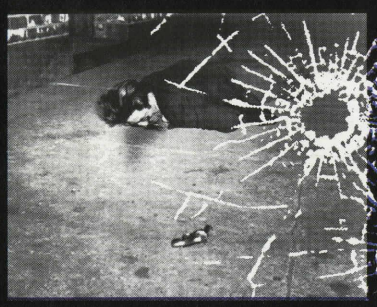

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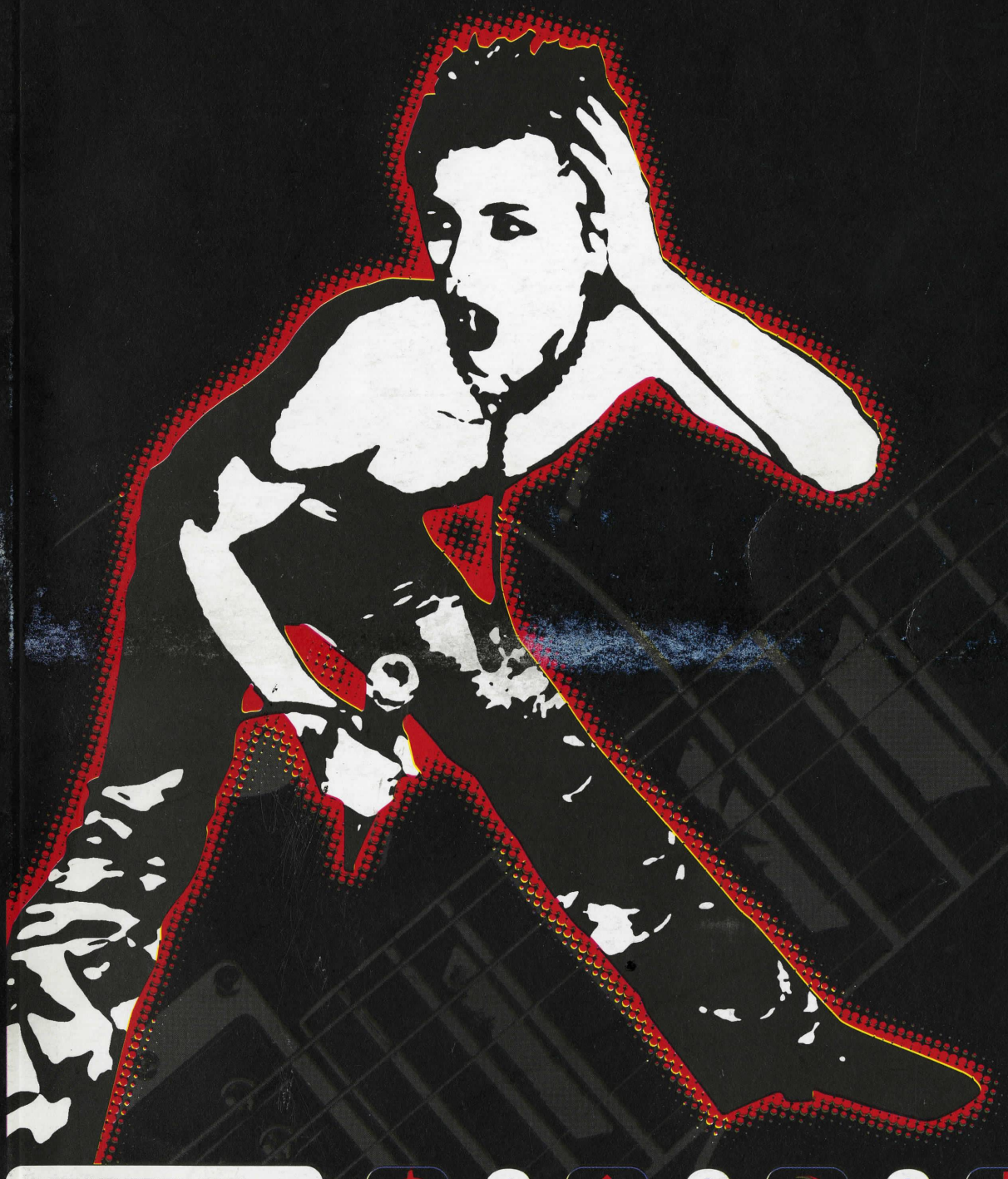

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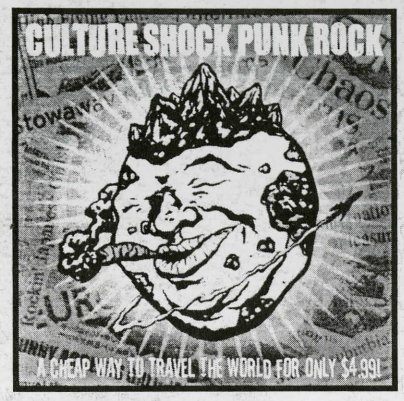

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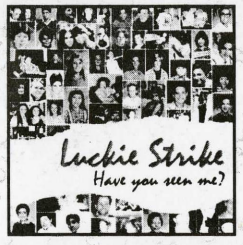

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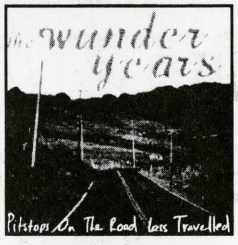

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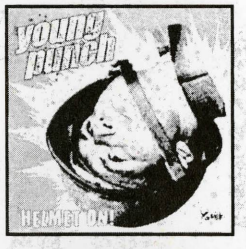

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Contributors

Thee Whiskey Rebel, Johan Kugelberg, Mike Stax, Tesco Vee, ShitEd, Russell Quan, Rev. "Finally! The Italics Have Come Back To My Column!" Nørb, Mel "Bigger Clash Fan Than Dave" Cheplowitz, Larry "When I Was Your Age..." Livermore, Byron Coley, Frank Discussion, Leslie Goldman, Michelley QueenofQueens, Richard Tater, Texas Tim Stegall, Fast Frankie Kozik, Joey Vindictive, Jack Rabid, Al "Araya" Quint, Kevin Coogan, Scott "Very Bad Man" Lee, Jimi "Yeah, whatever, Fuckface" Cheetah, Jade "Yeah, he's Metal." Puget, Sara Bellum, Athena Dread, Dimitri "Burntout Recluse" Monroe, Jeff Dahl, Ian evr, Jet City Vic Bondi, Gregg "El Chupacabra" Turner, East Bay Ray, Jeremy Bellah-Full-of-Whiskey-Women-and-Blackguarding, Ramsey "The Lebanese Don't Wear Kilts" Kanaan, Ian "Straightedge Bro" Randumb, Josh Rutledge Jami Wolf, Greg Lowery, Justice Howard, Tina Lucchesi, Alan Wright, Chad Hensley, Chaz Halo, Jake Roadhouse, Evan Jacobs, LMNOP, Glenn Shires, Josh Rutledge, Sir Lord John Cobbett.

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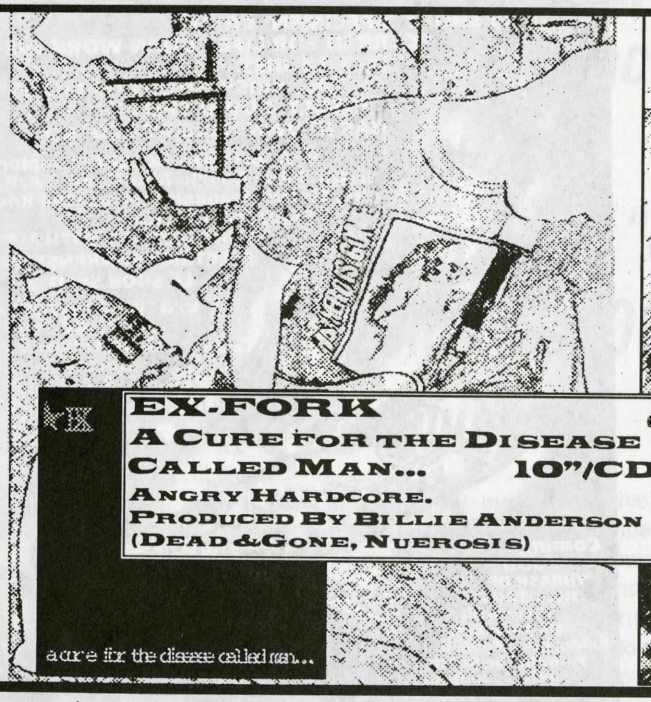



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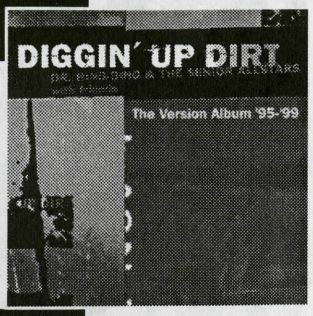

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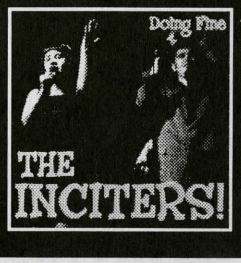

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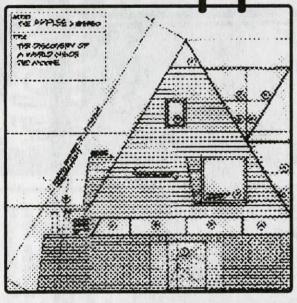

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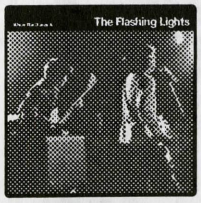

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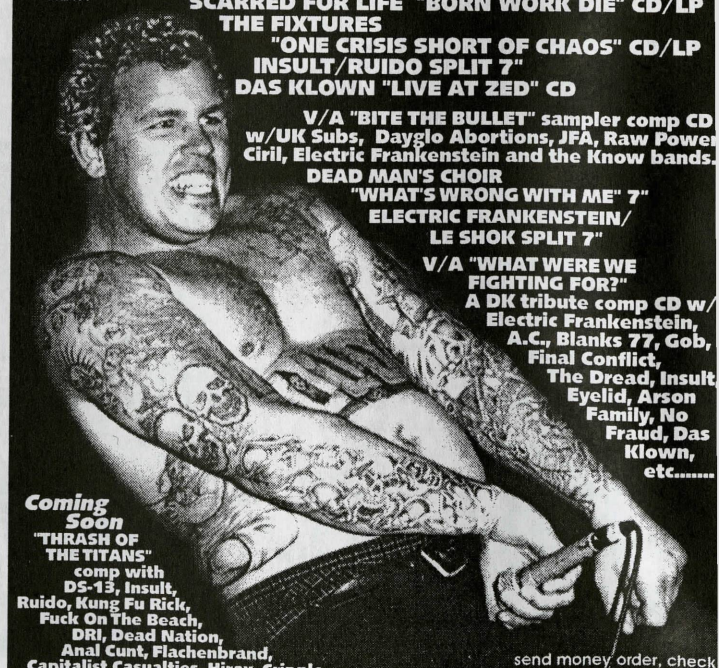

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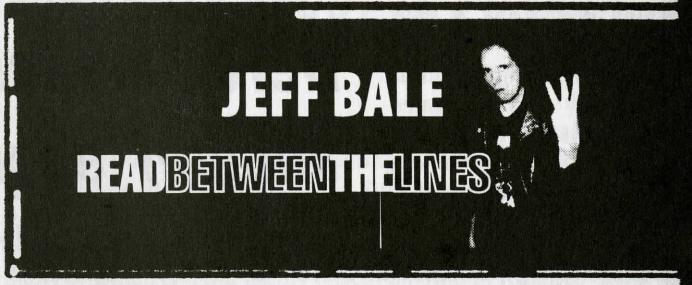
Every time a new issue of *Hit List* comes out, a certain number of readers tell us, either in person or in writing, that they "can't believe we had the nerve to publish" particular items that appeared in the magazine. To provide only a few examples, after *HL* #1 appeared, several uber-punks "couldn't believe" that we'd actually published an article on the politics of black metal; after *HL* #4 and #5 hit the stands, others said they "couldn't believe" we'd actually published those "obnoxious" cartoons by LMNOP of *Baby Sue* magazine; and after *HL* #6 came out, still others "couldn't believe" we'd actually published that "perverse" and jaw-dropping DWARVES interview. Most of the individuals who expressed such sentiments to us directly were in fact enthusiastically supportive of these decisions, whereas a few were both unpleasantly surprised and offended. Apparently, none of them had taken the remarks in my "mission statement" column in *HL* #1 seriously. At that time I indicated that we would be regularly dealing with a wide range of controversial issues, pushing the moral envelope, breaking deeply-ingrained cultural and social taboos, offending every human group under the sun (including, of course, "evil white devils" such as ourselves), displaying an aggressively contrarian attitude, intentionally baiting moral puritans of all stripes, virulently attacking ignorance and hypocrisy, and lampooning everyone we damn well wanted to, including ourselves — all in the interests of provoking thought, stimulating the imagination, generating guffaws, and promoting maximum freedom of expression. Despite these clear warnings, a number of people seem to have assumed that we weren't really serious. By now, it should be apparent to everyone that we meant exactly what we said, and that we have no intention of "wimping out" by altering these basic objectives in order to conform to assorted political orthodoxies or moralistic tendencies, especially those which are widespread or dominant within the punk underground.

Even so, despite the fact that we intentionally set out to gore sacred cows and, in the process, piss lots of people off, it never ceases to amaze me just how fanatical, conformist, humorless, hypersensitive, and puritanical, not to mention stupid, so many ostensible "hipsters" can be. More to the point, I find it incredible that certain groups of scenesters, including some who I've known for many years, fail to understand that our fundamental goal is to promote maximum personal freedom by "liberating" the entire underground scene from repressive, archaic dogmas and stifling orthodoxies. Anyone who can't even recognize that our basic objective is emancipatory, even if they disapprove of our "insensitive" manner and confrontational style, is either hopelessly blinkered, ideologically speaking, or not terribly bright. What else could account for the fact that a few people, some of whom should certainly know better, have characterized *Hit List* as "conservative" or, less charitably, as "racist", "sexist", or "homophobic". If that weren't ridiculous enough, others have accused us being "satanic", "degenerate", "perverted", "One-Worlders", "agents of ZOG", and "closet communists". (Jeez, what can we expect next, to be accused of being "members of the Illuminati"?) Very few of these people have actually had the guts to argue their cases in a public forum, which is fortunate for them since they would then quickly be made to look foolish, but naturally it hasn't prevented them from "talking shit" behind our backs or taking "cheap shots" in other zines.

Just for the record, then, I feel obliged to clarify that which is no doubt already obvious to our more perceptive readers. First of all, *Hit List* has never had, does not have, and never will have, any type of uniform political perspective or "party line". On the contrary, I have gone out of my way to recruit a wide array of iconoclastic writers whose only common denominator, other than literacy, intelligence, and a sense of humor, is a bad attitude and a hatred for moral puritanism and stale, repressive political dogmas of all types. Although the majority of our writers occupy positions somewhere on the left side of the conventional political spectrum, almost all of them are such cantankerous, argumentative SOBs that they wouldn't hesitate for a second to disagree vehemently with one another. If truth be told, several of them don't even *like* each other, and some don't care all that much for me, either.



