouldices don't back down. I was swamped at the office the day of Operation: Smoothie and Carly couldn't be there herself. Bethany—who does interpretive dance in addition to all of the honors classes and the golf team—had to be downtown by four o'clock for dance rehearsal, and we all know what afternoon traffic's like on the beltway. We were busy, but we knew we couldn't let the teachers down. Sure, we could have just left the drinks in the teachers' lounge, but it wouldn't have been the same. A true Shouldice never backs away from a challenge.

Now, let's talk about

issues, shall we? The first one I'd like to address is standardized testing. I believe in the value of testing. It's a competitive world and we deserve to know where our children stand in relation to the rest of that world, but we have to cut back on the number of standardized tests our kids take. Iowas, SATs, DRPs, OLSATs; tests in the fall, tests in the spring; it's too much, friends, and it's taking its toll. One day last fall, the market closed early and I caught the 12:30 train home, tossed the clubs in the Lexus, and picked up Bethany early from school. When she saw the clubs she said, "Dad, I don't feel like golf today." *Dad, I don't feel like golf today.* Her words really stung, especially coming from a young lady who consistently drives the ball 250 yards. No thanks to her coach last year who tried to convert Bethany to the David Leadbetter school of thought. Listen, a Leadbetter swing might work for Michelle Wie and Ernie Els, but Bethany developed the worst slice. But, hey, this isn't about Bethany's swing, which rebounded quite well, thank you. I could tell something was troubling her, and, you know,

On November 8

Vote for Gary Shouldice

Split Rock Board of Ed

*****Merit Pay for Teachers***
*****Fewer Tests for Students***
*****Full Funding for All Music
and Sports Program***

we have to talk to our kids, especially when they're in those troubling teen years, so we stopped off at Starbucks and Bethany opened her heart to me. She stopped sipping her coffee of the day, a delightful sun-dried Sidamo, and said, "Dad, I'm tired from the standardized testing. We've been doing it every day for, like, two weeks." A tear snuck out from behind her Bolle's, and I decided then and there that something needed to change. As a member of the board of education, I will push to eliminate all standardized tests administered in the fall. I know this is a controversial position, but I want what's best for Bethany and for all of our children and I believe that the tests taken in the spring will tell us all we need to know.

Let's give our teachers a chance to teach. We have wonderful instructors across the district and I want to encourage the best teachers to stay in Split Rock schools. That's why I advocate paying competitive salaries. As a member of your board of education I promise to keep Split Rock salaries on par with neighboring districts. At the same time I believe in keeping teachers accountable and rewarding the best and the brightest. That's why Gary Shouldice believes in merit pay. Let those who deliver the best results reap the benefits of a job well done, sometimes very well done.

I've told you a lot about Gary Shouldice, the candidate, and now I'd like to speak about Gary Shouldice, the husband, the father, the little league baseball coach who may have made mistakes. I know what some of you may be thinking and maybe it'll help to hear my side. Do I want the best for my players? You bet. Am I driven to succeed? Guilty. Did I injure an autistic child to get my team into the Little League World Series? Yes and no.

Last spring was my son Holden's final year in the division. The two previous years his team had come within one game—one game!—of making the World Series and last year was a special opportunity with so many returning players. The team had an offense like the '27 Yankees and some pretty good pitching, especially if Holden could take advantage of his pinpoint control. The boy's got an arm like Sandy Koufax, but the heart of a hairdresser. He's a flamethrower until he starts worrying about hitting other kids, then his velocity drops off completely and he can't keep his pitches down. He's always thinking too much—*What if I lose control? What if I hit someone in the head? What if I break someone's arm?*—his mind prevents his arm from doing what it can do, what it *needs* to do. Anyway, with hitting and pitching in place, our Achilles' heel was defense. And yes, here I'm referring to Toddy Murillo. Nice boy, but a real liability in the field. Toddy cost us a shot at the World Series two years in a row. I could have benched him or sent him the wrong schedule, like his t-ball coaches used to do, so he wouldn't show up at the right time. But no, I put Toddy in the games and I paid the price. And so did each and every one of my players and each and every one of their families. You should have seen the looks of disappointment when Toddy threw the ball over the outfield fence allowing the winning runs to score. I still

have nightmares about it. A routine pop fly falls in front of Toddy in right field. We've seen this before and we've worked out a plan. All he needs to do is pick up the ball and throw it in the general vicinity of the infield and we hold them to a run—two, tops—but Toddy starts whirling around like he's in a blender and hurls the ball into the bleachers. The bases cleared, we lost the game, and our World Series dreams evaporated. Once was painful. The second year it happened was devastating. I merely did what the other parents wanted to do: I removed the weak link from a team with championship potential. There are times when the good of the many outweighs the good of the one. If you had to sacrifice one person to save a planeload of passengers, you know you'd reach for the nearest pen knife in a heartbeat.

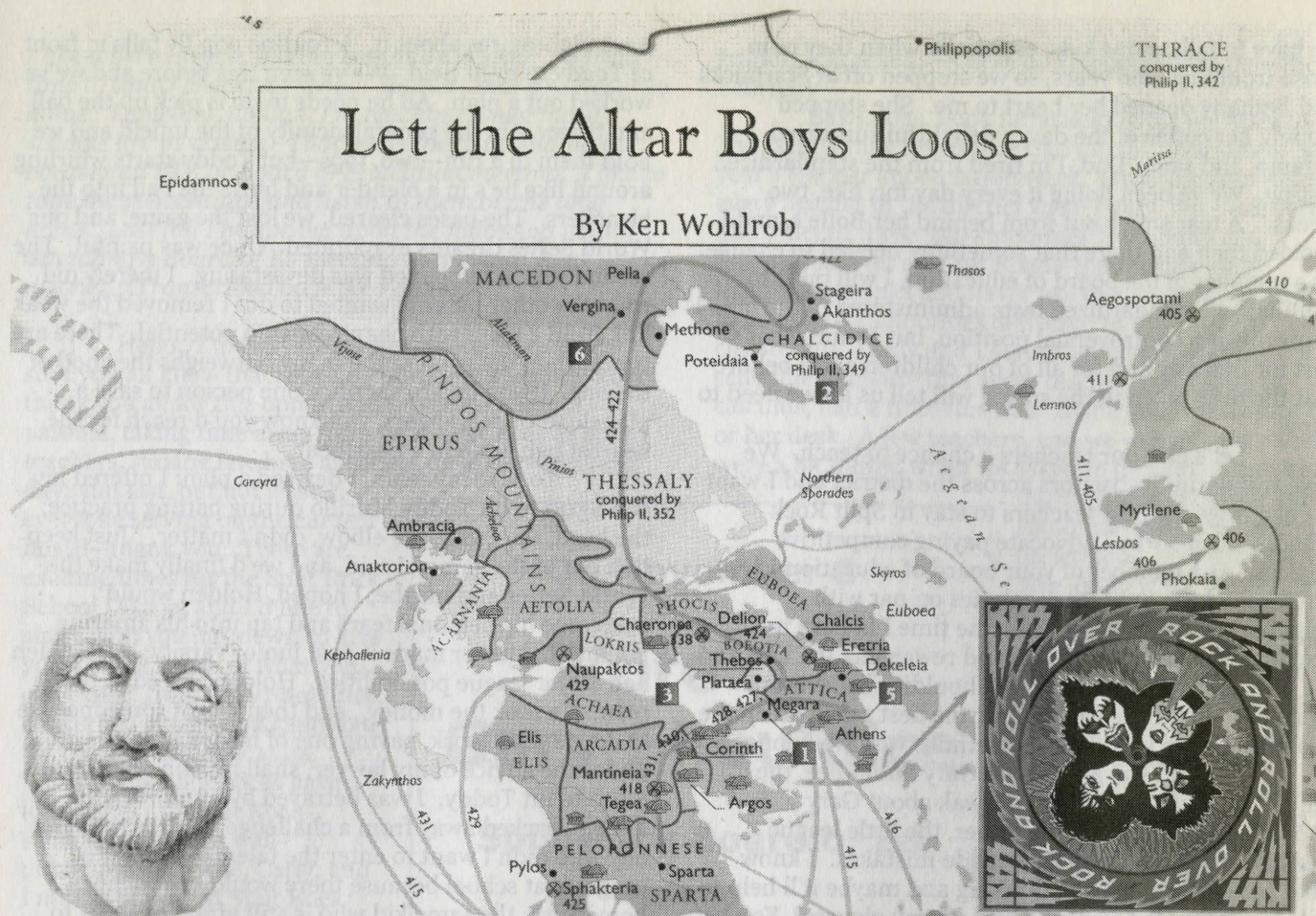
To save my team, I devised a plan: I offered my son \$500 to hit Toddy Murillo during batting practice; the head, the groin, the elbow, didn't matter. 'Just keep him out of the game,' I said, and we'd finally make the World Series and maybe, I hoped, Holden would overcome his personal fears and tap into his amazing potential. I never made it past junior varsity, but Holden had major league possibilities. Holden agreed to the plan. He took the money...and then he got someone else to do his dirty work, paying one of his teammates who, under the advice of my lawyer, shall remain anonymous, \$400 to hit Toddy. I was betrayed by a son who, as always, backed away from a challenge. This is the same boy who didn't want to enter the talented and gifted program at school because there would be too much homework; the same kid who is still afraid of going to sleepaway camp. And it didn't help that Holden's foolish teammate spent the entire \$400 in one shopping spree, treating 10 of his classmates to copies of X-Men Legends 2. When 10 kids come home from school on the same day with free games for their X-Boxes, people start asking questions.

Most of what I've shared thus far is a matter of public record, but what the papers never mention is that Toddy Murillo is barely autistic. He has Asperger's Disorder, which barely qualifies as a pervasive developmental disorder. I should know, I looked it up on WebMD. And let me tell you, Asperger's Disorder is certainly no handicap in the classroom. You should hear that kid conjugate verbs he's learned in Spanish class or reel off his spelling words. He'd be standing in the on-deck circle practicing "onomatopoeia" over and over again. In the end, Toddy got a bruised thigh and made a full recovery within three days, so no one really got hurt and even though we were disqualified and denied World Series glory yet again, I'm willing to put the whole thing behind me.

I could go on, telling you about my stance regarding full funding for our sports and music programs, but Gary Shouldice isn't the kind of guy who overstays his welcome. He is, however, the kind of guy who wants to be part of a board of education that works with educators and parents to insure that the best is yet to come for Split Rock schools. A vote for Gary Shouldice is a vote for a better tomorrow. Thank you.

Let the Altar Boys Loose

By Ken Wohlrob



Part of growing up Catholic is being subjected to weird ideas as to how to raise a proper Christian child. I don't know quite when the idea was first brought up. It was one of those decisions I didn't really have a proper say in. Parents are often like cabinet ministers. They only give you part of the information so they can steer you to a judgment that's in their favor. I think it went something like this:

"Kenneth, you want to be an altar boy right? Kenneth. Kenneth! Put the damn Legos down and listen to me."

"What? What?"

"You want to be an altar boy right?"

"Why?"

"Your brother Tommy is one. Don't you want to be one too?"

"I don't know. What do I have to do?"

"It's a good thing to be an altar boy. It's an honor."

"Why is it an honor?"

"Well it just is."

"Why?"

"Because you get to stand on the altar. Don't you want to stand on the altar where everyone can see you?"

"Will I go to hell if I don't become an altar boy?"

"Well...maybe..."

Looking back, it was not exactly a sound argument. I can't recall now, but I assume I was unconvinced by my parent's persuasion. Somehow, I think my brother Tommy appealed more to my childlike interests.

"Listen, why don't you become an altar boy like me."

"Why?"

"Because...every year they take us down the Jersey shore for a day. You get to go on the water flume and win prizes on the wheels. You can win KISS albums!" I was sold.

Being an altar boy is really not that hard... unless you are a) Italian, and b) educated in the New Jersey public school system. But even my brother and I, suffering from this dual handicap, were able to master the art of altar-boying. The routine is simple:

1. Show up
2. Put on your dress
3. Light the candles
4. Put out the crackers and beverages for the guests
5. Walk down the aisle
6. Don't drop the cross
7. Stand behind the priest and pretend you're listening
8. Stay awake
9. Don't bogart all the wine
10. And finally, simply do it all in reverse

point to my brother's 'system.' We Wohlrobs were meant to be hard workers—a good quality my father instilled in all of us—but we were always short in the brain department. The nut of his system was:

For the wheels that have four numbers on them, always bet on the '2' or '3' because they are on the lower half of the wheel and the arrow falls on them more often. For the wheels with a ton of numbers and symbols, bet on five at once. Since you can get five slots for a buck, you save a whole quarter (as it would cost you \$1.25 to bet each individually) and you get a better chance of hitting one of them.

It never occurred to me to consider why my brother had a system for winning giant sized Pepsi bottles filled with gumballs and spiked leather bracelets (that we thought made us look 'Metal' but really made us look more like gay bikers), especially since he had no system for getting better grades in school. Later in life, it always struck me as odd that this eternal 'C' student could conjure up such an elaborate system for cheating the merchants of Seaside Heights.

Needless to say my brother's system usually ended up costing us more money. Instead of buying a Scorpions cassette, which normally would have cost us \$8 at a local record shop, we would end up dropping \$12 at the wheel just to win one. Then when one of us won, we'd high-five the other guy, celebrating the triumphant victory with a slice of Silician pizza, not realizing that with our celebratory meal we were in the red \$5. We really lost our shirts on the more complicated wheels, where we would bet five symbols for a buck. Twenty dollars later we had the Motley Crue poster, with no clue as to why we were almost out of cash.

Whatever money that was left would normally be spent on my brother and mine's annual miniature golf tournament. Because of the strong sports family my father had created, we took every game as seriously as the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I still have wonderful memories of my brother Tommy tearing up a scoreboard we made out of a big sheet of brown paper after our block lost to kids from the next block in wiffle ball. I also had on videotape the incident where Tommy decked Michael Merola, six years his junior, during a close play at the plate. We weren't high-paid primadonnas like today's ballplayers who barely jog for multi-million dollar paychecks. We played because we loved the game. Or so we thought.

Every summer when we went on our altar boy trip my brother would insist on having a miniature golf tournament. I don't know why he called it a tournament. A tournament usually conjures up the scenario of multiple games in NCAA final four style where teams battle it out to move on to the next round. It was just the two of us, a pair of Italian

jackasses playing 18 holes of miniature golf. In most cases, the "tournament" went like this:

Tommy would jump to an early lead on holes 1-5.

By hole 6 he would start to taunt me, calling me a loser or fag or something of the sort.

Reaching the midpoint after hole 9, Tommy would add up the scores and then remark at how much he was kicking my ass.

By hole 14 I had given up and was swinging any which way and taking the five-stroke maximums.

After two rounds of purposely awful play, my brother would start to piss and moan about my lack of effort, feeling that his victory would somehow not be legitimate unless I was attempting not to lose.

"Goddammit! Will you try you big baby. What are you a quitter? I'll tell Dad you're a quitter." There was no more serious threat in our family than that.

Having had my ass thoroughly kicked at miniature golf by my brother, I usually proceeded to seize the joy of victory from Lim on the final hole. This is the novelty hole where you have to get it dead center to trigger the mechanism that means you won a free game. I may have sucked at miniature golf, but I had a knack for these things. Every time I won the free game, you could see the anger in Tommy's eye. He may have won the game, but I won a FREE game. It's the little victories that count.

And so it went every year. By five o'clock that day, after we had eaten enough pizza to sideline Pavarotti and had our arms stuffed with prizes that we gambled our savings away on, we loaded onto the bus for the two-hour ride back home. You could say that those trips were important bonding events for my brother, myself and the other guys. A way for us to learn how to have fun and associate with others who had committed to being one of God's servants. It allowed us to spend a fun day with a couple of the priests, to learn that religion wasn't stodgy, you could have fun and still be God-like.

Well, you could say that. All I know is that eventually, I started skipping out on going to church. I began telling my parents that I was going to 7:00 AM mass, riding my bike around for an hour before zooming over to the church to grab a program as 'proof' that I had attended church. I guess God was an enabler, huh?

Then again, if our stints down to the Jersey boardwalk had taught us anything, it was that getting into heaven was a simple matter of playing the wheel. I feel really bad for the devout Christians who have been playing the one and the four on the wheel all their life as it's gonna be a long trip to hell. After all, much like Vegas, heaven and hell is probably just another game of chance for those that believe in such buncombe.

Daddy Nose Best

By Tim Hall

It was the middle of the night. I opened my eyes and saw Mary standing over me, smiling sweetly.

"Sorry to wake you, honey," she said, "but I think it's time."

"Nonsense," I mumbled, closing my eyes. "He's not due for another three weeks."

"I've been having contractions for the past half hour."

"Braxton Hicks," I growled, snuggling back into the pillow.

"They're coming four minutes apart."

I sat up. "Breathe," I said.

"I am," Mary replied.

"Not you. I was talking to myself."

I got up and did the first thing all men do in moments of crisis: I went to the bathroom. I was prepared; I had been planning for this for nine months. So what if he came a few weeks early? I had taken the classes, seen the videos, read the books. I had a black belt in Lamaze; I would not faint.

I was washing my hands when something dropped into the sink. It was wet and red and looked like blood. There was another. By the time I had identified my left nostril as the source of the crimson drops the drip had turned into a drizzle; a moment later, as I frantically reached for a wad of toilet paper, it had become a full-blown downpour. The fact that I never got nosebleeds was irrelevant, because this was not just a nosebleed. It was unlike anything I had experienced. It was a gusher, nasal jihad, the Nosepocalypse. Dear God, I thought, I'm having a brain hemorrhage. My son will forever remember his birthday as the day his dad croaked from a fatal nosebleed.

I came out of the bathroom, a wad of toilet paper stuffed up my nose. Mary saw me and sighed.

"You'd better lie down and put pressure on that," she advised, then clutched her side as another contraction doubled her over.

"Doh!" I cried, finding it difficult to talk with the tissue in my nose. "We'b god do ged do de hozbital!"

My mom was in the hallway in her nightgown, scratching her nose. She had stayed over for our big Christmas shopping trip to J.C. Penney the next morning.

"What's all the racket?" she asked.

"Bary's in labor!" I answered, stuffily.

"And she punched you in the nose? Good girl!"

"Cud de joges and ged dressed!" I screamed

back at her.

In my bleeding frenzy I grabbed the essentials—iPod, cigarettes, a few Criterion Collection DVDs—and threw them in a bag. Then I put on my coat and ran back into the bedroom.

"I still think you should lie down for a while," Mary said, grimacing. "I'll be all right."

"Dike hell!" I barked. "I'll ged de gar. Bom, will you bring Bary down?"

"Of course I will, dear," my mother said sweetly. "There's no need to shout."

"I'B NOD SHOUDING!"

I headed downstairs. In the lobby the sleepy doorman got up from his chair.

"Good morning, sir," he said. "Are you all right?"

"Id's Mary, zhe's habing de baby!"

"And she punched you in the nose, is that it?"

"DAD'S NOD VUNNY!" I shrieked.

Outside, the Jersey City Heights were covered in a thick layer of fresh snow. It was almost six inches deep and still coming down. The plows and sanders weren't out yet. Of all the lousy times for Jersey City to decide it wants to look beautiful, I thought. Why now?

I threw the bags in the trunk and cleaned the car, then pulled around. Mary and mom were waiting in the lobby. I jumped out and with the doorman's help got them loaded in. That was the easy part. It was the drive that worried me. The hospital was less than a mile away, but it was below us, in Hoboken. There was a steep cliff to get down first. The police had already blocked off all the major routes, so I headed for one of the little-known back roads. Success! We skidded down the ravine in low gear, my head tilted back as I rode the emergency brake, while Mary handed me one wad of tissues after another and I angrily tossed the old bloody wads out the window.

We pulled up to the emergency entrance and went in. It wasn't yet dawn. A female security guard ran over and took my arm.

"Please sit down, sir," she said. "I'll have a doctor see you right away."

"Doh doh doh!" I bellowed, clutching my nose. "Id's nod me, id's by wife! She's habing a baby!"

The guard pulled away and looked at me.

"Are you sure? No offense, mister, but you look pretty messed up."

"Baternity!" I screamed. "Widge way do baternity?"

It was two more hours before my nose stopped bleeding; our beautiful and healthy boy was born two hours after that. Meanwhile, the nurses gathered around, wondering aloud if I shouldn't go back to the ER. I refused. One of them got me an ice pack. I sat in a chair in the delivery room, pressing the ice to my damaged nose while Mary lay next to me, legs up, waiting her turn.

Those Were the Days... That Filled My Nights: A Brief Tribute to Dirt Bike Annie

By Joe Keller

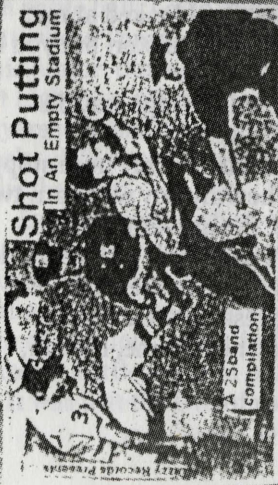
BE COOL AND
ROCK OUT WITH
DIRT BIKE ANNIE!!!



Adam

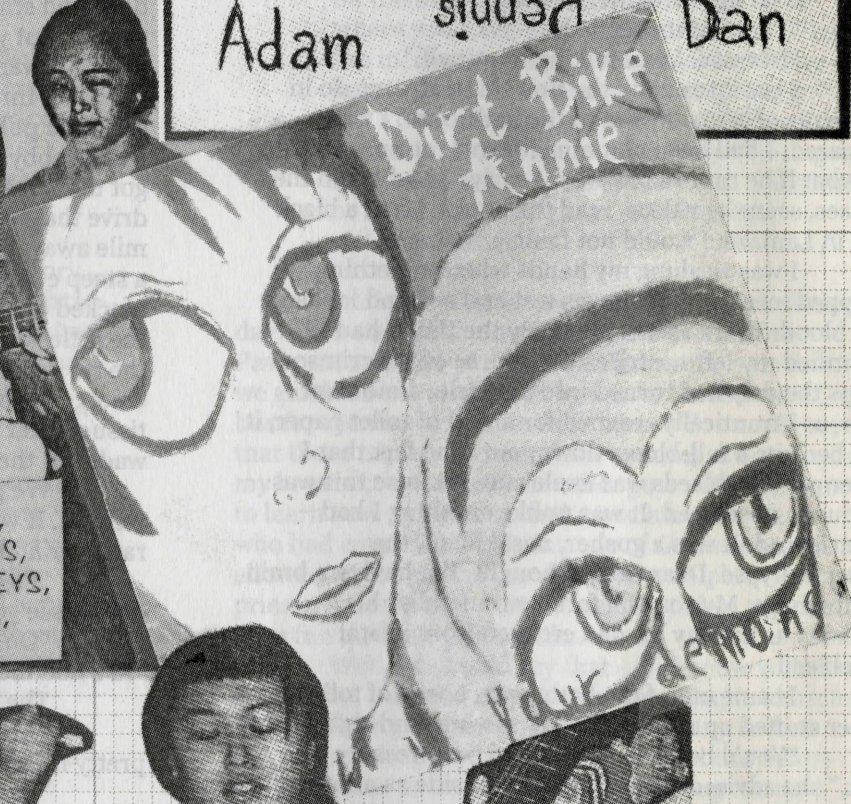
Dennis

Dan



Shot Putting
In An Empty Stadium

A 25 Band
compilation



"Hey fella, I don't see the 6 pack if you don't see the shortcut," said the shady looking drifter as he cut through the cemetery yard. He was looking at the booze partially hidden under the front tire of Dirt Bike Annie's tour van. "Not a problem," I managed to squeak out. I was already nervous as hell. Nervous that somehow, some sort of authority figure would catch me drinking.

Dirt Bike Annie had agreed to buy me what was to be my first beer. Upon greeting them at the Burlington New Jersey VFW hall, I had played it cool mentioning a bunch of their songs and other NYC pop punk bands I was hip to. When they came back to the van, we chilled out in their road vehicle and discussed how their tour had gone. As a high school nerd who rarely traveled outside of Middlesex county, even the most mundane details of their tour (and trust me most of it was not mundane) seemed overwhelmingly exciting to me. They gave me the first taste of life on the road washed down with a warm bottle of Yuengling Lager.

Dirt Bike Annie was, at one time, *the* band. To this day it angers me that Dirt Bike Annie never made it to the cover of all those glossy rock mags and the top of the charts. Don't get me wrong, I bear none of this anger towards any of the members of the band; Dirt Bike Annie did their part in spades—they rocked continuously. No, I'm more mad at the rest of the world for not recognizing how great this band was and treating them as such.

Normally, punk rockers such as myself tend to want to keep their local faves in their back pocket where they can be enjoyed candidly every weekend in some local bar down the street. Dirt Bike Annie was different though. They *SHOULD* have been big. They *SHOULD* have sold out. They could have taken the money and ran for all I cared as long they continued to give me the sweet musical heroin they were so good at producing. They were the one band I could play my non-punk friends and receive a positive response. Their songs sounded great in a basement but I could also hear them sounding equally great pounding out of radios across the county or on a huge arena stage. It was easy to picture the nation's youth singing along to "Capable of Anything" or "Next Time" before making out at a movie theater or going to the beach on a hot summer night. The band seriously had it all. The live show, the records, the looks, the charisma and the goddamn tunes! Shit, if nothing else, the band had the raw songwriting ammo to punch holes in 3-inch thick, military-grade, summertime blues.

I first heard the band from a scruffy punk tape comp (put out by a subsidiary of GenTech industries that shall remain nameless) given to me by my buddy Anthony Bartkewicz, member of the most excellent Chefs of the Future (who were featured on the tape as well.) The comp opened up with a Dirt Bike Annie song called "Double Bubble." The tune, an up-tempo Screeching Weasel-esque

number, raised my eyebrows and caused me to seek out the band's breakout Mutant Pop single *Choco-berri Sugar Pops*. Even on Mutant Pop, a pop punk label with a sound that leaned much more towards the pop than the punk, Dirt Bike Annie stood out as an overly pop-laden group. By their second 7" record, DBA had honed in on their own sound that wasn't so much a speedy rehash of Screeching Weasel, the Queers, or [insert other Lookout style pop punk band here], but was more of a blend of pop punk, power pop, and good old 50s rock n roll. The sweet, somewhat innocent relationship lyrics were amplified by the two part harmonies provided by Jeanie Lee and Dan Paquin. The more steady mid tempos suited the band's super catchy songs for not only singing along with ease, but also afforded one to get down during one of their sets. And get down, the people did.

While *Choco-berri* had left a lasting impression on me, nothing could or would compare to the first time I saw Dirt Bike Annie live. There was nothing that out of the ordinary about this particular Dirt Bike Annie show, it just happened to be my first. Ask any Dirt Bike Annie fan and their first show probably stands out as the best in their mind. I knew *Choco-berri* in and out and I wanted to know if the band could deliver onstage. Myself and a couple of friends (including my best friend Mike Yannich who would later become the definitive drummer for Dirt Bike Annie) made a trek up the Garden State Parkway to Skaters World in Wayne, NJ.

Yes, Dirt Bike Annie was playing a roller rink. The stage was over in the arcade area. It was the perfect venue for a band that was all fun; I would be able to catch my favorite band in between a round of Street Fighter II and some disco fries. They took the stage and holy lord, did they tear it up. As hinted by their music and record cover, they didn't look like punks at all. Dirt Bike Dan wore a bowling shirt. Dirt Bike Adam had a spiffy collared shirt and some slacks. The band looked sharp. They had sparkly guitars. They kicked off the show with "Shogun Warriors" and didn't let up. They had synchronized dance moves for crying out loud. Now most pop punk type bands in the mid to late 90s did lots of synchronized jumping in their songs, but Dirt Bike Annie's synchronized jumping was different. All those other shitty melodicore pop punk bands did these awful timed jumps that were supposed to look like they were spontaneous. Dirt Bike Annie's jumps looked choreographed and were therefore awesome. The band was so fun that even the most hardened be-Mohawked 16 year old punk couldn't help but be infected by the party vibe of this band, forget that he was wearing a Casualties shirt, and have a good time. Dirt Bike Annie knew how to put on a show. The dance moves, flashy guitars, tour zines, and live harmonies made it impossible for one to forget about DBA. I felt like I had left an event after I saw Dirt

Bike Annie that night, not some plodding rock show where everyone stood around and pretended to care about their friend's band. Later in their existence, Dirt Bike Annie would add Jonnie Whoa Oh on special effects—smoke and lights. It was like a mini-arena show.

In the spring of 1999, Dirt Bike Annie released their debut full length, the appropriately titled *Hit the Rock* on Mutant Pop records. *Hit the Rock* is the definitive document of the band in their prime. If you're looking for a place to start with the band, this record is it. Dirt Bike Annie's songwriting hit its stride here, his technique of blending party imagery and a swell of New York City references with catchy guitar hooks and singalong choruses has rarely met any stiff competition. Jeanie Lee and Dan Paquin did their parts as well, each turning in a couple of big bright shining hits ("All Systems Go" and "Grape Crush"). Drummer Deano held down the beat with expertise, his playing both precise and powerful, a combination often lacking in the world of pop punk. Dirt Bike Annie had pulled off the trick of combining Lookout/Green Day-like vocal melodies with a twin indie rock guitar attack, reminiscent of the Pixies and Superchunk. It was no easy feat, but it cemented the idea that this band was original, distinct. The release show for *Hit the Rock* was less of a show and more of a wild party. Their set that night was complimented by dual go-go dancers on either side of the stage and mucho, mucho alcohol imbibed and spilled. The band kept up the support, touring several times in the upcoming years to bring *Hit the Rock* to the underground masses of America.

Despite what some would misconstrue as punk-lite trappings, Dirt Bike Annie was a DIY band in the truest sense. They booked their own tours, made their own merch, and hooked up countless other touring bands with shows at their punk rock lair, the Souse House in Jersey City. They brought my band on our first tour ever and showed us the ropes when it came to living on the road, rocking the locals, and binge drinking. DBA also released numerous 7" records on numerous independent labels and in general kept in touch with the punk scene at the time. They played anywhere they could have a good time including clubs, bars, basements, and outdoor pool patio parties. This was definitely not a band that had its tour rider written out before logging mile one on the interstate.

After all the touring and a slew of great singles (my personal favorite is the *Superscope 7"* on Break Up Records) Dirt Bike Annie followed up *Hit the Rock* in 2003 with their second and final album, *Show Us Your Demons*. The ominous title belied a change in the mood of some DBA's material. Songs like "Wireless Connection," "Note to Self," and "Scream" were slightly darker and harder than any of band's previous catalog. Even the more upbeat songs like "Two Ton Wait" and "Shut In" had worrisome, anxious feelings to them. I'm not going to use the

dreaded "post 9-11" label here, but something within the band had changed. Even though the feeling to the songs was not same, it was a good change of pace. By their second full length, the Dirt Bikers had managed to expand their sound yet again, a move usually reserved for third or fourth albums. The ante was heavily upped in the production department. *Show Us Your Demons* sounded crisper and tighter than anything they ever did. While Adam still had the majority of the songs, Jeanie and Dan jacked up their songwriting quotients which gave the record a nice mix of all three of the band's main personalities. The band even ignored the producer's request to have Dan give up singing his songs because supposedly bands with three singers never "make it."

Sadly, the band's seemingly limitless charm, talent, and potential never materialized into the larger scale success most of their fans, myself, of course, included, thought they deserved. After nearly 10 years of playing, Dirt Bike Annie decided to pack it in. If there's one thing their lack of mainstream success taught me it is that you can have all the qualities of a great band and absolutely not go to the top. It's all about luck, dumb, stupid, luck. I guess the dreaded "personal differences" can be cited as what caused the band to break up, but perhaps it was for the best. Maybe the members of Dirt Bike Annie just knew that it was time and that all they could do was go out on a Seinfeldian high-note.

Now with Dirt Bike Annie gone, the NYC pop punk scene lives on without them, probably more active than ever. A great deal of its existence is thanks to Dirt Bike Annie. Along with Egghead., Dirt Bike Annie played the part of third generation Ramones, bringing all of the younger local pop punk fans together to meet one another, showing them that they could form a band, put out records, and tour. DBA's more concrete stats are also impressive. They went on ten tours and released two full lengths, seven singles, a split full length with the Popsters, and a CD collection of all their various material. They did more than most smaller bands ever will or probably should. Even though their list of indie rock accomplishments is long and distinguished, those things will not be what everyone remembers about them. I know when I think about them now, I think about how good they were live, how much fun EVERYONE who saw them had. I think about how much fun the members of Dirt Bike Annie had playing those shows and those songs and drinking many drinks with all their friends before and after the shows. I think about the home movies they made from their tours which weren't full so much of their performances, but rather of them skinny dipping at a swimming hole, sitting at the bar, or interviewing crazy locals. Most of all, I think about those records they made. Whenever I grimace and ball up my fist over how the world missed its chance to hear a great band, I put on those records. They will forever rock in at least one back-pocket and I suspect many more.

An Insider's Guide to Diffusing Middle Class Rage

By Chris Gethard

White middle class nerds are the number one demographic of people who eventually whip out gats and bust caps in their school lunchrooms, as well as the number one demographic of people who eventually start kidnapping people, disemboweling them, and wearing their face skin as masks. (There are no accurate profiles that say all school shooters are white, but let's face facts, people. I can back them up my claims regarding face skin masks. Almost all of those guys are non-descript white dudes. 84% of serial killers are white, 90% are male, and 86% are heterosexual.)

Being a classic, Billy Joel-esque angry young man, I have found that I cling to a number of pop culture outlets that calm me down, allow me to vent vicariously, and let me end my days happier than when I woke up.

I guarantee that if the following list became the syllabus for a mandatory course all suburban male high school sophomores were required to take, school shootings would cease to exist, serial killings would lessen by fifty percent, and emo would virtually disappear.

1. **Outrage** – This is a little known 1973 made for TV movie starring Robert Culp. It involves the story of Dr. Jim Kiler, a man who moves to a condo complex with poor zoning laws that lead to shoddy police protection. A gang of teenage punks terrorizes his home and his family, until he takes justice into his own hands in the most surreal, hilarious, yet completely satisfying-in-a-badass manner possible. Ask yourself what you would do if a hoodlum in a tricked out car fired a flaming rocket out of a pneumatic air gun into *your* bail of hay, then watch as Dr. Jim dutifully fulfills your fantasy.

2. **Pride Fighting Championships** – This is a Japanese mixed martial arts league, which means that it's like the Ultimate Fighting Championships except with that Japanese sense of flair and spectacle. So it's grown men brutally fighting, and unlike the UFC (pansies), they allow kicks, stomps, and knees to the head and face. The ring entrances oftentimes feature things such as men dressed as Super Mario, or Dutch kickboxers carrying ludicrously large sledgehammers, or a line of men wearing the same mask tormenting an opponent while forcing them to guess which is the actual man they will subsequently fight. In Japan there are

no weight classes, so literal giants (Giant Silva, over seven feet tall) fight men like Ikuhisa Minowa (a 5'6 tall Japanese man who in his training video races a flying jet on foot). Simply put, the pageantry is bizarre, the violence is real, and the catharsis is unquestionable.

3. **The Wanderers** – This movie came out in 1979 and follows a street gang called the Wanderers as they duke it out with the Fordham Baldies, the Wongs, the Del Bombers, and best of all, the creepy as shit and based on a real gang Ducky Boys. The violence is so bizarre that you can feel the freedom to be totally satisfied without feeling guilty when the Ducky Boys step on the big guy's arm and smash it. There are certain movies in life that make you want to set up a human shaped punching bag in your living room and shout out the names of your childhood bullies and high school science teachers while you watch them. This is one of those movies.
4. **Immortal Technique** – This rapper hails from Harlem and is, simply put, the angriest, funniest, most antagonistic musical artist I've heard in about 15 years. You can put his albums on and just laugh at how aggressively he tears apart every single person and subject that bothers him in the slightest. Basically, it has the same effect that listening to Minor Threat had on me when I was 14. I would put on a Minor Threat CD when I'm angry, but the truth is, I sometimes do that and start getting angrier or depressed, because it reiterates to me that I haven't grown up since I was a freshman in high school. By continuing suburban culture's long standing tradition of co-opting rap music, I can get the same aggression out through music while feeling like I am being hip, cool, and culturally aware.
5. **A&E Programming** – This is the most important one of all. Shows like Cold Case Files, The First 48, American Justice, and Dog the Bounty Hunter dissuade cowards like me from ever actually wanting to do something aggressive or criminal, because this network seems designed to show you that you will get caught. No matter what you do or when you do it, apparently, you get caught eventually. Or so A&E would have you believe. I'm willing to buy it if it deters me from punching my downstairs neighbor in the face when he mouths off.

Check out Chris' new book *Weird New York* at www.weirdnj.com. And while you're cruising the internets or perhaps a book store seek out *The Overrated Book*, which features contributions from GM writers Brett Essler, Mike Faloon, Russ Forster, and Aaron Lefkove (www.chunklet.com).



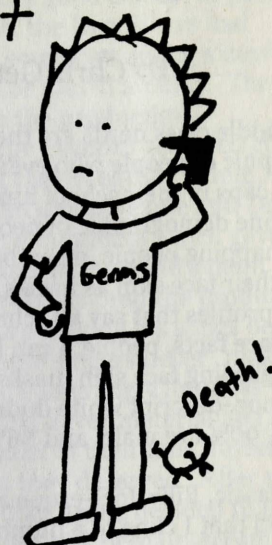
It's Time For Yet
Another...

Battle of the Bands!
(starring)

Green Day Vs.

The Germs!

With Maddy Tight Pants!



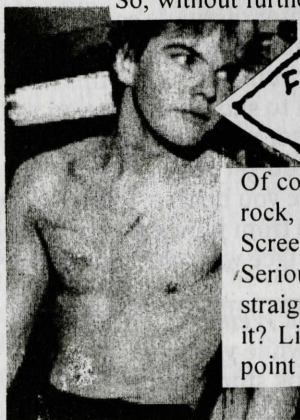
Halt the presses! Summon the National Guard! All hands on deck! It's time for another stunning, brutal, death-defying Battle of the Bands! Yes, it's time for the confrontation you've all been waiting for—an event even more anticipated than the fall of the Berlin Wall and the release of Kevin Federline's new album-- combined!

In an age when Sunni fights Shiite, Muslim fights Christian, and vegan fights McDonald's hamburger, we are used to conflict. However, the latest battle may challenge even our most jaded sensibilities. Yes, we may have to look bloodshed squarely in the eye, and say, "Verily, I have no fear!"®

For today's match, I have dug deep inside my own psyche, past the memories of bad cereal eaten and worse boyfriends kissed, past even my fifth grade attempts to dance like Paula Abdul. I have dug right to...The Central Issue of My Punk Rock Life! The Battle Between Good and Evil! Between all that's light, fun, bouncy, and silly and all that's dark, depressing, angry, and loud!

Which is why today's battle will feature...Green Day vs. The Germs! Yes, Green Day, America's "punk" sweethearts, known both for their early Gilman antics and their propensity to be included in high-school-graduation-musical-photo montages! And The Germs! Known mostly for Darby Crash, their self-destructive yet sensitive, peanut-butter-throwing front-man! This is not just a battle between two bands! It's a question of life or death!

So, without further ado, let the gloves come off!



**Fuck
Pop
Punk!**

① **Band Names!**

Of course, The Germs have the advantage here, having formed in the early days of punk rock, before all good band names were taken and punks had to resort to monikers like Screeching Weasel or The Connie Dungs. Think about those names for a second. Seriously. Okay, back to The-Task-At-Hand (TTAH). The Germs=simple, straightforward, menacing! They will corrupt you! Green Day= a pot reference. Dude, get it? Like green, 'cuz pot is green, and stuff. Halt! I shall go no further, and award one point to Darby Crash & Co!

Germs = 1 Green Day = 0

Heroin, World Destruction, & More!

② Use of Food Products!

Both bands have used food products onstage, to great success! The Germs' threw sugar everywhere during a cover of "Sugar, Sugar" at their first show at the Whiskey, and were known to throw peanut butter, whipped cream, salad dressing, and whatever else they could find, thus providing the punks with a satisfying meal, simply by opening their mouths while dancing. Ah, the humanitarianism of it all! Green Day also throws food, including whipped cream and other candied stuffs, but the consistency isn't there. I need to go to a punk show knowing I'll be fed! Score one point for The Germs!

Germs = 2

Green Day = 0

③ Purpose!

This is a tough call. First up, Green Day, a band that has an "Idiot Club," where, for \$20/yr, you can, like, totally access an online band message board and official band photos! This doth vex the punk in all of us, but, then there are times when, I don't know, let's say you're drunk. You're at a party. And someone puts on Kerplunk!, and the next thing you know, everyone's dancing around like a dork, screaming along. At that point, you have tapped into the Meaning of Green Day! Silly songs about silly girlfriends! The occasional song about hating your parents! Purpose=fun!

! TWO GREAT MINDS AT WORK!



Next up, The Germs, a band that gave fans cigarette burns to initiate them into the "Circle One" club/gang. A band with a lead singer who screamed, "I'm a lexicon devil with a battered brain. And I'm looking' for a future, the world's my aim!" and then killed himself. A lead singer who once said, "What we're going to do is get lots of--what do you call them?...allies--in key positions, and um, if you get somebody that works for the post office...I mean somebody that's just even a mail clerk, you can really screw the post office up bad. If you go to the newspapers and they have those big machines, you know, that print them and you shoot a rubber band into it...it rips the paper; it ruins the whole day's edition. So if you can get enough people to do that, you can go to the government and say, 'Well, you've got the armies, but we can just stop this country from working.'" Purpose=self-and-world destruction!