So let's be honest for a minute about those overused and much abused terms, "tolerance" and "diversity", shall we? (Both terms have nowadays become little more than hypocritical PC buzzwords. At present "tolerance" means that everyone else *has to* express uncritical sympathy and approval for members of certain select groups of allegedly "oppressed" people, warranted or not, even though in return these latter are never required or expected to be similarly "tolerant" of any other groups. Meanwhile, "diversity" now refers exclusively to the promotion of racial and gender diversity, typically via the coercive establishment of discriminatory de facto quotas. Thus, in actual practice "promoting tolerance" and "mandating diversity" have invariably led to the abusive insistence upon *ideological conformity and uniformity*, since no one now has the right to express contrary views that may be construed as "harmful" or "hurtful". Indeed, such demands inevitably lead to the savage castigation and social "shunning" of everyone who refuses to tow the established "party line", including iconoclastic members of the supposedly "victimized" groups in whose name they are perpetrated.) In my capacity as the editor of *Hit List*, I not only "tolerate" the presence of writers on our roster who I disagree with, at times in fundamental ways, I actively recruit them. I've even solicited contributions from several smart people with whom I've had personal beefs in the past and who, in truth, probably don't like me any more now than before. Far from peddling political "propaganda", then, as some dunderhead claimed in the pages of *MRR* — the quintessential punk propaganda mill — I've made prodigious efforts to

Others have accused us being "satanic", "degenerate", "perverted", "One-Worlders", "agents of ZOG", and "closet communists".

foster the only type of "diversity" that really matters in the context of a magazine: intellectual diversity. It goes without saying that no one has ever been excluded from contributing to our magazine on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Nor will they ever be.

Secondly, anyone who thinks that I'm a "conservative" or a "right-winger" obviously doesn't know me very well. I've always hated mainstream society, cultural conservatives, religious moralists, and the orthodox right, and that hasn't changed one bit over the years. The only thing that *has* changed is that I've now developed a burning hatred for orthodox leftists as well, who are every bit as intolerant, authoritarian, hypocritical, and destructive as their counterparts on the right. The simple truth is that my own variegated opinions on a range of particular issues do not fall neatly within any single conventional political category. On some issues I'm on the "left" (e.g., I'm generally hostile to religious dogmas, highly critical of American foreign policy in certain parts of the world, deeply concerned about the corporate corruption and manipulation of parliamentary democracy, and strongly in favor of socialized health care), on others I'm closer to the "center" (e.g., I support rational environmentalism, meritocratic principles, the defense of democratic institutions and processes, and the right of the government to carry out actions that are necessary to defend its legitimate national security interests and protect its own citizens), on still others I'm on the "right" (e.g, I advocate radical population control, believe that violent criminals should be severely punished, and am an unabashed elitist), and on the rest I have libertarian or thoroughly idiosyncratic libertine views (e.g., I'm pro-abortion, for the total legalization of drugs and prostitution, in favor of doctor-assisted suicide, virulently opposed to all forms of censorship, convinced that people should have to pass parenting tests before having children, and fully supportive of colorblind and gender-blind principles and policies.). That's because, like most thoughtful people, I make decisions about particular social and political issues on the basis of what I consider to be the substance and merits of specific cases, not in accordance with predetermined ideological formulae or dogmas. Those who don't take this sort of open-ended approach ought to try it some time.

Although I am clearly more sympathetic to libertarianism than to any other standard political doctrine, I nonetheless frequently break ranks with libertarians about a wide range of matters. For example, I don't think that the competitive "free market" — to the extent that it even survives in today's world of corporate capitalism, a matter of heated debate — is the solution to all of the world's economic, social, environmental, and political problems, am not opposed to military intervention abroad if the circumstances warrant it, and have nothing but contempt for the psuedo-libertarians that make up the bulk of the Libertarian Party, who (like conservatives) seem to be primarily interested in preventing the government from picking their pockets rather than in defending individual freedom. If pressed I would characterize myself as a radical individualist, philosophically speaking, but if others found it more convenient to call me a classical liberal — in contradistinction to a collectivistic "welfare state" liberal — I could live with that. No other political labels can legitimately be applied to me. So much for political ideology and abstract philosophical principles, which in the final analysis seem to be less important than each individual's intrinsic psychological make-up. From that standpoint I have always been, first and foremost, a "rebel", i.e., an inveterate nonconformist, iconoclast, and contrarian who, despite the obvious practical advantages of "going with the flow" and "towing party lines", feels a compulsive need to go *against* the existing grain or current — no matter which way it happens to be flowing in any given context. Thus, when I was growing up in Chicago, a fairly conservative blue-collar town, I tended to move increasingly to the "left" (loosely defined) as a way of expressing my alienation from and hostility toward the braindead majority and their restrictive, conformist values. Later, when I came out to San Francisco to attend UC Berkeley, I ended up moving increasingly to the "right" (loosely defined) as a way of expressing my alienation from and hostility toward the dominant orthodoxies and the equally braindead majority out here. After briefly deluding myself that I'd finally arrived in a virtual Shangri-La, i.e., a place that was truly open-minded, it quickly became apparent that the Bay Area was no more open-minded and tolerant of dissent and intellectual "diversity" than innumerable small towns in the Bible Belt. The only real distinction — and this ultimately provided little consolation — was that it was fanatically intolerant about different political issues. Anyone who has lived in this area for a while cannot fail to notice its stiflingly conformist political atmosphere, one which is incessantly and uncritically promoted by self-serving elected officials, educators, the local cultural establishment, mainstream media organs, countercultural spokespeople, the "alternative" press, and dozens of narrowly sectarian groups of so-called "radicals" (most of whom are, in truth, hopelessly reactionary and authoritarian). After being force-fed a continuous diet of mindless PC rhetoric and self-righteous left-wing dogma over a period of years, no rebellious, independent-thinking, and self-respecting person can ultimately avoid becoming alienated from, thoroughly disgusted with, and increasingly hostile to this particular brand of intolerance, hypocrisy, and fanaticism.

Here, apparently, is yet another example of MRR's muddled, Orwellian logic: on the one hand, "Conformity is Rebellion", and on the other, "Rebellion is Conformity".

In this context I can't resist commenting on something Arwen Curry seemed to be implying in a recent *MRR* column: that a genuine "rebel" was someone who conformed entirely to PC dogmas in a town (San Francisco) and scene ("political punk" circles) where such dog-

mas are wholly orthodox, whereas local punk dissidents who challenged these — and all other — fashionable dogmas (such as myself) were merely pseudo-rebels, i.e., "conformists". Here, apparently, is yet another example of *MRR*'s muddled, Orwellian logic: on the one hand, "Conformity is Rebellion", and on the other, "Rebellion is Conformity". What she obviously fails to recognize is that 1) the very same person can simultaneously rebel against both mainstream American society *and* the authoritarian PC left (as well as against any number of other things, e.g., the authoritarian right, since we're not really talking about either/or choices here), and that 2) a rebel is someone who consciously refuses to conform to existing social, political, and cultural norms *in the particular environment within which he or she happens to be operating*. In other words rebelliousness, unlike ideological radicalism, must be viewed as essentially *contextual and situational*. To advocate communism would be an act of rebellion in Pinochet's Chile, but this would surely not be the case in Mao's China. By extension, although it may well be rebellious to promote PC punk politics in a place like Tupelo, Mississippi, to do so in San Francisco is an act more akin to abject conformity.

As I suggested many years ago, Marlon Brando's response to the question "what are you rebelling against" in the classic motorcycle film, "The Wild One" — "Wadda ya got" — perfectly captures the essence of what it means to be a genuine rebel. A rebel is someone who *instinctively* resists when someone else (especially an authority figure) tells them what to do, say, or think — no matter what it might be — *not* someone who "goes with the flow", desperately strives to fit in, and never makes waves. If individuals rebel *solely* for the sake of rebelling in every single circumstance, they might legitimately be characterized as "rebels without a cause" or, more pejoratively, "rebels without a clue". But even if they try to be more selective in terms of what they choose to rebel against, as I do in my more rational moments, true rebels are by definition instinctive "nay-sayers" who are always inclined, personality-wise, to go *against* the grain. If they regularly do so they are recognizably rebels, irrespective of their actual political beliefs. On the other hand, people who rarely if ever feel any compulsion to rebel against the norms *which have become dominant within their own chosen milieu* cannot justifiably be described as "rebels", regardless of the particular values they espouse. *Hit List* is above all a magazine for countercultural rebels. It was created by and for rock'n'roll misfits who are uncompromising "nabobs of negativity", who refuse to tow the line, who prefer to think for themselves, and who deeply resent it when self-appointed censors and "authority figures" try to scold them, guilt-trip them, and otherwise tell them how to live their lives. To put it another way, our magazine is intentionally designed to appeal to nonconformists of *diverse political persuasions* who love controversy, open debate, and trashed-out rock'n'roll. If that description applies to you, so much the better. If not, too bad.

WTO REDUX

Last issue I complained that there weren't any scholarly anthologies containing an array of both pro-globalization and anti-globalization points of view, but as soon as *HL* #7 hit the stands I noticed that such a volume had just been published: Frank J. Lechner & John Boli, eds., *The Globalization Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). Now those with an open mind can actually compare various pro and con arguments related to free trade, the WTO, and the general process of globalization before making up their minds. Those with a closed mind, who no doubt form the vast majority, would likewise do well to remove their heads from their own rectums long enough to peruse this volume. Another relevant work, though not concerned specifically with the WTO or globalization. is by Virginia Postrel, *The Future and Its Enemies: The Growing Conflict Over Creativity, Enterprise, and Progress* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998). Although it's debatable whether this longstanding "conflict" is actually "growing", and at times she strikes me as being much too optimistic about the probable shape of the future, she is absolutely right to draw a clear distinction between those with a dynamist, open-ended view of future possibilities and those who fear change and desperately embrace stasis. After reading this book, you'll understand the reasons why I portrayed the bulk of the anti-WTO forces in Seattle as backwards-looking reactionaries. How else can Marxist fundamentalists, Zerzan-style "neo-primitivists", "constitutional" militias, and the isolationists of the New Right be described?

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO PUNK OUT, I SALUTE YOU

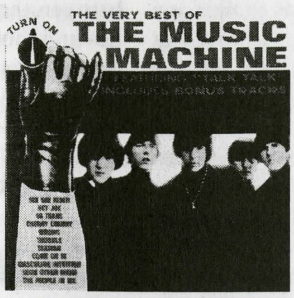
This time around I'd like to doff my hat to two rockin' 60's reissue labels that have long been putting out a series of stellar releases, especially of late: Collectables and Sundazed. Collectables was one of the earliest of the 60's CD reissue labels, and it therefore helped to clear a path for what has since become a veritable flood of reissues, many of which contain highly obscure material. Although most of the early Collectibles releases had a relatively poor sound quality and less-than-aesthetically-pleasing packaging, during the past few years, perhaps spurred on by the competition from other reissue labels such as Big Beat and Sundazed, the quality of Collectables releases has improved dramatically. This is perhaps most noticeable in connection with some of their more recent reissues, which as luck would have it feature some of my very favorite 60's bands.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with their reissue of the first MUSIC MACHINE LP, plus four bonus tracks released later by the band's black-clad head honcho, Sean Bonniwell. For my money "The Very Best of the Music Machine" sounds better than the earlier CD version available on the (otherwise fabulous) Dutch Repertoire label, and the cover art is a bit more fetching due to the addition of red highlights to the original black and white sleeve. (Obviously, here at *Hit List* we're very partial to black, red, and white color schemes!) The liner notes, though sparse, are written by Jud Cost, editor of the very cool 60's zine *Cream Puff War* (which is itself named after the best-ever GRATEFUL DEAD song). Now you too can hear some of the finest ever 60's crunch punk songs, including "Talk Talk", "Masculine Intuition", and "Trouble", in a new and improved format. At around the same time Collectables also reissued a CD version of the COUNT FIVE LP, again with several additional bonus tracks. This South Bay band were best known for the psych-punk rave-up, "Psychotic Reaction", but their album also contained a number of other fabulous songs, such as "Double-Decker Bus", "Piece of Mind", and "Pretty Big Mouth". In this instance, too, the packaging is eye-catching, the sound quality is superior, and the liner notes are prepared by Cost. The only thing that bugs me is that they shifted the track order by putting "Psychotic Reaction" first.

More recently, the same label has reissued new, improved versions of both the BLUES MAGOOS' and PEANUT BUTTER CONSPIRACY's first two LPs, in each instance on a single CD. The sound quality is again top notch, and the packaging is pretty damn sharp. The only problem with these double releases is that both LP covers are reproduced on the front sleeve, which looks a bit tacky (especially since they also added advertising blurbs to both CD covers!). In the case of the MAGOOS, though, they at least had the good sense to reproduce both LP front covers separately and the "Electric Comic Book" sleeve artwork on the inside. For those who are ignorant of rock'n'roll history,

HIT SQUAD

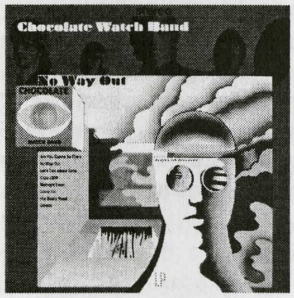
the two BLUES MAGOOS LPs included here are both exuberant psychedelic classics. Hence you should be thrilled to be able to hear songs like "(We Ain't Got) Nothin' Yet", "Gotta Get Away", "She's Coming Home", and the haunting ballad "Love Seems Doomed" (all from "Psychedelic Lollipop"), "Pipe Dream", "Albert Common is Dead", and an extended cover of "Gloria" (from "Electric Comic Book") all on one CD. My one complaint is that they didn't include the band's earlier folk rock single, "So I'm Wrong and You Are Right", which can only be found on Mercury's vastly inferior "Best of the Blues Magoos" CD, too much of which is filled with later MAGOOS throwaways. As for the PBC, they were a melodic folky psychedelic hippy outfit from L.A. who put out two uneven LPs with really dippy lyrics and a vaguely MAMAS & THE PAPAS meets JEFFERSON AIRPLANE feel. Even so, as long as you're not anticipating something really heavy duty it's good to hear fetching songs like "It's A Happening Thing", "Dark on You Now", "The Market Place", and "The Most Up Till Now" (all from "...is Spreading"), "Turn On a Friend", and "Pleasure" (from the much weaker "The Great Conspiracy"), and it must be said that the Collectibles reissue is superior to the Edsel label's version since it contains every song on both albums as well as some unreleased bonus tracks.

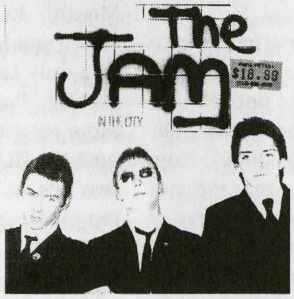




Collectibles has also released some cool comps in recent years, including the 10-volume series, "Green Crystal Ties", which is at times uneven from a musical standpoint but which nonetheless has terrifically colorful packaging. The best songs on each of these discs are really superb, though they tend to be surrounded by others which are somewhat more pedestrian. We will soon begin reviewing all of the individual volumes in our record review section. Somewhat more consistent is "The Human Expression and Other Psychedelic Groups", which features some outstanding guitar-oriented psych material from both the HUMAN EXPRESSION themselves (including the now classic "Optical Sound" and the absolutely amazing "Calm Me Down") and a number of other bands, including "Thoughts" by the FRONT PAGE NEWS, "Flashback" by SILK WINGED ALLIANCE, "Where Are You" by the KYKS, and "August Mademoiselle" by CHILDREN OF THE MUSHROOM, not to mention the truly bizarre "Mr. Spongeman" by MECHANICAL SWITCH. This particular record is well worth looking for if you like psych-pop with a rockin' beat (as opposed to the swirly, arty-farty variety of psychedelia, which I personally loathe). One feature of the above Collectibles comps is especially noteworthy — the tracks are all drawn from the original master tapes and remixed, and hence the sound quality is generally stupendous. Once you get used to such superior sound, it gets harder and harder to put up with the sort of scratchy, low-fi noise that used to be *de rigueur* for obscure 60's reissues. Fortunately, there is less and less need to settle for less.