So, what's better? Fun and silliness or chaos, postal manipulation, and death? Oh, the horror of this Nietzschean bind! What to do? When you get right down to it, although I have been through my fair share of Serious and Horrible Shit (SAHS), I cannot reward it, based on my long-standing Emo Principle. (Emo glorifies suffering. Emo is bad. Therefore, glorifying suffering is bad.) However, unlike every white-twenty-something emo singer currently writing lyrics that rhyme "pain" with "rain," Darby actually killed himself. If he had written songs about stuffed animals and rainbows and then taken an overdose of heroin, well, it just wouldn't seem right.

Suicidal consistency & Crackers!

Furthermore, if all I had to listen to was Green Day, I might have to kill myself anyway. Therefore, for the first time ever, I will be rewarding half points! Green Day gets half a point for being silly and dumb, and the Germs get one point, not only for writing songs about being angry and suicidal, but for actually being angry and suicidal. Consistency!

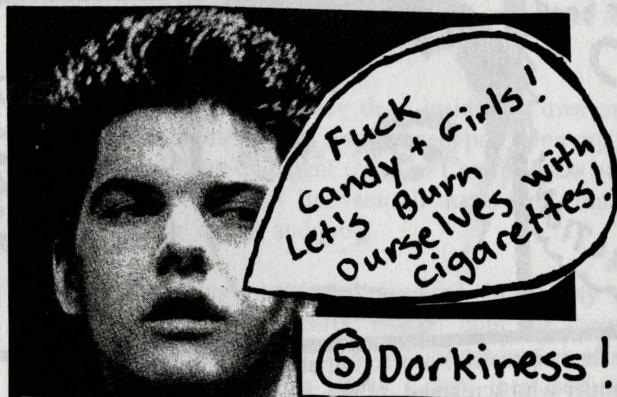
Germs = 3 Green Day = .5

④ The Masque vs. Gilman St!

In order to more fully fight this battle, we must examine the turf! The Germs had the Masque and Green Day had Gilman. First, the Masque, owned and operated by punk rocker Brendan Mullen! In an interview, scenester Geza X said, "I lived in the Masque when it first opened up. It was so cheap a bunch of unsigned local bands moved in. It was like a bomb shelter. There was a giant storage room filled with food rations from World War II. They were stored in these tins. We were all starving so we started opening them up and they were full of crackers and dried food. We'd go back there, drunk out of our minds and eat these food rations." Eating decades-old food rations? Punk rock!

Next up! Gilman is a collectively-run non-profit, where the punks have been known to sell homemade soda! There's really no competition here. Despite some problems at Gilman over the years, direct democracy wins out over autocratic cracker rationing every time! Score one point for Green Day!

Germs = 3 Green Day = 1.5



In any battle, the ability to laugh at oneself and act stupid is essential! In fact, Civil War soldiers were known for chuckling as they were shot. And Napoleon troops were actively encouraged to laugh while their limbs were amputated. It's true, I swear to you!

First up, The Germs! Although endearing dorkiness can be unearthed in such books as Lexicon Devil— Apparently, Darby had cut out the letters from a David Bowie song and taped them to his mirror—the Germs, and especially Darby, tried to hide that dorkiness as much as possible. Instead, they acted like the cool kids, who did the most drugs, said the most fucked-up things, and cared the least. In other words, there's no way any of them would have been friends with, say, a Lucky-Charms-loving girl with pink pants and an affinity for bouncy castles, for example.

Green Day, conversely, has a drummer named Tre Cool who used to hang out with Wavy Gravy. And, when said drummer put his hair in pigtails, which he's been known to do, the dorkiness rating is so high that not even I, a girl who got in trouble for reading too much in third grade, can beat it. Score one for Green Day!

Germs = 3 Green Day = 2.5



Alice Cooper,
golf, & fame!

I'm a
total
dork.



This is
as tough
as I can
look. Seriously.

© Drugs!

You'll hear no sXe mantra here! Unlike what Ian McKaye may have you believe, it's not about *whether* you do drugs, it's about *which* drugs you do! Now, I'm not a naïve little girl who thinks that, when you get rich and famous, you do something other than hire girls to do lines off your dick, so let's just assume that Green Day has done their fair share of any and all drugs. But, in the end, they don't seem like the kind of guys to end up going the way of Kurt Cobain or, um, Darby Crash.

Yes, yes, indeed, the heroin that killed Mr. Crash was a suicide attempt, but he was using it for sometime before that. And, in the hierarchy of drugs, from really-fucking-cool to totally-and-completely-lame, heroin is at the absolute bottom. Poor choice, dear Darby! You should have stuck to random pills and peanut butter! Score one for Green Day!

Germes = 3

Green Day = 3.5

⑦ The Golf Test!

This is simple. Playing golf is not punk.

On that very topic, here's Pat Smear: "With the Germs we went out of our way to say and do things that most people would never say or do--it was a reaction to our disappointment in other rock stars--specifically finding out that Alice Cooper played golf! That really upset us--really freaked us out-- 'Alice Cooper does what?' It was like, 'We're gonna fucking start a band, and we're gonna change our names, are we're gonna fucking be this thing--we're gonna really be like that, 24-7, we're not going to fake it!'" Punk rock!

Next up, Green Day. Sadly, the Green Day/golf connection has never been thoroughly investigated. However, I can point you to two disturbing facts: 1. A Green Day song was the official theme for the 1998 PGA Golf Tour.

2. Green Day participated in something called The Punk Rock Pro Am, a punk rock golfing tournament somewhere in California. Seriously. This is so lame, that I am tempted to subtract points from Green

Day's total, thereby breaking one of the main Battle of the Bands rules, but I will not. Score one for The Circle One Kids!

The battle has now ended! Let us gather the bloated bodies from the trenches and count the dead! The fighting was furious, but in the end the Germs emerged the victors!

The lesson of the day? Crazy, angry fucked-up punk rock, covered in peanut butter and heroin, wins out over silly, happy songs about kissing and getting high! Is this a commentary on our times, or just the end result of cold, statistical analysis? Only time will tell! See you in the history books!

Germes = 4

Green Day = 3.5

The End!

From the case files of **Raffles, the Gentleman Shoplifter**

By Brian Cogan

It was a splendid sunny June day and the London fog was heavy and thick upon the slippery cobblestone streets of Paris. Resplendent in his waistcoat, utility belt, large and gaudy overcoat emblazoned with "NYPD" and pith helmet, Inspector Lestrangle shuddered slightly to himself as he once again approached the all-too-familiar doors of 13 1/2 Ecclestein Court, for he had arrived at the door of no common criminal. No, this was the lair of the most cunning criminal he had ever met in his twenty-five years as a detective. This was the home of his most implacable foe, the most daring criminal of the last fifty years, inside the gilded oak and mahogany doors lurked the real-life Moriarity who had bedeviled the police forces of five continents, Interpol, and the secret services of a dozen countries. This was the home of Raffles, the gentlemen shoplifter, and Lestrangle knew that he would have to keep his guard up.

Lestrangle produced a small flask from his utility belt and took a firm belt from the flask. Slightly shuddering from the whisky, he briskly knocked three times on the antique lion's head knocker. He was almost sure he had seen that very knocker for sale at Bed Bath and Beyond, and hadn't there been something in the papers about one being "lifted" recently? Clearly, Raffles was throwing down the gauntlet. He was mocking Lestrangle, daring him to ask if Raffles had paid for the knocker. And knowing that damned Raffles, he would have some kind of receipt, forged by some of the best forgers in the criminal underworld. As Peyton, the butler, opened the door, Lestrangle steeled himself for the intellectual battle that he knew was to soon commence.

"Ah, Detective Lestrangle, how good to see you, sir. Mon. Raffles is waiting for you in the library. May I take your oversized NYPD jacket?"

"Yeah," responded Lestrangle sullenly. That was the thing he despised most about Raffles, his damned courtesy! The whole thing was an elaborate game, but as

he was in the spider's web, he was forced to play by the spider's rules. For now.

The library was an elaborate and sprawling room, packed with rare and expensive first editions and cheap Scott Turow paperbacks. The walls were covered with the finest "reproductions" of famous paintings, as well as several black light tiger posters and a mounted bass, "Larry," who, it was said, could sing "Don't Worry Be Happy" at the mere touch of a button. In a large stuffed easy chair, sat the devil himself, or his merest approximation on earth, thought Lestrangle to himself. Raffles was a tall thin man, dressed as always in a smoking jacket, ascot, and slippers. His longish hair was slicked back in the style of the times and his eyes, his damned eyes! Lestrangle was certain that their innocent look was once again a mere ruse. Despite his many decades as a detective, and his long years on the Raffles case, Lestrangle was sure that Raffles could charm the milk from a baby's bottle with those innocent eyes. What secrets, he wondered, did they conceal?

"Ah, my good detective, please come in, sit down. Peyton will get you something to take the chill out of your bones? A sherry perhaps? Ah, but I am forgetting myself, of course the good detective is an aficionado of the finest fresh brewed light beer from the Rockies? Peyton, one *argent de bon aloi-balle* for the fine detective."

As though he had a small refrigerator (\$199.99 at Sears) in the library, Peyton quickly produced a Coors Light on a sterling silver platter. As he took a sip, Raffles peered over intently.

"Refreshingly tapped from the Rockies, my dear detective? Apparently they are selling it for \$9.99 a twelve pack at Costco. I assure you, however, that you are not drinking, how would you put it, "purloined" beer. Peyton, we do have a receipt, do we not?

"Yes, sir, unless the recycling has been taken out."

"Fine, I don't need to see a receipt," Lestrangle growled. As he sipped the beer he wondered if he himself was complicit somehow in the many sins of his devious host. Raffles sat and stared amiably back at his guest.

"So, is this a social call, Detective Lestrangle? If you would indulge me I could show you some of my newest acquisitions? Over here is a twelve pack of Double AA batteries, next to it a new DVD copy of *Walk the Line* and next to that, ah, I am particularly proud of this as I am somewhat of an aficionado, a large 24 ounce bottle of *Evian* water. A bit overpriced for Duane Reade, but then again a man of my station never worries too much about...cost."

"Curse you, Raffles!" shouted Lestrangle, pushing himself up from his seat. "If you think you can show me stolen goods without raising my ire..."

"Ah, please, *ma bon petit chou*, I would never show you any additions to my collection for which I did not possess the prerequisite paperwork. Perhaps Peyton can show you my Amex receipt. I also believe if I am not mistaken, that these recent "purchases" gave me back ten dollars in Duane Reade rewards points. Quite a satisfactory transaction from all points of view. But perhaps you did not come here merely to admire my collection; perhaps the famous detective has something else on his mind. Mmm?" Raffles sat down and stared innocently over at Lestrangle, who at last broke the awkward silence.

"Damn, I hate to say this, Raffles, but we on the force, we, we need your help."

Raffles stared back, an amused smile playing on his lips.

"Well, as an honest citizen I am always glad to help the local authorities, but as a semi-retired ornithologist and collector of rare objects, I'm not sure to what expertise the *gendarme* is referring to?"

Lestrangle put down his beer and looked up at Raffles. "Have you heard of the Tagger?" It was Raffles turn to be surprised. "Do you mean," Raffles asked, "the tales of this, this 'Tagger' are true then?"

"Yes," replied Lestrangle quietly. "But you don't know the half of it. We make sure the tabloids keep it relatively quiet, but if the public knew the truth, there would be panic."

"You mean," asked Raffles, "that the tales of this fiend, who tears open merchandise without paying for it, eats a few potato chips or cookies, and leaves the bag on the shelf are not mere wives tales? That this monster who defaces K-Mart merchandise by drawing crudely sketched genitalia on the underwear models on Hanes underwear is real?"

"You don't know the half of it. The trouble is, neither do we. And that, is why I am here."

"Ah," said Raffles, leaning back and draining his sherry. "You simply can't catch him, can you?"

"Well, as the saying goes," responded Lestrangle, "it takes a thief to catch a thief. We sometimes have trouble understanding the criminal mindset." Raffles held his hand to his chest and feigned shock. "Surely," he chuckled, "you can't compare a man of my... artistic leaning to this madman? You can't compare me to this common vandal?"

"Madman?" Lestrangle said, finishing his beer and crushing the can against his forehead. "Or Madwoman? Our profilers indicate it may be a woman. Perhaps a mysterious and intriguing foreign blonde in a tight bodice."

"Intriguing," responded a now thoughtful Raffles.

For a moment, there was silence in the room, broken only by the sound of the "authentic crackling noise" from the fake fireplace, often found on sale at Macy's around Christmas time for \$25.99. At last Raffles left his chair and walked over to the detective. "*Mon ami*, I accept the challenge. I shall find this, this 'Tagger' for you. You have my word as a gentleman."

Grudgingly Lestrangle took his hand. "Find this fiend for us and stop her mad spree, and all past transgressions are forgotten."

Raffles smiled to himself and shook Lestrangle's hand.

"Fear not, my friend, for Raffles is on the case!"

Next issue: Battle on the rooftops of Rite-Aid!

Duncan Wilder Johnson

Presents

"Jawbreaker"

b/w

"You Gotta Be Shitting Me"

Side A – "Jawbreaker"

I can still see her sitting there in that leather chair, in the smoking room of her old group house. Her long legs crossed, her arms stretched over the top of her head, her left hand clutching a clove cigarette between her index and middle fingers. Her short blonde hair and beautiful face singing Jawbreaker songs at the top of her lungs. It's her fault. She's the one who got me into Jawbreaker. Playing her *24 Hour Revenge Therapy* 12 inch late into the night after we came home drunk from the bar around the corner.



Jawbreaker's "Unfun"

LP and Cassette, \$6.50

One of 1990's most successful alternative rock records. This Los Angeles trio combine philosophical lyrics with an intense energy, and powerful melodies on 12 songs.

If you can't find these records in stores you can get them real easy from Blacklist Mailorder. Make checks payable to: Blacklist, 475 Valencia St., S.F., CA 94103

"You're not punk, and I'm tellin' everyone. Save your breath I never was one!" Blake screams from the grooves and through the needle. All the songs project this independence and a unity for all us poor broken-hearted saps with sensitive art boy tendencies.

Every song is a hit; chuck full of the most succinct lyrics with incredible hooks and hard hitting back beats reminiscent of the mighty Ramones.

*I went to a party last night.
What sick things I saw.
Makeout sessions and bicycle messengers,
punks and art school dropouts.*

*I ran into this guy I knew,
but hadn't seen in years.
We went into the neon kitchen
and stole a couple beers.
He said his girl had dumped him
but was there with another guy.
He said that he still liked her.*

*All I could say was,
"Why, why, oh why, oh why,
Why is it always like this?
Either you're too mean, or you're too nice."
He said, "I even cooked her breakfast."*

*So we went into the living room.
Someone was blasting Zeppelin.
It sounded good. I felt ashamed.
I knew every drum fill.*

*Anyway, there she sat,
Totally kissing this guy.
They looked good, I mean like in love.
Then I remembered my friend.
He said, "How could you do this?
You said that you needed your space.
He's wearing the shirt that I gave you."*

*Then she said, "Why, why, oh why, oh why,
Why are you always like this?
If I'm having fun then it's breaking your heart.
Besides, you said I could have it."*

Then the cops showed up.

Fuckin' a, man! That kind of shit really happens to me! That's the kind of pathetic dork I am!

It was two years after the tumultuous break up with the beautiful blonde girl before I could listen to Jawbreaker again. I was in New York City, performing in an all-ages matinee at ABC No Rio. Kill Your Idols was the headliner. In the middle of their set, the crowd screamed, "Jawbreaker! Play the fuckin' Jawbreaker song!" Kick drum—"BOOM!" Snare drum—"Crack!" And they launched into "Do You Still Hate Me?" For the first time in a long time I was listening to a Jawbreaker song without the overwhelming sensation

of hurt, guilt, betrayal, and replacement. Instead I was listening to Jawbreaker and uniting with a room full of strangers over a song about hurt, guilt, betrayal, and replacement. It was on of those righteous moments in one's life where for a brief two minutes the entire world made sense. For a brief two minutes, none of us were lonely. And for a brief two minutes everything was truly going to be okay.

.....

Side B – “You Gotta Be Shitting Me”

“Dude, wanna play some acoustic Misfits songs at O’Brien’s?” Clay asked me one day over the phone while I worked on my fluorescent tan inside my cubicle at The Corporation.

“Uhhh, sure?” I said. The night was to be a few local artists covering songs by the original horror punks while spewing stories about the band’s legacy of brutality. Clay and I looked over the list of who was to play what and decided to perform “We Are 138,” “Return of The Fly,” “Dig Up Her Bones,” and the Danzig song “Twist of Cain.” True to form, covering a solo artist’s song when one should be playing the band’s original material proved to be in our worst interest.

I learned the songs and on the evening of the gig, went over to Clay’s house to rehearse. Between songs Clay and I reminisced about our time together at Mass Art as young lads and made fun of each other like always. We did our hair into Devil Locks and strategically placed fake blood around our mouths for dramatic effect (or maybe we just did it because we’re dorks).

We arrived at the show fashionably early to par-take in some barbeque. I tuned my guitar, checked some mics, and waited.

An older gentlemen (40’s-50’s) with large thick rimmed glasses, a Members Only jacket, and a broken left arm with a hip attachment, sat at the bar and squealed almost-insults at us like, “You guys better be good!” and “Aren’t you fuckin’ guys gonna do a sound check?” and my personal favorite, “I got a new name for your group: DESPERATE. Cuz you guys are fuckin’ DESPERATE!”

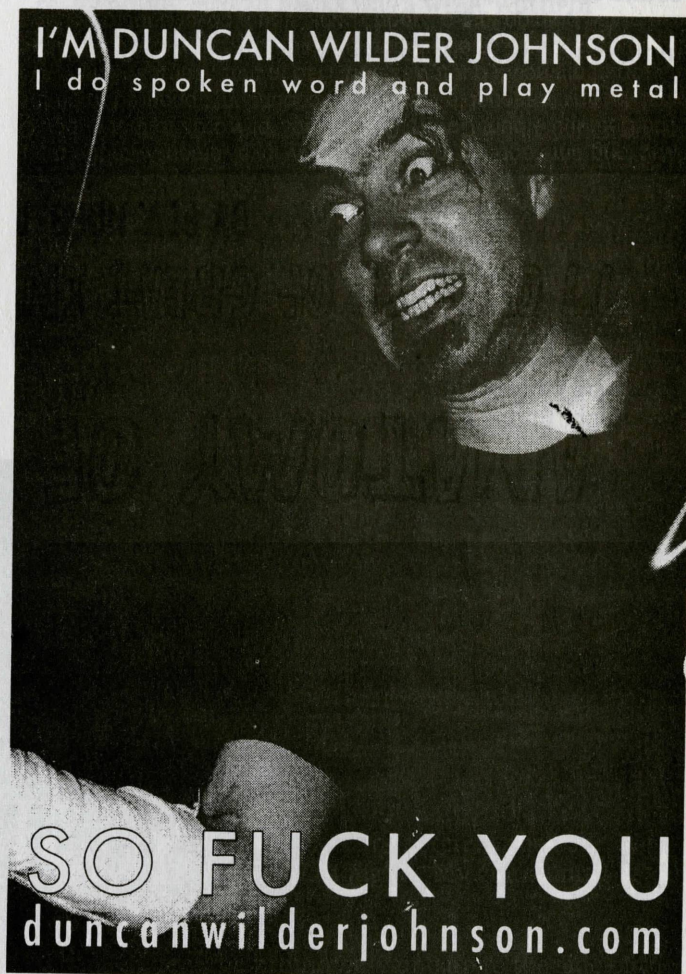
Soon enough, Clay and I stormed the stage like medieval British Knights (or two dorks in horror make-up). We played the songs and at the end played the Danzig song. I concentrated on my guitar playing since it was only myself on acoustic guitar and Clay singing so if I fell off beat the entire song would die. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a few people abruptly moving away from where “Insult Man” was standing. Then I heard a lot of commotion, but I didn’t look up because I didn’t want to screw up the song. When I could look up again, everyone who was watching us up

front walked to the back of the room by the bar. “We must sound terrible,” I thought. “My guitar must be out of tune or something?”

Then Kristen, the promoter, came up to the side of the stage and told me, “That crazy guy just took a shit in the middle of the room! That’s why everyone moved away. It’s not you guys!”

The chord I was playing hung in the air like a stale fart. I turned to Clay and explained “the incident.” He replied that it must be a sign from Mr. Glenn Danzig himself to finish the song with the utmost efficiency. We did just this and ended our set by stating, “Thank You for shitting on the floor.”

According to eyewitness accounts, “the substance” was quite soupy and shot out of “Insult Man’s” pant leg like projectile chemical warfare, which if you think about it, was exactly what it was. Many theories surrounded the legend of “Insult Man.” Perhaps he was a CIA agent, or Al Queda, or just another misunderstood music critic. Personally, I believed that he was a performance artist, dictating to the world that most music is shit and he for one WAS NOT GONNA TAKE IT ANY MORE.



Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ

(Or, How a Series of Unrelated Events Led to an Impulsive Pilgrimage to the Actual Asbury Park, NJ)

By Jesse Mank

I always thought that *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* by Bruce Springsteen was a live album. I generally don't enjoy or understand live albums, especially the cavernous-sounding, heavily retouched, live albums of the 1970s (see: *Frampton Comes Alive*). I felt the same about Springsteen. My musical awakening occurred during the 80s and so I only knew him as the mega-superstar that baby boomers pumped their fists to. "Pink Cadillac." "Born in the USA." Consequently, I often whizzed past *Asbury Park's* postcard-style album cover in \$2 bins at record shows and thrift shops and scoffed. I imagined a huge big sound stage set up in a sprawling Jersey park, a field of morons chanting *Broooooose*, and of course the Boss himself all "aw shucks" in the center of it all. No thanks.

But in the summer of 2004, three things occurred in a span of two days that not only led to a change of heart regarding Springsteen's debut, but also to my Asbury Park pilgrimage. First, I was spending a lot of time at Coney Island that summer. For those of you who've never been there, Coney Island is a once majestic and now run-down seaside park clumsily seated at the foot of Queens. General admission is free, and except for three or four famously vintage rides, most of the rides are the type you might find at a traveling carnival. Purists might



The Park Cinema: "Is this place open?"

complain about the tragic and incongruous nature of this arrangement, but the old and new rides share this one common trait: they look and feel unsafe. I must say that I was recovering from what one might call a nervous breakdown that summer, and so I was a little unstable. In all of New York, I felt most at home in Coney Island. We were beaten. We were broke. We were failing. I'd walk around from ride to ride watching people pay to be whipped and thrown around in cruel and unnatural ways by massive machines that were solely invented for this purpose. It appealed to my sense of destruction and my counterintuitive appetite for instability, recklessness, and danger. Further, it made me feel good. This was poof of our evolutionary progress. With immediate survival needs met in abundance, we've set out to explore our need for other less important things, like dizziness.

The second factor was an impulsive stop at an FYE CD store to escape the heat. Like most corporate record stores, they have listening stations where you can scan the barcode of any CD and enjoy a 30-second clip of each song. I was listening to mainstream albums that I've already convinced myself were pieces of shit before I even heard them. Well as you might have guessed, I found my way to Springsteen's *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ*. Still under the impression that it was a live record, I flipped the disc over expecting to see heavyweight titles like "Born To Run" or "Rosalita." But of course there were none. I did recognize the title "Growin' Up," but only because it was recently covered by Portastatic. The lead track is "Blinded By The Light," which I only knew as an awful Manfred Mann song, but was in fact written by Springsteen. In addition, I noticed that the record is dated 1973, much earlier than I expected. The grainy photo of Bruce on the back looks like it was taken straight out of your parents' photo album. *Here's one of your dad's old drinking friends, back before you were born.* Intrigued, I scanned the bar code and gave *Asbury Park* a spin.

The most surprising thing about *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* is the fidelity of the recording. It sounds like a demo: flat and punchy. The playing is loose and overall, the album is rather folky. Bruce sounds young, inspired and even Dylan-esque. If you're inclined to keep track of these sorts of things, "Blinded By The Light" squeezes 514 words into it. Strange ones, too.

"And now in Zanzibar a shootin' star was ridin' in a side car hummin' a lunar tune.
Yes, and the avatar said blow the bar but first remove the cookie jar.
We're gonna teach those boys to laugh too soon."

As I listened, much of *Asbury Park* seemed to actually be about life in Asbury Park, NJ with plenty of references to the amusement park, whores, and drug dealers. After listening for a little while, I correctly guessed that it was his first album. He was always a millionaire to me, so I

never really thought of him as a rough and tumble songwriter in New Jersey. I never really thought about him at all. But as I thought back, I realized how much Asbury Park, New Jersey seemed to haunt Springsteen's career, and it was cool. "My Hometown." In 1980 he stands on the overcast boardwalk of Asbury Park for the "Hungry Heart" single. He stands on that same boardwalk seven years later for the *Tunnel of Love* album cover. I remember reading that he wrote "Hungry Heart" for The Ramones after seeing them play in New Jersey, and how cool is that? Maybe I've unfairly blown him off all these years. *Asbury Park* was homespun and just a little surreal. Having grown up in downtrodden, blue-collar Buffalo, NY, I felt a kinship to young Bruce. I actually liked it and decided that I would buy the album as soon as I had some disposable income. I walked out of that air-conditioned, corporate excuse for a record store, a somewhat changed man.

The third road sign leading to Asbury Park was a piece by one of my favorite self-loathing authors, Jonathan Ames (also a New Jersey native) in an old issue of *McSweeney's*. In it, he mentioned going to Asbury Park for writing inspiration. Something about broken-down beauty and an old, rusty Ferris wheel. I seemed to block out the fact that the story took place in the early 90s, and like a crazy person who could draw associations from the most obtuse, unrelated thoughts, (remember, I was a little unstable that summer) the equation became clear. Coney Island + Bruce Springsteen + Jonathan Ames = Asbury Park. I must go to Asbury Park. I wasn't sure, but I figured it couldn't be that far from the city, probably a short train ride away. And one of the great things about New York is that you often think things are true without knowing if they are, and when you act on your thoughts, you usually find that you were right. So when I walked into Penn Station the next morning and asked for a roundtrip ticket to Asbury Park, NJ, not knowing if that's where one goes to get a ticket for Asbury Park, NJ, and was met with a short, curt reply of "fifteen dollars," I felt immediately validated. If I *thought* that Asbury Park would indeed still be a functioning seaside park, it simply *would* be.

About two hours later I was on a train that was pulling into the Asbury Park, NJ station. When the train came to a complete stop, I walked off onto a platform, expecting to see a Ferris wheel on the horizon that I could follow. Maybe it would smell like cotton candy and I could just follow the sounds and smells of people having a good time at the seaside park. But as the train pulled away and I was struck by the sweltering heat and desolate landscape, my first instinct was to walk to the other side of the platform and wait for the next train back. I had done a really stupid thing. I made a mistake. I knew nothing about Asbury Park, NJ. I came here because of a 1973 Bruce Springsteen album that I've only heard 30 second clips from. I had no idea where I was going or if what I was looking for still existed. There was really nothing around the train station but empty lots and some rough-looking residential houses. No Ferris wheel. A

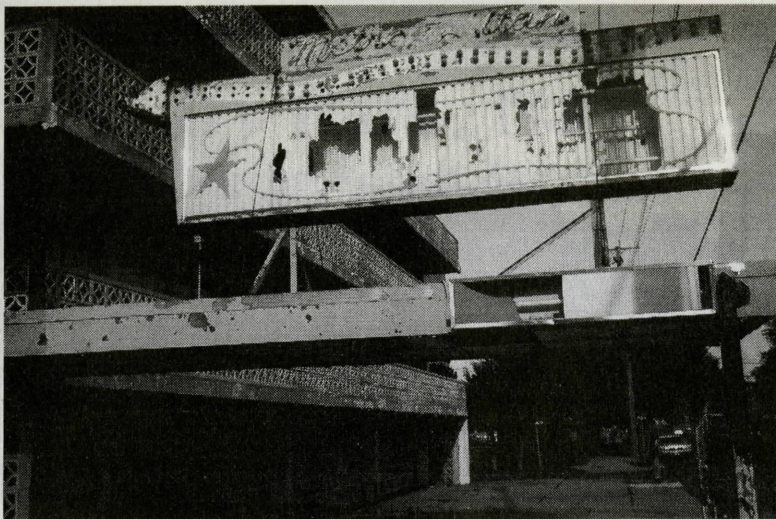


The site of the Palace Amusements Building

taxicab waited in the parking lot for about two minutes and pulled away. Some people walked far in the distance. Some old black guys stood around the station, waiting for a train they had no intention of boarding. It was so hot outside and the quiet, barren nature of the area made me feel like I was in the middle of a Western.

The only thing that stopped me from backing out was the fifteen bucks I spent getting there. I was really broke. Fifteen bucks was a week's worth of corner-deli pizza slices. So I took a deep breath and walked off the platform and headed towards a small nearby strip plaza. As I walked, some guy started shouting something incomprehensible to me from across the tracks. Whatever it was, I deduced that it was a question, because the last words rose in pitch. I looked his way and shook my head, raising my hand as if to appreciatively turn him down. *Thanks, but I just picked up some fresh crack rock this morning.* When I arrived at the plaza, I noticed that I was the only white face around. I noticed, because everyone else noticed. One shop was a black barbershop. Another sold cell phones and pagers. Another was a small corner store. I decided to keep walking and inconspicuously turn around when I felt that everyone stopped staring. I'm not racist, but I'm also not stupid. I understand when I'm not wanted. I needed to ask someone, but ask what? I was pretty sure that there was no longer any park in Asbury Park. *Excuse me good sir, but could you be so kind as to tell me which way the midway used to be?*

Eventually I asked a local youth where the park was, being as vague as I could. He looked at me a little confused and said, "You mean the beach?" Yes, the beach! I followed his directions, which were pretty simple. Follow this road and turn left. And as I walked the most notable thing about the area was the lack of people. Or cars. Or activity. It got quieter and quieter. I walked along a narrow canal that obviously led to the Atlantic Ocean. Across the canal I saw well-kept, Victorian-looking vacation homes. This gave me confidence. The area couldn't be that bad if rich people vacationed nearby. And as I got closer I saw my first



The Metropolitan Hotel

glimpse of the Asbury Park that I came here to see. It was a very European-looking gazebo, boarded up and decorated in small light bulbs that probably haven't been lit in over 20 years. When you reach the shore at Asbury Park, there are only three things to see: the Casino, the boardwalk, and the ocean. That's just about all that's left. Along the boardwalk, there is a long space where booths used to be. Far opposite sits the Paramount Theater, a conventional hall that is still in use, and probably the only real draw to the area. A few stands still exist at the end of the boardwalk, one with a poorly hand painted offer to "knock over the cans." The last stand on the strip is a Howard Johnson's, which upon closer inspection, I find hard to believe is still a franchised Howard Johnson's. The doors were open, I walked in and no one responded. Strangely, booze bottles sat behind the counter. I was starving, but I certainly wasn't going to hang around waiting for a hostess to seat me.

The Casino appears to float over the ocean. And when you get close to peek into the cracks of the boards that now cover the entrance, you see a jungle of wild plant life, illuminated by rays of the sun which pour in through the place where the roof used to be. Behind it sits the Empress Hotel, cousin to the neighboring Ambassador Hotel, which would not attract even the most resilient diplomatic official. It looks as if it's straight out of a horror film. Across from that sits the steel skeleton of a building that was literally abandoned halfway through construction. Started in 1986, it was supposed to be a sixteen-story condominium, but construction ceased in 1989 when its financial backers fled town. It's been unfinished for fifteen years, standing only twelve stories high. Nothing surrounds it but several demolished city blocks. And absurdly, row upon row of parking meters. It is perhaps the most audible presence in Asbury Park, as you can hear sheets of its unfastened metal loudly smashing against the unfinished structure in the harsh Atlantic breeze.

I walked through the emptiness, across what was once a ceramic tile floor. I picked up a loose tile up and pocketed it. I later learned that tile was once part

of the Palace Amusements floor, torn down earlier in the year. Two claw-like construction vehicles still stood near a pile of rubble. The idea that I might actually find people here enjoying themselves on rides was absolutely ridiculous to me now. It looked apocalyptic. Next to the rubble was an adult theater. Painted red, it advertised continuous shows. I walked over and peeked into the glass doors. It looked like your typical abandoned building inside, though all I could really see was the ticket booth. I started to walk away from the beach and head into downtown Asbury Park, when a car pulled up to the theater. I stopped to watch from a safe distance. An old man got out and just as I did, looked into the glass doors. How sad, I thought. He probably used to frequent the theater when he was a young man, back when it showed Hollywood films, not porn. And here he was coming back to revisit old memories. I can only imagine how disappointed he was. He turned around and scanned the horizon until his eyes fell on me.

"Is this place open?" he yelled over to me. He *had* to be kidding.

"Sir, it looks pretty closed to me." I yelled back. He just shook his head.

"Did you used to go here?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Back when it showed regular films?"

"Naw! I came here to see *hot* flicks!" He said this with an irritated tone, leading me to believe that he was here *now* to see a hot flick. I braced myself as he walked over to continue our conversation at close range. He spoke with a heavy Jersey accent, smoked a cigar and wore one of those old men, taxi driver/golf hats. For a while, I wondered if I wasn't hallucinating him. The ghost of Asbury Park. He went on to talk about the *bitch* that owned the theater and how the city was trying to buy it from her but she wanted too much.

"You know what all women want," he said, "money and a big dick." I wasn't sure how to respond to this, so I didn't. Instead, I asked him what happened to Asbury Park.

"This place looks like post-World War Germany. It used to be booming every night. Rides, music clubs, cars everywhere. Now it's just for the gays." I wasn't sure if I understood him correctly, since *nobody* was around, let alone the "gays." I tried to clarify.

"You mean this *used* to be the gay section of town?"

"Naw! It's *still* the gay section!" he pointed to several grave looking buildings. "That's a gay bar. That's a gay bar. And down there by the water, that's a gay bar." I was very surprised to learn that any of these establishments had running water, let alone served as a meeting place for gay men. Clearly, this was the rough gay section of town. I raised my eyebrows is if enlightened. And we both stood there in a small awkward silence.

"Well, I'm going to head down there." he motioned towards the water. "Do you want a ride?"

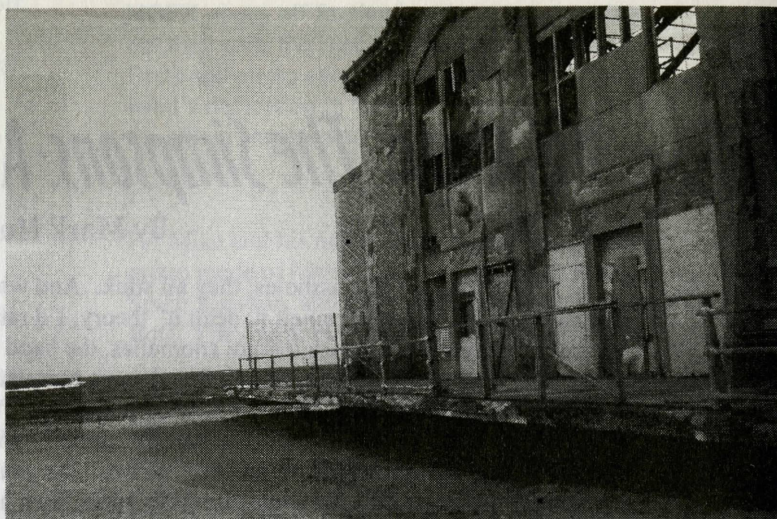
"No thanks, I'm going to look around for awhile. But thanks."

"All right, I'll see you later." The man turned around in a puff of cigar smoke and disappeared into his car. I watched him pull away and drive straight to the gay establishment down by the water, where his small, New Jersian figure got out and walked inside.

Downtown Asbury Park reminded me of an elaborate movie set. It looked real, but it wasn't. The *Anywheres-ville*, 1963 set on a back lot of Universal Studios. Most of the storefronts looked well preserved, notably Steinbach's department store with its heartbreakingly efficient, art deco silver marquee. Some of the stores appeared to be open, as in not closed forever, but if I had a wallet full of money that day there'd be no place to spend it. I felt like the last person on earth. There was nothing but silence and heat.

On the periphery of downtown, I found the remains of the Metropolitan Hotel. Its paint flaking off like a leper, there was a five-foot tall steel safe collapsed into the floorboards of its once regal looking porch. Across the street were houses, alternately well kept and completely abandoned beyond repair. Who the hell lived here? The heat, the hunger and the general fatigue of walking around for hours started to get to me. It all started to feel like a dream. I didn't have a cell phone and was so far from anyone who knew me that I felt extremely removed and disconnected, like I could just disappear here and no one would notice. That's when a police car pulled up alongside me.

In no uncertain terms, the cop told me to get out of town. As impolite as it seemed, he was looking out for my best interests. It was getting late, about six o'clock, and he said that unless I wanted to be mugged or beaten I should leave. I wished I'd asked him for a ride to the train station, but I was quite frankly



The Casino

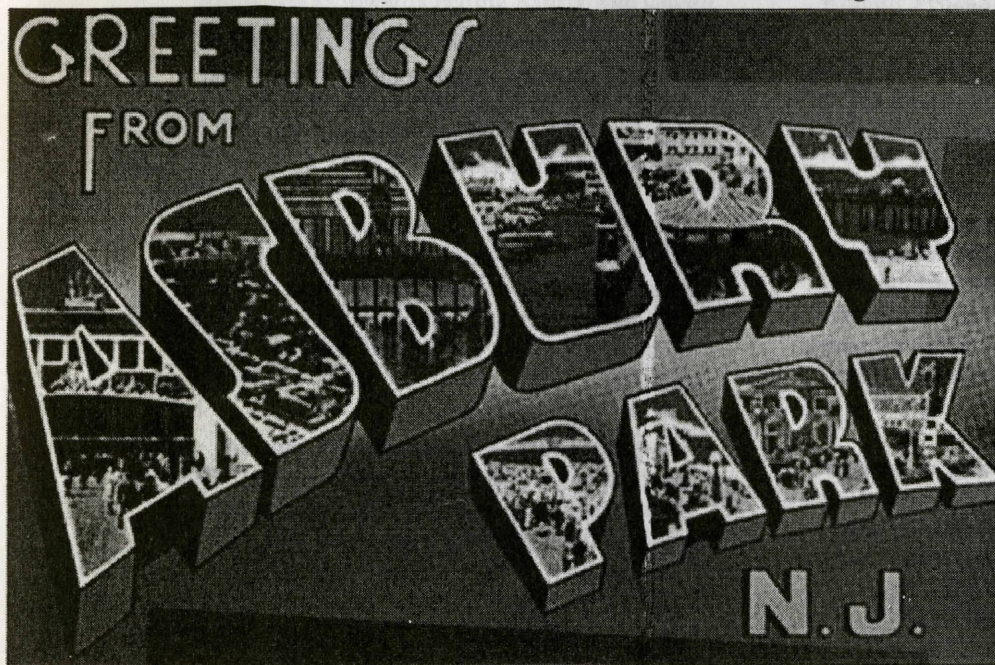
embarrassed by my naiveté, and to cover, affected a sort of foolish bravado. *I'm in danger? No problem officer, I'll just casually walk back to the creepy, barren train station where I have no idea when the next train is coming and wait all by myself. No, I'm not scared at all.* And having nothing but my foolish bravado, that's exactly what I did. On the train platform I was systematically shaken down for all the change in my pockets. I watched the sun set and wondered where I would sleep if a train never came. Two hours later a train pulled up. By the time I got back to New York and took the subway to Brooklyn, my watch read 11:30.

It's been two years now and I've managed to iron out most of my troubles. I've even reconciled my feelings towards live albums, asking for Springsteen's *Hammersmith Odeon '75* for an upcoming birthday. But Asbury Park, NJ still has a long way to go. This morning I read on-line about the abandoned twelve-story steel skeleton of a condominium complex. The article reports that they've imploded it to make room for (guess what) another high-rise condominium

complex. I followed a link to an earlier article in the *Asbury Park Press* predicting thousands coming to see the building fall, but today's article simply called it a "crowd." The low turnout should not have been a surprise. When finished, the condos will cost between \$400,000 and \$4 million apiece. I suspect that anyone rich and successful enough to afford to live in them would not be interested in standing around at 7am in a wasteland to watch a half-finished building implode. I can see the realty ads already: *Luxury high-rise condos with ocean view. Ample parking.*

Maybe they're banking on Bruce moving back.

All photos by Jesse Mank, except The Metropolitan Hotel which was taken by Terry Sheldrake.



NOFX and *The Simpsons*: A Comparative Timeline

By Mark Hughson

Opinions are like assholes; they all stink. And while I wouldn't be adverse to a round table discussion of the "whoever smelt it, dealt it" theory, I'd rather focus on a more scientific approach, and lay out two timelines of these two culture anomalies, the band NOFX and the television show *The Simpsons*. At the very core of these two entities I found some correlations. They both like to mock *everyone*, including themselves. They both like to buck authority. They are both icons of immense influence, all the while simply being (an albeit funhouse) mirror of their own environments. I decided I wanted to dig deeper in order to find more similarities between the two. Do you think NOFX is what's wrong with punk rock nowadays? Do you think *The Simpsons* have gone down hill these past few seasons? Those are debates for another venue, here I'm simply laying out the unique parallels between the two, at which point I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions, and possibly retort with "whoever denied it, supplied it."