And speaking of superior sound, the Sundazed label has also been in the process of releasing a torrent of classic and obscure 60's reissues, all of which sound terrific, include liner notes and unpublished photos, and feature the original LP artwork. It would take up quite a bit of space to even list all the great stuff this label has been putting out lately (much of which has been or will be reviewed in our review section), so this time around I'll just focus on a few of my very favorite items. Among the most notable are their re-releases of all the STANDELLS and CHOCOLATE WATCHBAND LPs, all with the addition of several bonus tracks (some unreleased, some from singles). One thing these two bands had in common was the superb songwriting skills of impresario Ed Cobb, who probably did more to make them commercially viable and "hip" than anyone else, though at times he stumbled badly. Both groups also appeared and absolutely shined in the wild teen flick, "Riot on Sunset Strip", a must-see for those who'd like to recapture the California mid-60's vibe, Hollywood-style.

The STANDELLS reissues begin with their first album, "Dirty Water", which not only contains the famous hit single of the same title but also a host of other tough-sounding punkish numbers, such as "Medication", "Little Sally Tease", "Why Did You Hurt Me", and "Poor Man's Prison" (bonus track), as well as more plaintive cuts like "Pride and Devotion" and "Take A Ride" (bonus) and covers of "19th Nervous Breakdown" (so-so) and "Hey Joe" (nice snooty vocals). However, as far as I'm concerned, the best song on the album — and one of my favorite songs of all time — is the (long version of) "Rari", with its irresistable organ riff, punchy drumming, bittersweet lyrics, extended instrumental break, unforgettable chorus, and Pacific island beach ambience. (As it happens, this particular song also has a special significance for me, since at the time it came out I had a big teenage crush on an older dark-haired girl named Shari, who lived a few blocks away. At the time she didn't even notice me — sigh! — although after I got a little older we had a long overdue but rather brief fling.)

In any event, most people think that this debut is the very best STANDELLS LP, but I myself prefer both their second, "Why Pick on Me", and their third, "Try It", both of which are criminally underrated (especially now, with the addition of several great bonus tracks). After all, the second not only contains the title track, but also gems like the bluesy "Black Hearted Woman", "Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White" (which has since been covered by several 70's punk groups), and one of their punkiest songs, "Mr. Nobody" (which features the following classic putdown of a rival suitor: "The world is full of nobodies like you are/Mr. Nobody, that's who you are"). Plus, it contains two

incredible moody bonus numbers, "I Hate to Leave You" (which almost makes me break down and cry) and "The Boy Who is Lost". There are a couple of awful "white soul" songs as well, three of which unfortunately also open their follow-up LP, "Try It". But then things improve dramatically, thanks to a host of brilliant punky tracks like "St. James Infirmary", the title song (which was actually banned for presumed lewdness), "Riot on Sunset Strip", and "Barracuda", not to mention sitar-laced psych punk nuggets like "Did You Ever Have That Feeling" and "All Fall Down". A deranged writer in *Here 'Tis* recently claimed that the STANDELLS were overrated, but if I recall correctly he also said the very same thing about the BLUES MAGOOS and COUNT FIVE! Chalk it up to mental illness or too many hallucinogens.

Turning now to the CHOCOLATE WATCHBAND, another one of the South Bay's finest ever bands, most r'n'r aficionados agree that their long-players are noticeably eclectic and uneven in quality. Their debut LP, "No Way Out", is undoubtedly the most consistent of the lot, despite a few inevitable throwaway tracks. It includes several classic punk numbers ("Let's Talk About Girls", the title song, and "Are You Gonna Be There [at the Love-In])", as well as punked-out covers of "Milk Cow Blues" and CHUCK BERRY's "Come On", a tremendous psych punk cut with sitar ("Gone and Passes By"), and several ambient but not rockin' psych numbers (including "Dark Side of the Mushroom", "Expo 2000", "Gossamer Wings", and "Psychedelic Trip"). Their follow-up album, "The Inner Mystique", is more heavily oriented toward psychedelia, apparently due to Cobb's intervention. Some of the tracks are too fluffy and airy-fairy, what with the annoying flutes and timpans, but even so one can find a number of outstanding songs on here, including the atmospheric, sitar-loaded "In The Past" (a WE THE PEOPLE cover), a subtler psych version of "Medication", haunting yet punky covers of "I Ain't No Miracle Worker" and the KINKS' "I'm Not Like Everybody Else", two fetching versions of DYLAN's "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue", the poppy "Misty Lane" with its terrific chorus, and an amazingly snotty bonus blast, "Sweet Young Thing", which probably best captures the band's live sound. Dave Aguilar's sneering vocals really stand out, as always. The third and final WATCHBAND LP, "One Step Beyond", highlighted a change of vocalists and a shift toward "heavy" hard rock, and is consequently much less satisfying. I've always kind of liked the countrified "Uncle Morris", but the rest consists mainly of cliché-ridden hard rock with occasional quasi-psych overtones. Fortunately, Sundazed managed to salvage the otherwise unsalvageable by adding some nifty bonus tracks from an earlier period (with Aguilar on vocals), including the remarkably punky "Don't Need Your Lovin'" and "Sitting There Standing" and their famous biker movie instrumental theme song (released under the moniker of the HOGS), "Blues Theme". This CD is still iffy, but their first and second albums are mandatory purchases for devotees of prime 60's psych punk.

Last but not least, all six of the JAM LPs have now been reissued on digitally-remastered Polydor imports, and if truth be told they sound absolutely splendid. Even so, for my money the only JAM albums that can be said to be absolutely necessary acquisitions for your collection are their debut, "In the City", and its follow-up, "This is the Modern World", both of which showcase their hard-edged punk-influenced neo-Mod sound. The highlights of the first include the classic title song, "Art School", "Sounds of the Street", "Time for Truth", "I've Changed My Address", and "Takin' My Love", whilst the second showcases the title song, "London Traffic", "Standards", "Life from a Window", "In the Street Today", and "I Need You". After these two long-players, the JAM LPs became more and more inconsistent. Don't get me wrong, though. There's no doubt that "All Mod Cons", "Setting Sons", "Sound Affects", and "The Gift" all contain a few terrific songs, but overall the band moved too quickly away from their uptempo rockin' sound and began to produce softer, increasingly complex and textured songs — many of them too soft and overly complex and textured, if you ask me. As such I find it difficult to listen to any of their later albums all the way through from start to finish, as well as impossible to recommend them unequivocably and wholeheartedly. A second major frustration here is that Polydor foolishly neglected to include any bonus 7" tracks on these reissues, which means that absolutely necessary songs such as "News of the World" and "All Around the World" are missing in action. My own solution to these vexatious problems was to buy the digitally-remastered "Very Best of the Jam" compilation, a French import, which contains all of their hit singles and the most famous numbers from the later albums, including the two aforementioned classics and "Down in the Tube Station at Midnight", "'A' Bomb in Wardour Street", "The Eton Rifles", "Going Underground", and many others.

If Polydor really wanted to make me happy, of course, they'd reissue (a digitally-remastered CD version of?) the JOLT LP and make sure to include all three of their early singles. In my opinion, the non-stop hard rockin' and tuneful JOLT LP blows all the other neo-Mod albums away, hands down, and demonstrates once and for all that wimp guitar outfits like SECRET AFFAIR and the LAMBRETTAS were vastly overrated.

HIT LIST *WANTS YOU*

We are currently looking for contributors in the following areas:

1) an extremely knowledgeable rockabilly fan who is an obsessive collector of trashy hillbilly releases, old and new, to write a regular column that incorporates reviews. If you actually know who some of the obscure acts on the Buffalo Bop comps are, please get in touch with us;

2) a few quality book reviewers who are well-informed and sophisticated enough to comment intelligently on non-fiction works dealing with important and unusual political, social, musical, and/or (counter)cultural matters;

3) serious researchers who are interested in writing occasional in-depth feature articles about intrinsically interesting or controversial subjects, above all people who are willing to challenge conventional viewpoints;

4) people living *outside* the United States who would like to submit a) in-depth articles/interviews with "old school" or noteworthy up-and-coming punk and garage bands — *no* hardcore, arty-farty, or emo crap — or b) serious articles on our favorite genres of trashed-out r'n'r. We're also very keen to expand our coverage of European, Australian, Japanese, and Latin American bands.

In each case we are *only* seeking to recruit intelligent, knowledgeable, and highly literate people who have a belligerent attitude, a sense of humor, fluency in the English language, and access to a computer. If you meet all of the above criteria and are hoping to gain a measure of attention or notoriety, at least within our insular little r'n'r underground, please contact us via e-mail at your earliest convenience. However, I implore you *not* to waste our time, not to mention try our patience, unless you're a really smart cookie and (except, perhaps, in the case of feature article writers and book reviewers) a passionate lover of rock'n'roll.

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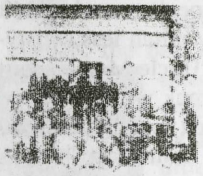

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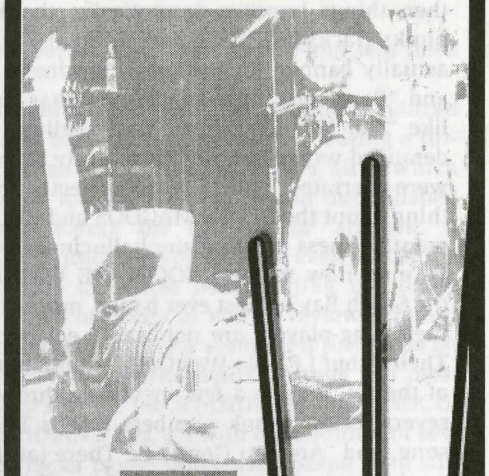

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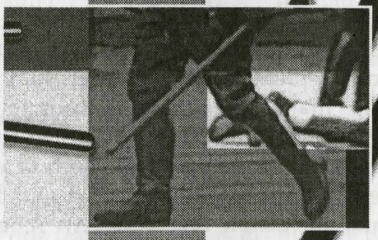

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glenn shires talks to T S O L's ron emory

A shortened version of this article previously appeared in the winter 2000 newsletter for KWVA, 88.1 FM (Eugene, OR).

True Sounds Of Liberty blasted out of southern California's fertile punk scene in 1979, thrilling fans and horrifying authority figures with their diabolical brand of gothic-tinged hardcore. Two EPs, two albums, and several singles later, they routinely headlined 3000-seat venues such as the Hollywood Palladium with bands like Bad Religion and Social Distortion opening for them. Eventually drifting into strange orchestral territory and cheesy hair-metal, T.S.O.L. underwent drastic personnel changes throughout the '80s. Now in their second decade of existence, the band recently re-grouped with an almost-original lineup for last summer's Social Chaos Tour, a travelling punk rock circus featuring some of yesteryear's greatest bands. They continued on the road throughout the fall, and punks young and old turned out in droves to see this legendary group when they arrived in Eugene, Oregon. By the time T.S.O.L. tore into their final song, the classic "Code Blue," half the audience was on stage with the band, screaming out the lyrics and/or incoherent obscenities. Now that's punk rock! I hoped to get T.S.O.L. into the KWVA studio for an on-air interview. Those plans fell through, but I still had a chance to speak with guitarist Ron Emory before the show.

Glenn Shires: To begin with, who's actually in the band right now? I understand that this is the original lineup?

Ron Emory: Yeah, with the exception of Danny, the drummer, who previously played withDown By Law. Todd Barnes, our original drummer, is kind of a mess right now. He'd rather be drunk and fully hammered than come out and play. It's one thing to drink, but to drink until you just can't function...You can't work with someone like that. We've tried to help him; tried to get him to pull it together because he's a really great drummer, but he doesn't seem to want to give up that lifestyle. [Todd Barnes unfortunately passed away after this interview was conducted, on December 6, 1999.]

Glenn: And who else is in the band?

Ron: All of us veterans: Jack Grisham singing, me on guitar, and Mike Roche is playing bass.

Glenn: What prompted this reunion? I know you've had a few reunion tours in the past, but it's been awhile since the last one.

Ron: Yeah, the last one was in 1989, which was the ten-year reunion. We did a record from that, but it didn't come out until '91. And really, since '83 we haven't played at all except for doing that. What prompted this was, ah, in L.A. they had a "History of L.A. Punk Rock" photo exhibit at a museum. And at the closing, they asked all the bands, or as many as they could get together, to come play a few songs, and it was great. They had all the best old bands playing. So we were like, "We can get together and do three songs, sure." We did that, and then we were asked to do the Warped Tour, the Unity Tour...all these big tours, and we ended up doing the Social Chaos Tour because it was the most feasible.

Glenn: What museum was that at?

Ron: It was at Bergermont Station in Santa Monica.

Glenn: What other bands played?

Ron: That night was great: X, the Plugs, the Weirdos...Devo played...the Bags, Rik L. Rik, the Go-Go's...They also had a tribute to the Circle Jerks, and it was all the Circle Jerks except for Keith Morris because he's really sick, so Jim from Pennywise filled in. He did all the Black Flag and Circle Jerks songs that Keith sang. It was like 20 bands in one night that you never would have seen anywhere else, ever. It was great. The Crowd played, the Adolescents played...Yeah, it was really something.