THE SIMPSONS

- 1983 Bongo, a child Binky never knew he had, first appears in the *Life In Hell* comic strip, printed in the *Los Angeles Reader*.
- 1985 Matt Greoning was invited by James L. Brooks to create some animated shorts for *The Tracy Ullman Show*.
- 1987 The animated segment "Good Night" airs on the *The Tracy Ullman Show*, the very first Simpsons appearance on television. Bart asks Homer a question about the human mind.
- 1989 *Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire* airs on the then laughably peon-esque Fox network, containing a chapter called "Where Have You Been Hiding The Christmas Money?"
- 1990 Fox airs *The Telltale Head*, an episode in which Bart tries to impress his peers by cutting off the head of the town statue. No one is impressed and Bart eventually comes clean.
- 1992 Homer and barmaid/trailer resident Lurleen Lumpkin become country music celebrities in the episode *Colonel Homer*. Homer buys a cowboy outfit, but ultimately resists Lurleen's romantic advances and gives up being a country music manager, saving his marriage from utter demise.
- 1994 Bart wins piles of cash by listening to the radio, but turns it down in favor of getting a pet elephant. The elephant lives a peaceful, self-satisfied life on a wildlife preserve.



NOFX

- First band practice in Los Angeles, California.
- The band was invited by some guy named Brad to play in his garage in Boise, Idaho.
- NOFX release *The PMRC Can Suck On This*, eventually the very first release on the Fat Wreck Chords record label. They play a song called "Dueling Retards."
- S & M Airlines*, the band's first release on the then-fledgling Epitaph records, contains the song "Screamin' For Change."
- The band releases *Ribbed*, and tries to impress peers by claiming that newcomer El Hefe was one of the kids in the 1976 movie *Bad New Bears*. No one is impressed and the band eventually comes clean.
- The group achieves "successful punk rock band" status, and also releases *White Trash*, *Two Heels*, and *a Bean*. Erik Sandin buys a lot of heroin, but ends up resisting the vice and gives up being an addict, saving the band from total downfall.
- The band records their masterpiece *Punk In Drublic*, and a video for "Leave It Alone." Piles of cash for radio and MTV airplay are turned down in favor of living a more peaceful, self-satisfied life.

- Life imitates art as *The Simpsons* writers piss off Australia by writing *Bart Vs. Australia*, an episode in which Bart pisses off Australia. The Undersecretary of International Protocol, Brat and Punk Division hails Bart's dedication to honor and responsibility, while Bart sneaks "Don't Tread On Me" onto his Aussie-mooning butt.
- 1995
- Homer forms Pin Pals, a bowling super group made of himself, Apu, Moe, and Otto. They wear neat bowling shirts.
- 1996
- Fox airs *The Secret War of Lisa Simpson*, an episode about Lisa Simpson trying to stick it to "the man."
- 1997
- Homer becomes head of the Springfield Sanitation Dept. in the episode *Trash of the Titans*, which becomes bankrupt a short time later. This is not the first time a member of the Simpsons has failed when attempting a new career.
- 1998
- Rhino Records releases *Go Simpsonic With The Simpsons*, which is promoted as a one very long album, but really it's just a bunch of little songs that segue nicely together.
- 1999
- The Simpsons* relationship with Butterfinger candy bars is almost at an end. The commercials soon stop, and the show moves on to endorse other products.
- 2000
- Fox airs *New Kids On The Bleech*, a commentary on the boy band fad that was big (thanks to the New Kids On The Block) in 1988.
- 2001
- The show dives into the political ring with *Mr. Spitz Goes To Washington*, and the Simpson family works towards getting Krusty The Clown elected to the House of Representatives.
- 2003
- The Simpsons* staff slaps together yet another Treehouse Of Horror for the 15th time, presumably because they can't think of anything else to do.
- 2004
- The show continues to air on the Fox network, and *The Simpsons* is also spread throughout the world thanks to syndication. Currently there are plans for the show to continue for at least two more seasons.
- 2006

NOFX pisses off foreign bootleggers by putting out their own live disc, *I Heard They Suck Live*. Brats and punks everywhere continue to hail the band's dedication to the DIY ethos, all the while the album sneaks onto the Billboard charts.

Fat Mike and his newly formed punk rock super group made of himself, Joey Cape, Dave Raun, Spike Slawson, and Chris Shiflett release *Have A Ball*. They wear neat bowling shirts.

NOFX release *So Long And Thanks For All The Shoes*, which contains "Kill Rock Stars," a song about Kathleen Hannah trying to stick it to "the man."

El Hefe opens up his own club, which becomes unsuccessful as a business a short time later. This is not the first time a member of NOFX has failed when attempting a new career.

Fat Wreck Chords releases *The Decline*, which is promoted as one very long song, but really it's just a bunch of little songs that segue nicely together.

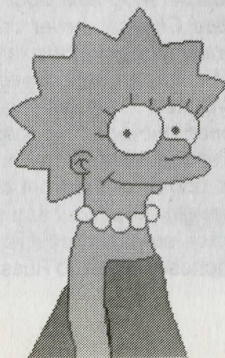
The NOFX t-shirt spoof of Snickers candy bars ends when the candy company legally prevents the band from parodying the logo. The band moves on to rip off other products.

NOFX puts out the *Surfer 7"*, which is an interpretation of the short, fast, punk rock fad that was big (thanks to Bad Religion) in 1988.

The band jumps headfirst into the political arena with their new album *The War On Errorism*, and Fat Mike starts punkvoter.com, in an attempt to get John Kerry in the White House.

The band slaps together a greatest hits collection for their 15th (non-7") release, presumably because they can't think of anything else to do.

NOFX continues to put out albums on the Fat Wreck Chord label, and the music is spread throughout the world thanks to file-sharing programs. Currently, there are plans for the band to continue for at least two more years.



Slime covered
rocks – yum!



ANATOMY OF A BAND PHOTO

OR

97 OBJECTS OF GREAT INTEREST TO YOU, THE READER

BY REV. NØRB, ANATOMICAL DELIGHT

'Way long time ago (as in "predating my involvement with the magazine" long time ago), *Maximum RockNRoll* ran a two-part article entitled "The Best 100 Album Covers Of All Time," or words to that effect. Curiously -- but perhaps not shockingly -- the piece then went on to depict what, by any reasonable method of accounting, appeared to be the *worst* hundred album covers of all time. I can't give you any examples off the top of my head, but it was *bad*. Bad in that secret special way only *MRR* could (sometimes) be. Everything i hated about punk/new wave album design was celebrated; everything i loved pilloried. At the crux of this aesthetic discrepancy? Seems that whomever wrote the article was of the opinion that a "good" punk album cover should get away from the "lame" cliché of depicting the band members standing in front of a brick wall or something when, everybody, of course, knows that depicting the dorks in the band in front of a brick wall is the apex of punk rock album-cover-dom; the gold standard to which all other covers must aspire (*MRR*'s failure to grasp this salient point may be due to the Freudian concept of "Brick Wall Envy" experienced by most West Coasters, whose seismically unsound environments preclude the use of



brick as a practical [i.e., non-lethal] building material). Not long afterwards, i published an issue of my egregiously irregular fanzine, (*SiC*) *TEEN*, and, having received a veritable mountain of mostly-useless promo records for review in the eons-long gap since the previous issue, i sought a quick and easy way to justify blowing off writing about those records in lieu of writing about records i actually cared about. Sooo...i took the dozen records i actually wanted to review (Rip Offs, Teengenerate, Spoiled Brats, Statics, Headcoats, Queers, Head, Bikini Kill), put 'em in one stack, then took of the heap of records i had gotten to review that i had no fucking interest whatsoever in writing about, and put the heap next to the stack for comparison. I couldn'tve scripted a better outcome: *EVERY ONE of the records i wanted to write about had the band's photo on the cover; almost EVERY ONE of the records i DIDN'T want to write about DIDN'T have the band's photo on the cover*. The gavel was instantly banged ("bung?"); policy was set: (*SiC*) *TEEN* will review no record that lacks a band photo on the front cover. Amen. Problem solved. My fanzine contained two pages of reviews, preceded by a half-page editorial explaining my decision to cease reviewing records without the band's picture on the front cover -- percentage-wise, likely a record-review-to-record-review-editorial record of some sort. Timbo from Mutant Pop Records -- a gent generally held to be pretty profoundly un-stupid -- was so swayed by my ranting on this subject that he instituted the band-photo-must-be-on-the-front-cover dictum as company policy, naming it the "Rozek Rule" in honor of some manner of Polish ice cream treat that i apparently resemble. This, of course, kinda opened the floodgates for every nameless cipher in a Queers t-shirt and Chuck Taylors to pose in front of a brick wall or local equivalent for their album photo, to the point where mere cover-bearing-band-photo-ness is no longer a particularly effective criterion for a record's hypothesized worth (but, that said, keep doing it). In any event, among the Enlightened (i.e., those who, unlike whomever wrote that piece for *MRR*, don't think a junior-high-quality drawing of a tank rolling over a McDonald's™ or something constitutes a good punk rock album cover), there are two chief subdivisions: First are the **Conceptualists** -- those who think you should have an "idea" for a band photo, then enlist a photographer to flesh out that idea. Greg Lowery of Rip Off Records is the definitive Conceptualist. His bands are always doing some very defined thing in their band photos -- band is eating at diner, band is in police lineup, band is pissing on cop car, band is in hospital, band is in car accident, etc. Greg is always like "I need an idea for a band photo! I need an idea for a band photo!" I wish he woulda asked me that before the Rip Offs took the pictures for their first 45 -- hey, i got an idea, Greg! My idea is that you guys *DON'T* not wear your masks on the cover! How's that for high concept?!) The opposite of the Conceptualists are the **Whateverists** -- the photographer shows up and the band just does whatever until he runs out of film. The prime Whateverist that comes to mind is myself. My last band, Boris The Sprinkler, took album cover photos in our practice room (8-Testicled Pogo Machine/She's Got a Lighter), my bedroom (Male Model), the living room (Drugs & Masturbation), the kitchen ([She Digs My] New Wave Records), the bathroom (Mega Anal), outside the barbershop next door (Saucer To Saturn) and the railroad warehouse behind the barbershop (Grilled Cheese), never once having any plan other than just using random items as props and generally mugging it up (and, when we got bored with posing with everything in a twenty-yard radius of our apartment, we took our photos in the recording studio [Suck]). A Conceptualist thinks that a Whateverist is just shooting the same photo over and over; a Whateverist finds the notion of pre-planned photographic staging to be somewhat corny and distasteful. Buuuuuuuuu...ideological differences aside, any methodology -- Conceptualist or Whateverist -- that produces a cool band photo for the front cover of your album is A-OK by The Powers That Be™. I personally think the weight of rational argument swings towards Whateverism, however, because the three best band-photos-on-album-covers there ever were or ever will be were those on the first Ramones album, the Ramones "Rocket To Russia" album, and the first Clash album

-- photos where the band is, essentially, just standing there -- Whateverism in its purest form. The fact that these bands are doing nothing but standing there on their album covers, however, sort of demands that any succeeding images in that vein exhibit some manner of differentiation from the Baseline Standing There (BST) -- meaning that you can't quite just stand in front of a wall any more, you gotta mix it up ever so slightly -- you gotta add a little something to your Baseline Standing There. It has been my personal observation that the most striking album cover images since the Ramones/Clash/Rocket To Russia holy trinity have been Whateverist Baseline Standing There photos that have added background data, knowingly or unknowingly, as their element of differentiation. Case in point: THE PACK's album cover. This is possibly my favorite album cover photo after the Holy Trinity, and what's not to love? You got a bass player with stubble, wild hair, black leather pants and some kinda brown braided leather guitar strap -- you can tell that the guy just wants to ROCK, was likely into Blue Oyster Cult six months ago and *doesn't care if you know it*. You got a scrawny drummer in shades and a raincoat, he's probably done wacked-out, fucked-up shit all his life because that's what drummers do, and he sees drumming for a punk band as a(n) (il)logical extension of his lifetime of wacked-out-fucked-up-shittery. Then you got the guitar player -- a longhaired, balding cross between Noddy Holder and Art Garfunkel's retarded Bavarian cousin -- who is obviously the ideological and creative lynchpin of the group, because he's standing in some public place in a red tuxedo jacket over a red-and-white vinyl vest over a white shirt and skinny tie, and he's wearing a Flying V and trying to look cool and indomitable and he actually looks like some old German who just shit himself. I mean, it's fucking priceless -- and the kicker is that they're standing in front of this wall of huge white German vending machines from the 1970's. I mean, i fucking love that shit. I love it because they are 1970's vending machines, which are different looking than modern vending machines. I love it because they are German vending machines, which are different looking than American vending machines (i mean, some appear to be operated by rotary dials. I don't ever recall seeing rotary dials on American vending machines in my life). And i really love it because the vending machines seem so massive and cumbersome that they somehow manage to translate and exude the bunker mentality *du jour* as some sort of innate design feature (i mean, these things look so impregnable that one can't help but think that they were designed to ensure that, in the case of localized NATO v. Soviet Bloc thermonuclear armageddon, any Krauts with the requisite spare change could still stagger in and walk away with an Orangina™ and some cupcakes). But anyway, yeah -- apart from the Baseline Standing There, that's what i like the most: Seeing everyday objects in the background and wondering exactly what the hell they are and what they do (another example, although it wasn't on an album cover, was the picture of the Circle Jerks on the "Group Sex" lyric sheet. Up until the point of that album's release, no one -- i mean NO ONE [at least that i knew] -- had seen a wall full of punk flyers like the one they were photographed in front of. I mean, yeah, we had flyers on our bedroom walls, sure -- but there was space between our flyers. The Circle Jerks dude's bedroom wall had the flyers abutting each other in such a manner that *every square inch on the wall was covered in flyers*. No actual wall was visible. This was immediately adopted as THEE visual model for in-bedroom flyer display; spaces on bedroom walls between flyers were quickly eliminated, and, by about 1982, damn near everybody's bedroom looked like the dude from the Circle Jerks' [although he had probably actually *been* to most of the shows he had flyers of -- we in the Hinterlands had to import the bulk of our flyers from other, better-connected hipsters]). I mean, not to get deeply philosophical here, but *a picture is worth a thousand words*, ya know? If you really wanna get a feel for somebody from a different time and place, you can't just read a paragraph or two summarizing the economic and social conditions whence they sprung, you gotta familiarize yourself with the quotidian crap of their daily surroundings. You gotta see what their vending machines and sporks and ravioli cans looked like! **KNOW THY VENDING MACHINE, KNOW THYSELF**, that's what i say! In any event, my most recent musical offering was a team-up with the pride of Neenah, the Obsoletees, gracing the world with our dainty renditions of a dozen Bob Dylan tunes and operating under the *nom de rock* of **Nøb Dylan & His Nøbsoletees** (by the way, i'm Nøb. I know, you never would have guessed). In time-honored Whateverist fashion, our back cover photo was shot, where else, in my living room (in less-time-honored Conceptualist fashion, the pose is intended to be a parody/tribute to Mr. Dylan's [excellent] *Bringing It All Back Home* album. That you, the reader, may know me as i wish to know you, i present you with an identification guide to the ten-trillion or so mundane household objects which appear in the back cover photo used for the back cover of our *12 Stiff Dylans!* CD. Hey, sure, maybe you don't care, and i'm just exposing myself and my stuff unwantedly, but, you gotta admit, it's better i do this than leave nude Polaroids™ of myself at bus stops so shaddap awready.

fig. D

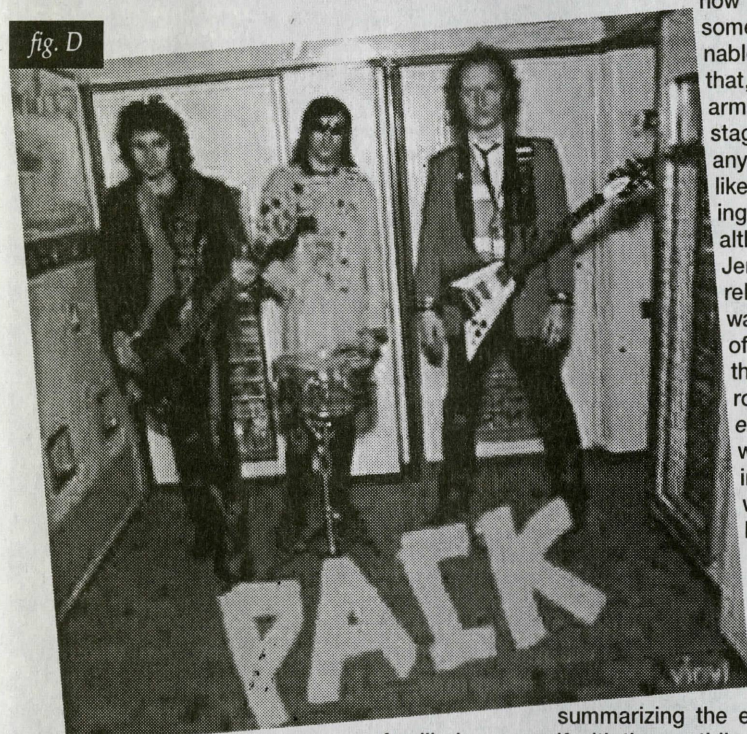


fig. E



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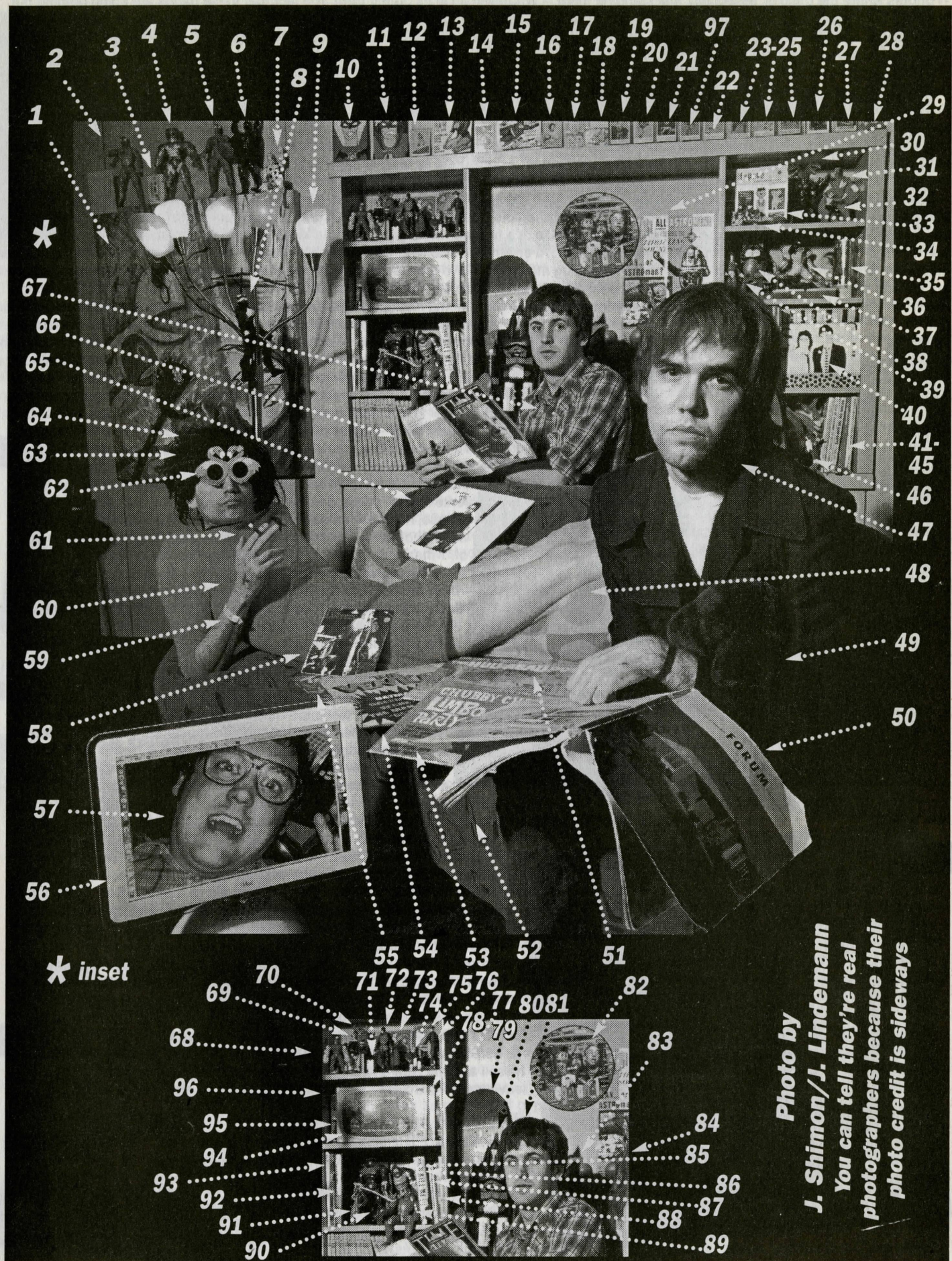
fig. A: Repent! The bedroom cometh!

fig. B: Peer into the majesty that was my bathroom!

fig. C: Gaze in rapt wonder at the mystery of the barbershop next door!

fig. C: Observe and make holy the Supreme Whateverist Moment!

fig. E: Remember, The Pack will be back! OK, that was admittedly gratuitous



**Photo by
J. Shimon/J. Lindemann**
You can tell they're real
photographers because their
photo credit is sideways

ANSWER KEY

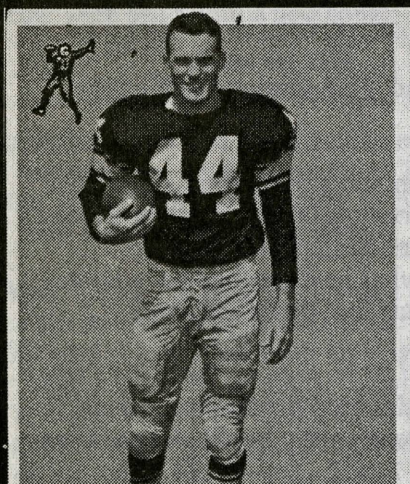
- 1) *Self-portrait with Demons*, acrylic on canvas, 1987. This is supposed to be a picture of me being beset by my art demons, who, as befitting their dual role as muses, are rendered in approximations of the four process colors: Magenta, Yellow, Cyan and Black. It actually looks more like four Muppets trying to eat a bunch of toothbrushes. Well, whatever.
- 2) *Spider-Man action figure wearing some kinda blue sweat top. I'm queer for inexplicable variants!*
- 3) *Johnny Thunders "Too Much Junkie Business" cassette* which was used to replace the yellow canvas panel that got dislodged from the top of *Self-Portrait with Demons*.
- 4) *Space Wolverine! Coolest action figure EVER!* Too bad Wolvie's keen space suit only covers his head, arms and legs; having one's uncovered torso continually explosively decompress every time they open up the airlock has got to tax even the mightiest of healing factors!
- 5) *Spider-Man action figure with red where the blue should be and blue where the red should be.* Some stoned Chinese dudes probably got caned for this.
- 6) *Black Panther action figure.* The Black Panther was the king of the African nation of Wakanda. Boris the Sprinkler played in Wauconda, IL once – we got docked \$\$\$ because one of our fans was dancy nutzy and punched out a bunch of ceiling tiles. It's a jungle!
- 7) *The Spot action figure.* Judging by the hands, this was a leftover Spider-Man action figure that somebody painted white with black polka dots. I had never heard of the guy before in my life; research uncovered that The Spot made one appearance in Marvel Team-Up way back when. Huh. Why can I buy a The Spot action figure and NOT a Nova The Human Rocket action figure??? Somewhere, some stoned executive is getting caned for this. Actually, he's probably just caning a Chinese proxy.
- 8) *Venom action figure.* The symbiont must be a transsexual 'cause I swear this dude has boobs.
- 9) *Cool floor lamp I got at Wal-Mart™.* What, you got something cooler?
- 10) *Crowbar*, acrylic on canvas panel, 1986
- 11) *The Beacon*, acrylic on canvas panel, 1986. I've always been a huge fan of the Justice Society of America ("JSA" to the "hep folk"), and, one day, I decided I would paint little mini-portraits of all twenty or so members, but I would change the characters just enough that they became my own intellectual property. Therefore, the Robin of Earth-2 became Crowbar, and the Green Lantern of Earth-2 became Beacon. I started painting a Wildcat analogue, and, somewhere in the middle, the innate inanity of what I was doing belatedly sunk in. Why I feel compelled to publicly display these, I cannot truly say. Probably because they haven't come out with a Robin of Earth-2 action figure yet.
- 12) *Pete Maravich card*, Topps 1972-73. This is the card that wound up in the CD booklet. In *Chronicle*, Bob Dylan wrote about how he saw Pistol playing with the Jazz just a few months before his untimely death (Pete's, not Bob's), and I used to love/fear him totally when I was a little kid and he was with the Hawks, so, what the fuck, I dedicated the record to him. Pete Maravich was great. He was the archetype of the volume-shooting point guard (a la Allen Iverson), he'd jack up a million shots per game, make half a million, and his team would lose by twenty. Perchance my favorite caucasian NBA player ever (although maybe I'd have liked George Mikan better if I was born 20 years earlier).
- 13) *PIC Gentlemen's Digest.* I used this cover for a Fleshtones/Swingin' Neckbreakers flyer. And there was much rejoicing.
- 14) *Kareem Abdul-Jabbar card*, Topps 1981-82. *My favorite player of all time!* Don't even get me talking on my skyhook. I started watching basketball when I was four or five because my dad told me a basket was worth two points and I liked even numbers. Next thing you know, MY TEAM IS THE WORLD CHAMPIONS. And then my "favorite player" decides Wisconsin isn't cool enough for him, demands a trade, and, thirty-five years later, I'm still waiting for that second world championship. Bah. Oh well, I usually don't like the design of any sports card made after the mid-70's, but the 81-82 Topps NBA cards are pretty cool 'cause the team and player name are in a magenta burst in the lower left hand corner. I'm easily amused.
- 15) *Justice League of America bubblegum machine display card.* When I was five (a pattern emerges!), they used to have Justice League bubblegum, which was sold by the piece in 1¢ vending machines (yes, that's right. ONE CENT. We were also bled with leeches regularly). It was like the old Bazooka™ gum was – a hard, horrible, sugary pink rectangle wrapped in waxy paper. In lieu of a Bazooka Joe comic, however, Justice League bubblegum came wrapped in a temporary tattoo bearing the image of a Justice Leaguer (which is why I can speak the name of most any member backwards without any conscious thought whatsoever – Namtab, Namkwah, Mota, go on, try me [years later, the backwards-spell-casting Zatanna would find this useful when she was granted membership in the JLA]). This card acted as the signage in the front of the JLA bubblegum machines. It has a thin strip of green tape on the bottom, covering up the mention of the tattoo, on accounta kids were eating the tattoos or some god damn thing, so they had to omit the tattoo from the product (which made it more or less useless IMO). I once went to kindergarten with a Wonder Woman tattoo over my belly button, which my mother found hilarious.
- 16) *Lynn Dickey card*, Topps 1974. Arguably the third-best Packers QB of all time, this is his "rookie card" with the Oilers, even though I'm 100% certain he was drafted by Houston in 1971 along with Dan Pastorini. You feel like uncovering this mystery for me, be my guest.
- 17) *Billy Howton card*, Topps 1956 (replica). As much as I love the Packers, I have little (actually, no) compulsion to surround myself with green and gold bric-a-brac. In point of fact, I have hardly any Packer crap visible anywhere in my house. It's just fuckin' boring to me (if you lived here, you'd understand). However, I find pre-Lombardi / pre "G" logo / pre-green-and-gold Packer stuff strangely compelling – therefore I think pretty much the only Packer stuff I have visible in my house are some cards from the fifties, when they wore blue and gold uniforms (and were the worst team in the league). Billy Howton played "end," and was also bled regularly with leeches.
- 18) *Mysterious Carroll Dale card.* I don't know what the hell this is, it's got Carroll Dale in a pre-1960 Packers uni, but he didn't get drafted until 1960 and didn't get traded to the Packers til 1965 so your guess is as good as mine. He plays flanker. *Modern!*
- 19) *Paul Hornung card*, Topps 1959. I love the 1959 Topps cards because the lettering for the player names goes red letter, blue letter, red letter, blue letter, and sometimes the cards have pink backgrounds. Paul Hornung cost the Packers a shot at a third consecutive NFL championship when he got suspended for gambling in 1963. My mom said she once called him when he was playing poker with one of her dad's friends. *Ooh la la!*
- 20-25) *More 1959 Topps Packers cards* – household names like Ollie Ferguson, Dave Hanner (later to become the Packers long-time trainer), etc...
- 97) WAIT FOR IT!!! WAIT FOR IT!!!
- 26) *My friend Alex.* I hang out with him on weekends because he doesn't have a dad. He's currently in a T-ball league with kids in wheelchairs and stuff, which seems to speak rather poorly on my ability to instill athletic abilities in my young charges.
- 27) *Lenny Wilkens card*, Topps 1971-72. My favorite NBA cards are the 71-72's and 72-73's. I'm not sure what makes Lenny Wilkens so special that I felt I needed to display his card (although I suppose he's better looking than Tom Boerwinkle or Terry Dischler). He was a cool coach.
- 28) *Alan Page card*, Topps 1971. Alan Page played for the hated Vikings, but he was my favorite player for a while because my favorite color is purple and my favorite number is 8 and Page wore purple and the number 88, so there ya go. You can't see it, but this card features the addition of a handmade word balloon from Metal Mike Saunders, reading "I SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AND I WILL KICK YOUR ASS." True 'dat, bro.
- 29) *Destroy All Astromen poster.* MOAM were kind of cool, but their posters were much cooler. Come on, robots. Come on.
- 30) *Two-headed dinosaur I got at Rola-Rena circa 1988.* This is one of my favorite stories ever. I got this dinosaur at the refreshment/souvenir stand at a roller rink where my old band, Depo-Provera, opened up for JFA (and Skatemaster Tattel). As I am going out to my car to put my new acquisition away, the legendary Time Bomb Tom comes frantically running out the side door. There is a strict "no stage diving" rule at the roller rink, and Time Bomb Tom has apparently just gratuitously violated it – intensifying matters by grabbing the shirts of security dudes as they try to apprehend him, and THEN diving, leaving the security fellows with mangled garments and in quite a lather. Tom bolts into JFA's bus, rips off his red t-shirt, puts on a white JFA shirt, takes off his glasses, and, very casually comes back out of the van. All this occurs in like the space of five seconds, a la Superman in a phone booth. The security dude with the ripped shirt storms out of the side door, out for blood. He runs up to Tom and myself. "Did you see a guy in a red shirt and glasses come this way?" Tom points towards the street. "I think he went that way." The fuming security guard takes off, muttering curses and death threats. Okay, that doesn't sound like that great of a story, but if you could've seen it, you wouldn't've believed it, it was like something from a Bugs Bunny cartoon. Guy runs into a bus, changes his shirt and glasses in like two seconds, comes back out, and gives his pursuer a casual "they went that-a-way." It was great. OKAY, TRUST ME, IT WAS GREAT. Sheesh.
- 31) *The Falcon action figure.* Captain America's African-American partner from the 70's. Some of the dialogue from those issues is priceless: "No way, Steve! So let's just shake and say it's been a gas! I owe you a lot...but now I have to get into my own bag! Dig?!" The mind boggles...

- 32) *Dr. Strange action figure*. I don't care what anybody says, Steve Ditko's crowning achievement in the comics field was NOT the first 38 issues of Spider-Man, it was Dr. Strange. Kooky Ditko hands and a bendy Cloak of Levitation!
- 33) *Shelf Space: Modern Package Design 1945-1965*. Hey, it's got Top Cat AND Brillo pads on the cover!
- 34) *Yellow Polka-dotted Stegosaurus hand-painted by #26*.
- 35) *24 oz. Schlitz Malt Liquor can*. Back from the good ol' days when magnets stuck to beer cans and they had a big rusty seam down the side!
- 36) *Black, white and magenta Gremlin-like thing*. I don't know what this is and I don't know why it's here but it occurs to me that this thing has like-ly eaten my blue plastic robot.
- 37) *Mexican Wrestling Ring*. I bought this from some old guy who looked like Edward Everett Horton sitting on the street in Tijuana. It's a little wooden wrestling ring with four plastic, caped wrestlers. The surface of the ring is covered by a large photo of a Mexican tag-team bedecked in pink leotards decorated with random numerals. Apparently, scientific wrestling at its purest!
- 38) *Black and purple cat with green eyes*. Curiously egg-shaped. No further information available. Perhaps he fights crime.
- 39) *Dr. Fate action figure*. According to my first solo record, it is this gentlemen whom I will be knocking you out of state like.
- 40) *The Reds 10"*. The late 70's/Early 80's Philadelphia new wave band, not the Texas dudes who morphed into the Marked Men. Fluorescent green and black cover. Looks a lot cooler than it sounds (although their first album is pretty decent). Contains a Doors cover. You have been warned.
- 41-45) *Origins of Marvel Comics, Son of Origins of Marvel Comics, Bring on the Bad Guys, The Superhero Women, Marvel's Superhero Battles*. The Stan Lee collection! All five of the Smilin' One's original books from the 70's! And, while the last three are forgettable, make-a-quick-buck schlock, *Origins of Marvel Comics* and *Son of Origins of Marvel Comics* were/are arguably the two most influential books I've ever read. Do NOT make the mistake of confusing the original 1970's versions with the cheesy modern versions of *Origins* and *Son of Origins* - those are shit, but these are THE shit. Excelsior!
- 46) *Captain America action figure vs. Nazi football helmet*. I have this painting I made way back when that was supposed to be VERY EVIL in nature. And, to this extent, I adorned it with a number of evil icons, including a football helmet I painted red with swastikas on the side. For better or for worse, this seems to be one of the more provocative art-things I've ever done, so I've always had it out on display. For the benefit of the casual observer, I thought I'd mitigate it somewhat by having my Captain America action figure attacking it. Results inconclusive.
- 47) *Tim*
- 48) *Orange and purple body pillow*. Also from Wal-Mart™. Come on, Wal-Mart™'s cool and you know it.
- 49) *Mathu*. I don't know who the hell bought me this stuffed dog, but now he has a name and a collar so I guess he's here for the duration.
- 50) *Architectural Forum magazine, 1948*. This was given to me by Mel of the Phantom Surfers, because the cover story is on Lustron™ homes - my prefabricated metal house, being a Lustron, looks pretty much the same as the house on the cover ('cept with more peanut shells in the driveway)
- 51) *Hullaballoos, "England's Newest Singing Sensations" LP*. We strewed a bunch of random records on the sofa to replicate the "Bringing It All Back Home" cover. I like the Hullaballoos OK (lots of fast eighth note rhythms on the hi-hats and Buddy Holly worship), but now I'm kind of wishing we used a more deeply significant record here. *Hull 1, Green Bay 0!*
- 52) *Blue Sofa*. I fucking LOVE this sofa. It's blue, and kidney shaped, and it's got these funky populuxe-type sixties patterns in it, and I was walking around the neighborhood a while after I bought it, and I'm thinking *Yeah! You go, Rev. Nerb! No one has a couch as cool as you! No one could ever locate something so stylish, let alone pull the trigger on it! You are a veritable bastion of home decor unsurpassability! You da man! Etc.* ...then I look across the street, where people are moving into some demi-run-down second floor apartment, and they're hauling up their couch, and it's the exact goddamn same sofa as mine, except it's red. *Well I never!*
- 53) *Chubby Checker "Your Twist Party" LP*. Not as good as his album with "The Hucklebuck" on it, but I've got a soft spot for "Jamaica Farewell" which Chub covers hereon.
- 54) *Ventures (aka "Batman Theme") LP*. This one's cool, it's got the Batman theme, the Green Hornet theme...no Spider-Man theme, though. Oh well, just wait until *Spider-Man: Rock Reflections of a Super-Hero! You'll be sorry!!!*
- 55) *Teengenerate "Get Action" LP*. 'Nuff said.
- 56) *iMac G4*. I don't know, they told me if I bought a Mac I'd be able to hold hands with Japanese girls?
- 57) *Jon* - he couldn't make the photo shoot so we just put one of his MySpace photos up on my computer and th' heck with him.
- 58) *Zantees "Rockin' In The House" 45*. My friend Donny used to be in the Navy, and he would buy gigantic amounts of records in California and ship them back home, then listen to them on leave. Sometimes he'd ship them to us, so we could tape them for him. This was my favorite thing in some big Donny shipment or another, and, when I saw it the night before at the Norton Records booth at the Rockabilly Fest, I snapped it up - not even realizing that the people I was purchasing it from, Billy and Miriam of Norton Records, were actually *in the band!* I went back the next day and got it autographed. Miriam told me to "stay in school." Right on, sister.
- 59.5) I just realized that there is no arrow pointing to my *Red Star Trek Dress*. Color that rectified.
- 59) *Wristband from Rockabilly Fest*. They have a bi-annual week-long rockabilly fest at a local casino. It's a fuckin' blast, but draining on the ol' sleep budget. Where the hell else you gonna go drink with Deke Dickerson and dance with Tomoko of Supersnazz in Green Bay?
- 60) *Indicator of Straight Edgeness*. Actually, it's an admission mark from the kick-ass Forty-Fives show at the Main Stage the previous night, which I attended after some time at the Rockabilly Fest.
- 61) *White Crayola*. Stay in school, kids!
- 62) *Pink Flamingo sunglasses I got at the Milwaukee Zoo*
- 63) *Same wig I wore on the "End Of The Century" album cover*
- 64) *Nøb*
- 65) *Another Side of Bob Dylan LP*. This record is actually in the original photo. I'm a little lacking in Lotta Lenya LPs though.
- 66) *Time Magazine*. LBJ is on the cover of the issue of *Time* on the "Bringing It All Back Home" cover, the recently-departed Pope John Paul II is on ours. Someday, archeologists will excavate this cover and praise us for our efforts in the service of mankind.
- 67) *Justin*
- 68) *Super-Skrull action figure*. All the powers of the Fantastic Four, *plus* he's green and wrinkly!
- 69) *Hourman action figure*. The original pill-popping JSA member!
- 70) *El Diablo bobblehead*. This very same bobblehead was on Stefan of Stardumb Records TV the time Boris were in Holland and I got so stoned I just about had to be committed. I calmed down by watching bicycle racing on TV, so I had a lot of time to stare at his bobblehead. Now I can replicate this state of overwhelming hysteria, panic and paranoia in the safety of my own home!
- 71) *Danelectro 9-volt battery*. "Style over substance?" What on EARTH are you TALKING about???
- 72) *Dr. Mid-Nite action figure*. Doc Mid-Nite was blind and had a pet owl named Hooty. Hooty did not make the cut here.
- 73) *Estrus Gearbox 7" box set*. Whatever happened to Coop?
- 74) *I have no idea what the fuck this is, but it's obscuring my view of my Shocker action figure*.
- 75) *Throw The Long Bomb!* This is a young adult type hardcover from the 60's. Paul Lukas, who currently does the truly excellent "Uni Watch" column for *espn.com*, was over at my house once, way before he did Uni Watch, and, while our mutual friends talked about artsy stuff, we bonded over discussing how the Giants' old "ny" helmet logo in evidence on the cover was vastly superior to the then current "GIANTS" logo.
- 76) *Golden Age Flash action figure*. The Flash of Earth-2 was cool. He wore a winged pie pan on his head. You should try it some time, it's cool.
- 77) *I think it's Quadrophrenia?*
- 78) *West Side Story maybe?*
- 79) *Skateboard deck with "Giants of Pi" drawing*. My friends own a skateboard shop, and they wanted to know if they could use some of my drawings for skateboard graphics. I'm like yeah, cool, now I'm hip! Unfortunately, the grim reality is that when you attach your trucks to this, a big hunk of the design is gonna be covered up. Maybe I should've opted for a career in snowboard design?
- 80) *Shogun Warrior Raydeen*. The Shogun Warriors were the coolest toys EVER! They were like two feet tall plastic Japanese robot samurais. Raydeen launched his fist in a mighty attack, and shot a bird-like missile out of his stomach. This is actually my brother's. *Shhhh.*

- 81) *Fuck you, we said you already*
- 82) *Mega Anal picture disc*. So, if you think about it, i've got a picture of me in my bathroom inside of a picture of me in my living room. Surely the perceived intimacy between subject and viewer has now grown exponentially!
- 83) *Shogun Warrior Mazinga*. I LOST MAZINGA'S BRAIN! I LOST MAZINGA'S BRAIN! Worse yet, i did it when i was an adult. Eek. I once rigged him up so he would launch missiles at anyone who opened my bedroom door. Of course, the downside of that was that, after he was set up, i couldn't leave the room, so i had to beg people outside to open my door and get shot at. Oh well, it's a living.
- 84) *Shogun Warrior Dragun*. He had a battleaxe he threw, and buzzsaws that came out of his arms. Yeah, i didn't think this was gonna take this long either.
- 85) *Dr. Doom action figure*. All plastic, therefore far superior to the other Dr. Doom figure i have with removable rubber armor.
- 86) *Please Kill Me*
- 87) No, seriously, PLEASE KILL ME. Oh, this is *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs.
- 88) *The Aesthetics of Rock* by Richard Meltzer. Seriously, if you were on a desert island, and the only books you wound up with were *The Aesthetics of Rock*, *Please Kill Me*, *Naked Lunch*, *Origins of Marvel Comics* and *Son of Origins of Marvel Comics*, you probably wouldn't have a half-bad time. Oh, and *Throw The Long Bomb!* Leave us not forget that one.
- 89) *Spider-Man action figure in some kinda weird silver armor*. Almost as dumb as the yellow and red armor he currently wears!
- 90) *Triceratops Alex painted...either that or a dead sparrow*.
- 91) *Golden Age Sandman action figure*. Hey, Guy Davis, the guy who drew all 74 issues of *Sandman Mystery Theatre*, lives with (or used to live with) the sister of Anthony Van Deuren, who used to be the singer of the Horshacks, givers-to-the-world of such ditties as "Metal Bowling Ball."
- 92) *Quarterbacking by Bart Starr*. A suave hardcover bequeathed to me by Timbo of Mutant Pop, likely in honor of my fine work inventing the Rozeke Rule and all like that. It's no *Throw The Long Bomb!*, but it suffices.
- 93) *Sex, America, Cheap Trick*. My instructor (and soon to be employer) didn't know that "He's A Whore" wasn't originally by Big Black. Ack!
- 94) *Monkees: Complete TV Series VHS box set*. Yes, i am quite cool for owning all the Monkees episodes. However, the packaging of this really brings up a long standing gripe i've had with latter-day Monkees products, in that it grates me to NO END how NO ONE SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE TRULY ICONIC MONKEES IMAGERY IS OR SHOULD BE! I mean, they made this box set "look like" a TV. Nice idea, chumps, except that THE BOX SET ISN'T THE SAME ASPECT RATIO AS A TV, so the whole thing looks like some squashed, tangentially TV-like oblong. Further, the unifying design idea for the box design, booklet design, and individual VHS cover design is can be defined as "Monkees + TV static background" - every visual design here is pretty much a photo of the Monkees superimposed over blue "ant races" visual noise. Again, i get the idea, but what's MONKEES-ish about TV in particular? I mean, should a *Seinfeld* or *M*A*S*H* or *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* box set be pictures of the *Seinfeld* or *M*A*S*H* or *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* cast over blue TV snow, just to drive home the fact that *Seinfeld* and *M*A*S*H* and *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* were TV shows? I KNOW THEY WERE FUCKING TV SHOWS!!! I KNOW WHAT A TV IS!!! I KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT'S TUNED TO A CHANNEL THAT'S NOT ON THE AIR!!! You want good packaging for a Monkees product? Take those goofy face images they popped up in the background when they were running the closing credits, plaster those, full color, all over everything, and call it a night. THAT'S what we want to see! THAT'S what says HEY HEY, IT'S THE MOTHER-FRIGGING MONKEES!!! to us!!! We want Mickey with the weird hat and Davy with the freaky sunglasses and all that shit, and we DON'T WANT anything else!!! WE WANT THEIR FRICKING DISEMBODED HEADS, THAT'S WHAT WE WANT!!! I mean, they put the disembodied heads (kinda) on the 1991 "Listen To The Band" box set, but they colored them all gross-like. I could make a super-kick-ass Monkees video box set design in like twenty minutes, fifteen if i was hungry, and everyone would hail the genius of the packaging, except for like three graphic artists and executives who never liked the Monkees to begin with who would claim it was unimaginative. Um...where was i, again? Oh yeah, the episodes aren't even on the tapes in order. Geez.
- 95) *Starman action figure*. Originally, if you put his cosmic rod in his hand (please! no jokes), it would light up, but then his arm kinda fell off and that doesn't work so well anymore (i guess the moral of the story is not to play with your cosmic rod or your arm will fall off. Stay in school, kids).
- 96) I have no fucking idea what this arrow could be pointing at, but i have noticed that there is a Boba Fett Pez Dispenser over by the Danelectro 9 volt battery that i overlooked. There's also a copy of the *JLA: Earth-2* graphic novel by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely that is just barely visible to the left of *Sex, America, Cheap Trick*, and *On The Road With The Ramones* is partially visible to the right of *Naked Lunch*. Also, further review finds that #74 is actually a triceratops that Alex painted, and that it, indeed, is blocking the view of my Shocker action figure. I also made a grievous error by not identifying the *Golden Book Encyclopedia* set that is just to the left of Justin's *Time* magazine - these were kids' encyclopedias they sold at grocery stores when i was around five years old; i amassed the complete set and i seriously still use them for basic references sometimes which is why i know what happened in 1066 and you don't. Also, on really really close inspection, i have found that my old blue ankylosaurus that i've had since first grade is visible just to the right of the polka-dotted stegosaurus. You'd really have to have the original photo to see this. Oh, and good news! I spotted my blue plastic robot - it's in front of the purple and black cat with green eyes. There's also a little red trachodon on its side in front of the Stan Lee books. I can't add more arrows and re-do the photo key because the original document crashed Quark and won't open. I know, thank God for small favors, right?