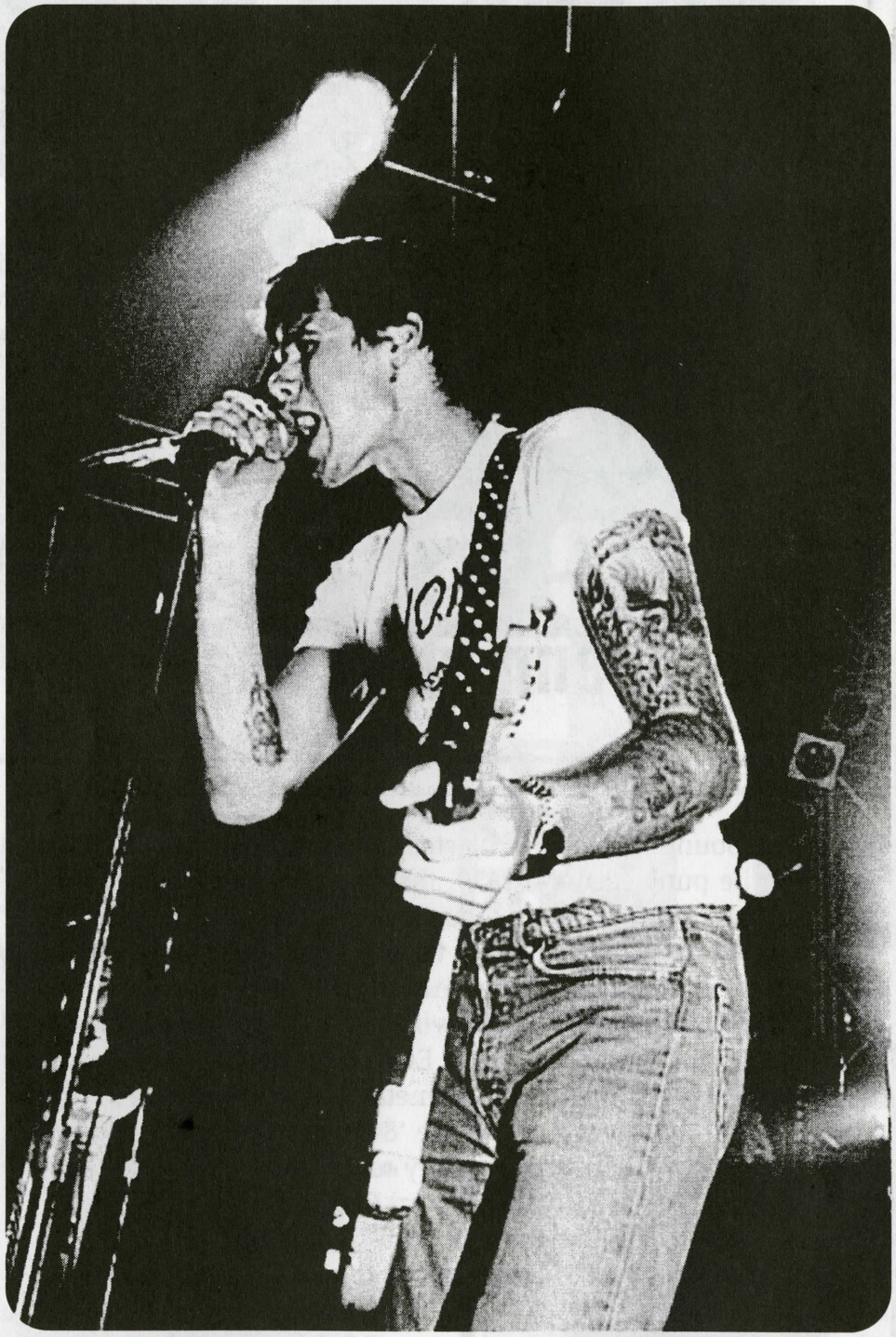
Glenn: How many people showed up for that?

Ron: Well, the opening had about 2,000 people. The closing was just like a band-only party, but the word got out a little bit, so it was probably about 1,000 people.

Glenn: So, you said the Social Chaos Tour was the most feasible for you. Why was that?

Ron: Well, the reason - or a big part of it - is because our bass player Mike is on parole right now. Technically, he's not allowed to leave the state of California. And those other tours were going to Europe, Japan, and Australia, and we wouldn't have been able to go. But we could do a few shows scattered around the United States. The Social Chaos Tour missed a lot of cities, but it hit a lot of cities where we've played before.

Glenn: I'm not sure if I remember this exactly, but when you played in Portland at the Social Chaos show, your singer said something to the effect that "This is a great show because a lot of the bands playing tonight used to not get along." Did there used to be some tension between those bands, or is my memory way off?



Ron: That's probably correct.

Glenn: Did you see any differences on that tour compared to 10 or 20 years ago, when those bands didn't get along? What exactly did he mean by that?

Ron: It was more united. As everyone's grown up, people have realized that there's a much bigger picture. There are better things to fight for than against each other. I mean, a lot of that still goes on with the skinheads; the unity skins, the racist skins, and all that crap. But as far as the older bands, like the Business, the Vibrators, the U.K. Subs, and Vice Squad, it was more of a togetherness thing. They weren't looking

down upon us for being Yanks, and we weren't looking down on them for being Limeys. For me, it was lots of fun. I used to listen to the U.K. Subs when I was first learning how to play guitar. Same for the Vibrators and Chelsea. One of the first songs T.S.O.L. ever did was "Right To Work" by Chelsea. So we finally got to play with them all, and it was great.

Glenn: Was it the first time you got to play with some of those bands?
Ron: We did a tour with the U.K. Subs before. We toured with D.O.A. a bunch, and D.R.I. too. But most of 'em, yeah, it was the first time.

Glenn: You just mentioned listening to the U.K. Subs when you started playing the guitar. Did you start playing guitar after you got into punk rock, or was it the other way around?

Ron: Yeah, after, definitely. I would go to shows in like '78, and I'd always find myself right in front of the guitar player. So I ended up working all summer until I had enough money for a guitar, and then I quit. I'd go and watch shows, then come home and try to figure out what they were doing with their fingers, and that's basically how I learned how to play. I saw the Clash and 999, and the Weirdos, the Germs, X, all those bands.

Glenn: How old were you guys when you started the band?

Ron: 16 or 17.

Glenn: I've heard that you had a band before T.S.O.L. called Vicious Circle.

Ron: Jack and Todd were in a band called Vicious Circle. Mike was in the Accidents, and I was in the Hoods. We did a skatepark tour back in '78. You know, back when all the skateparks were around in Southern California? Yeah, we toured the skate parks, man. It was great. We had Steve Olson, the pro skater, who was later in the Joneses with me. And Brian Wassman, who owns a record store in Portland now.

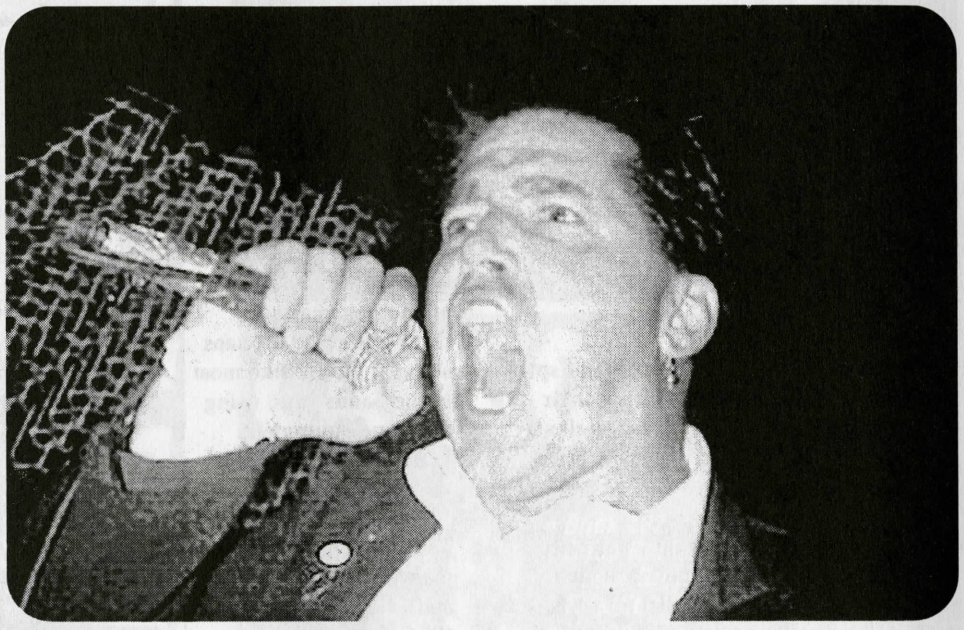
Glenn: Really, what store?

Ron: Ah, I can't think of the name off the top of my head, but he's a nut, man.

A kid from Portland who came down to see T.S.O.L.: Didn't it just open?

Ron:[laughing]: I'm not sure. He's got an insane record collection, though, I know that. He's got two kids now who are into punk. It was weird at Social Chaos show in Portland. These two little boys came up to me and said, "Our dad told us to say 'hi'!"

Glenn: I borrowed some old issues of *Flipside* from a friend of mine. She grew up in California around the time you guys were playing down there, earlier in your career. I was reading some of the letters to the editor, and it seemed like there was a lot of pressure at the time to prove yourself as a punk rocker. People were flinging all these accusations at bands and people in the scene, accusing each other of being "posers" and such. And my friend who let me borrow the magazines said she thought you guys were above all that. You didn't concern yourself with a lot of the petty "in-scene" politics.



Ron: No, I mean, we were really just about having fun. There's no set order with us. If you look at our records, in '82 we did "Beneath The Shadows," which was totally wacked compared to anything else at the time, and we didn't give a fuck. We didn't care. We always just tried to do whatever we wanted to do, and not get involved in any of that other crap.

Glenn: But was it harder to please people back then? Were the fans more critical?

Ron: Back then? Not at all. We had a huge scene, a huge following, because our fans never knew what to expect. It was always different. Jack has a way of grabbing the crowd and doing weird stuff to them.

Kid from Portland: Like the chicken fights last night [in which T.S.O.L. organized "chicken fights" among the audience and paid the winners out of their own pockets]?

Ron:[laughing]: Yeah, that was definitely worth my 10 bucks!

Glenn: This is kind of a broad question, but what's different about punk rock right now, as opposed to when you guys started out? Are there any big glaring differences?

Ron: Yeah, especially in terms of acceptability. When we started playing, you couldn't even walk down the street where we were from. We got arrested for being "punk in public." Not "drunk in public," but "punk in public!" They had files on us; the F.B.I. has files on us from back then. I guess if you write a song called "Abolish Government" and mention the president's name at the end...well, it goes into the public domain and you're placed under surveillance. And we were just a bunch of kids who didn't like what we saw going on in the world. It was weird, because our old manager, who used to manage us and the Dead Kennedys, got arrested driving in Orange County. I went to bail him out, and the process took forever. Later, he said, "Man, the F.B.I. had me in a room and they had books this thick on you guys. They wanted to know everything about you!"

Glenn: Whoa, I didn't know it was that serious.

Ron: Yeah, back around 1980, it was pretty ugly. But now you've got so-called "punk" bands doing commercials and stuff. You hear their music everywhere. It's weird because

there's this whole "pop-punk" thing going on now which is so damn commercialized and acceptable. My friend's 12-year-old daughter is into that stuff. What we're trying to do now is basically have some fun, which is basically what we tried to do back then. It's more or less the same idea.

Glenn: Do you guys have anything new planned? Have you written new songs or do you only play older material?

Ron: We're playing everything off of the first three records, and a little bit off the next one. We're also going to be recording soon. We have two shows set up in L.A. when we get back, and then we're going back into the studio to record. At this point, we're not really playing any of the new stuff.

Glenn: Will the new record be out this year?

Ron: It's supposed to come out in February.

Glenn: Does it have a title yet?

Ron: No, not yet.

Glenn: What label will it be on?

Ron: We don't know yet. We're paying for it ourselves.

Glenn: As you said, the original band split up around '83, and everyone went their own directions for awhile. Did you all stay involved in music, or did you have other bands, or other jobs?

Ron: When the band broke up I was getting into iron work, and I became a structural steel and iron worker; I did that for several years. I did elevator construction and ran a machine shop. Mike's done all kinds of things. He had a surf shop, he started a clothing company, all kinds of stuff. But ultimately we all got pretty heavily into drugs and ended up wrecking everything we had. But we're all pretty much back on track now.

Glenn: I've never heard the Joykiller's music, but I understand that Jack is the singer?

Ron: Jack used to be the singer, and I played guitar on their first record. They've got three records out on Epitaph, but they're no longer in existence. The first Joykiller record sounds a lot like T.S.O.L.

Glenn: Getting back to what you said about new bands, are there any new bands that you like?

Ron: I honestly couldn't say. I don't pay much attention to a lot of what passes for "punk rock" these days. One time I went and saw Pennywise, which is one of those bands I was talking about, and it was like...[shrugs]...I don't know. I do like the U.S. Bombs a lot, though. Duane's a really good friend of mine, and so is Kerry.

Glenn: Let's talk a little about your equipment, as far as guitars and stuff. What do you guys use, and what's your preferred setup?

Ron: I prefer equipment that was made before I was born. I'm really into vintage guitars. I have a 1955 TV model Les Paul Junior, and I have a '65 SG Junior which I'm playing through a '62 Fender 14 Concert and a '63 Super Reverb. That's what I use. Mike's got a '66 P bass and a '64 Jazz bass through an SVT. I've gotta have the old stuff. It has to pass the time test for me because new guitars feel like they're made by a fucking machine. They all seem to have one sound. You could put today's pickups on a 2x4 and it would probably sound the same. There's no individuality in them.

Glenn: That reminds me of another question. During the Social Chaos show, it looked like most of the bands were using the same equipment. Was that just to speed things up?

Ron: Yeah, there were so many bands, between 11 and 14 at some points. We brought all our own gear, but they didn't want us to use it. But I did use my own heads. I had a Soldano and a Sovtek head for that. I just used their cabinets.

Glenn: Did everyone use the same drum set too?

Ron: Some of the places had two whole setups on one stage, but yeah, pretty much everyone used the same equipment. And it was kinda weird because two of the bands had left-handed drummers. They had to flip everything around, then flip it right back around, then back again. The lesson to be learned is that if there are two left-handed drummers, they should go on back-to-back to make things easier. Sloppy Seconds were on the tour, too [laughing]. They were cool.

Glenn: One last question: Is this the first time that you've played in Eugene, or have you played here before?

Ron: No, we've played here before, but it was years and years ago; probably in '81.

Glenn: Do you remember much about that show? Any crazy Eugene stories?

Ron: Not really, at this point I couldn't even tell you where we played.

T.S.O.L. will be performing 14 dates on this summer's Warped Tour and are currently recording a new album for possible release on Nitro Records. www.truesoundsofliberty.com [This appears to be the "official" website. It's got tons more pictures of the band and is beautifully done.]



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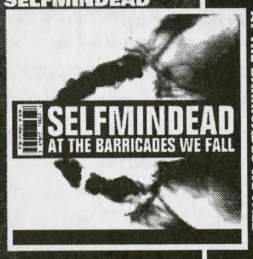

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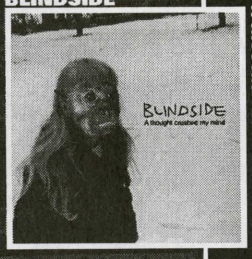

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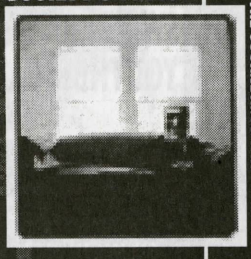

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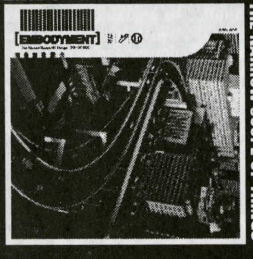

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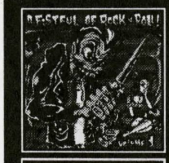

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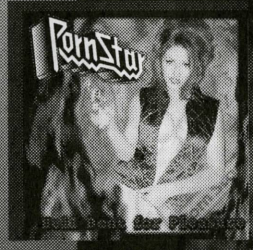

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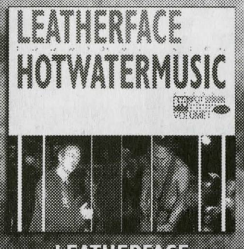

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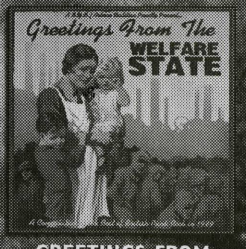

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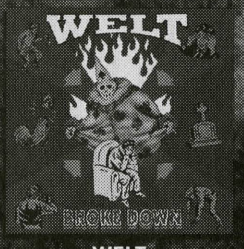

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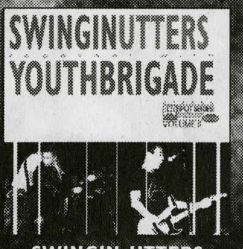

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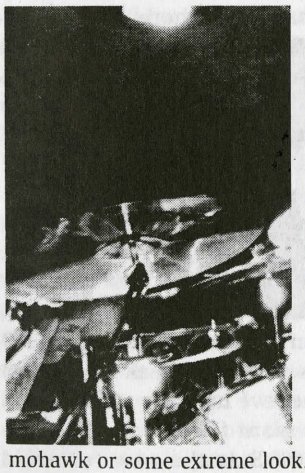
BYO RECORDS

I'M TELLIN' TIM

Well, here we go again; back at war with the conformists' handbook. I'm not sure if this has already been said yet in this issue — although I'm sure it has — but here's the scoop. I doubt any of you read *MRR*, and if you do, you probably only scan through it to check out the ads, as even their employees have said that "MRR has been reduced to a bunch of meaningless words draped around some ads that people may or may not look at", but a couple issues ago, a very intelligent brave "anonymous" person stepped forward — accusing Jeff Bale of being a racist because he criticized some fashions. What cracks me up is that with all the serious topics that get discussed between these two magazines, (who are supposed to be the two big powerhouse mags in "punk rock") the topic that brought this all to a head was fashion. Granted, the issue that was was racism, which I feel is far from a bogus issue — and never something that should be taken lightly when it actually occurs (which as it turns out, is about once every thirty times the card is actually played in a public forum), but if anyone is guilty of racist overtones here, it's the moron who wrote the damn letter. If Jeff makes a comment about someone saying "Yo" and having a crack pipe, causing you automatically assume that he's attacking the whole of African-American society, then you're most likely a racist yourself.