AND NOW...THE MOMENT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR...BEARING IN MIND THE ALL-IMPORTANT FACT THAT THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FOR A BOB DYLAN COVER ALBUM...

97)



BOBBY DILLON
DEF. BACK GREEN BAY PACKERS

OH, IRONY OF IRONIES!!!

That's all, good night, hope you can get the last hour of your life back someday!

- Rev. Nørb

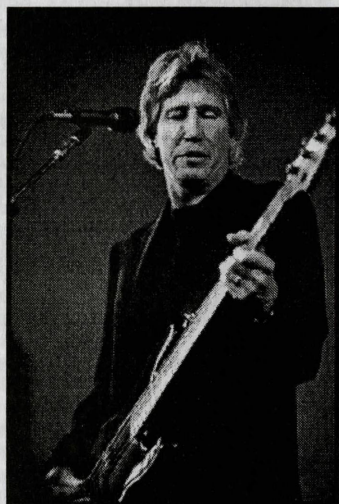
Illegal Music

by John Ross Bowie

A chilly wind is blowing through the music world—musicians and music fans are being condemned, banned, and detained for expressing themselves—and for all the wrong reasons.

FACT: A man was held as a terror suspect when trying to take a flight to Heathrow Airport in England. The 24-year-old mobile phone salesman apparently played the Clash's classic *London Calling* in a taxi on the way to his airport and the lyrics resulted in his cab driver reporting him to the police.

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE: Listening to *London Calling* should not be illegal. Listening to *Cut the Crap*, side two of *Combat Rock*, and sides five and six of *Sandinista* should be.



FACT: Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters Monday said he is moving his summer concert from Tel Aviv, Israel, to the Jewish/Arab town of Neveh Shalom.

Waters said he will show his support for Middle East peace by performing in Neveh Shalom, the "Village of Peace" established by Israeli Jews and Arabs, Ha'aretz reported.

Palestinians decried as hypocritical the British rocker's June 22 concert in Tel Aviv, because Waters was an opponent of Israel's construction of the controversial separation fence, Ha'aretz said.

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE: Roger Waters should not be banned for supporting Israel. Roger Waters should be banned for *The Final Cut*, and you know what, fuck it, *The Wall* is overrated. Really overrated. I went to see the movie in college one time and the best thing about the screening were the two Cornell fucks doing whippets in the second row. THEY were really entertaining.

FACT: Henry Rollins ran into trouble while flying from Auckland, New Zealand during the Big Day Out Tour.

Apparently, the former hardcore vocalist and author made the mistake of reading *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* while on the flight. The book—a largely academic look at the roots of conflicts in Central Asian countries and their connections to terrorism—apparently raised some red flags resulting in Rollins receiving what he described as "a letter from a nice woman who worked in one of those government areas that deals with anti-terrorism matters."

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE: Henry Rollins should not be condemned for reading a book. He should be condemned for publishing them—namely all of those poetry books. Jesus. Your friend died. I *get* it.

Big Marie

By Tim Hall

The acid was kicking in when Big Marie came out of the bathroom dressed only in a pink bath towel. She walked to the bedroom and shut the door. There was a line already.

I had been holding the guitar for a while, I was the only one who could play. The strings were shimmering laser beams of gold jelly, and I'd finally found a song that everybody could sing along to.

*We are one person,
We are two alone*

The first guy went in. We didn't hear anything. When he came out a little while later he was looking like he invented it. The next one went in.

*We are three together
We are for each other....*

It went on like that for a while. The door opened, the door closed. When it was open there was nothing but inky blackness, but I could see roiling waves of pink perfumed sex billowing out of the room—or the rat-stinking piss of toothless hooker alleys, depending on where my head was at. But I was having a good time. The girl sitting across from me was a skintight Greek goddess, ripped Levi's showing a passionate knee, the wood paneling behind her malachite hair pulsing alive with chemical sap.

"I'll get you beers if you'll keep playing," she said.

Big Marie came out and announced she was taking a break. The group at the door murmured dejectedly. She went to the fridge, got a beer, and wandered in and out of rooms, nothing on but the pink towel, which looked more like a dishrag on her. The six of us in the circle in the corner were heavy into a new song:

*Be on my side
I'll be on your side*

Marie came over and stood next to me.

"I thought you were gonna come in! You said you and your friend there were going to play cards on my back." She was talking about Satish, who was still a virgin.

"Sorry, Marie, I'm tripping. It was a joke."

She put on a sad face. So did Satish. Hell.

I felt kind of bad. I had been making fun of Big Marie earlier, calling her B.M. for short. But she was a nice girl, doing it to pay for school. Studying to be a nurse. I was dealing speed to pay my tuition, so I understood.

"Tell you what, Marie—why don't I just come in and play some songs while you work?"

Her eyes brightened.

"Really? You mean it?"

"Sure."

We went in. There was a broken down recliner in one corner by the window, and a mattress in the middle of the floor. I took the chair.

Marie went over to the mattress and dropped the towel. Then she laid herself out and in a stunning phone-sex voice purred: "I'm ready."

The door opened and Seth came in. He was out of it, far past the point that I'd even know where my dick was, let alone get it hard. He was followed, timidly, by Satish.

"Thought I'd take yer place at the card table," Seth slurred. Marie rolled her eyes and looked at me.

"He's all right," I said.

Marie got on all fours. Satish went around to her front and fumbled with his zipper.

"So this your first time, hon?" Marie asked sweetly. Satish nodded. I kept playing. I started working my way through "The Harder They Come," and when I got to the payoff, I put my all into it, moaning and wailing for all it was worth: "OOO-ooo, the harder they CO-O-OME..."

In my peripheral vision I could see the three bodies moving in time to the music. It was too much. I turned completely around in the chair and stared out the window.

There was an audience. Four or five guys were crouched down, trying to look through the tattered curtain. I made eye contact with one and he whispered to me.

"Hey, open the curtain a little more so we can see!"

"Beer and pot," I said. "Bring some and I'll do it."

There was a burst of harsh whispers—"go on!" "get it!" "hurry up!"—and he scurried off. I went back to my singing:

*This is the day
of the expanding man...*

The frat brother came back with the beer and pot, and I opened the curtain so they could see.

"All right, man!"

"Yeah! Thanks a lot!"

*They call Alabama
the Crimson Tide—*

I sang for about an hour while Marie serviced another dozen or so. When it was over she thanked me, and we talked for a while.

"I do a lot of work around campus," she said, "I'd love to have someone like you working with me. I could pay you pretty well."

I told her that it was certainly a unique offer, and if I was ever back in the area I'd look her up.

There haven't been many times in my life when I've done a job for no pay and enjoyed it, let alone been offered a career opportunity that actually sounded attractive. Marie offered me both. I hope she got herself through school okay. And I bet, if she did, that she's one hell of a nurse right now.

(When he's not serenading morbidly obese college prostitutes, Tim Hall can be found tweaking the noses of bullies in his new book, Triumph Of The Won't.)

When It's Good And Loud: A Beginner's Guide to Motorhead

By Matt Barber

Part 1

Over the past few months I've been on a steady audio diet of classic Motorhead. Sure, I've listened to lots of other records as well, but *Ace Of Spades*, *Bomber*, *Overkill*, and *BBC Live & In-Session* have been in my stereos—car and home—more often than anything else. I have my good friend Bill to thank for my recent preoccupation with all things Motorhead.

I'd often thought of picking up one of the band's albums. I knew they were a huge influence on just as many punks as metal heads. In the late 70s and early 80s Motorhead set the standard as they forged a leaner, rougher, faster brand of heavy music that united people with Mohawks and mullets; it eventually came to be known as speed metal. I'd heard and read about Motorhead's immense influence, and I was always enjoyed Superchunk's cover of "I'll Be Your Sister," but I wasn't sure where to begin, which Motorhead album to get first.

One day I was shopping at my favorite local record store, Home Of The Hits, when my buddy Bill was working there. I knew Bill was into Motorhead, so I asked him which title in the band's vast catalog would be the best to initiate a novice. Without any hesitation he strode over to the rack, and pulled out *Ace Of Spades*, like he was drawing a six-shooter from its holster. One listen and I was blown away. I quickly started considering which Motorhead record I would purchase next; it was inevitable that I'd have to hear more.

I had to find out if there was more to this band than one amazing album. So, I consulted my friend Mike (infamously known in some circles as Crazy Mike) one night when I saw him at a show. We were talking about *Ace Of Spades*, and I told him that our mutual friend Steve, who was also working at the record store the day I bought the disc, said, "*Ace Of Spades* is the only Motorhead album you'll ever need." Disbelief rolled over Mike's face, and his lip twisted into an incredulous smirk. "I wouldn't say that..." he scoffed.

I asked for his expert opinion on which record to get next, and he suggested *Bomber*. I bought it, and again I was not disappointed. It's kind of surprising that I hadn't delved into the Motorhead catalog long ago. See, I was a metal kid, with the Dio and

Queensryche tour shirts to prove it. But, in the mid 80s I was also a typically idiotic adolescent male, attracted to the fantastical, theatrical aspect of metal as much, if not more, than its aggression.

Motorhead get filed under metal because of the unyielding severity of the music they make, but they never went in for the gimmicks so common in the genre. There were never costumes, make-up, poofed hair, stage acrobatics, or concept albums for Motorhead, just denim, leather, and sweat. And there is none of that faux operatic nonsense in Lemmy's vocals. Sometimes it sounds like his voice is disintegrating on the spot, but he growls defiantly through his limitations, producing some of the most unique and inspiring vocals in rock n' roll.

I'm ashamed to say that back in the mid 80s, my sister and I made fun of Motorhead. It was a private joke between us. It seems almost like sacrilege now, but we didn't know any better. We thought the site of Lemmy riding out of the grave on his chopper in the "Killed By Death" video was ripe for ridicule. And just the name of that song, "Killed By Death," was too Spinal Tap not to laugh at. We were small town kids taught to conform. At that age, in those surroundings, there was no way we could possibly grasp the very essence of rebellion Lemmy embodied.

If you know anything about the lore and history behind the band, it's fairly obvious that Motorhead's exploits provided much of the inspiration for the creative team that made *This Is Spinal Tap*, the ultimate rock n' roll parody film. Motorhead is no joke band, but they embraced and espoused every aspect of the excessive rock lifestyle, which is exactly what *This Is Spinal Tap* targets. And the classic Motorhead lineup—Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister (bass/vocals), Fast Eddie Clarke (guitar), and Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor (drums)—consisted of three incredibly unique, larger-than-life personalities. Add unfathomable amounts of drugs, alcohol, sleep deprivation, money, and fame, and you're bound to come out with some ridiculous stories.

But there's no denying the power of Motorhead's music. It's a vital strand in rock n' roll's DNA. They fused heavy metal, blues rock, psychedelic, and punk music, and blazed the path for future sub-genres like noise rock, thrash, speed metal, and stoner rock. And what really attests to their legendary status is how well their recordings hold up to this day, how urgent and original they still sound. Motorhead is cited by many kinds of bands as a huge influence, and new fans, like me, are discovering them every day.

Ace Of Spades is, without question, the definitive Motorhead record; a true desert island disc, but *Overkill* comes in a close second on the list of classic Motorhead recordings, and it's definitely my favorite. Saying *Overkill* starts with a bang doesn't begin to convey the magnitude of aural force administered over the five minutes and ten seconds of supersaturated sound that make up its title track. It opens the album with a relentless sonic assault, propelled by Phil Taylor's furiously chugging double

kick drums. "Overkill" is one song that truly lives up to its name.

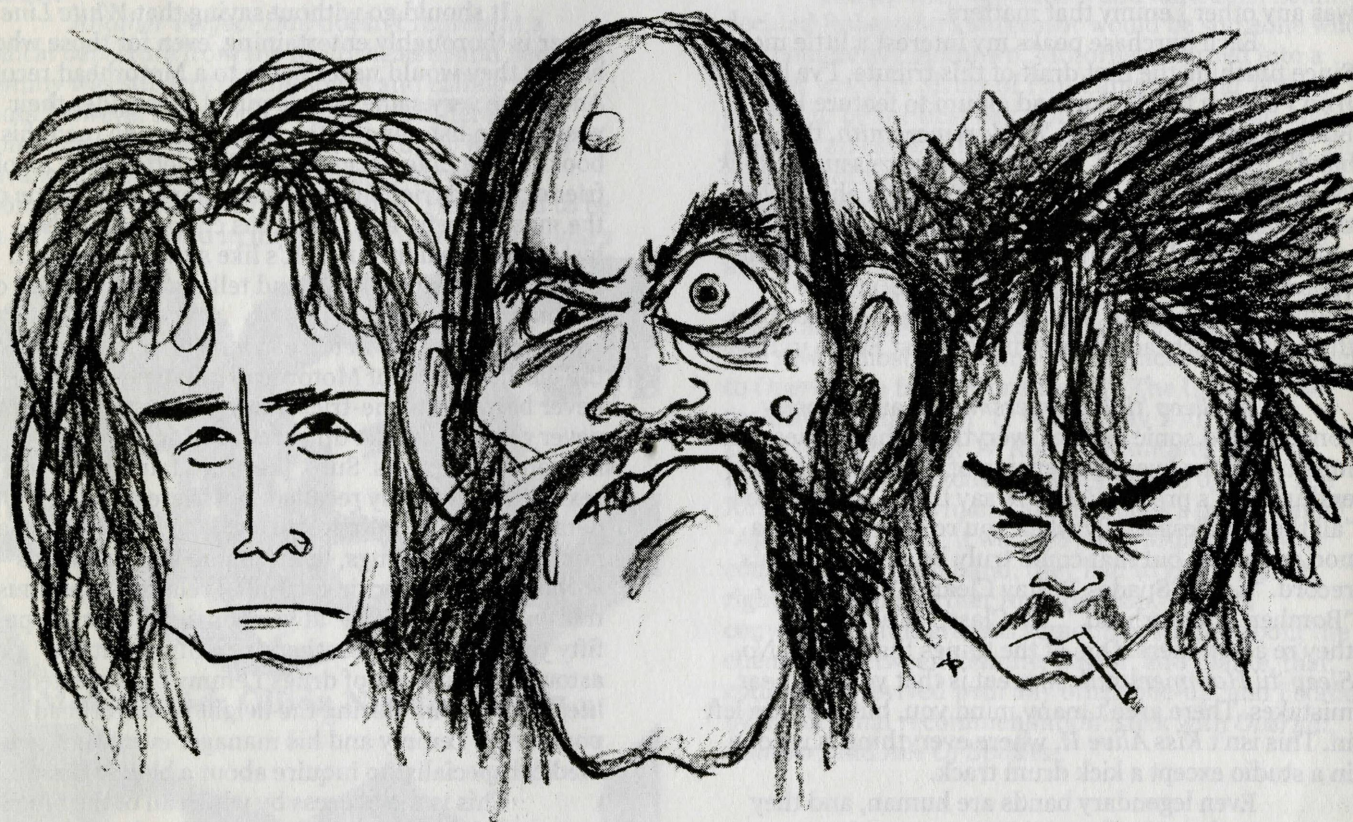
Next is "Stay Clean," which is something of a proto-grunge number with a riff that may have been nicked by Mudhoney years down the line. Lemmy's breathless vocals ratchet up the intensity on this track. "Stay Clean" could almost be mistaken for a Seattle export circa 1992 if it weren't for Fast Eddie Clarke's fiery soloing near its close. As always, Clarke's solos are accomplished, but rarely overdone. His bent note accents on the next song, "(I Won't) Pay Your Price," are good examples of just how tasteful his playing could be.

Lemmy is caught, tape rolling, as he mumbles, "I'm so drunk," before "(I Won't) Pay Your Price" begins. It's more than likely Motorhead spent the majority of the time they were recording thoroughly liquored, but you'd never know it from their performance on the tight, snarling blast of punk that follows Lemmy's admission. Alienation and the vengeful impulses it begets provide lyrical subject matter long favored by metal and punk bands alike, and "(I Won't) Pay Your Price" is brimming with venom. "You're really a nasty piece of work/You know you thought you was a hero but you're really just a jerk," Lemmy barks. Lyrics like, "I'm telling you the only real reason you ain't gonna get it's cause scum is not in season," prove Lemmy far surpassed the wit,

originality, and intelligence of most songwriters in heavy metal at that time.

Overkill's fourth cut, "I'll Be Your Sister," is driving riff rock at its finest. Clocking in at just two minutes and fifty seconds, it illustrates the band's conscious consideration of pop song structure. Along with the speed, fuck you attitude, Lemmy's debauched vocals, and Clarke's raw, vicious guitar tones, this sort of brevity probably ingratiated Motorhead to a lot of young punks. The psychedelic tendencies of Lemmy's previous band Hawkwind bleed over into "Capricorn," and later on "Metropolis," two songs that should be required listening in Stoner Rock 101.

In the liner notes of the two-disc reissue of *Overkill* (Sanctuary, 2005), Lemmy is quoted as saying, "We were a blues band, although we played it at a thousand miles per hour." The blues influence is clearly noticeable in "No Class," as well as "Damage Case." But the dynamic Lemmy describes is most obviously illustrated on album closer "Limb From Limb," which starts as a prowling, seedy blues-based rock song before shifting into Motorhead's signature break-neck gallop. You can't fully comprehend the meaning of the word lascivious until you've heard Lemmy sing, "Long leg lover, I'm gonna rip you limb from limb" on this recording.



Motorhead: Classic

The only song I've left out so far is my favorite on *Overkill*, "Tear Ya Down." It's another full-throttle rocker in the vein of "Stay Clean" and "I'll Be Your Sister." Lemmy begins by promising a potential sexual partner, "*Gonna show you what I'm all about, gonna make your toenails curl,*" and ends by vowing to give her "*supernatural powers.*" Sure it's ridiculous, but find some good 70s riff rock with lyrics that aren't. And Lemmy revealed he had more than sex and alienation in his lyrical arsenal on songs like "Stay Clean," and took his social commentary even further on Motorhead's next record, *Bomber*, with "Talking Head," "All The Aces," a scathing indictment of all the record business shits that ripped his band off, and the uncharacteristically personal words of "Poison."

I can't speak for any albums after Fast Eddie left the band, but any fan of heavy music can't go wrong with *Overkill*, *Bomber*, or *Ace Of Spades*. All have been remastered and reissued on Sanctuary in one-disc or deluxe two-disc editions. If you prefer your rock n' roll raw and unforgiving, like the sound of flesh ripping from bone, *Overkill* is the ticket, but all three are excellent in their own way and highly recommended. Thanks Bill and Mike.

Part 2

Since I wrote this homage, I have gone completely over the edge with my Motorhead obsession. Ask anyone that talks to me on a regular basis. I thought I might actually have to strike my friend Gina by saying, "Lemmy who?" after I mentioned him in conversation recently. As if there was any other Lemmy that matters.

Each purchase peaks my interest a little more. Since finishing the first draft of this tribute, I've bought *Iron Fist*, the last Motorhead album to feature Fast Eddie on guitar, *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith*, the band's first live record, the double disc reissue of *Rock 'N' Roll*, and the Classic Albums DVD that chronicles the making of *Ace Of Spades*. I also picked up, and quickly finished, Lemmy's autobiography *White Line Fever* (Kensington Publishing Corp., 2004), the reading of which lead me to buy *Another Perfect Day*, the first Motorhead album without Fast Eddie in the band.

No Sleep 'til Hammersmith is an intensely concentrated sonic blast of everything that makes rock music, and the live experiencing of it, so powerful and enduring. It's pretty clichéd to say that a band played "all the hits," especially when you're saying it with a nod and wink, but that could truly be said about this record. "Ace Of Spades," "Stay Clean," "Overkill," "Bomber," "Motorhead," "No Class," "Capricorn," they're all on there. One of the things that makes *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith* so great is that you can hear mistakes. There aren't many mind you, but they are left in. This isn't *Kiss Alive II*, where everything is redone in a studio except a kick drum track.

Even legendary bands are human, and they make mistakes. *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith* captures

one of the best power trios in the history of rock music at the height of their game, but they weren't flawless. And it's to their credit that they were secure enough to release a truly live record of themselves. It exemplifies the kind of balls and integrity that have made Motorhead a highly respected band for decades.

"The doctor...told Lemmy that...clean blood would kill him; his body wouldn't know what to do with it."

Iron Fist is a good record, but it can't stand toe-to-toe with the classics in Motorhead's canon. Fast Eddie produced *Iron Fist*, and cleaned some things up, but it certainly couldn't be called a slick record. At that time, Motorhead was a group that stuck to a formula. It was a good formula, one that worked, like Coca-Cola or mom's apple pie, whatever you want to liken it to. If you're familiar with that formula, and you like it, you'll like *Iron Fist*.

Some great songs like "Heart Of Stone," "Sex & Outrage," and "(Don't Need) Religion" are on *Iron Fist*, but it's not solid throughout. It's not a bad album, but it's not on par with *Overkill*, *Bomber*, or *Ace Of Spades*. I'd never tell Lemmy that though. It's obvious after reading his autobiography that in his humble estimation *every* Motorhead album is essential.

It should go without saying that *White Line Fever* is thoroughly entertaining, even for those who believe they would never listen to a Motorhead record. And those very same people might reconsider their position on listening to the band if they do read this book. *White Line Fever* reads like a letter from an old friend, an old friend that just so happens to be one of the most colorful and notorious characters in the history of popular music. It's like sitting down with Lem while he sips whisky and tells some tales, and can this man spin a yarn.

White Line Fever can appeal to those outside the die-hard crew of Motorhead fanatics because it never becomes a one-trick show. For instance, Lemmy never gets too caught up in recounting his many bedroom conquests. Sure, there is a fair amount of sexual excess fondly recalled, but there are also a lot of details about recording, touring, gear, record label and management dealings, interpersonal relationships within the band, writing, familial relationships, musical trends, and the "scene" at various times over the past fifty years. And, oh yes, there's plenty about the astounding amount of drugs Lemmy has ingested in his life. At one point during the height of Motorhead's popularity, Lemmy and his manager even went to a medical specialist to inquire about a blood transfusion.

This is the process by which all of the blood in a person's body is drained, and replaced with new,

“clean” blood. It’s long been rumored that Keith Richards underwent this process. After running a battery of tests, the doctor actually told Lemmy that if he introduced pure blood into his system his body would reject it. Clean blood would kill him; his body wouldn’t know what to do with it.

Turns out, Lem is a history buff, and as he writes of his travels all over the world, he sprinkles in bits about European History. Throughout the book he consistently reveals that he is a very intelligent man, and sometimes that he’s also a loose cannon. For example, when he’s arguing against vegetarianism, he cites the fact that Hitler was a vegetarian. Huh?

But even at his most ludicrous moments, Lemmy is a fascinating and funny dude. And his relentless confidence and bravado about his band’s output—especially *after* the classic trio broke up—is convincing. His boasting was enough to persuade me to buy *Another Perfect Day*, the first album Motorhead recorded after Fast Eddie Clarke left. Clarke quit during a tour, so they needed to recruit a hired gun that could come in, learn songs, and get acclimated fast. They chose former Thin Lizzy axe man Brian Robertson.

Robertson took the gig even though he’d admitted in print that he hated Motorhead’s music. In the liner notes to *Another Perfect Day*’s two-disc reissue on Sanctuary, a Robertson quotation from back at the time he joined the group is reprinted. “I hate Motorhead,” Robertson said at the time. “But I respect them for playing shit for so many years, and making money at it. And they’re original.” Sure, it sounds like a recipe for utter disaster, but it wasn’t a complete debacle.

Another Perfect Day doesn’t represent a radical departure from the Motorhead sound because Lemmy was still writing the songs and calling the shots, however there’s no denying it’s different. Robertson obviously believed it was up to him, and his advanced skills and musicianship, to elevate Motorhead, make them “respectable.” He proved to be an ill fit for the band in many ways. While Fast Eddie’s



Motorhead: Olivia Newton-John



aggressive style of playing produced riffs that stabbed and slashed through the thick foundation laid down by the rhythm section, Robertson’s guitar seemed to dance around the bass lines, and float high above the drums.

It’s true that Robertson added a new dimension to Motorhead’s music, but at times it didn’t advance the band’s agenda as much as it cluttered things up. His playing often brought out and accentuated the melodic core of Lemmy’s songs, but just as frequently his guitar tone was dangerously close to Boston, or some other cheesy arena rock act. And his irresistible urge to overplay could turn a promising track tedious. Robertson’s tenure in Motorhead didn’t make it past one album.

Fed up with ego battles and tantrums, Lemmy decided Robertson’s successor would be someone who was completely unknown. Motorhead turned into a quartet with the hiring of Phil Campbell and Wurzel. It proved to be the best decision for the band, and quite possibly an essential step in ensuring its longevity. The only recording I’ve heard from the period when Motorhead was a four-piece is *Rock ‘N’ Roll*, and it attests to the positive impact the hiring of Campbell and Wurzel had.

On *Rock ‘N’ Roll* Motorhead sounds like a band again, all on the same page, focused and determined. The raw, almost live sound of the tracks harkens back to *Overkill*; in fact “Stone Deaf In The USA” is a not too distant relative of “(I Won’t) Pay Your Price.” Unfortunately, *Rock ‘N’ Roll* also contains some of Lemmy’s most inexcusably stupid lyrics on “Eat The Rich” and “Boogeyman,” and includes a power ballad “All For You.” Hey, it was 1987 and Motorhead was considered a metal band, they had to give it a shot, right? So, upon further investigation, I’m still convinced that there was something special about the chemistry between Lemmy, Taylor, and Clarke, that couldn’t be revived with any other line-up, and I stand by my original recommendation: stick with *Overkill*, *Bomber*, and *Ace Of Spades*.



TO CATCH A FALLING STAR: Perry Como (1913-2001)

Wit duly sharpened and tongue even deeper within cheek than usual, I treated the news exactly five years ago of Perry Como's passing as little more than an excuse for some more big fun-but-informative Pigshit. Very literally speaking, of course.

Yet exactly as when polling pals-o-mine regarding Pat Boone and that Rock and Roll [sic!] Hall of Fame awhile back [for Roctober # 28, for those keeping count], I was somewhat taken arrears by the vast amount of overwhelmingly heartfelt—and uniformly quite positive—views and remembrances of Perry from both fans and peers alike. You just can't judge a crooner by its cardigan, as I guess the saying might still go.

So, in answer to that age-old musical question "What have you got to say about Como?" here's what a bunch of my virtual pals had to say on that dark, dark day in 2001...

Como was way cool. Always. In my book, the novelty songs gave him the edge, though it's said his legacy is forever tarnished because "he'd record anything anybody shoved in front of him." But us Fifties kids actually really dug the silly "Papa Loves Mambo"s, "Catch A Falling Star"s, "Hot Diggity"s and "Juke Box Baby"s. His TV show was seminal. He somehow stood out from all the other crooners, methinks. Rest in Peace, Per, and don't let the stars get in your eyes ...pere ubu."

—R. Stevie Moore, *perhaps the only person ever to work with both Kramer and Como*

My only thoughts: Perry Como and Eddy Arnold were both important in balancing the artsy crooning of Bing and Frank with a more manly chart presence. Just as David Bowie needed Slade and Chuck Berry had to answer to Pat Boone, Como provided a populist setting for the perpetuation of many great songs. Plus, Como didn't go on to host a smarmy talk show, and he had the funniest line when Bob Hope did a great *Star Wars* parody during one of his NBC specials. A fat woman was playing an alien, and it was scripted for her to break character and run over to Como as a big fan. "Hug me," she screamed. In response, Como sang, "It's impossible..." He couldn't keep a straight face, either.

—J.R. Taylor, New York Press

Unlike most adult contemptuous crooners afraid for their careers with the advent of Elvis, the Perryman embraced rock by having the Everlys and Fats Domino on his show, even though Mr. Saturday's idea of "rip it up" usually involved a packet of Ovaltine. Even though Como released records with kiddie names like "Hot Diggity" he resisted the urge to rip it up until 1961, when he released "You're Following Me," written by Burt Bacaharch, the same man who scribed "Magic Moments." With no Top 20 appearances since the "Magic Moments" era, Como decided to embrace the new rockin' sounds. Someone must've put something particularly strong in Como's Ovaltine that session, causing him to sign off on uncommonly loud bass, drums, Scotty Moore-ish guitar leads and maniacal "sha da da"s from background singers who sound like they were hijacked at gunpoint from a Bobby Rydell record. While the authoritative finger snaps that open the song might make the Jets and Sharks jump into rumble stance, having Mr. C. make like the Fonz with lines like "When I've got the time I'll slip you a kiss" must've had the kids doubling over with laughter. Still, it is a lot more rocking than the substandard material Como's labelmate Elvis was releasing with frightening regularity by this time. After that, he gave himself fully to somnambulists and sweater wearers everywhere. He'll be missed, when we realize there'll be no Christmas specials from Serbia.

—Serene Dominic, *Phoenix New Times*

He lived to be 88 and seemed a pretty centered guy, so good on him. Seems like it all worked out.

—Adam Marsland, *currently touring with Evie Sands and/or Al Jardine*

Well, part of the tragedy of guys like Como is that his brand of good, tuneful, light pop ("Magic Moments," "Round And Round," "Catch A Falling Star"—even 1970's sunny "Seattle") is all forgotten and dissed, simply because it wasn't "rockenroll." Yeah, we all dig rockstuff, but this behemoth/juggernaut—composed of music, marketing, and a whole cultural aesthetic—has an uncomfortably fascistic bent: i.e., it mows down everything else. So, Como's (admittedly modest but surely pleasant) accomplishments are lost to future generations, as are Herb Alpert's TJB, Jack Jones, Pet Clark's post-"Downtown" stuff, Mancini's Top 40 hits, et. al.

—Gene Sculatti, *Lost in the Grooves of the Catalog of Cool*

I have some thoughts about his death: I *thought* he had already died some time ago. I *thought* his song "Round And Round" wasn't as good as my song of the same title. I *thought* the law and the law won. Actually, in truth, Perry Como once gave my father a monogrammed money clip (my father worked on Perry's old television show...not his 1980's show "Perrysomething.")

—Michael Lynch, *Fufkin.com*

It's impossible
ask a baby not to fly
a life without Perry Como?
Now whose schedule will Mick Jagger look at to
see if he is too old to tour?

—Peter Noone, the artist formerly known as
Herman

I was reading a Brian Wilson interview a couple
of years back and when asked what he'd been
listening to, Perry Como was one of the "easy
listening" singers he listed. The next time I
came upon a Como album in the dollar bin, I
snatched it just to check it out (remembering
very little of his records...just the TV specials).
He was a fine crooner—no match for Sinatra,
Bennett, Nat King Cole *etc.* — a "pleasant
sound" was what many wanted and that's what
he had! I can't predict if his voice and those
arrangements will cross many more
generations as I think the others I just
mentioned will.

—Bill Lloyd, *Set to Pop as always*

It is with great sadness that I heard of the
passing of Perry Como. How many of us
remember those Christmas Eve get togethers at
Mom's, sharing those old family anecdotes,
sneaking shots from the already watered down
bottle of Five Star, Mr. Relaxation crooning "Good King
Wenceslas" in the background. Actually I have not one,
but TWO Perry Como stories: A good friend of mine
who was then known as Little Brucie Griffin was actually
booked to be on the Perry Como Show at the age of four.
His shtick was singing and playing the harmonica in
blackface. Also my idol, jazz singer Jimmy Scott, a
seventy five year old negro dwarf who sounds like Billie
Holiday, told me that Perry Como was his favorite
vocalist. He may or may not have been joking, it was
hard to tell.

—Ted Hawkins, *noted Canadian*

I am old enough to have loathed Perry Como. The Anti-
Elvis, no less. In addition, it always struck me that
catching a falling star was a good way to set fire to your
cardigan.

—Deviant Mick Farren

Here's my thought: Not to take anything away from the
man's talent, but the death of Perry Como brings to
mind an era when someone could build a career out of
projecting an image of amiability. In our time, in a
culture dominated by images of phony rock "rebellion"
and idealized rap "thuggery," this would be pretty hard
to carry off. Factoid #1: Perry Como received the first
gold record at a time when one had to sell 1 million (not
the 500 thousand you have to sell now). Factoid #2: I
know the guy who wrote the Como hit "Round And
Round." It's the same guy, Lou Stallman, who wrote the
Yankees theme song. (I'm a Met fan myself, though.)



Comical take #1: Because of Perry Como, I wasted years
trying to "Catch A Falling Star" and put in my pocket. I
could never do it. Comical take #2: Como started the
Latin explosion with his hit, "Papa Loves Mambo." Dig
that subtly-veiled eroticism. Now that's what we call
"Como-sexuality."

—Eytan Mirsky, *original American Splendor*

Perry Como was one of the few singers who had nothing
to prove with his voice. Every once in a while he'd let
loose just to prove he could do it, but most of the time he
just did his job: he quietly, comfortably hit the notes
and sang the melody. No fuss, no affect, no attitude, no
problem. Other pop singers with that quality are few
and far between (Rick Nelson comes to mind) and it is
much easier to point out the anti-Perrys on the scene
(Michael Bolton probably being the Prince of anti-
Perrys). Anybody who needs a lesson on how to get
there (wherever there is) with a minimum of fuss just
needs to listen to Perry sing "Round And Round." All
you need to know about life is in there. I'd have to say
that of all the singers my parents listened to, Perry Como
probably had more to do with the way I sing than just
about anybody.

—Shane Faubert, *whose Cheepskates actually recorded
an entire EP's worth of Comosongs a decade and a half
ago*

Among my earliest musical memories are hearing Perry
Como singing "Round And Round" and "Hot Diggity" on
the monophonic AM radio in my parent's '57 Plymouth.

I loved those songs, because to my impressionable adolescent mind they sounded exciting. When I discovered Top 40 rock in the early 60s, I tossed aside Como as hopelessly uncool—my parents' music. But around the time I began broadcasting at WFMU in 1975, I encountered Mr. C's Greatest Hits in a used LP bin, and was sufficiently over my (then) prog-rock snobbery to recognize that the guy had style, class, charisma, and a soothing way with a song. I'll take him over Sinatra or Tony Bennett any day.

—*Irwin Chusid, singing Songs in the Key of Z*

Como made musical history with the outspoken December 1945 political single, "Dig You Later," which commemorated the Allied victory in World War II with no small amount of bravado. He also championed the crossover of country music into mainstream acceptance with his December 1952 cover of Slim Willet's "Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes" and by being one of the first television hosts to spotlight Hank Williams Sr, who appeared on Como's long-running (1948-1963) variety show in 1951.

—*Mike McDowell, Blitz Magazine*

Other things about the Son Of The Barber: His fans are many and from all walks of life. The late Flip Wilson loved Como. So does country singer Don Williams. Sinatra didn't understand his appeal, but Crosby did and was flat out jealous. Dean Martin knew he could sing rings around Como, but that such a stunt would make him look bad. There would be no Andy Williams without Como's influence. Of course, Pat Boone's favorite singer of all-time is Perry Como, which speaks volumes without actually saying anything. My wife loved watching Como on the tube when she was a child, and that seems to be where (despite several dozen hit records) he made his greatest mark. Less an icon than a popular artist, he wore well on TV, like a sleepy uncle who had to be begged to sing a ditty or tell a joke. I'll never forget his on-air interview with Carl Perkins, at the time fresh off the accident that allowed Elvis to take the Rock'n'Roll throne unopposed. An obviously contemptuous Como noted the sales of "Blue Suede Shoes" (two million), to which a grinning Perkins replied, "Yes, Perry, it's made me very happy." Deliberately looking away from the grinning rockabilly titan, Como muttered smoothly, "Yes, I suppose that would make you very happy, Carl." Then he intro'd the song and ran off stage as fast as possible. Como lasted longer than Perkins, yet is not as revered today. There is no Perry Como revival. He was just another singer, while Perkins was at the forefront of a revolution. Would Perkins have liked to have changed places with Como? You bet. So would most anyone in rock at the time. He was a huge star, much loved, and bankable as all get out. Perry Como knew that a pleasing personality would make you more money than would all the fireworks and artistic pretensions in the world. A final word: "Como" is Spanish for "what?"

—*Ken Burke, still continuing on the Saga of Dr. Iguana*

Ya know, I remember going to a Perry Como concert all the way back in 1976, and getting in very early as the roadies were setting up. A Disney truck was backed in and, even though I was almost a hundred feet away, I swear I saw them roll Perry out on a dolly and stand him up at the front of the stage. I watched that thing for a good fifteen minutes and it never moved. Later, during the show, Perry was in that spot in that position and he never moved a muscle. Only difference was someone had put a prop mike in his hands. So you see, Perry Como has actually been dead for many decades now. All that's happened recently is Disney cut back another program and Perry got caught up in the numbers game. I know we've lost a crooner here in the real world, but we've gained another cutthroat in the Pirates Of The Caribbean. Rust in peace, Perry.¹

—*D.J. Johnson, Cosmik Debris Magazine*

I talked to my grandparents on Mother's Day and the subject came up. They said, "Nobody ever had anything bad to say about Perry Como" (as opposed to many of today's stars). Of course, my grandfather related that he wasn't thrilled when he had to wake up at 5 AM one Saturday morning to take my aunt to the airport to see Perry off on a tour.

—*Blair Buscareno, Teen Scene Magazine*

How could you not like him? I mean, what was there to possibly piss anyone off?

—*Chris Butler, singing Waitress*

Exactly, Chris. See you later then, Perry, and thanks for the pop.

—*Gary Pig Gold, somewhere in the Heights of Jersey City USA, 2006*



¹ Which reminds me of SCTV's brilliant parody Perry Como's Still Alive Tour—Ed.

Vladmir Lenin's



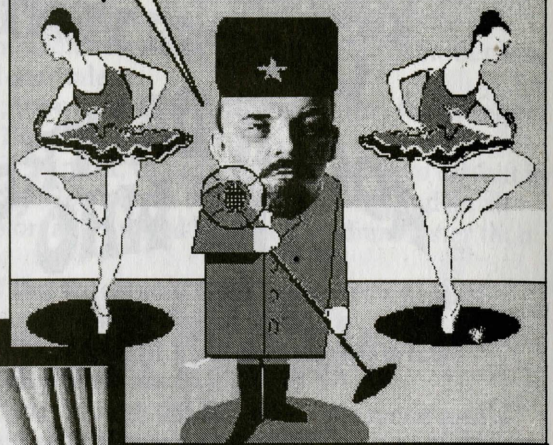
The Aristocrats

THE PEOPLE'S OPEN MIC NIGHT

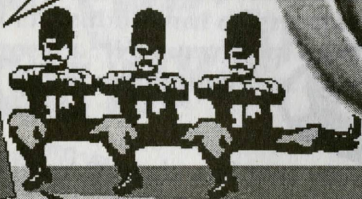
So a guy walks into a talent agent's office and says, "Man, have I got an act for you!"



The czar's daughters and the czarina come on stage, adorned in excessive jewelry, are debased in front of the czar and then shot by a firing squad.



Then the bourgeoisie professors are forced to read their own ponderously obtuse works, hence suffering like their students did before them.



Then the professors are debased and shot.

After that the idle rich are forced to do hard manual labor on collective farms under one of my five-year plans...and then they are debased and shot.

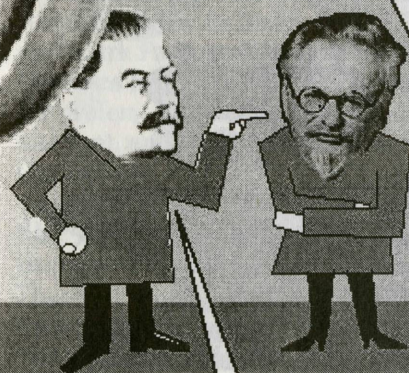


Heh heh heh



Ha!

For a finale, I dance on the graves of the ruling class, embodying the plight of the worker, of course. And then the talent agent says, "So what do you call the act?"



No, Trotsky, I'm on next!



CLAP! CLAP!
CLAP! CLAP!

The Aristocrats!



ROCK N' ROLL FANTASY CAMP

LIVE THE FANTASY! - JAM WITH THE STARS!

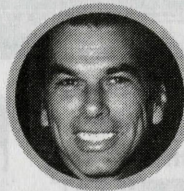
ROGER DALTRY
OF **THE WHO**



MICKEY HART
OF THE

GRATEFUL DEAD

MICKEY THOMAS
OF
JEFFERSON STARSHIP



CHEAP TRICK

NEAL SCHON
OF **JOURNEY**

DICKEY BETTS
OF THE

ALLMAN BROTHERS



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"I just returned from the greatest week of my life! The roster of legendary artists that coached, schooled and entertained us was incredible."

— Barry Rosenbaum, Camper

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- Small group instruction from celebrity rock 'n roll musicians
- Daily jam sessions with your band and rock star counselor
- Daily meals with celebrity musicians and campers
- Professional recording studio and rehearsal space
- 10+ hours of jamming daily
- Photograph and autograph opportunities
- A professional DVD of you jamming with the stars at House of Blues
- No experience necessary - All musical levels are welcome

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- The New York Times
- The History Channel
- Playboy Magazine
- CBS Morning News
- The Simpsons
- The Tonight Show
- The Today Show
- The Wall Street Journal
- People Magazine

COUNSELORS INCLUDE:

- Jack Blades, Night Ranger, Camp Director
- Gary Burr, Carol King Band/American Idol (Songwriter)
- Kelly Keagy, Night Ranger (Drums)
- Vince Melamed, Jimmy Buffet/ Eagles, (Keyboards)
- Michael Lardie, Great White, (Keyboards, Guitar)
- Simon Kirke, Bad Company, (Drums)
- Jerry Rennino, The Monkees, (Bass)
- Bruce Kulick, Kiss (Guitar)
- Jeff Pilson, Dokken, (Bass)



STAY TUNED...

Sunday, October 16, 2005 • 8:00pm-10:00pm, 11:00pm-1:00am
Thursday, October 20, 2005 • 8:00pm-10:00pm, 11:00pm-1:00am
Saturday, October 22, 2005 • 3:00pm-5:00pm
for the airing of the Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp
2 hour special on the Learning Channel



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**Hello, Mudduh,
Hello, Fadduh,
Here I Am at
Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp
Playing "Roundabout"
with Jon Anderson!**

Despite having troops in battle around the globe and various other ailments, life is pretty good for us Yanks. In fact, for some people, the prime dilemma is, How the hell am I going to spend this money? I've got a Hummer. I'm spending as much money as they'll allow me on my cell phone/cable tv/internet package. I've got floor seats for the Lakers. Last year I went snorkeling in New Zealand and yet I'm still bored! The "haves" are burdened with an itch they just can't seem to scratch.

Enter the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. An entertainment endeavor that offers more than its name suggests. We caught up with Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp employee, Ben Sturgis, to get the lowdown.

Go Metric: You are Ben Sturgis and you work for...

Ben Sturgis: The Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp, which is five days of people paying in the neighborhood of \$8,000-\$9,000 to learn from, perform next to rock stars. At the same time meeting and learning from even larger rock stars. In the past there's been Roger Daltry, Sheila E., Brett Michaels (Poison), Vince Neil (Motley Crue), George Thorogood, Marky Ramone, Leslie West (Mountain)...

And a former member of Kiss, too, right?

Bruce Kulick, as a normal counselor. And at one of the upcoming camps, Paul Stanley, that is not yet announced to the public. He's coming for L.A. Joe Walsh will be coming for L.A. Jack Bruce will be coming for London. Jon Anderson of Yes will performing in New York in August along with Dickie Betts (The Allman Brothers) and Mark Farner of Grand Funk Railroad.

Or does he prefer Grand Funk?

He prefers, due to a legal dispute, Mark Farner, in one size font, and then I believe 50% of that font, "formerly of Grand Funk Railroad." That's what he prefers.

At one point in that list of rock stars it sounded like you made a distinction among the stars, like there are different tiers among counselors.

There are what we like to call the rock star counselors and then our all-star talent. Those are the two designations. The all-star talent is the likes of a Roger Daltry, of a Dickie Betts, of a Joe Walsh. And then your counselors are guys who have been in bands with years of experience and platinum records under their belts, but not as big,

like a Kip Winger, a Mark Slaughter, a Jack Blades of Damn Yankees and Night Ranger.

Who was credited at one point as "head counselor."

You're touching on a very touchy subject that we need to avoid for right now. His status is up in the air. He will not be the head counselor for New York. We've also had counselors like Doug Fieger from the Knack, bands with platinum selling albums but not necessarily in the mainstream's consciousness right now. Mark Farner has acted as all-star talent...

I'm sorry, would that be Mark Farner, formerly of Grand Funk Railroad?"

Correct, only in print, though, you don't have to do that in conversation. He's been a regular counselor and an all-star counselor, and he sold out Shea Stadium faster than the Beatles.

As part of the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp?!

No, no, as part of Grand Funk Railroad.

So for my eight grand I get five days. What happens during those five days?

Let me run you through the schedule. Everyone meets the first afternoon. There's a meet and greet and an audition process. In advance you get a song list of what songs you should perform, it's like a 20-30 song list, and you say, I'm going to do one of these three songs and we group you with other people. We also try to do it so that the counselors have something to do with it. We'll call up numbers one, two, and three, which will be a singer, guitarist, and bass player and Simon Kirke (drummer, Bad Company) will already be up on stage and you'll be playing "All Right Now" with Simon Kirke.

And this is the first day?

Yes. So after everyone auditions the counselors get together and they decide how to put bands together. So the Simon Kirke's and the Bruce Kulick's are saying, I'm going to take girl #67, she was great, and I'll take drummer guy #32.

Almost like a draft.

It's a draft, and we want it to be fair so no one has an unfair advantage. After that, there's a lunch and you break up into your studios and start rehearsing. Then there's an opening night party. For New York City, it will be at The Guitar Center on 14th Street, that will be closed to the public. An all-star talent guy will come through. Tentatively scheduled is Max Weinberg. He'll come in. He'll meet and greet. He'll take pictures and give autographs. You can play with anything in the store. He'll do a little drum clinic. We call them master classes.

Does everyone attend a master class like that, guitarists, bassists, and drummers?

That one, since everyone is a captive audience, yes. But then usually if you're a guitarist you go to the guitarist master class. Like a Mark Farner. Or, like the last camp in L.A., we did two different drum classes. One with Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead—there were 250 people in the audience and everyone got a drum on their seat so you were drumming along with what he was doing on hand drums and it was this whole big rhythmic thing—and one with Bun E. Carlos of Cheap Trick. What he did with his master class was showed you his influences, told you a little bit about his life in general, what shows he was

going to—waiting on line to see Hendrix and what he took from that. And when they did their big song, “Surrender,” he showed the two different drumbeats he took aspects from and then put them together so you saw how the “Surrender” drumbeat really meshed.

I know people who would soil their jeans to hang out with Bun E. Carlos.

I’ll be honest, it’s really good. It’s highly entertaining. So that’s day one and a little bit of day two. Day two your goal is to decide what two songs you’re going to do for your final night as your band, get your band name, and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. That’s where your counselors are really working. They’re making sure you’re playing together, seeing what’s wrong, getting everyone to play in harmony, who’s going to play what part, vocals, backing vocals, etc.

How many people are typically in a group?

The goal is to have seven or eight, sometimes there’s more. In L.A. we had two drummers per band. In New York we’re going to change it so there’s one drummer, which I feel is better. When there were two drummers, some of the drummers like that better because there are different skills levels and someone who’s a bit more of an amateur likes the crutch of playing with someone who’s been playing for 10, 15, 20 years. A lot of our campers have years of experience. They’re not just rich guys who don’t know how to play.

And they’re referred to as “campers”?

Yes. Days three and four are very similar but there are different evening activities. Dinners, master classes, and you have your all-star talent coming through critiquing the bands. Meet and greets, as well. And sometimes they perform. In February, Cheap Trick, for the first time in their career, did an all-acoustic set for the camp.

Where was that?

The showroom at SRI Studios that has seating for about 300, like an auditorium. You get bonuses like that. Or lectures. Lisa Loeb came through as a surprise and did a 30-minute lecture about her life, music, the industry in general. Mickey Thomas from Starship did one. This time Levon Helm from the Band will do one. We’re also adding something this time: you need to write a song with your band. The final night there’s always a big blowout at a club. In L.A., that’s House of Blues; in New York, it’s B.B. Kings. You will perform in a battle of the bands before a paying audience, usually made up of friends and family. But the night before we’re offering at Sirius satellite studios another battle of the bands, which is the original song contest. Every band will write an original song and it will be broadcast over Sirius satellite. We’re trying to get in line those recordings so that campers have a cd to take home. Not a cd-r, a pressed cd. There have been original song contests before, but they weren’t mandatory.

How does that go over? I imagine that a lot of the campers see themselves as writers too, so I’d guess that a lot of them have a song they want the band to play.

That happens within the studios themselves and how does that happen in any band? That’s up to the bands themselves. I don’t know if the counselors have so much of a say. What we’ve discovered is that these people, like

a real band, form these bonds from being in the studio together for five solid days, practicing and playing 8-10 hours a day, that you just become friends and these relationships build. They comfortable enough to criticize (the songs) because they know it’s not malicious.

So then they are also exposed to band dynamics.

A lot of these people come for the rock stars but what they end up saying is that the studio time is the best part of it because they get to meet and interact with these other people who have this strong passion for music. A lot of them stay in touch. Sometimes have gotten together and started bands.

What comes to my mind, and I don’t intend to sound cynical, but are these people unaware of classified ads and open mic nights and other ways to meet other musicians without spending thousands of dollars. How would you profile the typical camper because it sounds like these are not people who are picking up an instrument for the first time.

There are some people picking up an instrument for the first time or don’t know how to play anything. We have rules for them, too. You can sing back up, play tambourine. And there are people who are proficient with their instrument but have only been playing in their basement for 20-30 years, so as good as you are you don’t have the confidence to go out to an open mic night by yourself or to put out a classified. Or it’s been years since you played in a band. I think it gives people the confidence. You are performing on stage with hundreds of people watching. It shows them that band dynamic. And they might take one of their band members with them to start something new. And that’s easier to do than to do something on your own.

What’s the average age of a camper?

I think the average age is early 40s. That said this upcoming camp we have a bunch of teenagers.

So I’m guessing most of the campers came of age in the 60s or 70s, which is reflected in the counselors.

For the most part it is affluent professionals because it is a luxury item. It is a little more classic rock oriented, which is problematic because it skews older and the idea is to get younger talent, either as counselors or as all-star talent, so we can skew to the 25 or 26-year-old.

Are there any particular people you’ve reached out to?

I know Dave Grohl has turned the camp down. Jack Black has said maybe but not yet. The drummer from System of a Down has said yes.

It figures a drummer would cross the line first.

Are people signing up ever asked for a demo tape or a sample recording?

No. Musical experience is not required.

If I’ve never played guitar before would I be playing guitar at B.B. Kings five days later?

Because guitar is the most popular instrument you will probably, maybe, be a fourth guitarist in that band. Who’s going to be proficient after five days? But you might strum a chord, maybe a pick slide. It’s up to your band and your counselor.

At the final performance, is it a collection of other groups from the camp? Is there an all-star headliner? How does that work?

There is not a specific name headliner, but after the battle of the bands—every band plays two songs, a winner is announced partly based on crowd reaction but mostly on celebrity judges. And sometimes celebrities come out, too. The last one Prince came out. Juaquin Phoenix came out a week before the Oscars, just to hang out and watch. Unpaid, on their own. I wasn't there but from what I understand Prince had two body guards and velvet ropes around him in the balcony. I've not seen pictures.

Do they attach a big name band to the final show, like a Grand Funk reunion?

There's not a Grand Funk reunion, but some of the all-star talent comes out with every band and does a verse, does a chorus. Then all of the counselors and some of the all-star talent get together and they do a set of hits. They do a set of 35-40 minutes. Maybe an hour.

The whole thing sounds like baseball fantasy camps.

This whole thing was started in '97 and then was repeated in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006. It's around the same time as when baseball and hockey fantasy camps started. What we like to say is that if you go to a baseball fantasy camp you've got 300-pound guys who can't run the bases any more, barely hit the ball out of the infield, that you're paying for. Meanwhile, our rock stars are selling out arenas and are the hottest touring acts. They're very relevant, as opposed to being over the hill. It's the only fantasy camp that gives you that.

I'll grant you that the musicians are more capable, but are they more relevant? Are people scaling the walls to see Bruce Kulick perform?

I agree, no offense to Bruce Kulick, who is a wonderful man. But Journey. Neil Schon was at the last camp in L.A., and Journey/Def Leppard is the hottest tour this summer. They had 40 dates, sold them all out and did an additional 40. The Who are getting together to do a new record and are looking to go out on tour next year.

How does David Fishoff, who is the producer, get in touch with these musicians?

David's been in the industry for over 20 years. He got the Monkees to reunite and did their tour in '86. Before that he was a sports agent with such athletes as Lou Pinella, Phil Simms, Marc Bavaro, and Vince Feragammo. Anyway, David hooked up with the Monkees. Their tour was very successful and he started delving into music instead of sports. He did the "Happy Together" tours. He was primarily a tour manager, instead of a band manager. It was his idea to do a Ringo Starr and the All-Stars band. He also did a *Dirty Dancing* tour across the world that was very lucrative.

He'll pay for that in the afterlife.

American Gladiators tour. He did quite a few shows.

And they just keep getting worse.

They do seem like they're going down but they do very well from a financial standpoint. He did the British Rock Symphony, which was getting big stars, like Roger Daltry, together with a full orchestra and have that go out on tour. And after awhile he was just managing Ringo's tours and he had this idea to do the Rock and Roll

Fantasy Camp back in the mid-90s. Then with Clear Channel buying up all these different venues all over the country, it killed the touring business because a lot of these smaller acts weren't being promoted. And a lot of these smaller acts, like a Great White or a Night Ranger or a Slaughter couldn't work as much as they did in the past because one big company was handling everything. These guys needed jobs and David put an olive branch out to them and said, You can be counselors at the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. You can work a little and get your name out there.

So how did this guy go from managing Phil Simms to putting together a Monkees tour?

I believe that he had an office in the same building as MTV and the Monkees were coming in (to MTV) and he met them.

Because MTV was airing the old Monkees tv show?

I guess so. He spoke to them in elevator and in the hall and they got talking and he went to MTV. He brokered a deal with them and made a lot of money on that '86 tour. Right place, right time.

Fascinating. Do you have any other anecdotes to share?

(Pauses) Do you want to know what the future holds?

Sure.

The idea is to bring this on tour for 40 cities. Forty, one-day camps. Sell it to corporate America as team building exercises. But, get this, you would be the opening act for a major tour. Maybe it would be a Poison or a Journey.

I would love for my wife to come back from a work-related conference and tell me that she played with Chicago. Last question: who would be the counselors and all-star talent for your Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. Not Ben Sturgis, employee, but Ben Sturgis, rock and roll fan.

Money's no issue.

Alive or dead?

Let's make it as realistic as possible and say only people who are still alive.

I'm such a classical fan that it's going to be difficult.

Who would you want to spend a week hanging out with?

I would love Pete Townsend to be an all-star counselor. I would love to have a Blake Schwarzenbach (Jawbreaker/Jets to Brazil). I think he would have a lot of interesting stories from the standpoint of being on a smaller label to getting to a major label, not succeeding, going back and starting another band on his own. That to me is more interesting than just someone who's made a lot of money. But also Green Day, the antithesis of that, who did make a lot of money. Billie Joe Armstrong. Tre Cool. Even Mike Dirnt would be awesome. All of Green Day would be pretty great, in terms of their musicianship. Songwriting, Dr. Frank and maybe Ben Weasel. It would be cool to hang out with the guys from NOFX to see what they would have to say. I'd throw in Paddy from Dillinger 4 and Kevin Apter (The Apters) to teach stage presence and comedy. From a business point of view I'd be curious to see what Brett Gurewitz (Epitaph Records) and Jay-Z (Roc-a-Fella Records) would have to say.

Brian and Mike's Rejected Idea File: Volume One 1977-2006

Together we have written nearly 7000 stories, essays, and restaurant reviews. We have also pitched ideas for films, comics, and band reunions. We have a reputation for success along with a reputation for being difficult to work with. Hey, we are willing to admit when one of our unconventional concepts is the cause of an acrimonious split with a producer or director. But neither of us is reluctant to speak up when impossible working conditions force us off a great project. Like last spring when we had to walk away from a highly coveted opportunity, interviewing Sharon Stone's disgruntled and notoriously reclusive vagina for Rolling Stone. (The famed organ was upset about being left on the cutting room floor of Basic Instinct 2 and wanted to tell her side of the story.)

What follows is a collection of "can't miss" ideas that somehow failed to catch on commercially. Read on. Decide for yourself who erred.

— Brian and Mike

1. King Crimson Reunion with David Cross

When violinist David Cross is unable to resume his role in a reformed King Crimson, his role is taken by actor/comedian David Cross (no relation).

David Cross: You see these fuckin' trophy wives with their \$80,000 Lexus SUVs drivin' around with flags. You're like, Shut the fuck up! Stop it. You're just encouraging more bombing. Stop it. It doesn't mean anything to you. It's just a completely empty gesture. It's, like, what does that mean to you...

Greg Lake: (Sings) *To summon back the fire witch/In the court of the crimson...*

David Cross: Why the fuck are you interrupting me? And what the hell is a crimson king anyway? (Realizes he's still holding one of those all-plastic electric violins, which he then smashes on the ground) This music is depressing. And a mellotron, guys!?

Robert Fripp: I applaud your energy, David. It has revitalized the ensemble. If only I could unlearn what I know and tap into your primitivism. However, I must call into question your insistence on performing in short pants. And the Dead Kennedys t-shirt may be a tad too, shall we say, assertive.

2. Learning to Fly: The New Adventures of Bee-Girl

Wondering what happened to that adorable girl from that Blind Melon video? She seemed so darned carefree. Well no more sleepless nights, friend. Turns out she moved to the big city and became a television journalist. Also stars David Spade, David Schwimmer, David Ogden Stiers, and Candice Bergen as her gruff but loveable boss.

3. Up Late with Johnny Thunders

Johnny, standing center stage, ready to do the night's monologue. The band is playing "Johnny's Gonna Die." He greets the band leader, Jayne County.

Johnny: How are you tonight, Jayne?

Jayne: Ambiguous as always, Johnny.

Johnny: So, Jayne, did you hear how Dan Quayle did at the National Spelling Bee?

Jayne: No, Johnny, I didn't hear about that.

Johnny: Not only did he misspell "potato," but he spelled "heroin" "h-e-r-o-i-n-e."

4. Holy Toledo!

Rhea Perlman and Telma Hopkins are the wackiest nuns in a Cleveland orphanage. Also stars Danny Devito as crazy Father Dave, the folkly priest.

Rhea Perlman: (Dressed as a nun, clutches a ruler, and scolds a 6-year-old): One more word out of you and I'll send you to purgatory without your supper! (Laugh track)

5. Fishing the Great Lakes with Winona Ryder

Flea: (The Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist is sits in a row boat, nude. He has tied several dead flies around his penis, which is he is attempting to flip around wildly) Woo hoo!

Winona: Flea, that's not for lake fishing! That's for rivers! (Groans, then addresses audience) Stay tuned for Wilco!

6. The Doors: Reunited

In 1995 we thought it would be hilarious if a classic rock band, such as, say, the Doors, did a reunion tour with a completely inappropriate lead singer such as, say, the Cult's Ian Astbury. We thought it would be even better to have an equally inappropriate drummer such as, well, Stewart Copeland. What a terrible idea for a band!

(Note: We also tried to coax a number of bands into covering other bands' concept albums. Cheap Trick were supposed to start the series by performing Queensryche's Operation: Mindcrime I and II. Second in the series was the Cro-Mags covering Yes' Topographic Oceans.)

7. Rush Limbaugh's Middle Aged Terrestrial Patriot Squad

This was to be an animated series on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim. The title characters are irreverent, talking food condiments. Each week they battle their arch enemies, the FDA-endorsed Food Pyramid, and deliver a fresh, hip look at the neo-conservative agenda. Perfect for the late-night channel surfers who call themselves "Generation Y." Rush Limbaugh, not unlike Charley or Professor Xavier, guides and coaches the team, giving them their assignments.

Trickle Down Ted – a supply side spouting bottle of Tabasco sauce

Capital Gains Kenny – a loveable bottle of ketchup whose powers triple in strength every tax season

Pro Life Pete – a militant pepper shaker who's always willing to shake up things with his controversial views

Old Money Mustard – suspicious of those who made their money via the Internet, his family is rumored to have made have their money the old fashioned way: slave labor and diamond mines

Perry Paprika – the seldom seen Log Cabin Republican

We don't understand the idea either, but we do recall that we stopped having meetings with Adult Swim right around the time that we proposed a character named Salty Sal, a proponent of a flag burning amendment.

8. *Oh That Andy!*

Join Andy Dick's manager, Mel Smithe, as he explains the intricate steps he goes through in order to secure work for his nutty client. Viewers have a chance to see Dick make various auditions around Hollywood—boy, oh boy, does he rely on his patented rusty trombone routine!—and then Smithe turns on the charm and gets Andy the gig. It's like magic. A real behind the scenes look at the world of entertainment!

9. *End Game II*

It's a buddy cop film starring Russell Crowe and Samuel Beckett. Here's a scene to whet your whistle...

(Crowe and Beckett play good cop/bad cop while interrogating a suspect, played by Joe Pesci. They try to get Pesci to confess where he has hidden his kidnapping victim.)

The photo below may appear to be Cheap Trick circa Dream Police, but it is actually Rockford's finest delivering the backstory to Operation: Mindcrime II. Read from left to right, it's the way to the Inner Circle!

Crowe: (Holds Pesci by the shirt collar) I might rough you up a little bit, but if you don't talk I'm going to let my partner take over.

Pesci: Yeah? What'll he do?

Crowe: He'll stare at you, just stare at you and fill your maw with existential dread and make you wonder if we live in a universe governed by chance or an indifferent, absentee god. (Camera cuts to Beckett, expressionless, inexplicably sitting in a garbage can up to his neck.)

(Note: End Game II bears no relation to the failed 1978 pitch to Marvel Comics, *Silent But Deadly*, a superhero team comprised of Black Bolt, Marcel Marceau, Samuel Beckett, and Harpo Marx. In the team's debut they fight Midas in a story titled "Silence Is Golden.")

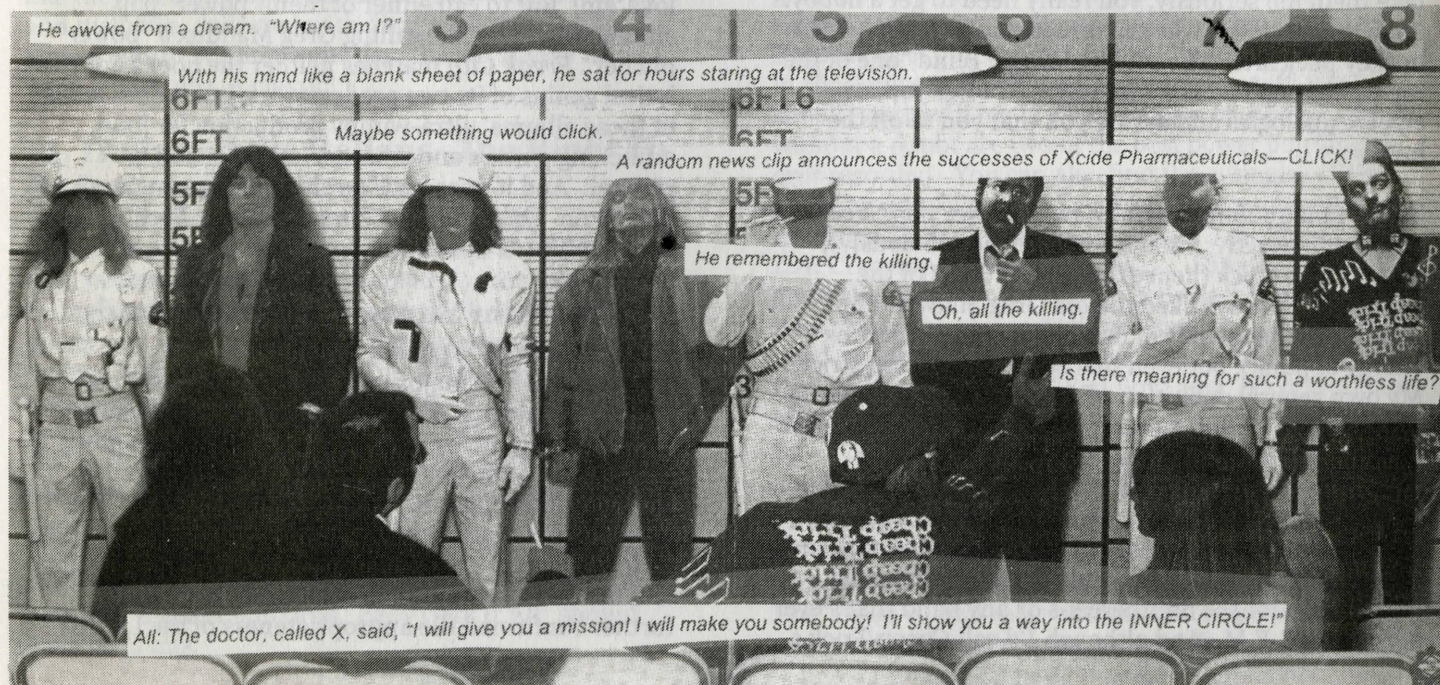
10. *Miss Congeniality's Weekend at the Mannequin's Department Store*

Sandra Bullock returns as Gracie Hart and goes undercover in a department store only to discover a mannequin that comes to life each night after closing. The duo enlist Bernie's corpse—who seems to be taking a *really* long time trying on a pair of Adidas—in order to search for the uranium supply that Al Queda has hidden in women's wear. Eighty minutes into the film they realize that Bernie is, in fact, dead.

Mannequin: Gracie, my god, he's...he's dead!

Sandra Bullock: (Raises her arms to the sky, ala *Star Trek II*, and releases her angst) O-saaaaaa-maaa!

(Note: Special appearance by Sophia Coppola as Mary Corleone, her character from *Godfather III*.)



20 Essential Power Pop LPs: Another of Josh Rutledge's Stupid Lists

The debate regarding what does and does not constitute "power pop" music rages on. The argument is not harmless. Noses have been broken, feelings have been hurt, friendships have been destroyed - all in the name of defining this controversial genre of rock music. Consider the marriage of Ken and Kendra Blaisdell of Winnebago, Minnesota, which was irreparably damaged by the wife's refusal to file her husband's copy of the Posies' *Frosting on the Beater* on the same shelf with her priceless Nerves single, and the subsequent evening he spent on the roof of their apartment building, threatening to jump. Although he didn't jump, he did move out of the house three days later, taking all his Badfinger albums with him.

But as far as the power pop wars are concerned, I'm out. There was a time, when I was younger and dumber, that I frequently voiced violent objections over wimpy college rock bands or slick modern rock groups referring to themselves as "power" pop. I even threw minor tantrums every time someone tried to slip a pop-punk band of the Descendents/All ilk into the power pop niche (as a result, there are at least four Burger King locations in southeastern Pennsylvania that no longer welcome my business). But today I'm reformed, mellowed-out by the wisdom of middle age and a new, low-caffeine approach to life. It took me only 35 years, but I figured it out: terms like "power pop" and "punk" are convenient for the purpose of marketing or reviewing musical recordings, but if you take them too seriously, you really need to get a hobby. So to that reviewer whom I threatened to maim with a hockey puck after he called Third Eye Blind "one of the top power pop bands of the 1990s," I offer you my sincere apologies and assure you that you're off the hook.

Today I take a more liberal view of power pop. I can't pinpoint it exactly, but it's gotta be pop (obviously), and it's gotta rock (hence the "power" part of the equation). I always liked the old Greg Shaw/Bomp! definition (the melody of 60s pop meets the driving energy of punk), but even that seems a little too strict. My own general definition of the style remains "Beatlesque pop with loud guitars," But I think Justice Potter Stewart said it best: "I shall not today attempt to further to define the kinds of material I understand to be power pop, but I know it when I hear it." I like Big Star but don't consider them power pop (the same goes for the million and a half bands that sound like Big Star). Ditto for the Smithereens or any band that's ever aped early R.E.M. And although I'd call Cheap Trick a

huge and primary influence on power pop music, I don't think they ever really made a power pop album (except for *Next Position, Please*, maybe). But I'm getting way off topic here, and I've barely begun this missive! The question is not really what power pop is, but rather what power pop albums you should buy. Assuming that you're relatively new to this genre but kinda dig it, and maybe you'd like to amass the ultimate collection of power pop LPs, where should you start? Well, why not begin with all the classics, and some of the "modern classics"? Here, then, is your guide to the 20 greatest power pop albums ever, in my very humble opinion.

.....

20. Pat Dull and his Media Whores - *Gimme the Whores (Break Up!, 1999)*

The term "power pop" was originally coined by Pete Townshend to describe the Who's fusion of melodic song-craft and earth-shaking, "loudest band in the world" rock energy. Pat Dull and His Media Whores, fronted by the head honcho of one of the great pop labels of the late 90s and featuring an arena-ready backing band, had the sound down pat: big, crushing guitars, monstrous classic rock drums, stick-in-your-head hooks, super-catchy melodies, and funny/clever lyrics about broken hearts and love-gone-bad. A few years back, Screaming Apple Records put out a Media Whores singles/rarities collection called *Master of Pop Hits*, and that's pretty fab. But for me, *Gimme The Whores* remains this band's most essential release. Can't do without "Lisa Sez"!

19. Material Issue - *Freak City Soundtrack (Polygram, 1994)*

Okay, the first two Material Issue albums are way better than this one. They may, in fact, be my two favorite pop albums of all-time. Love 'em, love 'em, love 'em! But to call either of them "power" pop albums would be like calling Greg Maddux a "power" pitcher. *Freak City* matches neither the hooks nor the lyrical genius of its two predecessors, but it does trade in those albums' ultra-wimpy production for loud, crunching guitars and a harder-edged sound in general. And it does have its share of amazing tracks, like "Goin' Through Your Purse," "Funny Feeling," and the beautiful "I Could Use You."

18. The Yum Yums - *Sweet As Candy (Screaming Apple, 1997)*

This was the first major incursion of the power pop sound into the 90s punk underground, a movement I was very grateful for. Norway, a country best known for ferocious, bad-ass rock n' roll, surprisingly produced this pleasant, sugary-sounding band. The sound was classic skinny tie power pop, updated with a crisp, Ramones-y crunch. Relaxed, moderate tempos and the clean, sunny vocals of Morten Henriksen further confirmed the appropriateness of the LP title.

No true pop lover could ever resist this record's swell mix of ultra-catchy originals ("Right Now," "Back To Rosie") and totally excellent covers (The Pointed Sticks' "Out of Luck," Jane Wiedlin's late 80s solo hit "Rush Hour").

17. The Decibels - *Create Action!* (G.I. Productions, 1998)

This Sacramento, California band, on the heels of the superb *Radio* EP, delivered the not-at-all disappointing *Create Action!* Mixing Beatles influenced pop with Rickenbacker/mod-rock sensibilities, the Decibels churned out one of the most refreshing and exciting American pop albums of the late 90s. Listen to "Alison" and "(So You're) In Love Again" - that's what The Oneders should have sounded like! Sadly, G.I. Productions went out of business not long after the album's release, and I don't think *Create Action!* was ever reissued. If you ever find it languishing in some used bin somewhere, by all means buy it!

16. The Checkers - *Make a Move* (Teenacide, 2003)

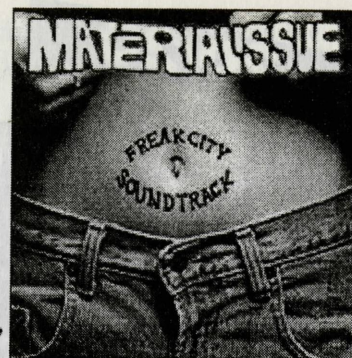
This is a perfect example of a "modern classic." L.A.'s Checkers, carrying on in the grand tradition of female-fronted power pop (Holly and the Italians, Josie Cotton), debuted with an album that would have bested the greatest hits packages of many bands from the skinny tie glory days. On vocals is noted rock photographer Julie Pavlowski. You should also check out the band's terrific new album *Running With Scissors*, also on Teenacide.

15. Psychotic Youth - *Stereoids* (Bomp!, 2000)

Frantic, fun, and insanely catchy, this collection from the should-have-been-legendary Swedes is the aural equivalent of a Jolt Cola Big Gulp. Great, great pop, like they used to play on the radio, chock full of hooks and melodies, delivered with dizzying gusto. If this album fails to brighten your day, there's simply no hope left for you. A classic!

14. Holly and the Italians - *The Right To Be Italian* (Virgin, 1981)

To call this album "influential" would be the understatement of the year. Along with the Nikki and the Corvettes LP, it set the template for the female-fronted punky pop sound. I can't think of any other power pop song in history better than the rousing opener "I Wanna Go Home" (one of the finest songs ever written about the United States of America—it still brings a tear to my eye). And "Tell That Girl To Shut Up" is absolutely legendary. Listening to this album, it's impossible not to identify Holly Beth Vincent as a major influence on subsequent generations of female punk/powerpop singers, her voice oozing don't-mess-with-me attitude and cool-girl sexuality. Lesser-known cuts like "Youth Coup" and "Baby Gets It All" should have been hits.



13. The Fevers - *Love Always Wins* (Alien Snatch, 2005)

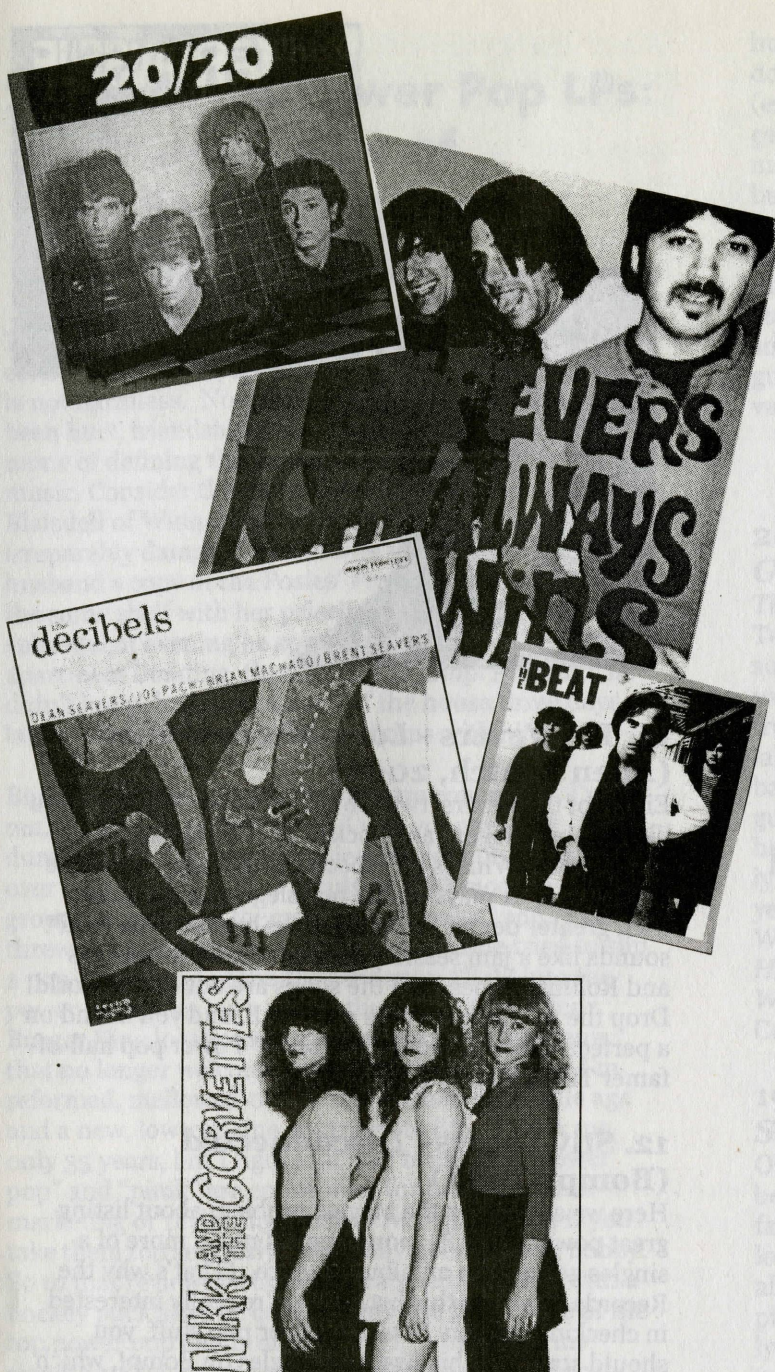
Either of the Fevers' two albums is worth owning if you like 60s bubblegum and rockin' pop, but last year's *Love Always Wins* is an especially necessary purchase in my book. It plays up the bubblegum angle to an even greater degree, but also rocks harder. The result sounds like a jam session between the Ohio Express and Rolling Stones, and the songs are out of this world! Drop the needle anywhere on Side B, and you'll land on a perfect, near-legendary pop song! Power pop hall-of-famer Travis Ramin is on drums.

12. Stiv Batours - *Disconnected* (Bomp!, 1980)

Here we encounter the biggest problem about listing great power pop LPs: power pop is much more of a singles genre than an albums genre. (That's why the Records aren't on this list.) If you're really interested in checking out Stiv Batours's power pop stuff, you should start with his first two singles on Bomp!, which without a doubt are two of the best power pop singles ever recorded. You can also find those singles ("It's Cold Outside"/"The Last Year" and "Circumstantial Evidence"/"Not That Way Anymore") on Stiv's *L.A. L.A.* CD compilation. But anyway... *Disconnected* is a great album in its own right, a little darker and more punky than the aforementioned singles, but still very much indebted to 60s pop and heavily influenced by the California lifestyle. "Evil Boy" and "Make Up Your Mind" are essential cuts.