About half a page up in the column, he makes reference to the baggy shorts, long-haired beach punk look, yet nobody accused him of hating whites. The fact that he goes on to talk about people that are wearing clothes that have been been popularized by a social demographic, even though they don't necessarily belong to that demographic, being wrong, I don't agree with. It's not a race thing, but a people thing. People should be allowed to wear whatever they want. If anything is racist in clothing, its companies like FUBU, which stands for "For Us, By Us", made and marketed strictly by and to the African-American hip-hop society. If this was "For Whites, By Whites", this country would be in an uproar, and the company would be forced out of business, while its factories would be burned to the ground. How is one racist but not the other? As far as Jeff judging people by their clothes, that's the same as some jock driving down the street and yelling shit at a punk rocker for having a mohawk or some extreme look. These are all fashion statements that make these people feel more comfortable and happy about what they are into. If a white guy is into rap and chooses a fashion that I personally would not choose, it doesn't make one of us right or wrong, it's just two different answers and should be accepted as such. It is a human thing, not a race thing, that Jeff has a problem with. Tell him that he hates people as a whole, and he'll finish the sentence before you do, but don't call him a racist for having a different opinion than you do. The only way that racism will ever be brought to a head and abolished is if we actually single it out and deal with it head-on. Side distractions like this only get people all riled up (one of Jeff's favorite things to do!) and takes meaning away from the actual racist actions that do occur in the world.

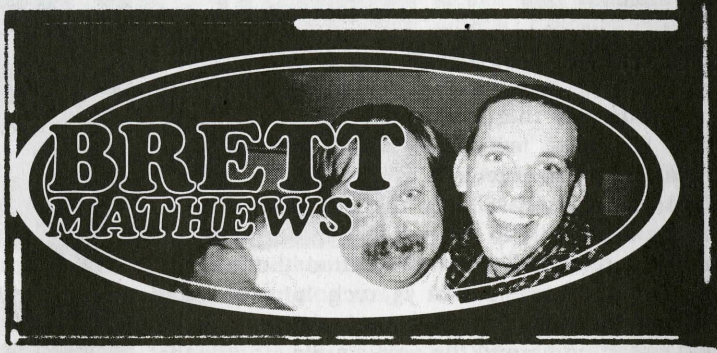


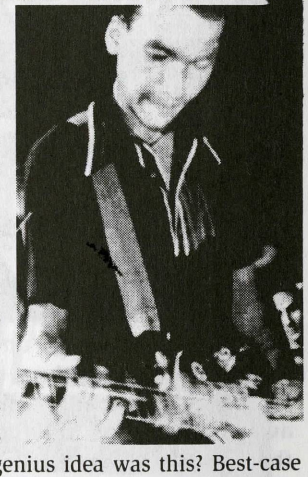


BACK IN ACTION: (Above) The former members of Jawbreaker are now all officially musically active again after their '96 breakup. Rejoice!

PEOPLE ARE THE DUMBEST ANIMALS

On to a lighter, more enjoyable topic. I guess some bonehead straightedge hardcore kids allegedly broke into VICTORY RECORDS the other night and stole the master tapes of the new EARTH CRISIS record, as the word on the street was that it was a more "listener friendly" record and not as aggressive as previous releases. In an effort to preserve the integrity of the band, these kids tied a chain to their truck, the other end to the front door, and jerked the sucker clean off, at which point they entered the premises, disturbing nothing else (good little straightedge boys and girls), and lifted the master tapes. This is *all* kinds of funny. As a label owner, this kind of bums me out, as I would hate to have someone break into my offices, but as a huge fan of music, just knowing that people would go that far to try to preserve what they saw as perfection from being blemished, it's kind of cool. Although in reality, if anything, it caused a one day delay while Victory called the mastering plant and said "burn me another master". Pointless as the exhibition might of been, it's still kind of funny, and I hope even Victory will get a laugh out of it some years down the road. I'm sure it'll be quite few years though...





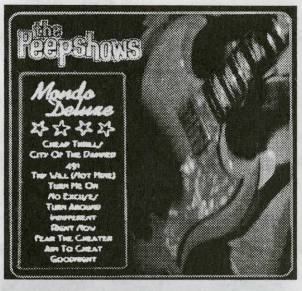
Speaking of boneheads, memo to METALLICA; you might want to confer with your financial advisers before you ever do anything — ever again!! I'm sure that suing your fans has to be on the "things your band SHOULDN'T do" list. Whose genius idea was this? Best-case senerio, all 300,000 kids cough up the stinkin' buck you claim that they owe you, leaving you with $300,000. Braniacs! You make that at your merch table every night. Even if it's only those immediate fans that are affected, you just lost 300,000 kids that won't pay $18 for your new CD, won't pay $30 to get into your next show, and won't pay $25 for your new tour t-shirt! That's $21,900,000 alone. Not to mention the way the rest of the world looks at you now. By the way, in case nobody's told you, EVERYBODY THINKS YOU'RE ASSHOLES!!! That was almost as dumb as kicking Dave Mustaine out was smart. What do you do for an encore?

While I have my calculator out, I would also like to say a little hello to my new friends over at TIME BOMB records. They called me the other day, asking me to do a story on one of their bands. It's weird having a major label contact us about bands, but I guess the band loves *Hit List*.

At least they have good taste. Anyway, I informed her that we were also working on a SOCIAL DISTORTION / MIKE NESS article, and that if she wanted to send in the back catalog TIME BOMB had for them, that I would love to include a brief overview in the article. This part's great. She wigs, and then says "That's like 12 titles. Do you know how much that would cost us?" Well, like I said, I have my trusty little calculator out. Erm, let's see. 12 titles, times the going major label rate for CD reproduction which is around $.65 for finished product — well, we're looking at about just under eight dollars. Good call in the thrifty department, ma'am! I'm sure both the band and the label are quite proud of your ability to save them money. Press? Aw, who needs it? Oh yeah, why did you call again?

FINALLY, THE ROCK HAS COME BACK TO SAN FRANCISCO!: (Top to bottom) Beth Loudmouth and Boom mug for the camera at Stinky's Peepshow. Speaking of Peepshows, here's their album cover. The Zodiac Killers — live at Stinky's Peepshow. The Peepshows live, but not at Stinky's Peepshow. Got it? Opposite: The Kids of Widney High.



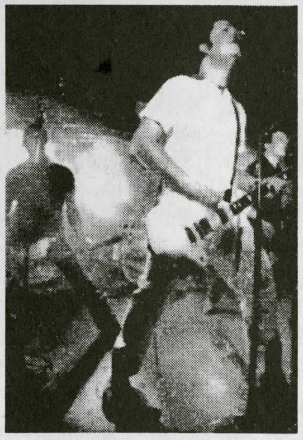


GOOD THINGS

I must say that I have to retract a statement that I made a few issues a go. I was whining about the state of rock 'n' roll, saying that it is far from what it was. Over the last year, *Hit List* brought not only to the public attention, but on a much larger scale to *my* attention the amazing underground scene that is rock 'n' roll today. We're planning on doing a series of compilation CD's starting here in the next couple months that will be hopefully turning a lot of music fans on to a lot of great bands. They will be broken up into categories, such as lo-fi/trashed out R&R, big production/glammy stadium R&R, oi! & street punk, etc... We will be pulling tracks from some of the best records that we get for review. Our plan is to have these in the stores for as cheap as possible, with our goal set at under $5. When you see these, please check them out. Even if out of the 15 or 20 tracks that are on there you are only blown away by 2 (although I don't think that you'll have that problem, as the tracks so far completely rule), I hope you, as fellow music fans will agree, finding an amazing new band is priceless.



Speaking of new amazing bands, we here at Coldfront were fortunate enough to get to work with what I think is a new band that will blow minds. Steve Miller, singer for ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN has a new band named CHERRY 13. While we only have a 7" out for them, I believe that they actually have a couple of releases in stores now. I would highly recommend tracking the records down and checking 'em out. Their stuff is quite remanisant of how EF started out — powerful, hungry, filled with attitude, chugging through some serious R&R hooks. (By the way, even though EF prints on the back of all their Records — and we are just as guilty as our record for them was the first to say it — don't fight the anti rock and roll conspiracy. Keep it underground, personal, and intimate. I saw what '94 did to the punk scene here in the Bay Area, and if that happened to R&R it would break my heart. I don't want to see a bunch of pretty-boy stuffed shirts hanging out at STINKY'S PEEP SHOW waiting to see the BLACK HALOS play their new radio hit.) Anyway, check out CHERRY 13. They will be the world's new darlings, and you can say you were there first!



While we're on the subject of EF, Sal, the band's guitarist and promotion Super-machine, has put together a mighty fine line of CD's entitled *Fist Full Of Rock & Roll*. It's pretty much a complete overview of today's R&R scene. 4 of the 13 volumes are in stores now, and are well worth picking up.

Jade Tree, having won the title of "king of the emo labels", recently just dropped a bomb on the world. It's called the EXPLOSION, and if you're going to pass it by under your assumptions that it's just another emo record, well that's your loss. In your face, pissed off late '70's, early '80's MISFITS/SEX PISTOLS influenced streetpunk. Good shit, and I hear that they put on a hell of a show. Check it out.

Anybody into stadium rock out there? Anybody who digs the sounds of TURBONEGRO / AMERICAN HEARTBREAK might want to check out a great band called the PEEPSHOWS. I gave it a glowing review in this issue's record review section, but have come to love it even more since then. If you read my column often, you know how I feel about TURBONEGRO's *Apocalypse Dudes*. Well, this is certainly up there. This is certainly better than any other TURBONEGRO album, but "A.D." was sort of a freak of nature. Anyway, if you won't believe me, take Happy Tom from TURBONEGRO's word for it, whom is proclaiming THE PEEPSHOWS as the new future in rock and roll. He also made some comments about elephant reproductive organs, but I've already mentioned his comment review of the record, and once is more than enough on things like that! Anyway, go check out the PEEPSHOWS. It's on Burning Heart Records out of Sweden, but their US distro is good so it should be an easy find.

At some point, when we have solidified a more self-sufficient form of distribution, and are not relying on RIP OFF RECORDS to put us through Mordam, I will sit down and explain to you exactly why RIP OFF is quite possibly the best and most consistent label of all time. If I was

to do this now, it might be misconstrued as ass-kissing, and not carry the weight it needs to. Until then, just know that Greg Lowry, owner of ROR, and formerly of several great bands, but probably most notably the RIP OFFs, has a new band out called the ZODIAC KILLERS, and the debut CD has set a new level for trashed-out R&R. Pick it up and rock out.

I know that you hear me talking about JAWBREAKER a lot, and most of you don't understand how my musical tastes can vary so much, but, well, tough shit. We finally have our third JAWBREAKER member sighting. Obviously Blake has gone on to do JETS TO BRAZIL, Adam has become the permanent temporary drummer for J CHURCH, and most recently, Chris Bauermeister has shown up in Chicago playing bass for HORACE PINKER. I'm quite proud and pleased to announce that Coldfront will be doing a CD-EP for the new line-up of HORACE PINKER, and also happy to report that they will be touring Canada and the US this summer.While all three guys would probably be the first to tell you that these bands are not JAWBREAKER, they're all great in their own different different ways.



You might also look into project called the KIDS OF WIDNEY HIGH. It's a bunch of retarded kids that go to a school, Widney High (duh), and at the end of their school year they make a record. Their new CD just came out on IPECAC, Mike Patton's (of FAITH NO MORE fame) label, and is brilliant. You'll be happy to know that the label actually fully backs the program, and is in full support of the kids and the school itself. Personally I just think it's funny as shit, and almost went to see MR BUNGLE on New Year's Eve, just to see these kids open for them, though I'm happy to see that the label is more mature than I am. Whatever the reason is, check out their new CD. I don't think it packs the punch of their first, "Special Music From Special Kids", but it does the trick.

I guess I'm going to log off before I piss anybody off too seriously. I think I did pretty good this time of keeping people happy. I'm still wondering if I should tell you the story about going and seeing Sebastian Bach (SKID ROW) the other night, but that would just lead you to ask what I was doing there, which would open further cans of worms to labyrinthine to explain at this juncture. Let's just say that our backstage passes were good enough to get me in front of ol' Sebastian's deli tray. I did all the damage I could, but was asked to leave before I was satisfied. Dave Johnson, being the good friend that he is, (and knowing that I was probably still hungry), grabbed Sebastian's wheel of brie, (which by the way, must have been at least a foot across) folded it in half, stuffed it in his jacket, and walked out with it. I was in cheese heaven. Damn! Dave didn't grab any crackers though! That's what friends are for. You might have to slide under the table while they (in this case Dave accompanied by the almighty Al Quint make up the "they") are beating on tables and singing songs from SLAYER'S *Reign In Blood* in public restaurants, but at least you know when you're *truly hungry*, they're always there with Sebastian's wheel of cheese!!