11. The Plimsouls - self-titled LP (Planet, 1981)

Often cited as THE definitive power pop band, the Plimsouls were actually more musically complex (i.e., less "fluffy") than most of their contemporaries. The group mixed British Invasion pop influences with roots



rock and the burgeoning new wave sensibility, and to this blend they brought a soulfulness and musical texture that were often absent from the power pop recordings of the time. It was the immense talents of songwriter Peter Case that set the Plimsouls apart from their peers, and he shines on this legendary 1981 release. "Now," "Everyday Things," and "Zero Hour" are all classics of the genre.

10. Nikki and The Corvettes - self-titled LP (Bomp! Records, 1980)

The archetype for every great "girl band power pop album." Chock full of honey-dipped harmonies, racing riffs, and radio-friendly choruses, songs like "Back Seat Love," "I Wanna Be Your Girlfriend," and "Boys, Boys, Boys" jubilantly celebrate good times, young lust,

unrepentant fun, and teenage sex. The collaboration between studio mastermind Peter James and cutie-pie Detroit punk chick Nikki Corvette was a match made in rock n' roll heaven—the album's buoyant amalgamation of 60s girl group pop and feverish three-chord punk is still thrilling and remains the standard to which all bands of this ilk aspire. If you buy the 2000 CD reissue, you'll also get the brilliant 1977 single "You Make Me Crazy."

9. The Romantics - self-titled LP (Nemperor/Epic, 1980)

You all know the classic rock staple "What I Like About You." Of course, it's the best cut on the Romantics' debut LP. But there's lots more to love all throughout the record, especially the crashing opener "When I Look In Your Eyes," the sappy gem "Tell It To Carrie," and the raucously infectious "Girl Next Door." Of all the skinny tie era power pop LPs, this is the one with the rawest, most rocking feel: guitars blast, drums thump, and the production captures a no-frills garage rock energy. The matching red leather jackets looked snazzy and all, but these cats were Detroit rockers through and through!

8. Tina and the Total Babes - *She's So Tuff* (Sympathy for the Record Industry, 2001)

Bobbyteens singer Tina Luchessi was always a power pop fan. Through her label, Lipstick Records, she had released singles by the Fevers, Candygirl, and Bitchschool, and the Bobbyteens flirted seriously with a power pop direction on their outstanding 2000 album *Not So Sweet*. So it was no surprise to me when Luchessi hooked up with genius songwriter Travis Ramin (Candygirl, Nikki Corvette) and made *She's So Tuff*, a power pop album in the classic Holly and The Italian/Nikki and the Corvettes style. Spunky, sassy, sublimely-catchy numbers like "Tongue Tied," "Christy," and "Tragedy" made the album an instant classic. I wouldn't have expected anything less from such a collaboration of pop greats.

7. The Knack - *Get the Knack* (Capitol, 1979)

Critically derided and vilified by the punk crowd as the embodiment of corporate rock drivel, *Get the Knack* has been redeemed over time by one simple fact: it's a great album! So while wearing suits and aping the early Beatles (as well as the Kinks, Buddy Holly, and others) may have not seemed like such a novel idea 27 years ago, the group's songwriting was spot-on, and its melodies proved timeless. Laugh off "My Sharona" as a guilty pleasure if you wish. But "Good Girls Don't," "Oh Tara," and "That's What the Little Girls Do" are too good to be denied.

6. Exploding Hearts - *Guitar Romantic* (Screaming Apple Records, 2002/Dirtnap Records, 2003)

Sure, the Exploding Hearts were so much more than

"just" a power pop band. Music as good as theirs transcends genre, and I thus rate the Hearts as the greatest pop band *and* the greatest punk band of the oos. With a sound reminiscent of the best '77 punk, new wave power pop, and mod/R&B standard-bearers, and lyrics and vocals that probed the painful depths of post-adolescent heartbreak and love lost, the Hearts were truly something special. I'll assume that you all own this album already. And if not...WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!!!

5. The Cheeks - *Have Some Real Fun...* (Screaming Apple, 1997)

The Cheeks were twentysomething krauts who were clearly obsessed with new wave era power pop (the Beat, Romantics, the Knack, etc.) and the poppy mod-punk of the late 70s (the Jam, the Jolt, the Jags, etc.). So it's not hard to imagine what their debut album sounded like: sweet, punchy power pop infused with mod-ish energy & power. Do the words PERFECT POP ring a bell? Every song is a "hit" replete with super-catchy choruses, mega-memorable melodies, and crunchy Rickenbacker guitars. The very "punk rock" choices in cover songs (The Modernettes' masterpiece "Confidential" and The Carpettes' obscure classic "Nothing Ever Changes") demonstrated exactly where the band was coming from. Sadly, this LP is way, way, way out of print and nearly impossible to find. Thus I'm probably a big jerk for recommending it. Oh well. This one's worth hunting down. SOMEONE PLEASE REISSUE THIS ALBUM. PLEASE!

4. Candy - *Whatever Happened to Fun* (Mercury/Polygram, 1985)

Few are aware of this album's existence, and even fewer know of its utter brilliance. *Glitzine's* Sandi Shanyin calls it "the greatest album of pop/rock ever released," and I doubt she's exaggerating her feelings. Not many power pop fans would have thought to buy this album (it was released in the earliest stages of Sunset Strip heavy metal mania, and these big-haired guys definitely looked the part), but those who did must have been pleasantly surprised. *Whatever Happened to Fun* is tuneful and anthemic, and packed with utterly fantastic songs. It plays like the soundtrack to the greatest 80s movie you never saw, its songs radiating themes of youth, innocence, adolescent love, big dreams, and summer nights in the car with the radio playing loud. Every time I hear "Kids In the City" or "Weekend Boy," I feel all tingly and nostalgic for my teen years. This album features future Guns N' Roses guitarist Gilby Clarke, and ex-Raspberries star Wally Bryson is credited as "musical director."

3. Vapors - *New Clear Days* (United Artists, 1980)

I have written about this album dozens of times and have run out of things to say. Take my word for it: it's awesome, you need to own it, your girlfriend will leave you if you refuse to take my advice. This one's a

CLASSIC, kids. And "Turning Japanese" isn't even the best song! ("News At Ten" is.)

2. 20/20 - self-titled LP (Portrait, 1979)

This album rocks just hard enough to qualify as "power" pop. But the songs...OH, the songs! This band understood melody, pop craftsmanship, and the fine art of the love song. And with several band members contributing songs, there was a wealth of great material in the 20/20 camp. The new wavey "Yellow Pills" is the famous track here. But just as good are "Cheri," "Remember the Lightning," "She's An Obsession," "Leaving Your World Behind," "Backyard Guys"...stop me before I list off every single track!

1. The Beat (aka The Paul Collins Beat) - self-titled LP (Columbia/CBS, 1979)

The definitive power pop album. Features the classics "Rock N' Roll Girl," "Walking Out on Love," "Different Kind of Girl," and "Don't Wait Up for Me." Now available on a two-fer CD package that also includes the band's somewhat disappointing (but still decent) second LP.

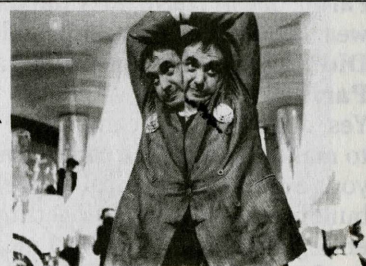
So there you have it: another one of my off-the-cuff lists, hastily thrown together in a matter of days, which I'll surely disavow in another week when I regret leaving off the first Shoes LP. Angry rebuttals or detailed analyses of my cluelessness are welcomed, so please keep the hatemail coming. If enough people convince me to file Teenage Fanclub under "power pop," I just might cave.

Josh Rutledge
July 2006
newwavebaby@yahoo.com

Missing a Few Back Issues of *Go Metric*?

Don't Punish Yourself,

Punish Us!



Sure, we should have mentioned this offer earlier. Say, somewhere near the table of contents. We forgot. Sue us. Better yet order a stack of back issues.

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The Adventures of Sass Parilla, the Singing Gorilla

Warning to readers: The following introduction contains dangerously high levels of pretense. We encourage you to press on, though. You're a strong lot.

In her rather turbulent memoir, Fierce Attachments, Vivian Gornick writes about the invigorating sensation she gets from a particular museum exhibit. She talks about how the art makes her "internal space" swell with joy and that "when the space is wide and I occupy it fully, I taste the air, feel the light...I am peaceful and excited, beyond influence or threat." In short, she feels on top of the world.

That's the feeling I get every year while attending MicroCineFest, three nights of the best cheaply made movies. The highlight of MCF 2005 was The Adventures of Sass Parilla, the Singing Gorilla, a four-chapter serial in which Sass battles Mechasassparilla, the Artic Yeti, the Black Widow, and hordes of zombies. Sass Parilla draws on the best aspects of monster movies, giant robot movies, Mexican wrestling movies, and Ed Wood. And the sets, costumes, and special effects look great.

Based in Atlanta, the film's title character is, as his name implies, also a musician. More on that to come. (Note: It wasn't our intention to interview another gorilla from Georgia (see the 8-Track Gorilla interview in GM #20).) (Interview by Mike Faloan)

Go Metric: For the sake of readers just being introduced to Sass Parilla, is Sass Parilla a blue gorilla or a man in a blue gorilla suit?

Sass Parilla: He's a guy in a gorilla suit. That's why Sass Parilla doesn't have furry hands and feet and why he wears shoes. Rather fashionable shoes, I'd like to think.

Did Sass Parilla the musician precede Sass Parilla the actor?

Yes, one of my fans came to me and said, Hey, Sass, want to make a movie? He came to me with this script—fight your evil bio-mechanical doppelganger among the buildings of the city after getting enlarged with an enlargement ray. I'm like, I'm in!

And was that with all four parts already written?

It was just the first chapter and when I said I was in, he went home and within five days had written the other three chapters.

And this is director Charles Porterfield?

Yes, my buddy Chuck. Ex-pro wrestler, minor league wrestler. I saw him wrestle at Dragon Con. He was great. He really understood the psychology of working the crowd. They all hated him in the beginning and by the end of the match they all pulled for him. He was savagely beaten in 22 minutes. He wrestled under the name The Nature Toy—Devin Desire. He had purple hair.

That explains the influence of Mexican wrestling movies on the Sass Parilla movies.

Yes, though I don't know much about Mexican wrestling movies myself. I should point out that Sass' movie persona was written to be different than this stage persona, though they do share certain characteristics. His on-stage persona doesn't tear people's arms off or eat as much food. You get to see a little of his sass, pardon the pun, when hecklers come around on occasion and that's entertaining. Not everyone loves Sass Parilla's musical act. In fact, I get the feeling that roughly 8-11% of any room I play is outright pissed at the act. It's a small number of people but there's always someone standing in the back and it's like nail on a chalkboard. I've had people tell me pointblank that I should just give up playing music. And I'm grateful to them, by the way, because they'll talk about Sass Parilla at the water cooler just as much as the people who love Sass Parilla, and there are a lot of them out there. Sass Parilla's original mission, the first gimmick, was that he was the singing gorilla who would not do singing telegrams. Singing gorillas have been pigeonholed into one vocation. Sass never wanted to do that. He's going to blaze a trail for singing gorillas everywhere and raise the bar. I'm a freelance singing gorilla and I'll take work wherever I can get it.

So it's not the material or your singing so much as the fact that you're a guy in a gorilla suit performing at a night club.

They're just not ready for it. Also, some people are not comfortable with the anonymity factor, the fact that there's someone in the room whose identity is concealed.

Which brings it down to the mask more than the suit.

It could be. He's silly looking.

What songs are currently in your set list?

Currently I'm taking on an ambitious project, the Sass Parilla version of *Tommy* by the Who. I'm into the second album now. I'm going to have to trim it down to make it more palatable. Recently I added Roberta Flack's "Where's the Love?" I sing her part and Donny Hathaway's. "Alabama Song" by the Doors. "Cross-eyed Mary" by Jethro Tull. I've been working on the whistle-hum. I think I did that in Baltimore when I did "Rio." I've been working on that because it enables me to mimic other instruments, like the flute in a Jethro Tull song or a keyboard solo in a Doors song or what have you.

It's obvious that not a lot of money went into the movie, but it's equally obvious that a great deal of care went into every aspect of the movie, the sets, the costumes, and best of all, the inventions. In every chapter Sass' pal, Dr. Nutonious, invents a new device to save the world. What are Sass Parilla's thoughts on the invention from chapter one, the Enlargement Ray?

I was really excited to work with the Enlargement Ray. It's everyone's dream, I'm sure, to be in a giant monster movie where you get to smash up stuff. I did my own stunts, but I didn't get damaged.

In the second chapter it's the Gun Disintegrator Ray.

Yes, the Gun Disintegrator-Ray, which dissolves all guns and firearms within a 10-meter radius. He'd have to build an awful lot of them to eradicate all weapons, but that was his goal. A noble invention.

The Invisibility Belt, from chapter three, also has noble intentions.

Such a unique idea. I love the fact that he almost got it right; if you're wearing an invisibility belt you can be seen by anyone wearing an invisibility belt. It would be great if we all just couldn't see each other, then no one would be annoyed by anyone.

And that led to the invisible fight scene, in which the two guys fighting are invisible to the audience but not to each other.

It was a lot of fun. And after that, in the same chapter, is the zombie onslaught.

Do invisible punches hurt as much as visible punches?

Yes.

Then in the fourth chapter he invents the Olfactor-erator.

I think that was less to help mankind and more to satisfy his own curiosity.

Science for the sake of science?

It might be science for the sake of huffing whatever was coming out of the Olfactor-erator. It's a good thing they made it though because if they didn't coax Sass Parilla back to the lair he might still have that mind control helmet on and that wouldn't be a good thing.

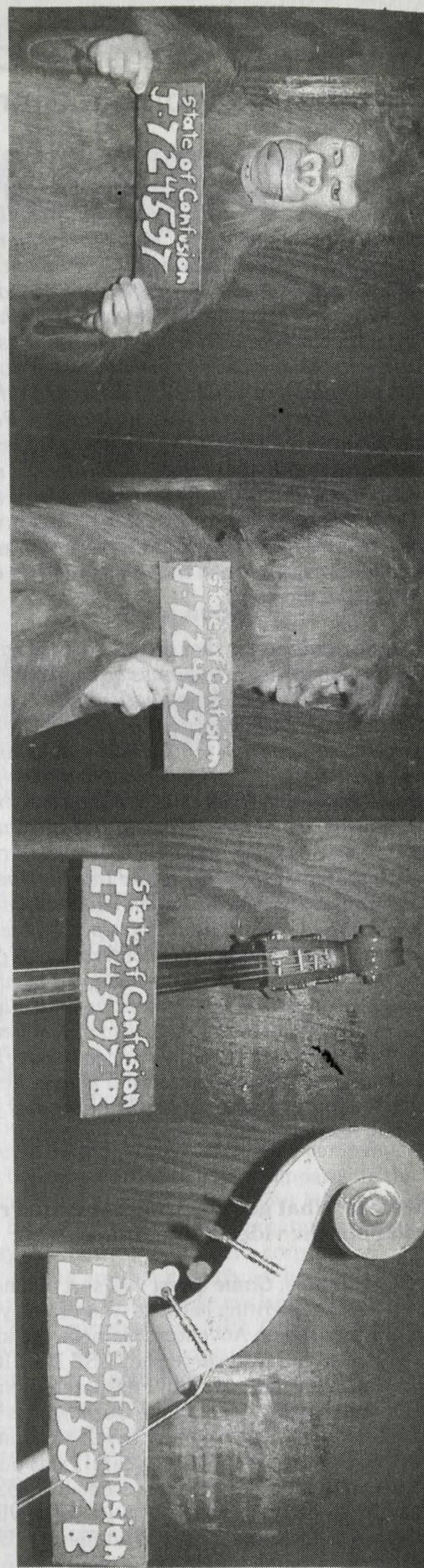
I'm glad you bring that up. There are those who look at Sass Parilla as a beacon of hope for truth and justice and such. And there are those who think he's a loose cannon. He allowed himself to be controlled by the Black Widow. He killed innocent civilians. How do we know we can trust him? It's kind of like J. Jonah Jameson and Spider Man. What does Sass Parilla say to those critics?

I think they're missing the point. I think in the movies he's a loose cannon at any time, whether he's under the Black Widow's control or not. He's loveable but he doesn't know his own strength.

I hear you, Sass Parilla. Is there anything you'd like to leave with our readers?

As far as Sass Parilla, 2006 is turning out to be a good year. Chuck is talking about making a second movie, another four-part series, and he's written the first chapter to that. I'm really excited that he wants to work with me more. I've been on the radio to perform songs. Recently, I auditioned for *America's Got Talent* on NBC and they showed a clip of Sass Parilla on the first episode. Regis said something like, "And some very hairy people come to audition." It's all moving in the right direction. I'm going to keep finding work that isn't a singing telegram. There are no rules and that's the best thing about it.

Have You Seen This Gorilla?



The Quest for the Great Canadian Novel: An Interview with *Game Quest* Author Leopold McGinnis

By Wred Fright

Video games are currently a multi-billion dollar industry, and a possible rival in the future to movies and television as the dominant entertainment medium in advanced industrial societies. However, video games are an extremely disposable medium, with a history littered with obsolete systems and old games shed like snakeskin to be replaced by ever-newer versions. Seldom thought of as art, the video game, in the eyes of most people, has yet to produce its War and Peace, its Citizen Kane, or its Maus (or at least those sorts of people who actually think about such stuff). I suspect someday it might though, just as the novel, the movie, and the comic book flowered past their beginnings as popular culture trash (not that there's anything wrong with popular culture trash though as readers of Go Metric! no doubt know).

*While we're waiting for that grand day, we can content ourselves with what video games have inspired in another medium: a cracking good novel. Canadian author Leopold McGinnis (a name so perfect for a writer that many people think it surely must be a penname, though it is not) has written and self-published *Game Quest*, a novel about a time in the video game industry when text and primitive graphic adventure games ruled. His novel recounts a two-year period in the mid-1990s just as the Internet went mainstream, and a small independent computer gaming company found itself swamped by the rising tide of dot com greed and the proliferation of graphic heavy first person shooter games. Since I knew McGinnis through my involvement in the Underground Literary Alliance, of which he is also a member, *Go Metric!* sent me north (at least via cyberspace) to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (a land where metric is the law!) to find out more about McGinnis's quest for readers of his novel about video game quests.*

Go Metric: What got you interested in writing a novel about the video game industry?

Leopold McGinnis: *Game Quest* was sort of a novel in waiting. I got into writing because when I was young I was totally hooked on Adventure Games—the kind detailed in *Game Quest* where you "USE MAGICAL PIG ON HAY" and that sort of stuff. I desperately wanted to work for Sierra (who made all the Quest games at that time). I couldn't program games myself so I started writing. Flash forward about ten years. I was on a train in the U.K. and there was this discarded newspaper on the seat. In it was an interview with Roberta Williams (designer of some of the big games at Sierra) about women gamers. Suddenly I had this idea for a novel

about an adventure gaming company under siege. I wouldn't say Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* was an inspiration, but what he showed me was that you could write about things that most people could care less about. If he could write about Microsoft employees, then surely I could write a novel about computer games! But it was really a novel in waiting. I'd been naively working for a while on (and then abandoned) a "history of computer games" book, so I had all this crap just sitting in my noggin that I thought was interesting. I'd also been reading up a lot on corporate malfeasance and chain stores at the time, which fit quite well with the themes I wanted to talk about.

What's been the response to the novel from the gaming community?

As for promoting the book, it's been weird. The adventure gaming community has been all over it. I've sold to maybe fifteen people through that and expect I'll sell more. But I guess the leap from adventure games to a novel about adventure games isn't much. I thought women gamers would be ALL over *Game Quest*, because they constantly talk about how they are underrepresented and there aren't games made for their interest and the novel is probably the first in existence to really cover that topic. I updated and informed several women gaming sites about the novel on several occasions but no one ever took interest. Some sympathetically said they would buy it, but you could tell it was just to assuage some sense of guilt they'd developed. But they all said they only like to read fantasy. Disappointing, since I think there's a lot to like in this book, but people have generally given up on lit [except] for vampire and warlock books.

You use quite a few of those nifty old school computer graphics in *Game Quest*. What interested you in including them?

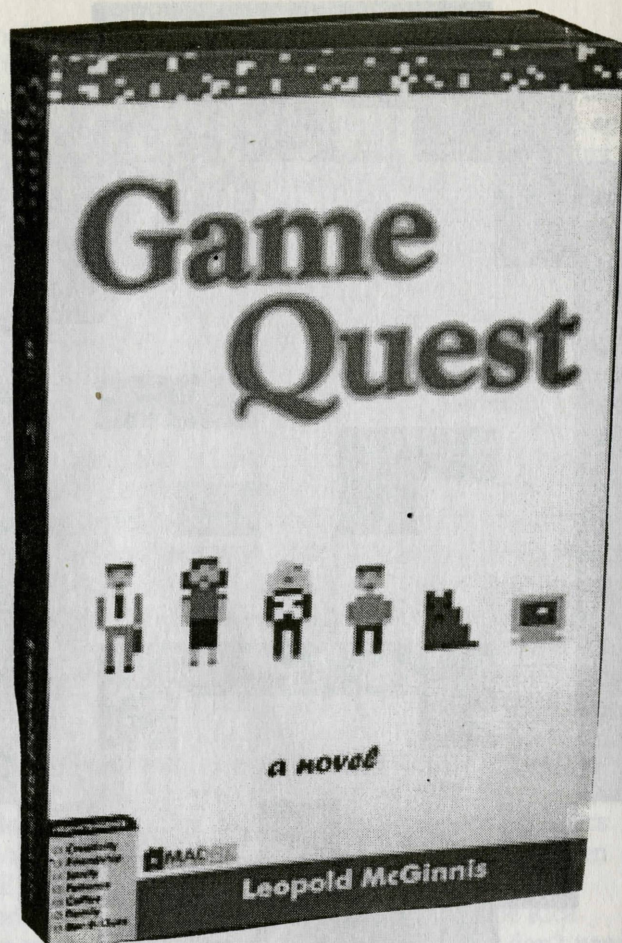
As for the illustrations, that really comes from doing-it-myself. The publishing empires are visionless and thrive on variations of the same. Usually it comes down to being cheap. Illustrations aren't cheap. Whereas I'm an underground writer, I'm desperate to convince people to try my books. I'll do anything to make it more unique than what's on the shelves. I have to make my stuff eight times better than what's on the shelves for people to give it a chance (lucky for me, the stuff on the shelves is terrible). Plus, I always liked illustrations in books. They're cool. I was taking [an] illustration course and pretty sure, by that point, that I didn't want to become an illustrator, but this seemed like a really good way to use those skills. I was originally only going to do three inside, for the beginning of each part. But I finished up the book on a Friday and since I couldn't send it into the printers until Monday, on a whim I decided to make an illustration of the Sea Hag for Pat Simonelli of LitVision Press, because he seemed to really latch onto that character for some reason. I don't know what happened, but next thing I knew I had 25+ illustrations for the book! One of those happy accidents, I guess. I really

lucked out with those on *Game Quest*. They were like manna from the heavens. People who buy *Game Quest* have access to the "rejected images" section of my website where I put up the illustrations that didn't make it.

You're now a member of the Underground Literary Alliance, but how did you initially get interested in independent literature and self-publishing?

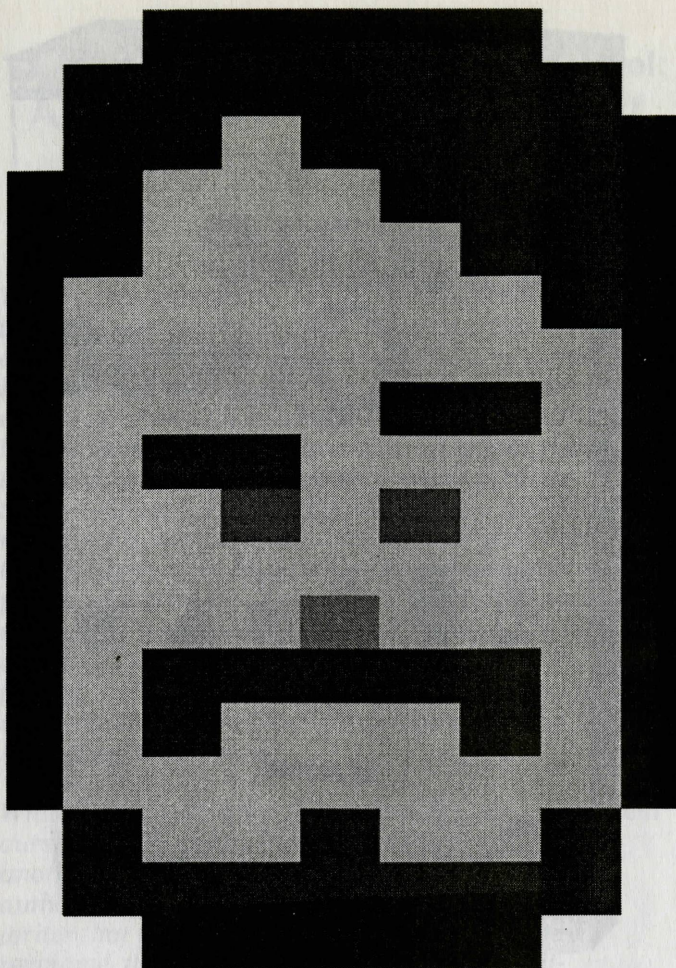
Pretty much by accident. When I first started submitting my work to lit journals—this is just after I decided to write again and was working on *Game Quest*—I thought it would be a cinch to get published. I mean, I flipped through them all and 99% of it was boring. REALLY BORING. So I figured, if *this* is the stuff I'm up against it's going to be easy! A year and a half's worth of rejections later I realized—hey, they actually *like* the crap they publish. So I'd given up on the lit journals, but had faith that publishers would leap all over *Game Quest*. I spent two years submitting it to agents and publishers, small and large, many claiming to represent "new talent"—I even submitted it to a couple presses of which my mother is part—and still no bites. By this time I'd moved to Toronto to take Advanced Illustration, trying to get into graphic design work. It was a big year for me, artistically. In the class I met Jeff Lemire, who is an independent Toronto comic artist, and we car-shared the hour drive to and from school almost every day. He was big into something called the "zine" scene, which I'd only heard about and he kept saying, "Leopold, I just don't understand why you don't do it yourself." So I put out the *Red Fez*, as a test, to see how a self-published work would go. I had total control over my vision and felt like I owned the book. The advantage of dropping \$4500 and thousands and thousands of man-hours on publishing a book is that you are very motivated in selling that book. This is going to sound sort of pathetic, but I also found out that Douglas Coupland was going to be releasing his next novel, a sequel to *Microserfs* about computer game programmers, and I was all "I finished this book three years ago and spent two years trying to get publishers to pick it up. I'm gonna be damned if Douglas Coupland gets to waltz in and beat me to it!" Not that I have anything against Douglas Coupland, but I guess I'm a defiant person and one of the few "promotional" aspects of the book I had to my advantage was that it was the first book to talk about computer gaming in a literary way. So that was the kick in the butt that really got me started. Through the zine scene Jeff introduced me to, I heard about this funny little group called the Underground Literary Alliance. I went to their site and was like "Oh my god this is all the stuff I've been complaining and bitching about the lit industry for nearly four years!!" It was like reading my own rants—except I hadn't written them.

Your ULA work seems much in line with your suspicions of corporate power, as that's a major theme in the novel. Why don't you like corporations? And can they be stopped or is the



21st century the era of the monolithic business brand?

It doesn't take much to be critical of corporations. Even a cursory look at their track record reveals a lot of specious activity. Mostly what I was trying to get at with *Game Quest* was that it's not the corporations themselves, it's not the people running them, it's the way the system is set up (If I can say "system" without sounding like a hackneyed revolutionary). The thing I liked about the *Game Quest* story is that it was "soft." It's not about corporations undermining human rights in foreign countries, it's not about union busting or even corporate fraud. It's about the hostile takeover of this little (in the grand scheme of things) computer game company, which is a pretty bourgeois problem when compared to the scale of gross misconduct out there. But I think it really shows the basic problem of the corporation in a very human way. Anyone can point out a corporation violating rights in another country as "bad," the problem with that is it's easy to say these are isolated incidents caused by "bad" corporations. With *Game Quest* I tried to show how the very underlying structure is skewed, how the corporate model ends up corrupting the purposes it's supposed to serve. It's an instance of where making money becomes more important than what the company set out to do—to make good art, to make an honest, open living. The corporation's sole responsibility in the modern age is to make money for its shareholders. It has no social accountability. When corporations first appeared, they had to get licensed from the monarch and



prove they were performing some public good. The monarch could take away their incorporation at any time. Now that's totally become twisted. The corporation's only responsibility is to the shareholder, who wants money. So the corporation does whatever is in its means to achieve that end, including subverting laws and social good. The shareholders can't be blamed for wanting money, that's why they invest. That is their purpose. The corporation can't be blamed because they are fulfilling their purpose. But to make money this way, shares have to increase every year. It's like asking an athlete to pole vault successively higher heights. Eventually she has to hit a limit, but that's not acceptable for a corporation. That means stagnancy or devaluation. So, in the end, it doesn't matter why we're jumping this god-damned bar, what the reason is for it, or how it's helping us. All that matters is that we jump a higher bar every year—which is impossible. In this system it's not enough to just do a job and do it well. You have to make money at it and you have to make more money every year. I think *Game Quest*'s story really illustrates that problem on a human level, not like a textbook or a rant, but it shows very clearly how that happens and what it means in one instance. And I think that can be generalized to almost everything in our lives, currently. It's like blaming Hollywood producers for all the bad movies. Of course it's their fault, but not on an individual level. It's the fact that Hollywood producers are allowed to make all the decisions—and their focus is on money—that's the problem. No one really has control so everyone is absolved of responsibility. The current system is a

bunch of guys getting into a car and saying if we put our foot on the gas, the car will steer itself where we want to go. That's a lovely little belief-system, because nobody has to take responsibility for the crash and nobody has to admit that they don't know how to control the car and nobody really has to think too much. But forgive me for not wanting to ride in that car. The system encourages what happens in the novel—the end is destroyed by the means. The tool becomes the master—which sounds like a bad line from *Highlander*, but I think my point is taken. Can corporations be stopped? That's a BIG question. Considering that all a corporation is is a large organization, usually with a board of directors, dedicated to the achievement of one goal, I'd say that it's not a question of whether it can or should be stopped. We could have corporations whose goal is world peace or environmental protection. I'm not suggesting we hand these responsibilities over to corporations as they stand now (god no!), but the point is a corporation is just an organization idea. The problem is the focus on money. To quote Gil Scott-Heron, the problem with peace is that you can't make any money from it. We can slap little addendums on corporate responsibility for the next century and not change much of the problem. I don't think this is a thing changeable overnight. But we can make meaningful change. You know, even though the good guys lose in *Game Quest*, they actually win in the end. They actually make change, they make a difference. And I think if we all act like that, we'll win in the end too. There are opportunities to make change everyday. So yes, corporations or whatever the problem is, can be stopped, it can be fixed. But it will take work and people sticking to their guns.

Along those lines, I was wondering how much of *Game Quest* is based on research, and how much on imagination? I mean did the storyline more or less really happen to Sierra Games?

The research question is interesting, because I never researched any of the stuff in the book with an aim to write about it, and as soon as I decided to write it, I made a conscious decision not to research. As a kid I was way into Sierra's adventure games. I got their little fan newsletter, read through everything that came in the boxes, fantasized about what it would be like to work there, etc. Then the adventure game sort of died, Sierra stopped making interesting stuff and I grew up and didn't think much about it. The summer before I started this book I had a job where I pretty much had to look like I was working eight hours a day. So I did a lot of Internet surfing. As I mentioned earlier, I had this pipe dream of writing a really comprehensive history of video games. What I had planned hadn't really been done before, but I slowly began to realize that even if I wrote the greatest history of video games ever, it would never be picked up by a publisher because who was I? There's this whole credibility thing that publishing houses really rely on. Unless you're a prof or an industry expert, then your analysis just isn't going to be picked up, no matter how good it is. That and the fact that it was a massive, obsessive project finally led me to give it up. But I had

started looking into all this stuff and putting together my thoughts on games—not just as a "history" but a sort of contextual cultural analysis. There were some pretty horrible games out there—and I don't mean as in "not fun to play." For example, Custer's Revenge where you were a cowboy trying to have sex with (essentially rape) an Indian woman tied to a cactus. In another horror game you used a light gun to blow apart people chained to walls and other torture devices. Pretty reprehensible stuff and I liked analyzing it. Is Custer's Revenge just a silly naughty game (remember, the thing is in 4 or 8 bit blocks, so the player is using a LOT of imagination) or was it a morally reprehensible extension of imperialism/racism? Or both? There's so much cultural stuff to examine in this, so I was really starting to think about games in a broader context, rather than "In Mario Bros. you hit things from beneath, but in Super Mario Bros, you stomp things from above!" But I'm digressing a bit. So I did research into Sierra and found out that it had been sold off by the founder under expectations that it would be continued to run as it always had. Then it was managed terribly, and overnight 90% of the staff was fired. Then it was sold dirt cheap to another management company. It was the first I'd really heard of these video game umbrella corporations. It used to all be people and companies run out of garages. A real independent thing. Now they were all suddenly owned by larger, unrelated corporations and had boards of directors. So what happened to Sierra was kind of an end of an era and, maybe even an end of naiveté in the industry. I know the former owner, Ken Williams, was pretty P.O.ed about it, a lot of fans were really angry and made a lot of noise about it. But none of that really mattered in the end. The impersonal corporations got their way. So I had all this knowledge up there. But once I decided to write *Game Quest* I had a vision and I didn't want reality to interfere with the story I wanted to tell. The story emerged from reality, but was not tied to it. In *Game Quest*, for artistic purposes, everything happens a LOT faster, within the span of a year and a half, maybe, whereas Sierra's downfall took a decade. Again, I didn't do any research on the real story after I decided to write the novel. I had my own story, vaguely plucked from the real one. I did actual research on the business side of stuff, because I knew very little about that. Overall, I guess the reason this book felt like a gift is because by the time I thought of it, I already had 90% of everything I'd need in my head. I really had fun with it.

So did I reading it. What are you working on next?

I don't really work linearly. I think *Game Quest* is one of the few pieces I worked on from start to finish with nothing else in between. Usually I'm juggling from 5 to 10 different writing projects at once, going from one to the other when I get stuck or bored on something. It keeps me fresh. There is a big project I'm working on, another novel, but because it's been kicking my ass for the three years since I started it, I'm hesitant to talk about it, because it's finally going well again. I wrote a novella immediately after *Game Quest* about working as

one of those really annoying guys in Future Shop (probably Best Buy in the US is the closest thing). Basically, this guy decides that there's no way that he can change the emptiness and drive for consumer culture, so if he can't beat them, he's going to join them. He's going to become the best goddamned widget salesman ever, but he has some real competition from "genuine" widget salesmen. It's what I call an optimistic-nihilism piece. I'll probably be publishing that next.

I'm looking forward to it when you do though. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered in the interview?

Oh god yeah. There's LOTS of stuff to talk about. Most of it couldn't be covered in the scope of this interview, but one thing that's really interesting to me is the marketing aspect of self-promotion. It's all new to me. I've been pushing *Game Quest*, at this point, for about a month and I knew it was going to be a struggle to convince people and, especially organizations to take it seriously, but the real interesting stuff is in the details. One thing that's mind-boggling is people's aversion to computer games and computer gamers' aversion to books! The moment I mention the word "computers" when talking about my book, people's faces turn pale. I don't understand this. You don't have to know about computers or care about them to enjoy this book, but this has been THE main struggling point I've had in getting people interested in this book. I don't get it. Does Anne Rice have to go around convincing people that they don't need to know about vampire folklore to enjoy her books? Do people worry that they might not relate to Stephen King's work because they haven't had personal trauma getting their face chewed off by a fetid sewer monster? And most computer gamers, it seems, won't touch it because they "only read sci-fi or fantasy" if they read at all. ¶¶¶ Publishing from the underground is an amazing experience. I have total control over my work and vision, I feel more like an artist than an "author." I have a connection with almost everyone I sell the book to, either a conversation, or an email correspondence. And I like the challenge. For some reason I have a lot of energy for challenging perceptions. As soon as someone says "No, you can't do that" I'm all excited about trying to do it, to prove them wrong. Maybe that's sick, stupid or self-destructive, but it seems to be my personality, so I'm going with it.

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For more information on Leopold McGinnis and *Game Quest*, visit leopoldmcginnis.com

Wred Fright's novel about a garage rock band, *The Pornographic Flabbergasted Emus*, is coming out in 2006 from Underground Literary Alliance/Out Your Backdoor Press. Visit wredfright.com for more information.

For more information about the Underground Literary Alliance, visit literaryrevolution.com

I Wanted a Pacer or Yugo But All I Got Was This Damn Pinto—The Cars I've Owned

by Tim Hinely

I just wanted to be able to *drive!* To be mobile and be able to get around and not have to have my dad drive me everywhere. Plenty of folks I knew took the bus but not me. Buses were for chumps and this was suburban southern New Jersey and you pretty much had to have a car, at least to be cool and god knows I was trying.

When dad told me he was going to get me a car that meant only one thing: the Pinto! Driving around in a Ford Pinto in the early 80s was as cool as driving a rickshaw. Might as well have been the same thing, but fuck it. I wanted to be on the road. I swallowed my pride and took over ownership of the 1974 Ford Pinto. My dad bought it from my middle school science teacher, Mr. Morey, a jovial guy who apparently had bad taste in cars. It was shocking blue but it was an automatic. I didn't need to be shifting gears when I was going to be too busy switching tapes in the tape deck with my right hand—from Minor Threat to Social Distortion to the Meatmen to, well, you get the picture—and giving girls the one-fingered “c'mere baby” with the left and, of course, steering with my knee (an old trick I learned from one of my older sisters only she wasn't switching tapes, she was lighting a pipe, and I don't mean one for tobacco).

My pal Sean Smith and I had a bet over who would get their driver's license first. He beat me to the punch but he didn't have a car and I did. When I got my license and first walked out to the car as a driver, my dad blessed and saluted me (and probably pre-planned my funeral arrangements) and off I went. Off to where I wasn't quite sure, but damn if I wasn't going to get there in that Pinto.

That lasted for about a month until one day I was minding my own business driving down Tilton Road. in the suburb of Northfield (right next to the town of Linwood, where I grew up) and lo and behold some old geezer in a battered 60s pickup truck blows through a stop sign and t-bones me! Fuck!! The Pinto is *totaled* and I'm shaking like a leaf and near tears. I was barely hurt but it scared the *bejesus* out of me. Anyway, he gets out of his truck, comes over to me—he looked to be about 150 years old—and he starts yelling at *me!* Fuck dude, *you* ran the stop sign! Shortly thereafter the cops arrived on the scene. I think they took geezer's license on the spot (“Sorry, Mr. Hinely, but once you reach the age of 125 we have to take a license. He should not have even been on the road. Really sorry for the inconvenience, sir.”). *Sorry for the inconvenience?!!* Man, my wheels are gone! Ummm, can't you *kill* the geezer? I think that would be an appropriate punishment.

What to do next? Well, the only thing I can do is buy another car. So I got a lime green 1976 Chevy Malibu with a white vinyl roof (remember gang, this was the early 80s). To be honest, it is 2006 and I still wish I had that car today. Everyone and their brother told me to hang onto that car but I didn't. It ran great, it was roomy, and it had a kickin' stereo. I can't tell you how many trips

that car made back and forth to the beach in Ocean City but if I had a nickel for every one of them, well, I'd have a lot of nickels.

Everyone tried to talk me out of it, except my two friends who sold it to me. Yup, I needed a hot rod so I bought a 1968 Chevy Camaro Rally Sport with no paint (primer, baby) and N-50's on the back (the widest tires you can get on the street, or so I was told). My pal Mike Fry sold it to me (some friend) and another pal Rich Himes was forever working on it. I never really got it on the road and honestly it was a waste of \$1000.

From there it was onto more practical things. Next I got a shocking blue (again?) 1974 VW Squareback (called the “punkmobile”) that took me and my pals surfing more times than I can remember. It ran great, for a while anyway. Then it died.

Another friend, Rick Gaskill, had a 1973 Chevy Vega and said it was “a total surfmobile” and hey, what better way to spend \$250 than yet another hunk-a-shit? The best part of that car was the brush-painted paint job of gold with black stripes.

It must have been about early 1985 by now, I was a few years out of high school and beginning community college and needed something practical to get me there. How about a 1978 Chevy Blazer that was four-wheel drive and got like three gallons to the mile? I bought this one off of Bob Kimble, a local nut job alcoholic two years younger than me who would toss beer cans at cops, flip off old ladies, and managed to get thrown out of every school he ever set foot in. I think he may have been semi-retarded but that's another story. I put a lift kit on Blazer, took it four-wheeling occasionally until it broke down and I was on foot once again. Around that same time my pal Chris had gotten an old-school VW Bug with a floppy vinyl moon roof and the sound of that seriously appealed to me. The summer of 1985 was coming and I needed some fun in the sun while I was driving. Local gearhead Mitch Crawford was selling a 1978 VW Bug convertible that had a ragtop that was basically new (but rusted out beyond belief). I bought that car and *loved it*. Everyone in town knew me in that car. Forget that it didn't have a floor in the back seat due to the rust, the car was rad and I felt like the king driving it! I wouldn't take it too far out of town but that car did make one pilgrimage to New Brunswick, NJ for a legendary Butthole Surfers gig in summer of 1986 (at the Court Tavern). I wanted to give Gibby ride in it afterwards but even his drug-addled mind was sane enough to say no.

From there it was even more hoopties: 1978 Chevy Caprice Classic with the smashed in driver's door (had to get in and out of the passenger's door, always a turn on for the ladies), the 1972 Pontiac Grand Prix with the V-8 455 cubic inch engine that helped me lay smokey burnouts on every street in town, the 1980 Chevy Citation (not a good thing naming a car after a traffic ticket) that got me out to California in 1992 when I moved out West, but died three weeks later and, well, at least a few other that I'm forgetting about. I'm happy to say that in the past decade I have owned just two cars, both of them Hondas. A 1988 Civic that I proudly drove the wheels off of until I bought my current car, a 1994 Accord, in 2001 and has not given me a lick of problems (knock on wood).

This is where you, the greatly appreciated reader, shall, should you choose to continue reading past this title, find what we like to call the "music review" section, though, in fact, it, the "music review" section does include a couple of book reviews.

Angry Angles – *Apparent-Transparent 7"* ep

Here we have a collaboration between Jay (Reatards, Lost Sounds) and Alix (Lids), a guy and a gal who are also romantically linked. Kind of like a pre-Fleetwood Mac Buckingham and Nicks. (Come to think of it, whoever's left in Fleetwood Mac should hire Jay and Alix. Then Steve Nicks would make a play for Jay and John McVie would go after Alix. Then they would unleash a punk rock *Rumors*.) In the meantime, the a-side is a split decision. The title track is a new wave gem, driven by keyboards early on but yielding to guitars. The second cut, "You Fell In," sets a mood but doesn't do much with it. That leaves the b-side, a

cover of Wire's "The 15th," to tip the balance. It's haunting and just short of creepy, yet I still sing along which vaults *Apparent-Transparent* into the "keep it for mix tapes" pile. (Plastic Idol)

–Mike Faloone

Anxieties – *The De-evolution Will Be Televised 7"* ep

The Anxieties, on their record sleeve, have opted for the classic "band caught standing around" photo. And in said photo it appears that the group is comprised of four different personalities, ala the Beatles or Monkees. Going from left to right, we have the New Wave Dude (decked out in sunglasses, stripped shirt, and jacket), the Working Class Dude (clad in jeans, moustache, and a button up shirt with a stitched name tag), the Ramones Dude (*Road to Ruin* t-shirt and a couple of visible tattoos), and the Private School Rebel Dude (cigarette dangling from his lip, wearing a t-shirt that says Pretoria Boys High). So which of these guys is most like the Anxieties sound? I'm going to opt for Working Class Dude. The Anxieties are loud and fast and, as their name implies, fidgety, the kind of unsettled sound that comes from working all day at a job you hate and thinking about your band. I like it, I do, especially the a-side. Comes with a Motorhead cover too ("Going to Brazil"). (Plastic Idol)

–Mike Faloone

Ape City R&B – "She's Candy Coated" 7"

Don't be fooled by the band name, it's not R&B, but it most definitely is APE CITY R&B! In a time where guitar/drum 2 piece garage bands are a dime a dozen, these guys rise above. They're trashy as hell but great drumming and dynamics keep it all very tight. The title track leans toward Cheater Slicks style trash while "Oh Li'l Girl" is a little more soulful. They do a good job of describing their own record: LOW BUDGET, LOW BROW, LO-FI. (Jenasol)

–Brian Wallace

The AV Club – *The AV Club cd*

Mike Faloone: I liked the AV Club a lot when I saw them live last fall. I was at the back of the bar, talking with friends, and didn't hear the next band announced. The AV Club's rough-around-the-edges power pop worked its way across the room and pulled me in. On disc, though, something was lacking. The glossy production left me wondering if I was missing something. So I passed the disc on for a second opinion...

Steve Reynolds: This New Haven trio tries to follow the power pop formula to a T. Hooky choruses? Check. Songs about girls screwing you over? Yup. Lots of harmonies? Mmm hmm. Alas, the tried-and-true formula doesn't always work on this self-titled debut. "Sweethearts at 17," "Girl From Mars" and "Trouble Girls" are all standouts, but the rest of the 11 tracks don't quite match that level. There's certainly enough potential in the AV Club to make one want to hear a second album in the future. (Insubordination Records, P.O. Box 2646, Columbia, MD 21045)

Bent Outta Shape – *Stray Dog Town cd*

Man, that one song is awesome. Some of the others are good, too. Some are too long (two tracks clock in at over the 5:00 mark!) and kind of blend into one another, but man, that one song... When you write one like that you just set the guitar down and walk away. You're done. (Recess Records, P.O. Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733)

–Matt Braun

Big Star – *In Space cd*

One of my favorite aspects of Alex Chilton solo records is that they never come close to sounding like Big Star records. It's like the guy never heard of the sort of power pop for which Big Star is so revered. Instead, his solo records always struck me as the work of drunken Italian wedding singer, the kind of guy who was just as happy playing some killer uptempo R&B number that even your Aunt Connie couldn't resist as he was plowing through a half-hearted version of "Volare." *Keep 'em guessing* seems to be Chilton's motto. I admire that, but since 1987's *High Priest* it's been slim pickings for Chilton fans, more misses than hits. If you think of *In Space* as an "anything goes" solo record, you're bound to be satisfied. Chilton, joined by longtime Big Star drummer Jody Stephens and Posies Ken Stringfellow and Jon Auer, leads the band through some excellent R&B ("Mine Exclusively," "A Whole New Thing," and "Do You Wanna Make It"). Then there's the wedding singer material: the disco workout that'll snag anyone who resisted the R&B numbers ("Love Revolution") and the oddball instrumental that works well when people are in line at the buffet ("Aria, Largo"). If, on the other hand, you think of it as a genuine Big Star record, you stand to be disappointed because only a third of these songs resemble classic Big Star. Sure, I'd love to hear a dozen songs on par with pop gems like "Best Chance" and "Hung Up with Summer"

but where's the fun in getting what you expected? (Rykodisc)

—Mike Faloon

Blue Checkered Record Player (BCRP) – s/t CD

This is a project by a Seattle-based artist named Sonny Votolato. "It's gorgeous, and the perfect soundtrack to falling leaves and changing seasons," says the promo letter. My interpretation of that sentence is this: It's mostly slow, acoustic, and boring. If you're into that kind of thing, though, you'll probably enjoy BCRP. The music is played well and the singing is done well, but it's a little too "precious" for me. (Esoterik Musik)

—Justin Kearbey

The Bird Circuit—mercurochrome cd

The Bird Circuit is a focused and unapologetically poppy band from Rochester, New York that embraces and celebrates everything that makes music accessible and memorable. On *mercurochrome* the Bird Circuit shoots the moon in pursuit of perfect hooks and big, irresistible choruses, and comes up aces. Intensity and attention to detail are obvious in the waves of overlapping vocals, keyboards, and horns layered throughout the disc. The variety of influences displayed in the Bird Circuit's work leaves no doubt that its members are ardent, lifelong pop fans with an understanding of the genre's stylistic integration that goes well beyond commonplace Beatle-isms. The album's lead track, "Maryann and the Bridge," begins with wind chimes materializing out of thin air and quickly shifts into a persistent, shuffling rhythm before the brass swoops in and lifts it to a whole different level of infectious energy. "Ready Go" moseys along with a simple, traditional roots rock arrangement, while "On the Radio" is a thoughtful mix of folk and 60s pop that calls to mind R.E.M. with its delicate piano, acoustic guitar, and mandolin. Horns trade solos and pump up the end of "Swells," a sweet, breezy tune, while "Boy Scouts of America" and "Faster" are raucous, driving power pop similar to singer/guitarist David Baumgartner's previous band Muler. The familiar, nostalgic tone of *mercurochrome*'s lyrics will endear the record to people with a sentimental streak. And those down to earth words combined with the grand, romantic aspirations of the Bird Circuit's music should please fans of Lotion, Buffalo Tom, Teenage Fanclub, and the Long Winters, among others. (Anabel Records)

—Matt Barber

The Black Angels – Passover cd

The packaging of this cd is neat. It's embossed and has a multitude of fine lines. It's hard on the eyes, but it's neat. The music's another story altogether. I've read articles about the band that compare Alex Maas's vocals to Jim Morrison's, but I disagree. I've also heard comparisons to the Velvet Underground, but I only barely hear that. In my opinion, the Black Angels are boring. "A deep sustained or monotonous sound" is one way the dictionary describes "drone," and that is a pretty good (though maybe a bit unfair) description of the music. It's not completely monotonous, and there are some good, catchy riffs, but the songs are too long and unvaried to hold my attention. Quoted from their website: "Picture a red moonlit night, deep in the heart of Texas, with the ghosts of Nico and Timothy Leary being called back from the dead to guide you on a journey through Heaven & Hell and back again." My response: "I don't want to be led by the ghosts of Nico and Timothy Leary through Heaven & Hell and back again. That sounds creepy." (Light in the Attic Records – PO Box 31970, Seattle, WA 98103)

—Justin Kearbey

The Bloody Hollies – If Footmen Tire You lp

The sound of Detroit done right by four lads from Buffalo, suddenly for some reason the rock-and-goddamn-roll capital of the world. This is a superlative release. Loud, confident garage rock on candy red vinyl. There is a lot of stuff like this out there, but you won't mix these guys up with anyone else. You might even get that White Stripes fan in your life into them. There's a song called "Dirty Water" on here, but it's not a cover of the Standells hit. There's also a Jesus & Mary Chain song called "Dirty Water." All three songs are killers. Don't buy this record. Find a girl that already owns it and marry her. (Alive)

—Johnny Reno

Blotto/Altaira – split 7"

Dig the sounds of early Lookout releases? Not enough Blatz in your diet? Always looking for artwork reminiscent of an Aaron Cometbus cassette compilation? How about a Cringer cover? Welcome to the Blotto/Altaira split. Blotto, the more melodic of the two combos, gets my nod. The guys in Altaira, desperate to "set aside some time," would benefit from a good front porch. (Snuffy Smile)

—Mike Faloon

Blowtops – Insected Mind cd

Somewhere in the basement of the lead singer for the Blowtops, you'll find a copy of the Butthole Surfers *PCP Pep* album, perhaps bought by his older brother. What does this mean to you, the punk rock record consumer? Weirdness, that's what, with religious imagery and crazy sounds. The Kafka-riffic title track has hints of the mighty Cramps and Southern Culture. A circus organ shows up to make you slightly more uncomfortable than you were already. There's a song called "Letter From the Morgue." The whole thing is so off-putting I almost really like it. Book 'em to play your prom. (Big Neck)

—Johnny Reno

Blue Velvet – Four Songs cd ep

Blue Velvet quickly racked up significant strikes against them in the "Win the Record Reviewer's Stamp of Approval" sweepstakes. First, there's the David Lynch reference, intended or otherwise. Second, the emo trappings of the cover art. Third, they're about as prolific as Terrence Malick. There are but four songs here. Two of them have the same title ("Docile 1" and "Docile 2") and one has no title (track 4). Two titles for four songs = Is anyone trying? Then, for the proverbial cherry on top, it turns out that all of these songs are merely reworkings of previously released material. It's like when the only new song on that Police greatest hits record was a new version of "Don't Stand So Close to Me." First impression: why am I about to listen to this? Second impression: Why did Blue Velvet bother releasing this cd? The disc opens the way I expected it to—quiet, repetitive guitars, a la Fugazi, used to build tension over sparse drumming, in this case, all cymbals, no snare drum. But it never took the turn I expected it to. I figured I'd missed something only the second cut, "Docile 2," did the same thing; it was all build up with no release. I don't think there's a single snare drum hit on either song. That's odd. The saxophone and xylophone on "Blue Cannon" shouldn't have surprised me but they did. They intrigued me too, much more than anticipated. I found myself returning to *Four Songs* a surprising number of times. Well played, gents. (Phantry)

—Mike Faloon

Book of Maps – Book of Maps II cd

A friend of mine once dismissed Queen as a band that wrote songs for arenas. The general idea is right—Queen wanted to please large gatherings of people—but the scale is off: Queen wanted to conquer the galaxy. I could talk about Queen all day, but the task at hand is

Book of Maps II. What snagged my attention here are the song titles, namely cuts three and eight, "Freddie Mercury Equals Who?" and "Freddie Mercury Equals You." Queen tributes? Thinly veiled Queen covers? Neither. Facetious pop culture references that amuse the band members? Yes, I think so. With loads of screaming over intricate math rock a title like "Bastards of the Universe" is probably a better indicator of what's in store. Though, ironically, the guitar work reminds me of another 70s guitar hero, Steve "GTR" Howe. (Note: "Evannder Holyfield vs. Riddick Bowe" contains no overt connections to the title bout of the same name.) (Whoa Boat)

—Mike Faloone

The Brotherhood of Electricity - Invisible 7"

"Invisible" starts off with a terrific blast of panicked drumming and Dickies-like keyboards, quickly drops the organ in favor of Fugazi vocals, which is weird, and then brings the organ back in right when it will be most effective. There's a song on side B about what it's like to be followed everywhere by a hearse. Hearses are wonderful. I like the name the Brotherhood of Electricity, and I dig the cover, which is not reproduced here. With a full heart, I recommend this record. From here, inside the experimental submarine that is my home, I suggest you obtain a copy. (Super Secret!)

—Johnny Reno

The Busy Signals - 7"

Fun, spazzy, poorly recorded punk rock displaying no musical prowess whatever. All three songs are world-class. Fans of the FM Knives and the Catholic Boys will want this EP. My mom might not. I did get her the new Neil Diamond CD for Christmas, but I think it's too bleak for her. She liked a TV show about the Celtic Women, so I bought her *that* CD for her birthday, but she only likes some of it. That's a hard woman to please. (Douchemaster)

—Johnny Reno

Jack Butwell - The Story of My Life cd

My initial impression: moderately appealing 70s country music. But this is a disc worth sticking with because what the late Jack Butwell lacked in terms of vocal range he more than made up for with lyrical range and therein lies the sporadic magic in *The Story of My Life*. Like a country music David Bowie or Ray Davies, Butwell pioneered musical subgenres, at least lyrically, but was always quick to move on to the next new

thing, never sticking with one approach too long. Take "Country Street and Road," a fascinating hybrid of three classic country styles, the drinking song, the mama song, and the betrayal song. The twist here is that mama has the drinking problem and is betraying the father, along with her poor son Jack, by spending her time at the local watering hole and making moon eyes with the barkeep who lets her drink on the house while they drink to every "Country, street, and road." Butwell seems sincere, but I can imagine an up and coming Nashville songwriter trying a similar experiment in the hopes of expanding the commercial appeal of his songs. So in the 1970s, during the wave of popular sci-fi movies, I can understand why someone would write a song about spotting UFO's while fishing outside of Toronto ("Toronto Connection"). I love the song. Most of Butwell's material, conversely, had the opposite effect, severely limiting his potential audience. Not many country music fans, for example, were looking for songs about the joys of skateboarding. Not the joys of watching your kid skate or the fun you had skating when you were a kid, rather the enjoyment you, the adult, Jack Butwell in this case, 30-something construction worker, derive from doing 180's, or when he's skating with this baby, popping a handstand. And this guy was no ordinary skater. He jumps Greyhound buses. He skates in abandoned pools in downtown hotels. To close the disc, Jack moves from the odd to the progressive, incorporating identity politics. "Do You As a Woman Think It's Right" speaks for itself. Bikini Kill could have worked with that title. The last cut, "Woman with a Shovel," voices a practical approach to tolerance. A woman, part of "the new woman's lib," shows up on the job site, shovel in hand, to work alongside the fellas. Jack doesn't mind but his wife does, so Jack quits. The boss isn't fazed because, to paraphrase, "there are plenty of women, willing to work harder, who are willing to take your place." Get ready for a brave new world, Jack Butwell.

—Mike Faloone

Cheap Trick - Rockford cd

Having underachieved since late 1979, no one expects much from a Cheap Trick record any more. Which is why *Rockford* is a pleasant surprise for those who have seen them live and know they still have the chops. The cuts that Steve Albini had a hand in ("Give it Away," "This Time You Got It," "Decaf") are crunchy power pop circa the glory years while the remainder mine the band's penchant for power ballads, boogie-

rock, and ELO-inspired Beatle nods. Through it all, only the limp "If It Takes a Lifetime" is cringe-worthy, and even that one has a mega-ton hook in the chorus. (Big 3)

—Brett Essler

Clorox Girls - This Dimension lp

*Twice in the past month I've talked to people about this album and in both cases they shrugged in response. Only now, weeks later, am I able to formulate a response. I just assumed that when anyone with taste came into contact with This Dimension that they would fall in love just like I did, develop one of those aching crushes that keep you up at night. Indifference I was not prepared for. But now I am. The following is a long overdue reply to the aforementioned conversations...Are you insane? You don't love that record? I know you like the Ramones and are always looking for bands that deliver a similar combination of power and pop without sounding like a Ramones clone band. I also know that you've heard so many of those lame Ramones clone bands that at some point you've resented the Ramones, even if only a little bit, for starting the whole "let's sniff glue and cover the Buddah Records catalog" genre. But those great Ramones songs unleash a high like no other and that's why we keep searching for bands who can deliver the goods. The Clorox Girls are such a band. They've got the rough and tumble attitude that would win over Dee Dee and they've got the hooks that would snare Joey. (There never was any pleasing Johnny, so let's not worry about him.) You should know all of this already. *This Dimension* is the second Clorox Girls record. Their first should be tattooed to your subconscious. But I'll forgive you. That's what friends do. You forgave me when I first said that the Marked Men album was just okay. I've since learned the error of my ways and now I'm returning the favor. Go back to *This Dimension*. The payoff awaits. (Smart Guy)*

—Mike Faloone

Dan Padilla/Chinese Telephone - split 7"

A couple weeks ago the *New York Times* ran an article on house parties. Well, they didn't use that phrase to describe the living room performances being hosted throughout Westchester county, but they were talking about house parties, nonetheless. The article talked about musicians, mostly folk and classical, playing to small gatherings of friends and neighbors. The people hosting the shows marveled about the

intimacy, about being able to approach a performer after a show, about putting someone up for the night and treating them to a hearty breakfast the next day. The whole article radiated a sense of *Why didn't we think of this before?* They should have talked to their kids. I bet a lot of them have been to punk rock house parties. The writer of the article should have tracked down the guys who put out this split 7". It's a great testament to the joys of a punk rock house party. Good times with good music and a group of people crowded together in a small room. Only with beer and pizza replacing wine and cheese (everybody's got their own version of booze and dairy to accompany music). Dan Padilla's "I Liked That Dude" is the best cut here, but the split is solid all around. (Note: *There appears to be no person in the band Dan Padilla who bears such a name. My first guess was that they taken their name from the little known 16th century English agriculturalist who invented a since-neglected drill bit.*) (Fast Crowd)
 —Mike Faloon

DC Snipers – Missile Sunset cd
 Charming. Hard-to-listen-to punk rock mixed to give you a headache. I still like them, for some reason. I must not respect myself very much. They're so weird. They have a song called "Get Awesome on the Street" and at one point somebody plays a very Duane Allman-like guitar solo. There's just a touch of oi, somewhere, in the vocals that sound like everybody sings everything all the time. The record cover is awful. They sing about electric chairs and the 'Nam. The keyboard is a nice touch. Hire them to play your wedding, if you're marrying Lyle Menendez. If you're marrying Eric Menendez, you might want to go with something a little more country.
 (Dead Beat)

—Johnny Reno

Dean Dirg – 26 Kicks To Make The Whole World Pay cd
 Dean Dirg is a crummy name for a band. If this record was by just one guy, a singer-songwriter type, maybe, like say, Benny Mardones of "Sheila C" fame, it would be bad enough, but there is no Dean Dirg even listed in this record's credits, which means that these maroons came up with the name Dean Dirg, liked the sound of it, and now that's what they're called. Perhaps it means something cool in their native Germany. All's I know is I live in 'merica, and this shit is just not going to cut it here, where we are awash in band names as cool as the Hydeouts and Thee Make-Out Party! The U.S. is a tough

market, bub. Talk to Alfa-Romeo. I will from this point on refer to Dean Dirg as the Recidivists, which is a much better name for a punk rock band. Loud noise? Yep. A sound like the Dissimilars? Uh-huh. A number called "Everyone Back Off?" Sure. 26 songs in 26 minutes? Sign me RIGHT THE FUCK UP. I like the Recidivists, and I like this record. It's a very aggressive way to spend almost a half hour. The Recidivists! Ask for them today! (Dead Beat)

—Johnny Reno

The Destroyed – Russian Roulette cd

Bert Switzer and J.D. Jackson punish their instruments with the enthusiasm of two pissed off 15 year-old boys, still excited by the sheer volume two guys can produce with just a guitar and drum kit. It should come to you as a surprise then that Bert and J.D. are 57 and 51 respectively. This is the Destroyed's second release in 29 years, but in all fairness the group was dormant for 24 of those years. The sound is loud and loose. Very loose. In fact, you'll be hard pressed to find Switzer playing a straight beat for longer than a measure. He's a frantic Buddy Rich on crystal-meth, producing a sound not that dissimilar from Bill Stevenson's bashing on Black Flag's *The Process of Weeding Out*. J.D. Jackson accompanies this chaos with a bed of cheap, lo-fi power chords that fall in and out of time and he sings like a sleepy Johnny Rotten, even cribbing the melody of "Sub-Mission" on "Crime Wave." But the Destroyed make the Sex Pistols' polished, structured songs sound more like the Bay City Rollers than punk. *Russian Roulette* is 31 minutes of insane, bombastic, exhausting, noisy punk, and as my girlfriend pointed out, *not for girls*.

—Jesse Mank

Dick Panthers – Eternal Biological Conflict cd-r

This is weird, crude, jokey, homemade music. It's lo-fi, but the music is actually put together really well. I can't get into this kind of stuff, but the track entitled "I'm a People," is very catchy and rather charming.
 (www.dickpanthers.com)

—Justin Kearbey

Driver – Ninth Valley cd

Polka beat drums, metallic guitars, menacing Cookie Monster vocals—Driver slay everything in their path. Their monster movie lyrics make sense to me ("Psycho Nuns from Outer Space,"

"Lesbian Seahags from Indiana," "Margie Was a Martian") but I'm confused by the topical songs, like "Draft Dodger" and "Communism (Catch the Fever)." Do they admire the character in "Draft Dodger"? Do they want to turn him in? Do they know any actual draft dodgers? Last I checked dodging the draft hasn't been much of an issue since they got rid of the draft and moved to an all-volunteer military. Similarly with "Communism." Outside of Fidel Castro and the guys in i-farm, who endorses Marxism these days? (Don't say China. I don't know how best to describe what they practice but a) it's no threat to catch on with anyone else on the planet and b) it ain't communism.) I feel like Donald Sutherland's character in *Animal House* as I type this but I really do want to know the answers to these questions. Come on, people, this is my job! (Lookatme Bumpole)

—Mike Faloon

Epoxies – "Need More Time" cd ep

Collecting five songs from the band's first two 7"s, this disc is a great way to dip your toes in the snappy new wave waters of Lake Epoxie. The only catch is that most of these tracks have since surfaced on the Epoxies' albums. The exceptions are the covers, Adam Ant's "Beat My Guest" and Carron's "Clones." This is a community service release for diehards craving those elusive songs. (Diehards who will buy this and then still go on eBay to seek out the original singles.) (Dirtnap)

—Mike Faloon

The Ergs – Jersey's Best Prancers 12" ep

Yea, yea, yea. By now I think we're all over the whole "Oh-my-god-they're-a-bunch-of-funny-looking-little-nerds-that-are-way-too-into-All-but-wow-they-can-really-play-their-nerdy-little-asses-off." OK, I get it already! But damn if this little butterfly doesn't take off just when you're ready to pin its wings to the riker mount! Suddenly there's complexity and nuance, and not for the sake of complexity and nuance. but for the sake of the songs, man! Somehow these lads find the trapdoor hidden in that corner they were about to paint themselves into and take the leap. Where they'll land is anyone's guess, but who cares? For now I'm too busy enjoying the plunge.

—Matt Braun

The Ergs – *Jersey's Best Prancers* 12" ep; "Jazz Is the New Coke" b/w "Out There" 7"

Sometimes I wonder why the bands I love don't latch onto some sort of mainstream success. We live in an age where Marilyn Manson is considered mainstream. I listen to a lot of strange music, but nothing that rivals that nut. Plus, there are precedents, bands I've liked that went on to pick up an audience. I was plugging Nirvana back in 1990 and they went on to sell a box of records or three. Other times, though, it's crystal clear why, for example, my co-workers aren't into the same bands as I am. Take the Ergs, one of my favorite bands of the decade. They sing about broken hearts. They soak all of their songs in big, irresistible hooks. They can even play their instruments. They've got the sounds, but how on earth can anyone find those sounds? One of their recent releases, *New Jersey's Best Prancers*, is a 12" 45 of which 100 copies were pressed. Their other new record, "Jazz Is the New Coke," is a 7" of which 250 copies were made. Two releases; 350 copies. No one was meant to hear these records. In fact, the 7" came with a note saying, basically, don't review this because it's part of a singles club and, though brand new, is pretty much out of print. I know this reeks of bellyaching on my part. I know I should be grateful to have two new Ergs records in the stacks. But I can't blame people for not signing up for Ergs mania when even I have a hard time tracking down their records. These guys deserve better. There, I've vented. Let's move on. *Best Prancers* is remarkable, especially side two. It's there that we get a glimpse of the Ergs of the future. Much as I love those caffeinated love songs the Ergs are known for, I've long assumed that the Ergs are built for the long haul and, given that, wondered where their sound is headed. How about sprinkling in acoustic guitars? Using words I have to look up in the dictionary (infirmity – n., a moral weakness or failing)? Hell, writing about dreams you've had, even if those dreams are about bridges. Just do so without sacrificing the other elements that keep the Ergs in steady rotation in wiser households across the country. The a-side of the 7", "Jazz Is the New Coke," is, in fact, much better than either jazz or new Coke, picking up where the band's last full-length left off. The flipside, "Out There," is a Screaming Trees cover. I know, Screaming Trees (where's the Tad cover, right?), but be polite and cover your mouth when you yawn. And remember, this is the Ergs. They can make a dull thing, say, a

Screaming Trees song, interesting. Quite interesting, as a matter of fact. Almost makes me wish I'd kept that free Screaming Trees record I got way back when, the one with the original version of "Out There." Wait, no. "Out There" is from a Screaming Trees side project band, Solomon Grundy. That just makes the Ergs' version an order of magnitude more impressive. (Though I wonder if the release of said cover means that the Ergs have cancelled their plans to release an album of cover songs titled "Out There"? Are the Dinosaur Jr. and Eric Dolphy covers now permanently shelved?) To sum up, we have one record, the 7", that picks up where the Ergs left off and another record, the 12", that gives us a sign of the shape of things to come. Right on. (Note: As we went to press we were informed that a) the 12" reviewed above will be available on cd and b) there are 500 copies of the 7".) (*New Jersey's Best Prancers*: Don Giovanni Records; "Jazz Is the New Coke" b/w "Out There": Art of the Underground)

–Mike Faloon

Fe Fi Fo Fums – *Shake All Night* lp

I like their debut single, but I wasn't prepared this platter. It's like following a spitball with a hand grenade. The adjectives are still the same—music that's trashy and fun, lyrics that are loaded with impatience, production that's low budget—but it's all ten times more effective. This is everything I'm looking for in a record. The label behind this gem, Boom Boom Records, is probably the best label on the planet right now and lately each of their releases has leap frogged its predecessor. This may reek of hyperbole, but it's all true. If you buy a copy of *Shake All Night* and fail to feel the need to preserve said record for your children's children's children, then I will buy the record from you and see that it gets into the hands of someone who will properly adore it. I'll ridicule you in public, but I'll buy the record. At some point you're going to have to look at yourself in the mirror. (Boom Boom)

–Mike Faloon

Federation X – *Rally Day* cd

Not-quite-stoner-rock with a heavy groove that isn't nearly as horrible as the phrase "not-quite-stoner-rock with a heavy groove" makes it sound. Think more Fleshes than Fu Manchu and you're almost on the right track. But I'm sitting there the other night listening to it going, "dang, did they have to use that distortion effect on the vocals on every freakin' track?" A couple nights later I caught 'em live and realize that's no

effect—that's that boy's voice! Recommended for entertaining guests in your custom van if your custom van is a fixed gear bike. (Estrus, P.O. Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227)

–Matt Braun

David Greenberger and 3 Leg Torso – *Whispers, Grins, Bloodloss, and Handshakes* cd

Whispers finds David Greenberger again paired up with 3 Leg Torso, his monologues supported by their instrumentals. It worked to wonderful effect on their last outing, *Legibly Speaking*, but here they have tinkered with the formula. The songs are shorter and spending less time with each subject shifts the emphasis from personalities to anecdotes. The results leave me torn. On the one hand I love this experiment and am thankful they are continuing it. On the other, the faster pace—14 songs in 21 minutes—makes it less like spending a relaxing afternoon on a front porch and more like a series of speed conversations. Heard individually, in between longer pieces on *This American Life*, for example, these tracks might make a greater impression. As a whole, they go by too fast. (Meester/Pel Pel)

–Mike Faloon

David Greenberger & Birdsongs of the Mesozoic – *1001 Real Apes* cd

Despite all the great music on this 28 track CD, it is before anything, spoken word. David Greenberger delivers stream-of-consciousness, "shaggy-dog" monologues culled from hours of off-the-wall conversations with the aging residents of the now defunct Duplex Nursing home in Boston, punctuated by the eclectic jazz-fusion, kitchen-sink, Raymond Scott-ophiles, Birdsongs of The Mesozoic. The result sounds like an NPR-ready, Hal Willner-with-his-hair-down project: high-rent silliness for discerning, highbrow listeners. For over 25 years Greenberger has been publishing these conversations in his homemade magazine *Duplex Planet*, which has garnered praise from just about any respected, nonsense-loving artist you could think of, from Penn Jillette to Robyn Hitchcock. His work has been adapted in comic form by Dan Clowes, Chris Ware, and Peter Bagge and in musical form by XTC, Morphine, and Young Fresh Fellows, among many others. So, it's hard to dismiss what Greenberger does with so many respected artists in his corner. But while his talent for coaxing brilliantly irrelevant stories from seniors is remarkable, his readings of these stories may be a little too cutesy for the average Gen X cynic. His exaggerated, hey-kids-

it's-story-time delivery "Technicolors" these otherwise fantastic pieces, making even the funniest, weirdest bits on this CD feel corny. With so many gifted performers championing his work, I can't help but wonder how great this CD would be had Greenberger taken the back seat and left the orating to the professionals. (Meester/Pel Pel)

—Jesse Mank

Tim Hall – *The Triumph of the Won't* novel

Note of disclosure: Tim Hall is both a contributor and a friend. Now the review... I've been watching a lot of Sam Peckinpah lately. He's one of those directors I was aware of long before seeing any of his movies. I sampled the bookends—*The Wild Bunch*, his breakthrough from 1969; *The Osterman Weekend*, his swan song from 1983—but it wasn't I saw the remarkable *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* that I got a full dose of Peckinpah. Gratuitous sex and violence and absurdly dark humor typically turn me away but those are Peckinpah stocks in trade. The thing is he takes me into these ugly worlds that I'll never venture close to and he makes me see how a guy ends up on a quest for another guy's head, tempering the extreme with the tender. Just as the images of Warren Oates driving around Mexico talking to Garcia's decapitated head are forever seared in my mind, so are those where Oates is being serenaded by his girlfriend while they rest in the shade. Though Hall doesn't go to Peckinpah-like extremes, there are a lot of those "warts and all" dynamics at work in *Triumph of the Won't*. Hall takes us into unpleasant worlds and sometimes shows us more than we want to see, but he cares about these characters and that's what keeps *Triumph of the Won't* above the level of mere cheap thrills. Another Peckinpah/Hall similarity is a shared tendency to root for the little guy against an encroaching modern world that doesn't always make sense, with Hall using the literary and musical worlds of 80s and 90s NYC as his backdrop. (There are two of Hall's essays included in this issue. Sample for yourself.) I flew through *Triumph*, one story as readable as the next. My favorites being the longer stories like "Club It Up" and "Literary Anarchists Mobilizing Everywhere." A great read. (Undie Press)

—Mike Faloona

Headache City – s/t cd

Catchy pop songs with moody keyboards and vocals that seem just a little bit off...doesn't sound appealing does it? In

fact, it sounds like a review you'd read in *CMJ*, a review that translates to "I don't really like this record but the editor won't let us give negative reviews because we need every potential advertiser we can get." And the thing is I've listened to *Headache City* a lot this summer, it's quite a good record. About the second or third listen it started reminding me of Flying Nun bands like the Chills and the Verlaines, bands whose albums used to take me years to fully appreciate. I figured the same payoff was in store with *Headache City* and I was right. Theirs is that restless mix of pop and punk that draws me in even while it doesn't sit quite right; yes, there are hooks but there's also some work to be done on the part of the listener. (That and the idiotic appeal—on my part, not the band's—contained in the fact that the band Headache City has released an album titled *Headache City*, which contains a song called "Headache City." It's the Talk Talk/Talk Talk/"Talk Talk" trifecta!) "Suicide Summer" and "Don't" contain the biggest pop hooks, but watch out for cuts like "Knee Jerk Reaction" and "Livin on the Edge of a Knife," the slow burners which sound like they come from a Homestead Records sampler circa 1986. Now, back to my *CMJ* audition: Catchy pop songs with moody keyboards and vocals that seem just a little bit off make *Headache City* a worthy destination for the discerning indie rock fan! RIYL: Chills, Verlaines, Sonic Youth, Embarrassment. (Shit Sandwich)

—Mike Faloona

The Heartattacks – *Your Lies 7"* ep

Billed as the Swedish Teengenerate, the Heartattacks are fast and raw, but they lack that glint in their eye, that hint that they might be nuts and shatter a lamp or two in the process. (Plastic Idol)

—Mike Faloona

Hellbillys – *Torture Garden* cd

A record that opens with a sample of movie dialogue? Cover art that pays tribute to EC comics? Punked up rockabilly? What is this, 1995? Well, yes it is, in the form of this reissue of the Hellbillys' debut album. You know the drill, they slick up their hair, write lyrics that ape the culture of 1950s juvenile delinquents all while the singer howls and the bass player chugs away on his upright. The buzzsaw guitar suffocates their Collins Kids' cover ("Whistle Bait"), but the originals hold up all right. (Marsh Metal)

—Mike Faloona

The Hi-Frequencies – *Money Isn't Everything* cd

When I saw the picture of the band on the cover, I thought it might be ska or

swing, but the Hi-Frequencies play 50s/60s rock/pop/surf-ish music, and I'm glad. The album is a mix of covers (Chuck Berry, Tommy Roe, Fats Domino), original songs with vocals, and original instrumentals. They start out the album with Chuck Berry's "I'm Talking About You," and while I like the song, it seems odd to start off the album with a cover. What seems even stranger to me is to follow that up with "Everybody" by Tommy Roe. The good thing is that I really like their version. What I like even more is "225," a fantastic original instrumental. The few original songs with vocals are pretty good, but not outstanding. Sometimes it may lack energy, but all in all, it's a fun record. (Teen Regime Records – PO Box 100167, Pittsburgh, PA 15233)

—Justin Kearbey

Hunchback – *Ugly on the Outside* cd

Everybody loves surf music! But nobody will fess up to playing the stuff straight. Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet, the much beloved trio whose "Having an Average Weekend" wound up being the *Kids in the Hall* theme song, had a great song called "We're Not a Fucking Surf Band." And they were right. They were an instrumental band, though they could have scored any number of genres other than sketch comedy shows (and Taco Bell ads). The equally adored (at least in the pond in which I swim) Man...Or Astroman? didn't play surf music eitler, mixing their high octave instrumental action with science fiction. And now we have Hunchback. They're not a surf band either. Not really. Sure, Mike Hunchback can uncork guitar lines that make me wish I had a handle on surf lingo, but the band's just as likely to break into quiet indie pop ("Feeling Betterdotcom") or garage rock ("Black Sunday"). Not to mention the horror movie samples (which they're kind enough to credit: *Seeds of Sin* and *Spider Baby*). It's a bit schizophrenic, but there's a lot to like. (Freedom School)

—Mike Faloona

Hunters, Run – *Broken Sounds* cd

There's a good blueprint behind these songs, early Lemonheads in the vocals, more than a passing nod to XTC (especially "A Sweet Deal on the Murderhouse," which is a full-on tribute to Andy Partridge and company circa *Drums and Wires* or *Black Sea*). But *Broken Sounds* seems unsettled, like a work in progress. The mix is uneven (the vocals need to come down and the guitars need to be pushed up) and the sounds don't always fit the song at hand

(like the incongruous keyboards on "Our Latter Days"). Uneven, but promising.

—Mike Faloon

Hussalonia – Four Pop Songs About Death cd ep; The Broken Hearted Friends EP cd ep

Dear Hussalonia,

I know these records came with explicit instructions stating that they not be reviewed. I am writing to inform you that I plan to adhere to your wishes. At the same time, I have to let you know how much I appreciate and enjoy the ep's. Let's start with *Pop Songs About Death*. The combination of sweetness and morbidity reminds me of Halloween, with pop hooks and death-themed lyrics replacing candy and death-themed manners of dress. *You make me want to kill myself/ And take others with me too*—now that's a chorus. Death doesn't surface often enough in pop songs. My favorite cut is "Death Is Imminent." The angelic vocals appeal to my inner Freddie Mercury (which we all have, I believe) while the sharp-as-a-Ginsu guitar lines appeal to my inner Brian May. Taken as a whole these songs are another example of Hussalonia's time-honored practice that anything can, and should, go into a pop song. XTC's Andy Partridge would be proud. (Though just to be clear, what with the Queen and XTC references, I think the latter is the more direct connection in this case.) I also like *The Broken Hearted Friends EP*. I don't often listen to music with this much open space in it. The fact that I've come back to this disc so many times, most often when driving home after a long day at work, is further proof of how malleable the Hussalonia sound is. Even when the songs are stripped down, quieted down, and slowed down the melodies still ring-through. (Good choice of covers, by the way, especially milf's "Me.") Some nights I need a record to overwhelm my mind. Other nights I need a record like this to bring me down (in terms of energy, not mood). By the way, "Your Black Umbrella" is a swell closer ("I'll collapse like your black umbrella/If you take me out when it rains").

It will be difficult to resist reviewing these records, but resist I shall.

Sincerely,
Mike Faloon

I Object - Teaching Revenge cd

Oh, man! Whoever said there's no room for comedy in punk rock did not know

what the fuck they were talking about. This is the funniest thing, punk rock or otherwise, I have heard (and seen, and read) in years. Motherfuck a Bob Newhart; this thing skewers political-punk while leaving you in stitches. Let's start with the hand-drawn cover art, where we see a punk prison convict flipping off the prison guard that's stepping on his neck. How do I know he's punk? Simple, he's got "PUNX" tattooed on one hand and "KILL" on the other. Brilliant! Well, as if the poor punk didn't have it bad enough as is, there appear to be several B-52s dropping bombs on either the prison or its immediate surroundings. And you thought you had a bad day! Inside the booklet it only gets better. Of course, the lyrics hit the nail on the head and cover every topic you fully expect on a high-concept, joke-punk record of this caliber (eating disorders, health insurance, prison), but where it really shines are the quasi-literate "explanations" that accompany the lyrics. Take this tidbit: "High School can be a very dangerous situation for some people. This was the case for me. Luckily I got out before I did anything stupid. Dropping out is not an end all. It can be a new beginning for a lot of us." Hilarious. I don't even want to tell you how long it took me to get the joke behind the band's name. (Hint #1: they're female fronted. Hint #2: add a comma.) Overall, I think I'd have to say this might be the most scathing mockery of contemporary punk A.T. has ever dared to put out! Wait... what? No c'mon, seriously? Oh wow... whoops. (Blacknoise/ Alternative Tentacles, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco, CAA 94141-9092)

—Matt Braun

The Impulse – s/t cd-r ep

It has to be tough starting a new band after spending a decade with a previous group. Do you ditch the sound you've developed and move on to completely new ground, or do you keep doing what you've done, only with new people and under a different banner? That's where Adam Rabuck is, post-Dirt Bike Annie, as he sets sail with the Impulse. He's recruited a good band and they have quality material in hand, though it seems like they're still adjusting how to make these songs sound great without sounding like DBA. Ironically what these songs need is more Adam, more punch in the guitars, fewer effects on the vocals. I wonder if he senses that too ("Still feeling self conscious and I so wish I could change it—"Losing RockandRoll"). These are things that will work themselves out. This not what I expected from Adam would do post-

Dirt Bike Annie—especially "Tornados and Trailer Parks," which is nice and sweet and long, but long in a good way—but it is what I hoped he would do: close to Dirt Bike Annie but different. (myspace/theimpulse)

—Mike Faloon

The Itch – The Courage to Be Hated cd

Yet another product from the Itch I don't like. A song like the 1:08 "Attack of the Social Chameleons" seems like it goes on too long, which isn't good, and the guitars on the whole record are monotonous. I always think their singer is off-key. What's that, you say? Only a huge pussy cares if a singer is off-key? Fine, then. I take this insulting word, "pussy," and I co-opt it! I'm a pussy! I'm the Number-One-Emperor-King Pussy. Now what are you going to do? What? Nothing? Really? Nothing at all? You're just going to sit there and sip on your juicebox? Yeah, that's what I thought. This isn't a terrible record. If you're a Minutemen fan, you might even like the guy's voice. I never got into the Minutemen, myself. Huh? Now you know that I'm a prick, because I don't like the Minutemen? Intolerant, name-calling people like you are why the Greeks and the Turks are still fighting over Cyprus. Oh, you're not familiar with the details of the Cypriot War? Now who's a prick? (Wee Rock)

—Johnny Reno

Knights of the New Crusade – A Challenge to the Cowards of Christendom cd

I'm all for good gimmicks. They make bands more distinctive and give them sharper focus. But sometimes they can be taken too far. Like the Knights of the New Crusade. I'm a big proponent of their debut album, it's a garage rock classic. The fact that it draws on Christian scripture for inspiration motivates the band to play better and write finer material, which enhances the listening experience for the audience. Yet on their sophomore effort, the Knights, perhaps too mindful of their audience, let the preaching get the better of them. Nearly every track opens with a skit or monologue. I get the impression that in the eyes of the Knights, testifying has come to eclipse rocking. I mean, do we need a two and a half minute lecture on the negative aspects of hell? The Knights think we do. And they follow that track, "Why Do You Want to Go to Hell?" by speaking in tongues. Literally. They close the album with "Knight Beat: Speaking in the Holy Spirit," a tune that will either have your eyes rolling back into your head or your hands

desperately reaching for the "stop" button. And yet I still recommend *A Challenge to the Cowards of Christendom*. I'm a patient guy. I got through nearly an hour of *Munich* before giving up. (Do you know anyone who sat through that entire movie?) I waded through the spoken material and found myself awash in great songs. The Knights still rock with abandon. And then we're back to the gimmick. I wonder on what level they mean it, or at least one Knight means it or was forced to study religion when they were a kid. Why commit so much if it's a joke? Burning questions remain...