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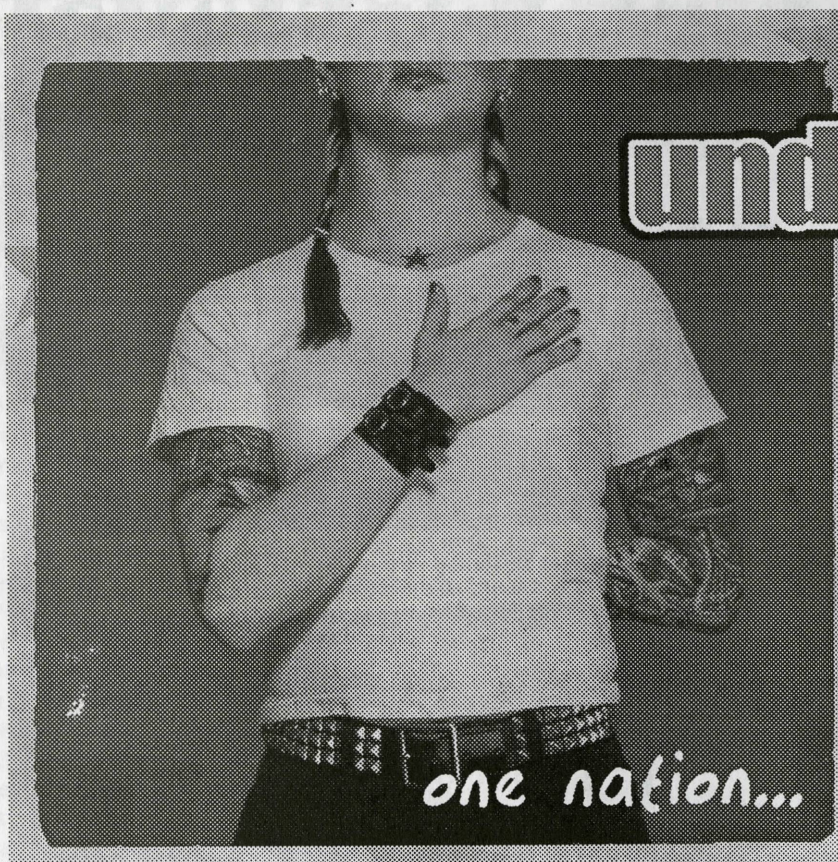

under the gun



NEW RECORD OUT JUNE 2000

"Imagine Social Distortion crashing into Bad Religion on the Rancid highway. *-Chord Magazine*

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This being my first column for *Hit List*, I am not sure if I need an introduction. For once, however, I am not concerned if I should bother with one. I am aware of all the arguments regarding the sublime desire of readers to be better influenced by those through whom they live vicariously — i.e., celebrities — as well as their demand to know about the author's experience, but as usual, I prefer to get down to brass tacks. I have no patience with the insecurities inherent to idolatry — be it giving or receiving — and as for my track record, it will become clear soon enough. In any case, what I have to say stands by itself; to disregard or accept it simply because of the mortal coil-cum-interpreter through which the words are introduced to those that read them, is to ignore the message. And as this column is not a spoken word piece nor a live performance, one can always re-read it to pick up what was not initially digested. Lastly, there is not much time to waste trying to make an impression, I must admit; I always have loads of projects screaming for completion, so let us get on with this debut.

The current state of self-publishing — zines, in particular — remains dismal. I say this because it is an acute observation and not because I am a naysayer or because of any lack of action on my part. No, zinedom is in need of an overhaul for many reasons. One is to attenuate — if not obliterate — the fanciful residue of a single reviewzine desire (a king of the hill, if you will), and another is to be rid of the dreadfully tepid debate as to what connotes a "zine." Also of great importance is the lack of a self-supporting milieu, an economic environment that should replace the business-as-usual and mainstream media methods of promotion. And then there is the flailing, failing e-medium, the internet newsgroup known as alt.zines.

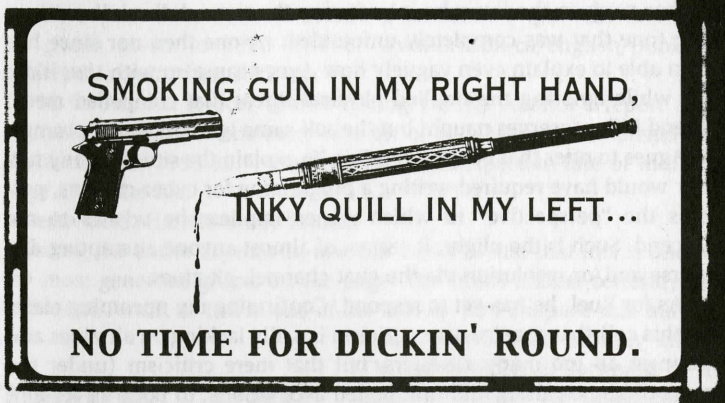
It was not so long ago — 1994, in fact — that alt.zines was abuzz with a host of zine "celebs" as well as forgettable passersby. The novelty of the expediency and the ease of convenience made the fledgling forum ripe for the rant indicative of the early-to-mid 1990s zine pubber. That cycle seemed to wane in late 1995, and has come round at least twice since then (and as I had gone off-line in late 1996 and did not get another account until mid-1998, there was enough time for another cycle or two). Unfortunately, such quibbling has come to make a mockery of a forum that has great potential and power. For a while I could not bother to even lurk (this was early on when I had re-established an on-line account, in 1998), for the overwhelming amount of personal messages (that could have been emailed), pointless remarks, and indescriptive posts of self-promotion made it a waste of time.

There continues to be no end to the unabashed idiocy found on alt.zines, but I did manage to narrow it down to a few examples. The first one was a typical remark made in responce to someone whose intention was to offer some constructive criticism. One Steen Sigmund (marrak@gte.net) stated (please note that all quotes in this column are reprinted exactly as they were on alt.zines, with typos and all errors), "I find it somewhat strange that not more networking between you publishers of zines is made here when it comes to where to sell your zines. Few publishers of zines I see hear and talk to are doing much to help each other finding new outlet for their zines. The exception might be all the band fanzines some of which we print. They constantly are sharing outlets, shows and other meeting details. The same goes for small book publishers that share ALL their inner details of the bookstores they deal with.

"Or is it that alt.zines is not a good place to share this information at? To official, to open? Should this take place on a subscribed mailing list? Or, since it is true that most small stores rather like to have only one account for magazine and sorts, to simplify their accounting it should not take place at all and be left only to the handful of still existing distributors to find these retail outlets that will carry your zines?

"Why not trade zine outlets to build up a customer base? One zine in one store don't do it, but a dozen zines in one store might."

Emerson Dameron (Omnivore@starplace.com) elected to eschew arguing the admirable merit of Sigmund's comment, instead attacking a ridiculously insignificant point (a grammatical gaffe which would have otherwise upset me; in this case, however, I found such a very small mistake not worth the effort): "Let me just say that, although free enterprise doesn't bother me (at least not much more than the sun bothers me), I hate it when people cannibalise nouns for homemade verbs (ex-'networking'). It's awkwardly cute, which violates the #1 rule governing cuteness: If you're going to try to be cute, you sure as shit better succeed. And make it seamless. Just my two cents."



For all the constructive criticism that Sigmund offered, Dameron could find only a single word and its obvious but almost completely insignificant misuse, to discuss. That the topic chosen by Sigmund was one that has had enough import to occasionally destroy loads of self-publishers — recall the Fine Print debacle? — apparently did not need to be discussed in light of the almost felonious rhetorical transgression committed by Sigmund. (And if Sigmund's erroneous use of "networking" was so bad, one could only imagine the terror that shall result when Professor Dameron realises that the term "email" has been abused by everyone, everywhere, and in a far shorter time than the aforementioned atrocity!)

Sadly, such incidents are not at all infrequent on alt.zines.

Another fine example came during a debate regarding one zinester's alleged threat, which was perceived when he showed up unannounced at another zinester's place of work. The first zinester, Ruel of *Amusing Yourself To Death*, had shown up with a friend (someone named Dave) at the place of work in order to "talk" with *Filthy Shit* editor Mike Tolento after Mike's exposé of Ruel's aggravating flakiness in connection with the 1999 Santa Barbara ZineFest. (The event threatened to be a nearly thorough flop due to Ruel failing to come through on his part. It was saved, ironically enough, by Mike as well as Lynne Lowe of *Java Turtle*.) When I posted an open lettre to Ruel about his threatening behaviour and how it could have been better communicated via a phone call, email, or an announced call to Mike's apartment (seeing as how both parties were local friends cognizant of each other's residence, etc.), my sentiments were met with the truly ludicrous claim that I was ultimately upset over a mere three dollars. The author of the allegation was a one Agnes DeLappe (AgnesDelightful@yahoo.com) (a zine reviewer for *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press*), whose statement was as follows:

HIT SQUAD

"The additional over-reaction is enjoyable, Randall, but I still await a reasonable reason why you're posting childish threats of bodily harm against someone who may or may not owe you three dollars.

"Until you can explain that, my good advice remains: Take your Prozac and sit down, Randall. Get some perspective."

Were I to take the inane approach that the typical alt.zinester would employ, I would have responded that the use of Prozac tends not so much to calm patients but to leave them bereft of the undesirable emotions that are part of a dynamic that is easily upset, thus allowing said patients to brutally carry out the elimination of those folk that disparage or even merely annoy them. But no, I took the polite approach: ignoring the accusation. After all, Agnes' attempt to further confuse the issue by introducing the three-dollar-bill red herring (one that was completely unfounded; no-one then nor since has been able to explain even vaguely how Agnes came up with *that* illogic!) while ignoring the implied physical threat that compelled me to defend Mike deserves naught but the self-same ignorance that prompted Agnes to offer that delightful tidbit. To explain the situation any further would have required writing a programme for cyber-crayons, perhaps the "perspective" to which Agnes implies she wishes to me descend. Such is the plight, it seems, of almost anyone attempting discourse and/or resolution via the chat channel, alt.zines.

As for Ruel, he has yet to respond. Confirming my upcoming claim (in this col) that constructive criticism is sadly lacking on alt.zines and amongst all too many zinesters, but that mere criticism (under the guise of name-calling and unfounded accusations, to boot) is certainly not in short supply, one H.D. Miller (hdmiller@pantheon.yale.edu) deemed it a tenet of debate that the aforementioned aspects (as regards the latter: mere criticism) of impassioned interlocution are enough support for one's arguments. His claims that some alt.zinesters need to deploy dictionaries rather than thesauri remain unsubstantiated with respect to any actual prosaic transgressions by those towards whom he directed his wild accusations; he stopped short, not unlike a crack-whore's gob around the cock of a drunk offering a C-note, by failing to offer even a single example as to why the occasional rogue zinester should not deservedly and eloquently attack one of alt.zines' darling celebrities.

Granted, these examples tend to be of a personal nature. When it comes to the ever-changing, high-spirited (some would say "high-strung") and verbally volatile mini-world of zines, there is no room for armchair action even if much of the action is parlayed from the relatively recumbent position of one's chair. But to jump into the action simply out of a pathetic desire to be heard, rather than to achieve momentary goals along the road of self-publishing, is detrimental to the already impaired movement that is forever beset upon by the rest of the world (during those rare moments when the rest of the world even bothers to acknowledge our collective endeavours). If we are unable to goad each other into being relevant while suffering the slings and errors of others' comments and our mistakes, then our little pond *will* dry up. But it does not mean that we should fill the occasional void with pointless bickering; better the energy is expended doing something *while* creating — via constructive criticism — a formidable literary force.

Anyone mistaking my opinion for that of a Luddite view is incorrect.

I have in other rags made clear my indignation about the sloppy expediency afforded by the photostatic machine, and how it allows one to produce in great numbers that which is all too often not carefully written. On the other end of the spectrum is the lettrepress, which I feel inadvertently commands responsibility because one has to actually read what one wishes to reproduce due to the process required to print a piece. With the advent of the Internet as a global, universal medium, a new form of abuse has become common, so let me attempt to conclude this portion of my petty complaint with the words of two others who put it far more eloquently than I. *Opuntia* editor Dale Spiers, at the end of a review of Stewart Home's *The Assault on Culture* (AK Press, 1991), opined, "Usenet newsgroups represent what happens when speed takes precedence over thought." {Vol. 44.1B, page 9} The statement that prompted Spiers to publish his comment may well have been from page 93 of Home's book: "However, the speed with which electronic communications systems operate does serve to pressurize those using them into reducing the time they take to reach any given decision, thus lowering the overall quality of human thought and the rationality of individual choice making." (Anyone mistaking my opinion for that of a Luddite view is incorrect. I realise that it is the user, not the medium, that is responsible for the indecision and error in communications.) Yea, and yet I attempted to conclude this bit with the aforementioned aphorisms, so I failed. Here is one more bit, albeit by a zinester who shall remain anonymous pursuant to his/her request yet whose efforts are well known among the younger self-publishing set — myself included — and whose latest endeavour was ended in early 2000 due to burnout:

"Subject: Re: AYTD/Ruel presumed dead, or soon to be beaten?
Date: Wed, 20 Oct 1999
To: (revtinear@angrythoreauan.com)
Dear Randal,

I don't even know why you try with the alt.zines crowd. They have no concern except for themselves and every legitimate concern that is posted on this newsgroup is met with hostile cynicism. Perhaps the cynicism would be easier to stomach if most of these people's zines didn't suck. You made your public call to Ruel (which I support), but unfortunately he probably will not take the opportunity to give his side of the story. That to me says that he is guilty as charged, though I am still willing to hear his side. But as far as the alt.zines people go, it is probably better to devote your attention to nice people like Lynne and Mike behind the scenes.

"If Ruel decides to continue to act this way, then the bridges will quicken in there burning."

But I blather on, and for what reason? Alt.zines is so ridiculously insignificant that, even counting the lurkers, there cannot be anywhere near one hundred people reading the posts. So do not think I am implying that it is the primary forum for the literally tens of thousands of zine pubbers; it is not. Whereas "alt.zines" is a newsgroup with a title that implies discourse on zine-making, the disillusionment of small press pubbing and other topics pertinent to zines, one need but visit one time the alt.zines newsgroup to be quickly convinced that there is little worth discussing. A recent "debate," one which held forth the arguments about Frank Zappa's being a hippie or a punk, as well as the punkness of various incarnations of BLACK FLAG (the band, not the chaotic english zine), was indicative of the inanity of this otherwise powerful medium. The nearly ninety postings that com-

prised this thread (The alt.zines average is one!) took place during the fortnight of mid- to late-January 2000 and has probably been bested since then, but the memory of being held hostage in a virtual *Maximum Rocknroll* readers' lettres recital persists!

My next topic-*cum*-target is one well known to anyone who has appreciated punk rock for at least ten years: what constitutes a "zine." Like punk, everyone not only has a definition (one that is all too often and unwittingly pinched from some celebrity whose business acumen is far more astute than their writing ability), but they often spend far, far too much time and effort foisting it upon others. Dare I say that those of us that *do* rather than define find this habit aggravating? Well, I will, for even after this disclosure (and deconstruction of such wheel-spinning) the waste of effort entitled alt.zines will barely subside. Were the energy expended in forcing the various and often insignificant differences as to what defines a "zine" put into actually *making* one, then surely our collective effort would be one step closer to being a unique tributary. Granted, anyone can enter the mainstream; the point is to sway its course rather than merely swim with it. And while I do respect the desire to oblige semantics (philology and etiology are loves of mine), it must not become so all-consuming a project as to eclipse the reason for zines. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, et al, do not waste much time quibbling about what constitutes journalism; they execute what they firmly believe it to be, and the firmness with which they go about it convinces the general public that what they produce *is* journalism. I do not wish such discussions to be left in the dust, mind you; like the definition of "zine," it deserves discussion and debate, but not so much as to sacrifice the actual endeavour. What will it matter if all we do is eventually come to a decision as to what constitutes a zine, if the resultant agreement moves nothing more than the corners of our mouths? The revolving door of mainstream-initiated punk rockers has only helped swell the girth of the mainstream by validating punk — whatever "punk" is — and I know of no real social change that has come as a result, only a chunk of change that took a vacation (when it should have been helped to permanently emigrate) from The Great Society. Are we to let zines, a medium that has far less profit potential (when was the last time you took a stack of used zines down to the local bookshoppe or newsagent for credit or cash?) than punk rock music, be waylaid by our own negligence?

Granted, anyone can enter the mainstream; the point is to sway its course rather than merely swim with it.

Of course, there are very few avenues that seem to allow our little rags to be seen by those folk that compromise the seemingly highly coveted eyeballs of the general population. And it is this desperation, I fear, that seems to have people begging to be lorded over by fools such as ex-*Factsheet 5*, v.III editor Seth Friedman (And where is he now, he who claimed to have such a love for the zine "community"? I would imagine that he is sulking over the lack of takers of his $70,000 asking price.) and up-and-coming editor "celebs" that parlay their petty jealousies into editorial tenets even as they attempt to formulate a gospel for those that need no such nonsense. A particularly foul failing of the zine world is the want of an exclusive hub for our efforts, rather than the desire to establish a seemingly perpetual paper node that knows no center, a series of strands that refers each reader to many other door-filled roundhouses, rather than being a bunch of spindly spokes that alone are worthless but together lead outward from one single spokesperson (much like a public relations clearing-house for corporations). It takes but the petty mind of the clearing-house controller to pick favourably his friends while ignoring those that dare to speak out against the very nature of the structure. And when that hub spins off into a rain gutter, then what? Babies crying for direction, frantic fans desperately clawing at what they think is an alternative rather than creating a strand that will strengthen a figurative web.

North of the border there is said to be the reviewzine known as *Broken Pencil*, but after two years of occasional attempts to even garner a reply, I have yet to find little more than hearsay via reviews (of possibly errant copies!) and internet newsgroup mentions that this rag even exists. Ironically enough, the most convincing piece of evidence I have of *Broken Pencil*'s existence, is the apparent money awarded it by the Ontario Arts Council. There is an adobe (*.pdf) file that lists all grants given in 1998-1999 at www.arts.on.ca/english/publications/pdf/ar.pdf (then click on:
"1998-99 Annual Report/Grants Listing (703K) Auditor's report and audited financial statements, plus a list of all OAC grant recipients for the fiscal year 1998-99.") One can find the respective line of info on page 27 of the file:
"Niedzviecki, Hal, Toronto, $5,000"
Perusing the entire document, one can easily divine that this is one of the most generous grants on the page. The funds almost certainly go to *Broken Pencil*, as Hal is one of the editors. So I suppose that maybe *Broken Pencil* does actually exist. (Thanks to Michael Jackman of *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press* for this tidbit.)

Another aspect of the zine community, if I may be so bold as to brand our bunch of semi-selfish stragglers a "community," is the implication that ignorance is indicative of one's integrity. That an editor would dare employ verbiage which threatens to implore readers to deploy a dictionary or — fuck's sake! — a thesaurus seems to be a bourgeois belligerence on behalf of the writer in question. The underlying assumption is akin to the ziney tenet that crap is king, for handwritten zines are held in high regard despite any idiocy they may contain (and too many — albeit not all, I must say for those potential protesters that shall inevitably interpret "too many" as "all" — of them do) and that the editor is no longer true should s/he stoop to using polysyllabic-flavoured prose. On the other hand, an almost immediate cold air is perceived whenever a previously photocopied zine becomes popular or takes a road similar to the one Bob Dylan traveled when his fans suddenly and collectively berated him for daring to employ electricity. One would think that a zine would help people to see such mistakes, rather than repeating them.

Unlike the punk milieu whence sprang the more contemporary version of the fanzine — and which, like punk rock, sprouted numerous offshoots — there was but the briefest heyday and an even shorter, small period of pay for the focus of fanzines/zines. Even worse to those concerned with the semantics of the term "zine" (powerful as they may be, the passion to self-publish is stronger — or so I believe) is the misappropriation of the term itself, not to mention the possible mainstream breakthroughs that some felt would propel zinedom into the bright lights. Rumours of a Hollywood movie or two influenced by

HIT SQUAD

zines (or a zine; I forget the name and have been unable to find the source from where I acquired this tidbit, but I know it was relatively sincere), vague influences in the mainstream (that only we zinesters could appreciate, let alone divine, such as how "a 'zine has slipped into the mainstream, as exhibited by the nearby 'Separated at Lunch'" bit from a 15 February 1999 edition of *AdWeek*), and the reprehensible reliance on a single spokesman for those that are supposed to think, speak and write for themselves — hence, *self*-publishing — are diversions that continue to churn up time and distract enough zinesters for me to comment on the matters. Perhaps it is true that zines, like bands, are done primarily by those whose intentions are not art but mere attention, thus the "authors'" whining in order to garner mainstream attention as well as the lack of results with respect to such a goal. Were the zine "community" to stop balking at being writers and publishers as well as to start being more critical about the community's potential, and let the mainstream "discover" our collective endeavour due to its collective strength rather than its individual insecurities (you know, those "zany kids" and their "wacky, quirky 'zines"), then maybe we would make first an eddy in the mainstream and then perhaps become strong enough to divert a enough water to wend through the wilderness a river of our own.

SEPARATED AT LUNCH?



A tabloid Web site has sued the Florida Department of Citrus and its ad agency, The Richards Group, over stolen sandwich.

Specifically, San Francisco-based 'zine Tabloid.com last week filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court claiming the shop stole the sandwich character used in Florida Citrus spots. It seeks unspecified damages and an immediate halt to the $20 million effort.

In last year's Florida Citrus spots, a talking ham sandwich (shown at top) imparts heavy-handed advice about orange juice's health benefits. Tabloid.net claims that Richards copied that image from "Vodka City," a 1997 column with a similar smartaleck sandwich (shown at bottom).

Although Tabloid.net claims computers from Richards visited the site at least three times before the campaign's launch, shop president Stan Richards said the plagiarism charge is "somewhere close to their imagination." The creators of the citrus ads denied prior knowledge.

Tabloid.net attorney Paul Kiesel declined comment. —*Glen Fest and Joan Voight*

Let me give you an example of what real constructive criticism can create. In the case that one is skeptical of the source, please be aware that the advertising industry was not really an industry until the late 1960s, when a very famous Volkswagen commercial was aired — many decades after the self-publishing world of fanzines was already established (and, lest you were foolish enough to believe that fleeing fool of *Factsheet 5*, v.III fame, fanzines have been around for at least a couple of centuries, which is more than enough time to have built up the capital power that the ad industry has accumulated in a mere quarter-century!)

During a recent paid temp gig that commenced in mid-October, 1999 (and has, at the time this was written — March, 2000 — just now ceased), I took the opportunity to read cover to cover nearly two years' worth of the twenty year olde trade rag, *AdWeek*. Although the crux of the content is ethically reprehensible (manipulation for money, better known as "advertising"), the manner by which it was (and is) judged, presented and critiqued could serve the zine world well. Despite the backstabbing and thievery that partially defines the multi-billion dollar industry of marketing promotion (which is not unusual, since the zine universe is rife with rip-offs despite there being so little money involved; multiply the monetary rewards by literally billions and imagine the corruption!), there are no holds barred when it comes to criticism. Granted, the average advertising account of $30 million makes it much easier to suffer the slings and arrows of such public humiliations, but the vast amount of media shoppes also makes the meanness invaluable: rarely is there a second fuck-up for fear of losing even one of the highly coveted accounts, be it worth $2 million or $100 million.

As I stated earlier, we in the publishing underground could learn a lesson or two by acknowledging others' insights rather than quibbling over trifles while, simultaneously, mistakenly dismissing the mainstream *in toto*.

In the next issue of *Hit List*, my column shall tackle the conundrum and problems of distribution. Names will be divulged, and niceties eschewed for the sake of brass tacks. And if some zines are sent for review, I may start sooner than usual the section of zine reviews. I will also start compiling and publishing a list of places — i.e., zines — wherein one's own zine may be reviewed. (I would have done so thish, but I have only *A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press* — formerly *Zine World* — to offer, which is far, far too few to compile as a "list"!) In the meantime, let me state where else I have published zine reviews/columns, as well as mine other zine crime:

Flipside, PO Box 60790, Pasadena CA 91116;

Panik Magazine, 996 Redondo Avenue, Suite 626, Long Beach CA 90804;

and, of course,

Angry Thoreauan, PO Box 3478, Los Angeles CA 90078

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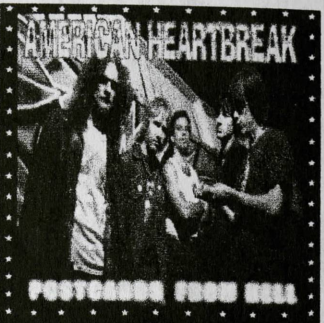

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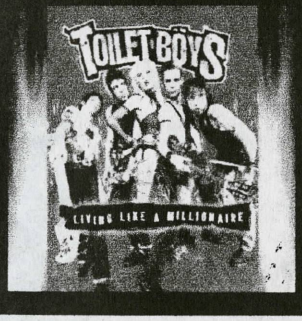

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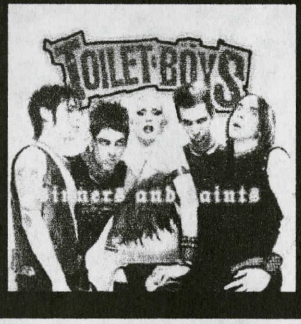

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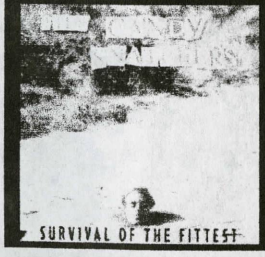

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If you're involved at all in the hardcore/post-hardcore scene of the last five years (or if you've read any of Brett Mathews' columns since the beginning of *Hit List*), you undoubtedly are already aware of Hot Water Music. Gainesville, Florida's pride and joy, these four guys have been churning out raw, emotive crunch for the thinking man since 1994. I first became aware of them a couple years ago, when Brett played me their first true full-length album, *Fuel For the Hate Game*. They're at the forefront of a bunch of talented new-ish bands drawing on the legacies of bands like Jawbreaker, Fugazi and Quicksand. Dual raspy-as-fuck vocals, dissonant-yet-concilatory guitars, and (seriously) one of the greatest rhythm sections in rock history add up to a heady yet visceral stew that, over their insanely rigorous touring and recording schedules, has resulted in a rabid fan base. As Ruairi from American Steel said in our last issue, " People are just insane about Leatherface; people are just *insane* about certain bands — Hot Water Music."

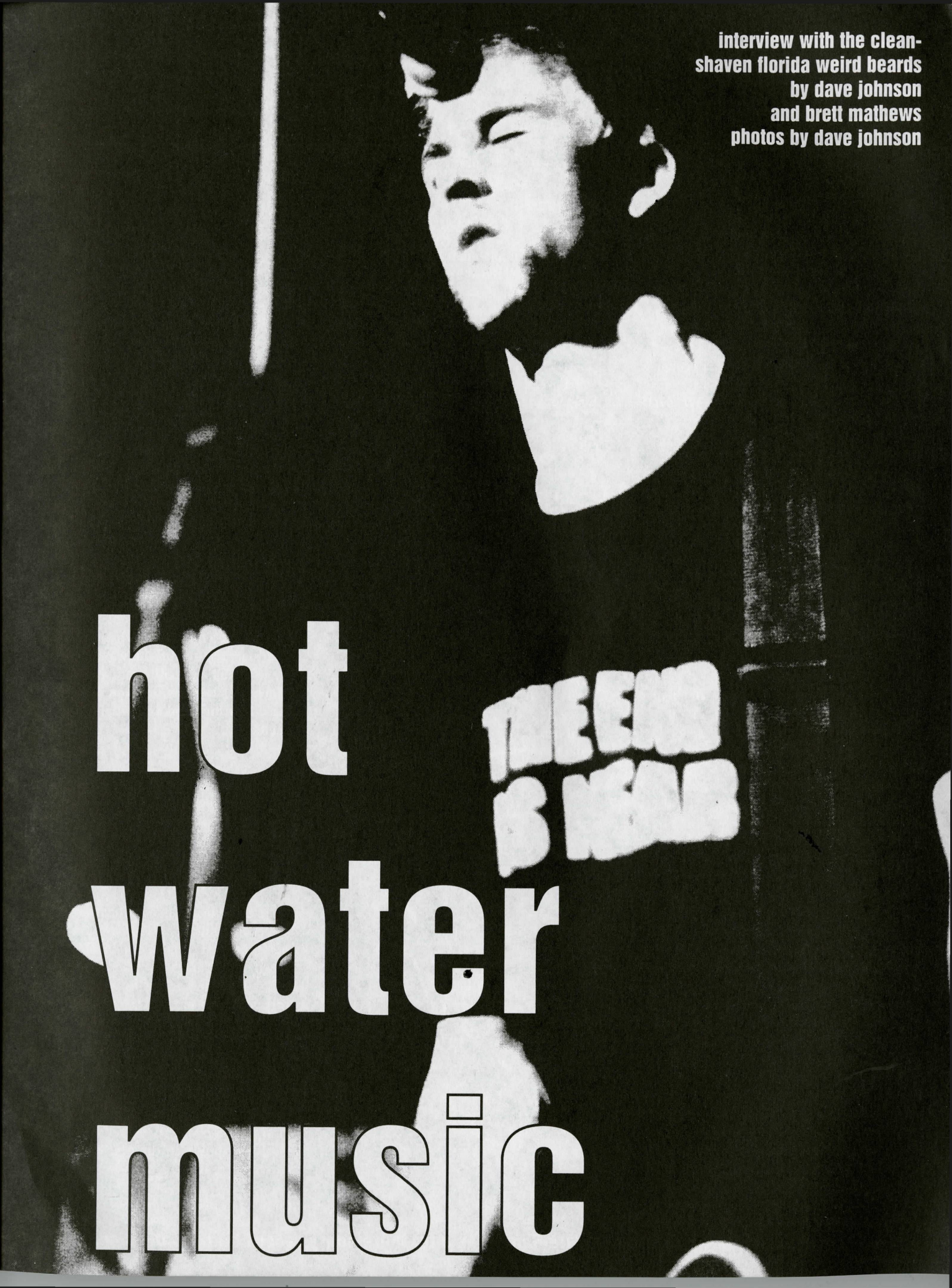
After a breakup in mid-'98, HWM came back in '99 with four high-profile releases — a split CD/LP with the aforementioned legendary English juggernaut Leatherface (themselves newly reformed) on BYO, a live album and two 7"'s on No Idea (combined on the brilliant *Moonpies for Misfits* CDEP), and finally, a full-length on Some Records entitled *No Division*, which along with American Steel's jaw-dropping *Rogue's March*, the live Clash album, Pinhead Gunpowder's *Shoot The Moon* EP, and the aforementioned *Moonpies...* EP, topped my favorite records list for '99.

Setting aside the slightly downcast lyrical elements of their first three full-length CD's (*Fuel For the Hate Game*, 1997's *Forever and Counting* and the singles and rarities compilation *Finding the Rhythms*), HWM came back with a jubilant vengeance. Never wavering in lyrical conviction, singer/lyricists Chuck Ragan and Chris Wollard toss out posi-yet-not-corny diatribes on the value of friendship, community and brotherhood. And guess what? They fucking stick like a size-4 Lycra minidress on a 200-pound transvestite. Bassist Jason Black and drummer George Rebelo lay the straight-up smackdown, trading a bit of their former noodliness for a whole assload of backbeat. The end result? HWM's strongest recorded legacy to date (though Brett would disagree with me — the high point for him was *Fuel For the Hate Game*). Fuck you, Brett. You're wrong. (But I love you anyway.)