—Mike Faloon

LiveFastDie – Bandana Thrash Record cd

Neither bandana rock (think Aerosmith or Bon Jovi) nor thrash, LiveFastDie seem to be among that rare breed who dig early Ramones albums but, when it came time to record their own album found those same Ramones albums to be too slick. LiveFastDie use a similar formula for songwriting—mixing bubblegum hooks with cartoonishly malicious lyrics ("Passing Out (In Front of Children)", "Snuff Movie")—but, hellbent on making the worst sounding record you've ever heard, they bury the results under an avalanche of ridiculously distorted guitars and vocals. Good in some places, trying in others. (Dead Beat)

—Mike Faloon

The Mag Seven – The Future Is Ours, If You Can Count cd

Enclosed are all the elements of a low-stakes all-star side project—guys from bands you've likely heard of (Black Flag, All, Gwar, Hagfish) playing outside of their usual genres (all instrumentals) and jokey song titles from the He-Man-Woman-Haters handbook ("Suck Bitch," "Poonzilla"). Unfortunately, *The Future Is Ours* also bears another trait of the side project: songs that sound like they were learned one day and recorded the next. There aren't any flubbed guitar lines or dropped beats, everyone involved is too professional to allow such errors to slip through, but it's that same professionalism that leaves *The Future Is Ours* sounding like another day at the office. (End Sounds)

—Mike Faloon

The Manikins – Spend the Night Alone 7" ep

Usually it only takes a spin or two to figure out if you like a single. They are like candy. It's not like you have to swish a Clark Bar around your pallet for five minutes to reach a verdict. Cheap

and easy to consume (or dispose of, if it is not to your liking), that's the point. Why, then, are the Manikins giving me such a hard time? I know I like them, that much was easy, but I can't figure out why. It's like there's some new variation on caramel or nougat that is throwing my taste buds for a loop. On the one hand, they profess to be "Still Afraid of Girls," which is totally at odds with the hip swaggering confidence exuded by the music. Adding to the conundrum is "Spend the Night Alone," in which our hero very politely asks the lady in his life to stop calling him because they've "hurt each other enough already." He's willfully staying at home and he's exercising precaution. What the hell is that all about? There's no room for precaution in rock'n'roll. Or so I thought before hearing the Manikins. And I didn't even get to "Take 5," the best song on the ep. I'm just going to enjoy that one. (Plastic Idol)

—Mike Faloon

The Marked Men – Fix My Brain

Here's the third Marked Men LP, which I downloaded directly off iTunes in a spasm of technological impulsiveness. I wish I had bought the wax, instead, now that I think about it. I had to hear it right away. I chose convenience. Now I don't have a record cover to look at, and I don't get liner notes or anything. For all I know, Swami sells ad space on the cover, like that Sigie Sigie Sputnik album. Maybe they have reproduced "Penis Landscape" in a gatefold or called the Spits "dilettantes" in the thank-you section, inspiring a full-fledged gang war that will end in bloodshed, heartache, and promises of revenge. I'll miss out on the whole thing. Hey, is my moanin' gonna turn back the clock? Nope. So what am I gonna do? Live life! That's right! Live life. This record stinks of the goddamned sixties, with Beach Boy harmonies on "Sophisticate" and "Sully My Name," which lets loose a Dylan vocal style not even hinted at on the last LP. This would infuriate me, except that I love the Beach Boys and there are one or two Dylan records that I love, too. Although *Fix My Brain* isn't the flamethrower *On the Outside* is, it's still pretty loud. "Wait Here, Wait For You" is a hit pop song in a reality less cynical than ours. The third Marked Men full length is yet another superlative set of songs from a band enjoying a creative peak, and it sounds to me like they are gearing up for something bigger. What you should do is buy everything the Marked Men ever release. (Swami)

—Johnny Reno

Marked Men/Sultans/ Heartaches – tour split 7"

Here's the best split of the year, featuring my new favorite Marked Men song, "Wait For You" along with "She's Gone," a bittersweet cover by the Sultans that will make you a little sad, and "Prisoner Of Love" by the Heartaches, which features lots of prison imagery. The whole thing is great. Plus, I met a chick at the show and we took dirty pictures in a photo booth. Why am I reviewing a record you are never going to be able to buy now that this tour is done? Fuck you, that's why. (Swami)

—Johnny Reno

The Marknetic Fields – 9 Love Songs cd-r ep

Mark Hughson, sole proprietor of the Marknetic Fields (and, in full disclosure, also a contributor to these pages), sings so gently—just above a whisper actually, accompanied by just a hint of acoustic guitar—it's like his special someone is in the same room as he's recording and he's trying not to wake her up. Not that he has anything to hide, he's just a considerate guy and he probably wants to surprise her with these songs, which are probably all about her in one way or another, except "Hot Topic Girl," I don't think the subject of the other songs works there. Pleasant bedroom pop from a guy who, unlike most purveyors of the form, actually talks to his beloved. (Bort Records)

—Mike Faloon

The Mind Controls – s/t cd

Johnny Reno: If these songs were shorter and faster these guys would be the Automatics.

Mike Faloon: Is that a good thing?

Reno: Not necessarily. Dirtnap is so reliable, maybe we just expect too much from them.

Faloon: Also, we don't need any more songs about "Friday Night." Fridays? I've taken care of them, I always enjoy my Friday nights, even when I just come home and fall asleep half way through a movie. It's Wednesdays I have trouble with; we need more songs about Wednesdays. (Dirtnap)

The Mind Controls – s/t cd

Within the first two seconds of this disc, I was smiling. It's about time I found something I really like! The fact that Mark Sultan plays guitar, sings, and wrote all the songs just makes me happier. I love his one-man-band recordings (as BBQ), and I love this as well. While the BBQ recordings are bluesy, stomping rock & roll, *The Mind Controls* is pretty much straight punk rock. The songs are all short (only three are over two minutes), and that's the

way it should be. They aren't inventive or extremely original, either, but who cares when they are so catchy and fun? *The Mind Controls* is a raw, urgent recording that anyone who likes "punk rock" should pick up. (Dirtnap Records – 2615 SE Clinton, Portland, OR 97202) –Justin Kearbey

Minus 5 – *The Gun Album* cd

From the chorus to "Out There on the Maroon" to the bass line for "My Life as a Creep" to the piano part on "All Worn Out," there is an abundance of Beatles-like behavior flowing through *The Gun Album*, which is cause for rejoicing because few people in this world can work a pop song like the Minus 5's master of ceremonies, Scott McCaughey. And while the Beatles may be the main template for the latest M5 offering, the Fab Four never uncorked a punk song like "Aw Shit Man." Nor did they ever go country like "With a Gun" or "Cemetery Row." Stylistically, you'd think *The Gun Album* might collapse under the weight of its "all that and the kitchen sink" approach, but McCaughey's voice, literally and lyrically, binds it all together. He has the ability to emulate his heroes without imitating them and he seems to draw on his own experiences without writing about himself. At first glance it may not appear to add up. Like the way a line such as "Life doesn't have sun most of the time" ("With a Gun") can be uplifting. I get some of my best thinking done to Minus 5 albums and I get to brush up on my backing vocals, too. (Yep Roc)

–Mike Faloon

Miranda Sound – *Western Reserve* cd

Mike Faloon: When I saw the blue jay on the cover I immediately thought of *Blue Jay Way*, which is a side project done by two of the guys from the Moody Blues, Justin Hayward and John Lodge. Johnny Reno: This is good but I don't like it. It's like the Promise Ring. Faloon: It's like that Patton Oswald bit about different types of comedians. One of the categories is "They're funny but so what." Kind of like musicians who play their instruments well but write songs you don't relate to. Reno: Nobody reading this magazine is going to like this. My patience is running out. (Sunken Treasure)

Modern Machines – *Taco Blessing* cd

I like that the youth of today (not Youth of Today) have latched on to the exciting sound of two of my all time favorite

bands: Husker Du and the Replacements. However, I don't like the fact they all seem to be operating under the misconception that *Candy Apple Grey* and *Don't Tell a Soul* are good records when, in point of fact, the Modern Machines' *Thwap!* was better than either one of them. (Recess Records, P.O. Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733)

–Matt Braun

Modern Machines – *Take it, Somebody!* cd

You run a big risk giving an album a title like this. It really makes it too easy to give it a witty, unfavorable review. By that same token, as the reviewer in this scenario, you don't want to blow an opportunity like this. It'd be like Barry Bonds striking out looking in a beer league softball game. (GenTech's decision to "transition" some of the Zisk staff to GM's review section should be apparent to the reader by now.) Anyhow here it goes (and pretend the review both begins and ends here): "I have a feeling that's what I'll be saying after the third used record retailer in a row says 'pass' to this CD!" Meh. You see what I'm saying? Let's call that one "reached on an error." (Dirtnap Records)

–Matt Braun

Nardwuar – *Doot Doola Doot Doo...Doot Doo!* double dvd

I wonder what it's like the first time a band is interviewed by Nardwuar. They sit down expecting to be asked about the tour or their influences and he wants to talk about a club the bassist joined in high school. And Nardwuar's not speculating, he knows what club the bassist joined. Now he, the bassist, can play the Nardwuar game, which means giving the interviewer the spotlight or he can resist and cling to the notion that he's the rock star and he gets all of the attention. From Nardwuar's perspective it doesn't matter what the bassist does, he's ready for anything. He has a blast with the people who play along. And he can handle the wet blankets who tear up his interview questions (Blur) or break his glasses (Sonic Youth), storm away (Courtney Love) or, my favorite, try to match Sir Nardwuar in a battle of wits and reveal how dimwitted they are (Sum 41). Over the course of two discs you get it all, but the best is *Nard Wars I*, which originally aired on Canada's *Much Music*. This hour long show puts together Nardwuar's greatest hits and it's wonderful. Who else could draw an interesting interview out of a cynic like Gene Simmons? And there's over four hours of footage beyond that show.

Nardwuar waiting for Snoop Dog; Nardwuar's bands; full-length interviews. *Doot Doola Doot Doo...Doot Doo!* is relentlessly ridiculous. It's also a cultural treasure. (Alternative Tentacles)

–Mike Faloon

NRBQ – *Froggy's Favorites Vol. 1* – *Live 1979-1999* double cd

NRBQ, aka The New Rhythm and Blues Quartet, can, and do, cover just about every corner of the post-WWII American music landscape, expect punk rock. No punk rock in the NRBQ sound. That's why it took me so long to appreciate them. When I hit 30 I decided to try new things, one of which was NRBQ. (I started with the *At Yankee Stadium* album, the gag being that they weren't performing at Yankee Stadium, they were just photographed sitting in the stands.) Turns out they do everything but punk, they do it well, and they always radiate an infectious sense of "let's have a good time." Which brings us, or me at least, to *Froggy's Favorites*, a two-disc set of previously unreleased live material. Disc one offers 17 songs from 11 different shows. A good time for diehard fans looking for new twists in old favorites but, because the songs come from so many different shows, a bit choppy. Disc two works better. Thirteen of the cuts come from two shows so you get better sense of the band building momentum over the course of a live set. One highlight is the inclusion of a great live routine, the Magic Box. Audience members are encouraged to write the name of any song from any era that they want to hear the band cover. They claim to "know 'em all." Except Devo's "Whip It," which is suggested, attempted, aborted, and replaced by "The Impossible Dream." (I love the irony of Yankee fans playing "The Impossible Dream," which was the theme song for the 1967 Red Sox.) If there's one band that can make such a claim, it's NRBQ because either they know the song or you want to hear them fake it. (Edisun)

–Mike Faloon

Pyrite – *Iron Soul Fight* cd-r ep

According to the laws of probability, it was bound to happen sooner or later, though I had my doubts: among the flood of turn of the century bands discovering Gang of 4 and Mission of Burma, I would find one that I liked. The most common mistake among such bands is the belief that singing poorly is the way to update the post-punk sounds of the late 70s and early 80s. *If I howl like a banshee, then no one will be able to tell that my band is trying to sound*

like a mix of Entertainment and Signals, Calls, and Marches. Yeah, we've heard the unconventional vocals on Fugazi records, but those guys are the exception, not the rule. And in a different way, so is Pyrite. They might very well own the records mentioned above, but they're carving out their own path. A fine outing fellas, keep us posted. (Myspace.com/Pyrite)

—Mike Faloon

The Radio Beats – Ready to Shake cd

This disc is one big gumball of sound, guitar, bass, drums, cymbals, and vocals all globbed together into a mass that you can't pull apart without getting your fingers all dirty. A mess I don't mind and I can deal with a clump of songs that all sound the same, but at some point I like to be able to tell where the guitars end and the snare drums begins. I'm cranky that way. (Big Neck)

—Mike Faloon

Radio Reelers – The Next Big Thing cd

At first spin I was all set to write off Radio Reelers (no "The") as yet another bunch of insufferable, third rate Devil Dogs-wannabes. Then it hit me and suddenly I "got it." Sure, there was a time when the rock underground was virtually awash in such tripe. In fact, didn't the Gotohells go so far as to actually have Steve Baise join their band? But when you think about it, when's the last time you ran across a band that would even name-check the Devil Dogs as an influence? One can only assume that everyone's pinky fingers just got really sore from doing that du-nuh-NUH-nuh thing that you have to do with your pinky finger to fully ape 'da Dogs trademark sound, and that was the end of that. Well Radio Reelers are bringing it back! And these hombres ain't shy about what they're shooting for here either; right down to that ugly typeface that was used on all those Crypt records back in the day (which, HOLY SHIT, all of a sudden is over ten years ago). No other cheesy-but-irresistible stone is left unturned here either from shouting out their own band's name in the middle of songs to the ubiquitous "let's name a bunch of cities across the country" thing that I'm always a sucker for. Good times. (Dead Beat Records, P.O. Box 283, Los Angeles, CA 90078)

—Matt Braun

Rectangles – Suspended Animation 7" ep

In the grand tradition of Devo, Servotron, and the Epoxies, come the Rectangles, purveyors of wonderfully cartoonish robotic new wave. (They say

synth punk, I say new wave, but we can all get along, right?) The Rectangles acknowledge that they're not the most progressive band around ("I can't go forward/I can't go back/Suspended Animation") and we don't need them to be. The only thing missing is evidence of a collective agenda. Are they of us or from beyond? Did they set up that remote outpost on the cover in order to observe or conquer? And how about the array of machinery littering the back cover? Radar dishes, robots, all-terrain laser tanks—looks like an intergalactic garage sale. My guess is that this 3-song ep, which serves as the band's debut, is an attempt to assimilate and that further plans will be revealed in the future. (Discourage)

—Mike Faloon

The Returnables – s/t cd ep

Every once in a great while I see colors when I listen to music. It happened once in junior high (Rush's *Fly By Night* elicited a shiny, reddish brown) and once in college (Les Paul and Mary Ford's "How High the Moon" had me seeing the most amazing golds and yellows). It's been awhile since I experienced this reaction—it always happens with music that I love and sans psychedelics—but I'm pleased to say that it happened again listening to the four studio cuts on *The Returnables*. Twelve minutes of pure pop bliss that had me seeing the most amazingly vivid reds, and still do. I'm tempted to close the review here, but I'd be doing a disservice if I left anyone with the impression that the Returnables—not reviewed in *GM* since '99—sound like either Rush or Les Paul and Mary Ford. Much more like the Buzzcocks at their best or the Wedding Present (whose "Dare" is covered here) at their poppiest. (Dirtnap)

—Mike Faloon

Gary Reynolds and the Brides of Obscurity – Instant Happiness cd

Seattle-based Gary Reynolds has a fixation with early solo Paul McCartney and post-Ziggy Stardust David Bowie, and he shows that off throughout *Instant Happiness*. And while those are fine artists to list as influences, it can get a bit draining when someone tries to emulate them over the space of an entire album. *Instant Happiness* isn't without a couple of pleasures—"The Food Song" could find a place on any Egyptians-era Robyn Hitchcock album—but not enough of them are here to offset what sounds like an early 70s tribute album. (Electro Kitty)

—Steve Reynolds

River City Tanlines – All 7 Inches Plus Two More cd

I guess when you're writing note perfect Stooges-meet-Shangri-Las garage pop of this quality and somebody asks you what title you'd like to give to the CD that compiles all your 7"s, you're probably just too damn busy rockin' out to come up with something better than *All 7 Inches Plus Two More*. Top notch stuff. (Dirtnap Records)

—Matt Braun

Saboteur – s/t cd ep

Before we even get started, I'll tell you flat-out: This isn't my kind of thing. It's not up my creek or down my alley or around the bend, even. The music is mid-paced, maybe melodic, and played well. I've heard Saboteur being compared to Queens of the Stone Age, Social Distortion, Rocket From the Crypt, and even MTV pop-punk bands, and I support those comparisons. Unfortunately, I don't like any of those bands. (End Sounds – P.O. Box 684743, Austin, TX 78768)

—Justin Kearbey

The Shemps – Kick Out the Jims 2006 Tour cd-r ep (specific enough, for you?)

While the lyrics present the same old loveable Shemps ("Who Brought the Dick?" "Foam Rubber Lover")—and who'd have it any other way?—the songs are the poppiest I've ever heard from these guys. More melodies, more backing vocals, keyboards here and there; Artie, the lead singer, even sounds downright tuneful. I like it a lot. I'm not nuts for the cover song (James Brown's "I'll Go Crazy"), but the five originals are really good. (myspace/theshemps)

—Mike Faloon

Sneaky Pinks – I Can't Wait 7" ep

It happens every spring when I get my annual dose of Alice Cooper's "School's Out." First, I commend the man for having the genius to write such a song and then I wonder why the ranks of such songs haven't swelled. Everyone can connect to "School's Out" on some level. My students don't like 70s rock, but they'll get on board with anything that celebrates the start of summer. I like teaching, but I'm the same way. I cease hearing the song itself and start thinking about all the things I'm going to do over the summer. So why don't we hear more of these songs? Are people not writing them? I suspect that they are, but that they are not writing them well. Cue "I Can't Wait" by the Sneaky Pinks. "Eighteen years is a long, long time/Eighteen years is a long, long time/oh yeah, oh yeah/ oh yeah, oh

yeah/ oh yeah, oh yeah/ oh yeah/I can't wait." It's stupid and simple and magic. Even if, like me, you've lived 18 years twice over. It's not about your age, it's about finally getting something you've long been denied and for at least a few moments it's as cool as you imagined it being. "I Can't Wait" should be afternoon drive material on every pop and rock station coast to coast. Granted, the \$1.98 production might take some people awhile to get used to, but no one will want to resist when that chorus comes around.
(SneakyPinks@hotmail.com)

—Mike Faloon

Snuggle/Whiskey Sunday – split 7"

Whiskey Sunday growls and goes whoa-oh and they're not for me. Snuggle includes a neat little mini-zine with lyrics and pirate pictures and highway maps and I don't care for them much, either. I can't remember why I ordered this record. Maybe I didn't. Sometimes distributors stick in free stuff.
(Vinehell Records)

—Johnny Reno

Sons of Cyrus – Monkey Business Singles & Rarities cd

I put off listening to this a long time. I don't know, they've got that long hair and everything and they're from one of those Scandinavian countries that's so far behind the USA that 30-year-old men are dressing like American teenagers circa 1975, and it's one of those singles and rarities things (and worse yet one from a band you never heard of). But I told Mike, "Yeah, dude, send me whatever, I'll review it." Well, I finally got around to putting it on and it actually ain't half bad. Of course, it's wildly uneven; it's one of those singles and rarities things from a band you never heard of. A surprising amount of this disc is comprised of covers of early 60s hits, though, which made the whole affair more palatable than expected. I mean who doesn't want to sing along to "Nobody But Me," especially now that Cousin Brucie is off the air? (Dead Beat Records, P.O. Box 283, Los Angeles, CA 90078)

—Matt Braun

Sons of Cyrus – Rock & Rollercoaster

Let me think of something positive to say about Sons Of Cyrus. Okay, I have it: Sons Of Cyrus are a wonderful band that you will love. This is an instantly likeable record, with simple lyrics in Swedish-accented English. The best songs are the ones in the beginning and in the middle and at the end.
"Everything is going to go, go to hell,

with everything!" Alicja Trout sings lead on "Begging Me For More," and it's the best thing she's done ever, and this is Alicja Trout we're jabbering about here, she released fourteen records on Saturday, for Pete's sake, and they're ALL pretty good. The Sons remind me of Urge Overkill in that magic *Stull/Saturation* period. What the hell happened to Urge Overkill? It doesn't matter. Time moves forward. Your high school girlfriend has three kids and no amount of Googling is going to change it. (Big Brothel/Dead Beat)

—Johnny Reno

Swing Ding Amigos – Kings of Culo cd

Fantastic, overdriven, spazzy, Tucson stuff that comes off sounding like a leaner, meaner Sonic's Rendezvous Band or early Scared of Chaka with more rock sensibility. No fluff here. 14 songs in 27 minutes and everyone of 'em is damn near perfect. (Recess Records, P.O. Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733)

—Matt Braun

Bert Switzer – Second Chance dvd

We should all have the good fortune to have Bert Switzer's love of life. To paraphrase Jonathan Richman, Bert loves drumming and he lets it show. *Second Chance* is over two hours of footage compiled by Bert himself. Most of those 128 minutes are comprised of drum solos. Bert, hair uncombed, shirt unbuttoned, wailing first on a 7-piece drum kit. Then a soloing on a 5-piece kit. Then a 4-piece set. And the guy plays like a monster, an adept, improvising behemoth. I don't think there's a regular beat to be found in the solos. But if you couldn't tell from the barrage of drumming that Bert digs his trade, then there are 10 interview segments covering everything from Bert's inspirations to the time his old band, the Destroyed, opened for the J. Giels Band. (The blizzard of '78 led to most of the dates being cancelled and during the remaining gig, after the band had the plug pulled on their set, Bert kept playing—drummers don't need no lousy electricity—until the arena security guys forced him off the stage.) Now let's say, just for the sake of argument, that Bert's soloing and interviews had failed to seal the deal for you, the viewer. Enter the second party testimonial, in this case legendary guitarist Henry Kaiser. Henry and Bert played together in a band called Monster Island back in the 70s. (Not only does Henry reminisce about the old days, he gets another Monster Island alumnus to talk about the band they used to rehearse next to, "the worst metal band in the world," a

band that was openly mocked for their lame "more than a feeling" song, a band that became Boston.) Henry and Bert reunite in a bizarre split screen collaboration in which neither the images nor the sounds actually mix together, literally remaining side by side. I wouldn't go so far as to recommend all of *Second Change* but its highlights make it a fascinating cultural document. (BertSwitzer.com)

—Mike Faloon

The Things – Psycho Sound 7" ep

Johnny Reno: This sounds like the Cramps.

Mike Faloon: I was thinking that too. Do you like the Cramps?

Reno: Yeah.

Faloon: Do you like this?

Reno: Not as much as I like the Cramps, but I do like the Things, especially "Sick Street." The best part of this ep is the cover, which is a Stryper-esque yellow and black.

Faloon: Not my bag, though I might dig them live.

Reno: I do like Cramps.

(Big Neck)

The Throbbin' Urges – s/t cd

Dear John and Jane Q. Public,

We, the assembled members of the Throbbin' Urges would like, with this, the release of our debut cd, to go on record as being neither healthy ("I'm So Sick") nor content ("Dial-a-Date") nor fortunate ("Bad Luck") nor trustworthy ("Under Suspicion") nor overly concerned with hygiene ("Head in a Jar"). For those who have sampled our songs you may also be aware of the fact that we are not very worried about anyone being able to tell our songs apart. (Truth be told, that last part isn't easy for us either.) But we want you to know that none of these things are our fault. We are, after all, merely letting out what's naturally there. Our 'throbbin' urges,' if you will, hence the name. It's nature over nurture, man. Still, join us, won't you? Buy the record. Put "Remote Control Pussy" on your mix tapes.

Regards,

The Throbbin' Urges—Adam, Scott, and Kenny

(Dead Beat)

Tractor Sex Fatality – Black Magic, White Pussy cd

Okay, the band name is terrible, and the album title is terrible, but the cover art

is nifty and the booklet folds out to show machete-wielding zombies covered in cobwebs, and that's so cool I taped it inside my medicine cabinet. The record itself is, as they say, not for me. Noisy distorted vocals and no melody. I think they're from Buffalo. I love Buffalo. (Big Neck)

—Johnny Reno

Tractor Sex Fatality – Peel and Eat cd

I don't like the band name, first of all. The artwork is alright, but not spectacular. The music is very aggressive, noisy, and it gives me a headache. It sometimes reminds me of the chorus to Nirvana's "Scentless Apprentice," but more annoying. Maybe if I was a very angry young man, I'd want to crank this up and jump around the room, but as of this writing, I'm just a sickly young man who wants to listen to the Beach Boys. (Dead Beat Records – P.O. Box 283, Los Angeles, CA 90078)

—Justin Kearbey

Tranzmitors – 7"

The pink and yellow record cover makes this look like a new-wave kind of a thing, but the Tranzmitors are a loud guitar band somewhat in the mode of the Exploding Hearts on "Glamour Girls" and the Clash on the anti-consumption "Bigger Houses, Bigger Homes." They sound like commies to me. Both of these songs sound great. Their name is a pain in the ass to spell. There should be at least one more song on this. This is the third excellent 7" I have reviewed in a row. (Deranged)

—Johnny Reno

Uncle Scratch's Gospel Revival – North of Hell cd

Brother Ant plays guitar and Brother Ed plays drums. They dress like white trash and they play blues for the Lord—"Sin City," "Lord Took My Hand," "Devil's Chrysler." I guess Uncle Scratch's Gospel Revival is supposed to be like Knights of the New Crusade, a band which seems committed to both rockin' and testifyin'. But the thing is Ant and Ed never stop winking and mugging. *North of Hell* comes across like a couple of college kids making fun of poor Christians. Easy targets, sure, but I know the satire isn't working when I find myself siding with the church goers. (Rock'n'Roll Purgatory)

—Mike Faloon

V/A – Foot in Mouth Productions Comp 2 cd

The Buckeye state is often among the best places to look for new sounds and this bargain hunter's special is no

exception. With 15 bands, two songs each, it's like plowing through a stack of 45s. Most of those singles are punk rock (some of it to this guy's liking: **Eric Wrong and the Do-Rights**, **Kill the Hippies**, **Professional Againsters**, the **Jeffs**), but are also splashes of pop (**Strange Division**, **Stab-o-matic**) and rockabilly (**Lords of the Highway**). Six good singles; that's worth the price of admission. 12 for 30 = .400. (F.I.M.P.)

—Mike Faloon

V/A – The Funhouse Comp Thing cd

This is the most exhausting record in history. And that's coming from a guy who's taken *Topographic Oceans* for more than one lap around the track. The key distinction being that *The Funhouse Comp Thing* wears me out with an overwhelming number of great songs, while *Topographic Oceans* wears me out with a quartet of side-long song suites. There are 19 good songs on *Funhouse*. Take that, Paul Hardcastle! I listen to *Funhouse* in chunks, eight or 10 songs at a time. It's too much all at once and there are too many cool cuts to merely skip around. So what's in store? Pop and punk and surf and garage and just about everything else that makes life worth living. For god's sake, there are new songs here from **Sgt. Major** (Kurt Bloch's post-Fastbacks combo) and the **Primate 5**. And the **Pulses** and the **Fall-Outs** and gobs of other cool bands (**Fe Fi Fo Fums**, **Unnatural Helpers**, **Trashies**, **Head, Gas Huffer**, **Black Horse**, yes, at this point you should realize that I'm going to list each and every one of the bands that I either liked or loved on here, I must do all that I can to coerce you into acquiring this collection and maybe, just maybe, you'll recognize a band name or three, so, back to the list, **Old Haunts**, **Dead Vampires**, **Bugs**, **Blank Its**, **Bug Nasties**, **Charming Snakes**, **Cripples**, **Invisible Eyes**, and **Ape City R&B**). Never before has there been a record that's worth recommending despite having 13 weak songs. Trust me on this one. 19 for 32 = .612. (My Fat Ass Productions)

—Mike Faloon

V/A – Let's Have Some God Damn Fun! cd

The unofficial subtitle for this right fine platter is *Songs from Former Sea Monkeys and the Women Who Love Them*. You've got a great cut from the **Little Killers**, who feature one ex-Sea Monkey (Andy), another from the **Yams**, featuring another ex-Sea Monkey (Dave the Spazz), yet another

from the **Shemps**, who, you guessed it have a former Sea Monkey on board (Bill Florio) and used to have another (Dave the Spazz, pre-Yams). Then there's the **Plungers**, one of whom, Chris, is dating Andy (see: Little Killers) and another of whom used to date Dave the Spazz (I think). I also liked the contributions from **Andy G. and the Roller Kings**, the **Stags**, and the **Electric Shadows**. Good times in NYC. 7 for 16 = .437. (Rapid Pulse)

—Mike Faloon

V/A – Regime Change: Thirteen Tales From the Pennsylvania Southwest cd

Hey, it's a compilation of Pennsylvania bands! What makes it neat and different is that the songs were all recorded by the label for a (somewhat) consistent sound and flow—it's got an organic kind of sound. What's surprising to me is that I actually like a lot of the songs on here! The bands I like the most (**Boxstep**, **Working Poor**, **Breakup Society**, etc...) seem very down-to-earth, old-fashioned, and poppy. It's a very good compilation! (Teen Regime Records – PO Box 100167, Pittsburgh, PA 15233)

—Justin Kearbey

Watch It Burn/Altaira – split 7"

"I took a good look at this life of mine today" ("Stupid Song")...and I moved on to the next song. I'm all for reflective moments, as a teacher it's part of the trade, but I'd rather have the fellas in Watch It Burn show me as opposed to tell me. "St. Louis Song" is much better. The guitar lines are livelier, especially during the verses, and the lyrics are more specific (standing on the banks of the Mississippi River and gazing up at the Arch is a pretty amazing experience, and "I lost my way at the gateway" is a good line). The two cuts from Altaira passed by without much notice. I liked their songs on the Blotto split 7" better. (Accident Prone)

—Mike Faloon

The Wendy Kroys – Songs About Lust, Revenge, and UFOs

Cutesy bullshit about Wilhelm Dafoe and "funny" ways the lead singer is going to get even with her boyfriend, like putting Nair in his shampoo. What do you think? Is that funny? She likes "Bike Messenger Boys" because they're scruffy. For the most part this album sucks. Both sides, however, end with eight-plus-minute instrumentals, and they are sparse and twangy and straight up lovely. Yo La Tengo freaks will appreciate them. Hal Hartley used to put stuff like this in his movies. The instrumentals will be too indulgent for

some, and maybe they're kinda obviously filler, but I like this kind of stuff, which is ironic, considering how much I hate jam bands. What can you say? I'm a complex man.

—Johnny Reno

Jennifer Whiteford – *Grrrl* novel

Marlie is a teenager growing up in the suburbs of Toronto in the early 90s. She's unsure of her place in the world. She's confused by her friends and her sexuality. She can barely tolerate school and her part-time jobs, and music gets her through it all. She also keeps a journal. *Grrrl* collects two years worth of those journal entries into a subtly compelling novel. As a guy who grew up on the south side of the 49th parallel I wasn't sure how I'd be able to relate to *Grrrl*, yet I found myself putting down another engaging book in order to fly through Jennifer Whiteford's novel. Her characters are drawn well and her plotting slowly pulls you into Marlie's world, a world that is wrought with angst but also sufficient self-reflection. Characters come and go quickly and while Marlie narrates the entire novel, it really is an ensemble cast. In fact, reading *Grrrl* reminded me of the experiences my wife has when she rents

a season's worth of a show like *Six Feet Under*. I got really wrapped up in the drama and found myself rooting for and against certain characters—*That Taylor is no good for her, why does she bother? There's something about that Alastair that I just don't trust. What's his motivation for liking her?* Even more intriguing to me was following Marlie's path to starting a band. Early on, as a fan, she has her favorite tapes, especially the Pretenders, but then she discovers the bands who aren't getting mainstream attention, bands whom she can see in more intimate venues and meet face to face. Then she realizes that she doesn't just have to sit on the sidelines, she can buy her own guitar. Whiteford captures this journey really well. The thrill of a band's first precarious practice. The awkwardness of being around someone who seems to know more about music than you do. Wobbling through your band's first show. On the surface—and in the title and on the book jacket, for that matter—*Grrrl* is a novel for girls. But dig deeper and you'll find a great coming of age story. (Gorsky Press)

—Mike Faloon

The Worst – *Earache 7" ep*

Faloon: It's produced by Jimmy Hollywood from the Baseball Furies and the Tyrades.

Reno: I like the name Jimmy Hollywood. This would be great to put on a mix tape for your girlfriend if you girlfriend is Eileen Wournos.

Faloon: Who is...?

Reno: The woman *Monster* is based on.

Faloon: Got it. Not a lot of fun in these grooves.

Reno: I like punk rock to be fun.

Faloon: "Learning Basic Skills" is a deal breaker.

(Big Neck)

And that, ladies and gentlemen, concludes the "music review section" for this issue. This section will next appear in *Go Metric* #22, which will surface sometime in '07. Bands and/or labels interested in submitting review materials should send "the goods" to 801 Eagles Ridge Road, Brewster, NY 10509. Feel free to specify which one of our talented writers you would like to review your record. Well, we say "review," but often our reviews are more like mini-personal essays or brief exercises in memoir than they are conventional reviews. We do that on purpose. We're a bitter lot, raised on those convoluted *Rolling Stone* reviews where you'd read 500-1,000 words about a record and come out of the experience having no idea what the record was like and whether or not the reviewer liked the record. We seek to rise above, baby. Good night.

I'M GOING TO DISNEYLAND! ♡



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October 12, 1952

Dick Rowe
c/o Charles Scribner's Sons
56 Cooper Square
New York City, New York

Ernest Hemingway
Grand Hotel et de Milan
Via Manzoni 29
Milan

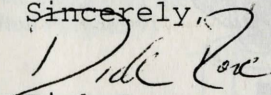
Dear Mr. Hemingway,

Thank you for submitting your promising work *The Old Man and the Sea*. As a man of some experience in the literary field, allow me to say that I believe you to be on the right track, though, clearly, the book is not yet ready for publication.

A couple of questions for your consideration: Why an old man? Market research shows that 81% of new novels are purchased by those in the 25-40 age bracket. It's the Eisenhower era, after all, be mindful of contemporary icons such as the ever-gaunt Marlon Brando and James Dean. (Did you see his promotional work for the Traffic Safety Council? Outstanding!) I recommend making the protagonist younger and more accessible. Second, why a sea? Don't get me wrong, we have had great success with fishing books in recent years (notably Lance Wedlick's *60 Ways to Fool a Muskellunge* and *The Happy Armchair Angler's Guide to the Magic of Bait Fishing in Utah*), but our nation is bordered by two oceans (the Atlantic and the Pacific). Further, I am reluctant to ostracize our many readers in the middle regions of the country. Perhaps a river or an inlet would be more appropriate.

In closing, do not be discouraged. I am certain you will enjoy a flourishing career as long as the noble General Batista reigns over Cuba.

Sincerely,

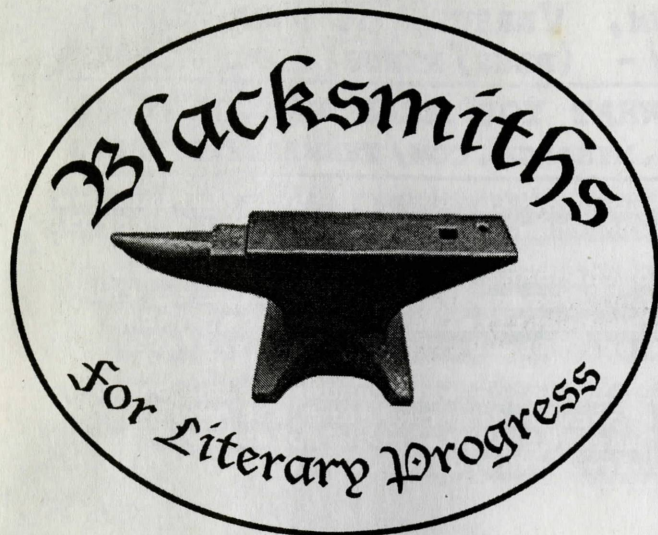

Dick Rowe

PS Flawed heroes are on the way out.

It is a little known fact that Dick Rowe, the Decca Records PR man who famously dismissed the Beatles in 1962 because "guitar groups (were) on the way out," had a substantial career as a literary agent whose acumen for spotting great works of literature somehow exceeded his ability to spot up and coming beat groups.

Mr. Rowe passed away in early 2006 and his estate presented his archives to Columbia's Harnick School of American Studies. *GM* was granted a sneak preview of Rowe's correspondence with legendary authors. Here is the first in a series of Overlooked Letters of Rejection.

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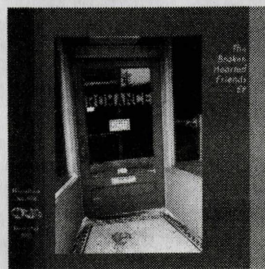
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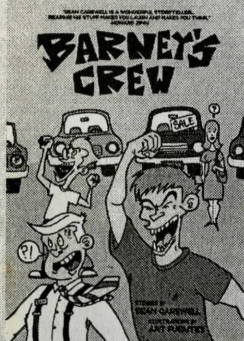


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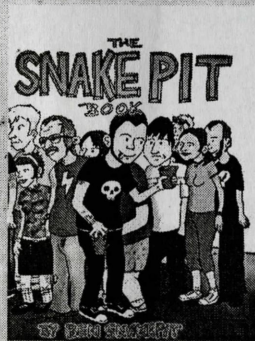
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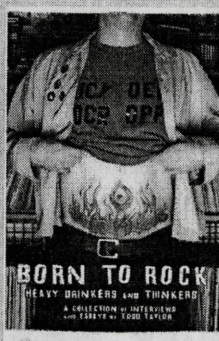
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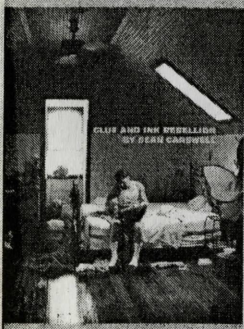
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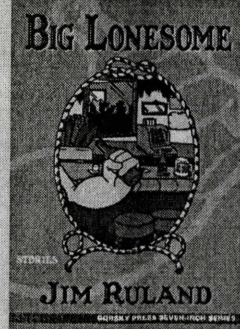
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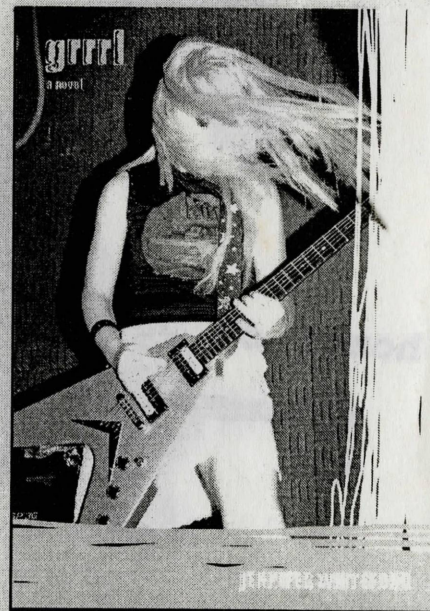


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in honor of your departure

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