No Division isn't a vast departure for Hot Water, but at the same time, the differences are marked. Instead of going in and laying it down in three days, the guys took a few weeks to record this album, along the way, inviting friends down to the studio in Richmond, Virginia — most notably, Avail's Tim Barry, who basically takes over the entire end of "Hit and Miss" as if Hot Water Music were actually *his* band. In fact, if you're *not* familiar with HWM's music at all, a crude (though not at all out of place) approximation would be Avail covering early Fugazi. This new sense of studio-openness results in a recorded openness that, rather than leaving the listener wowed but slightly excluded, invites him or her in, practically imploring us to sing along.

Brett and I caught up with the band before their gig at Bottom of the Hill. They seemed a bit tired from the rigorous touring, but their love of life and their ideas on how to live it remain unembattled. It came across in their live set, and I hope it comes across in this interview. The world *needs* more bands with the kind of commitment, chops and belief that these guys have. Let's see if we can't do something about that, can we?

-Dave Johnson



hot water music

interview with the clean-shaven florida weird beards
by dave johnson
and brett mathews
photos by dave johnson



Dave: Let's start out talking about where you guys left off. You broke up for awhile and then came back with three releases inside a year. Kind of a "back with a vengance" thing. What prompted that sort of demise and ressurection, and what affect did it have on the stuff you guys did afterward?

Chuck: The breakup, as far as the effect, was mainly just the fact that it brought us closer together, 'cause when we broke we had to re-evaluate why we were doing what were doing all together. I think in getting back together...it was like starting fresh, starting new. It was like when we were sitting around playing the first songs we ever did. We were sitting around playing the stuff and going "We don't give a shit if people like this or not. Fuck it. We love it." And I think that's what kind of kicked us off. I don't know. It was definitely the smartest thing we could do at that point.

Dave: To break up or get back together?

Chuck: To break up.

Brett: It's kinda weird, when you got back together, your lyrical content was 180 degrees from where it was before that. You weren't writing *negative* songs, but there was kind of a dark feel. When you got back together, everything was really positive — it had a different outlook than before. Was it something you felt you needed for the band as a whole to stay together?

Chuck: I think it's just how we felt in general in our lives. It just seemed like *everything* was coming together the way it should at that time.

Brett: Do the lyrics seem different to you guys?

Chris: Every record is what happened the last record until then. *No Division* is about everything that happened from *Forever and Counting* on. However, whatever the tone or the vibe is, it just comes from what we went through. I can definitely see that *Fuel For the Hate Game* was a lot more angry record than *No Division*.

Chuck: But it was just how we felt at the time. And who knows? The next record could be a lot more pissed-off than *No Division*. We never really know until we're right in the middle of it. Or when we're done. Or when somebody points it out like you just did, you know? It's just a documentation of what

I can definitely see that *Fuel For the Hate Game* was a lot more angry record than *No Division*. — Chris

we were going through — music *and* lyrics.

Dave: The words as you've progressed have become a little less — how would I say it...willfully obscure. They're more direct.

Chris: I definitely was trying to be a bit more direct on *No Division*, I don't know about you guys...

Chuck: I think when we got back together we were all just like, "All right, what're we doing?" And it was obvious that we couldn't *not* play together. When we came back together after being apart for awhile, it was obvious that we were *meant* to be together right now. If you're talking about the lyrics just being like, "All right, check it out, here it is," just straight up, up front, the way we see things.

George: I think you guys just got *better* at it.

Chuck: Oh and that too, maybe.

George: It definitely seems a little more direct.

Dave: Lyrically, where do you draw inspiration from? Is it all Charles Bukowski? [laughter] [*Hot Water Music* is the name of a Bukowski book.]

Chuck: It can never really be pinpointed because it changes all the time. It's anything and everything that affects us in any way — positive, negative, emotionally, physically, visually.

Brett: It seems like on *No Division* — and I hate to bring up the "Unity Song" — but a lot of songs are really about accepting the positive in unity. Is that you guys trying to draw people in or influence people?

Chuck: A little bit of both, I think. And I think a lot of that had to do with when we recorded it and how we recorded it. We recorded that record up in Richmond Virginia.

Chris: A couple of songs got written up there.

Chuck: The music was done, but we ended up writing the lyrics up there. Having friends come by the studio non-stop. Living at our friends' house at night, studio at day. Back and forth, we were just saturated in it.

Chris: Yeah...staying at our friends' house, partying every night. We'd just stay up and talk shit *all* night.

Brett: With the Gainesville Cheerleaders? [laughter]

Chris: No, they recorded that down there. But we'd go out, get drunk, run into somebody and be like, "Hey! Come down to the studio! Play some drums!"

Chuck: I think all that definitely had an impact on the record itself. Yeah, of course, I'd much rather everybody look at shows or gathering like this as a celebration rather than just looking at it as something to do, because that's the cool thing to do or be at this time. That's why I wanna be down at Bottom of the Hill. We look at it in a completely different way. This is our *livelihood*. This is our *celebration*.

Dave: One thing I noticed since you guys got back together — the earlier records have a feeling of there being a surface — and maybe this is partially due to the way they were recorded, what you guys were going through at the time or whatever — but there's a surface, and the band is bubbling underneath it, trying to break *through* it, but it seems like on the newer stuff, and especaily *No Division* kinda breaks through that and says, "Everybody come on in!" And maybe I'm just being obscure, head-up-his-ass Rock Critic Guy, but it's a real inviting record. Yeah, it's loud, it's aggressive, it's at times dissonant, but it's a record that says "Come on! Listen to this!" Was there an intention to make it more accessible?

Chuck: I'm glad it came across that way.

Chris: I think it's because we had everybody come and join in on the record. Every other record is *just* us. There's no extra guitar tracks, no extra drum tracks, it's just the band, the way we play right here. On *No Division* it wasn't that we just asked people to sing stuff, but also to write their own parts. "Here's the song, join in, help out, here's the song, sing here, sing here, and do what you want!"

Brett: Did Tim write the end of that song ["Hit and Miss"]?

Chuck: Yeah, Tim Barry. Tim, Walter, Robbie Huddleston. George wrote a part.

Chris: We'd tell 'em what the song was, what it was about, where we wanted to take it and then write it down.

Dave: Brett and I are both big fans of Avail. When *No Division* came out, Brett came by and was like, "Dude. You've *gotta* come by and get the new Hot Water Music record today. There's a song on there, and I swear that's Tim from Avail singing." He hadn't read the liner notes, but it basically turns into an Avail song at the end.

Chuck: Erik from Avail played drums on that track, and so did Ed, who plays drums in Avail *now*.

Jason: I wrote my own woodblock part. [laughter]

Chuck: I played a nail on *that* part. [more laughter]

Dave: Who played the pedal steel?

Chuck: I played a lap steel and Chris played a dobro.

Brett: It's cool, because what you're doing is kind of like really aggressive folk music, so to actually bring in those instruments is an interesting thing.

Chris: Yeah man! We've kinda always wanted to do that, but the guy who recorded our other records wasn't too into it. That's why it was only what we played live.

Jason: Well, he just came from different philosophy. His take on it was, "If you can't pull it off live, why put it on a record?"

Chris: We went along with it. He kinda convinced us of that. This time it was like, "Well, we're with a new guy, let's do a different kind of record."

Chuck: We've got some new material now. Looking back on what we did on *No Division*, it's just the tip of the iceberg.

Chris: Yeah, that record seems like it's a stepping stone.

Chuck: Yeah, that was our first *studio* album. Normally we were at the studio for like three days. All the songs recorded this day, all the vocals the next day and then mixing the third day and we're done. There it is. This time, we had a chance to go in and *get* a good drum sound, mess around with guitar sounds, try some shit, relax, write stuff.

Chris: Yeah, we'd go from 12 to 12, and after that, we'd all be borderline drunk and borderline insane and we'd all just go into the big room where everything was still set up

It was obvious that we were *meant* to be together right now. — Chuck

and just *play*. Everybody would just pick up an instrument. Pianos and lap steels and basses and dobros.

Chuck: Wind down time.

Chris: Yeah, we'd just play until we were done and then go home.

Chuck: It was *definitely* an experience.

Chris: It was such a cool vibe, y'know?

Chuck: Looking at that, though, these new songs are just over the top.

Dave: Are you dispensing with electric guitars entirely? [laughter]

Brett: Drums and keyboards?

Dave: Drums, keyboards, dobros, lap steels.

Chris: We're gonna bypass the keyboard. Just drums and bass.

Chuck: Didjeridoo.

Brett: So how was working with Walter? Was Gorilla Biscuits an influence you always had?

Chuck: It was awesome. It was amazing. It was an honor just to meet him, but to actually have him throw input down... And he *really* did have serious input on the record. He had a lot of good things to say.

Chris: He's got a really good way about him. He won't let you argue, he's always like, "Okay! Let's get it done!" He's always got a smile on his face. He keeps the energy flowing.

Chuck: He's always got a direction. He'll be like, "Try this." And you'll try it and it'll suck, so he'll be like, "All right then, try *this*."

Chris: You'll record a song vocally like five times and you'll just be like, [groaning sound], and hell go, "Okay, that was *really* good, but I think you can do it a little bit better. You wanna try to do it?" You'll be like, "All right, dude."

Chuck: But if you said, "No man, I liked it, I *felt* it," he'll just be like, "Cool."

Chris: He's *so* much fun.

Chuck: We're gonna do the same thing for the next record...*hopefully*.

Brett: Did you ever look look up and one point and go, "That's our producer...wow...that's Gorilla Biscuits!" Or were you past that point?

Jason: At that point he's Wally, at first it was like, "Mister Quicksand," but after we got over that, he was just Wally, he's got a great musical ear and is a great guy.

Dave: Was Quicksand a pretty influential band for you guys as well?

Band: Oh yeah.

Dave: At least in my sort of scope of things, I see them as one of the first bands to move music in the direction you guys are moving it. Fugazi took one end of it, and Quicksand took the other. One thing I wanted to ask about — I hear a lot of Fugazi and Jawbox in your music; especially Jawbox. I hear it in the basslines a lot.

Chris: That's one of Jason's favorite bands, but I don't think we're *that* influenced by them.

Jason: God! I would *never* say I play with a pick and two notes a song! [laughter]

Dave: If Kim Coletta and Steve Harris had a kid, and Joe Lally was the Godfather...

Jason: Throw Karl Alvarez in there, and I'll go for it. [Looking in the fridge] Oh, we've got a case of raw chicken!

Chris: I forgot to tell you. I put that on our rider. I wanna put one in my pants every night. [laughter]

Brett: So you started out playing bass, doing classical or jazz stuff? The fills and lines seem to be that type of music brought into this kind of context. Would that be right? Or have you changed a lot crossing over?

Jason: No, I'd say that's right.

Dave: The thing I find most immediately compelling about your music is the way you guys move *around* the beat. It seems like songs drop back and then move over and around the beat. Like there's this real tension/release sort of thing.

George: Everybody's got their own view on what the music should sound like. I think it just all comes from us writing together.

Dave: Let me ask this then of each of you. If suddenly you became Dictator of HWM, which direction would it go? Obviously that's not going to make the band great, but which direction would it go?

Chris: I couldn't even *begin* to think like that.

Jason: I could. I always do. [laughter] Actually, not that much different than the way it is.

Dave: More tapping, a la Billy Sheehan? [laughter]

Jason: More singing.

Brett: Really?

Jason: And I might have less drum stuff. George and I would absolutely go to fucking war.

George: But at the same time, I've become a better drummer because these guys keep on my ass. Keep me trying to stay punk about it.

Dave: So that's the secret to the monster rhythm section? You guys are consistently at war?

Jason: I mean, I have no problem playing [monotone] "doodoodoodoodoododdoodoo-doo", but George has a lot of problems playing [claps in a simple, even rhythm] "smack-smack-smack-smack-smack". I don't have a problem playing a simple bassline. I mean, I *don't* usually, but if the song calls for it, I don't have a problem with it. If it were up to me, the whole thing would be more funky, but then you think about it and go, "Wait, we're four white guys from Florida." [laughter]

Dave: It seems to be more straight-ahead on this record.

George: I've learned to appreciate the straight-ahead a little more.

Chuck: I was just gonna say it's a lot more simple than the previous records.

Chris: I think we were just letting the songs guide us instead of deliberately putting in a part to deliberately twist it this way and that.

Jason: I think this is the first thing we've done where someone wasn't like, "I don't like my bass part. It's not complicated enough."

George: We've gotten more confident with it

I would *never* say I play with a pick and two notes a song! — Jason

[At this point, Hunter walks in.]

Brett: Badical Turbo Radness is in the House! [a reference to Hunter's old Grass Valley band from the days before he got drafted to rock the house with Abbreviated Metal Warriors, AFI. For more on Abbreviated Metal, see my column. For more on AFI, see Nick 13's interview with them this issue.]

Dave: The BTR is in it, yo! [laughter]

[Hunter says his hellos and leaves.]

Jason: I don't think any of us really actually have the thought going through our head that we have to prove ourselves as musicians anymore. I mean, on the other records, there are parts in there that're just in there...for no fucking reason at all, y'know? [laughter] "I can play this!"

Chuck: I think it goes back to what you said earlier. When we came back together after breaking up, there was *no* bullshit at all, right off the bat. The songs came quick, they were right on, and when they were done they were done, and there was no question about it.

Chris: And we're also trying to write good *albums* instead of cool parts.

George: Yeah, on our older albums, there are drum parts that are wacky and cool — that a drummer might think are cool — but I only did it 'cause I could.

Dave: But isn't that part of the fun of making music?

Jason: I play a lot more live than I do on record. I tone it way down for the records.

Brett: Speaking of playing live, obviously the records are fucking amazing, but going out and taking what you guys do to another level live, seems to have made a huge reputation for you. Has it always been important to you guys?

Chuck: Absolutely.

Dave: It's like Ian MacKaye once said about "In the old days, records were the menu and the live show was the meal."

Jason: Yeah...I think that's kind of true. This is the first one that we've done that I actually think of as a *record*. Where we actually kinda were into it rather than, "Just record us!" We were trying to make more of an album.

Chuck: There's *nothing* like playing live. That's *definitely* our bread and butter, but without writing new songs, we go crazy. And that's what happened to us last time when we broke up. We going so long, just touring non-stop, playing the same shit over and over and over again and there was *nothing* new.

Chris: We were trying to write songs while sandwiched in between tours. You can't write a song like that.

Chuck: You can't push it...well, you can...

Dave: You can *Push For Coin!* [Chorus of derision from the band]

George: Asshole! [laughter]

Brett: It seems to me that you guys are like hometown heroes, always really big there, but over the last year, nationally you guys have become huge. Is that something you gradually saw as the tour went along?

Chuck: Well, we haven't stopped touring.

Jason: It was gradual until last year. Then all of a sudden it was like, "What the fuck!?" 1999 was the year where we we like "Wow!"

Brett: How does that feel? I know you guys like the small, tight-knit communities, but playing to a different audience, is that pretty cool, too?

Chris: A small, crazy punk show is just as exciting as a big, huge club show. And vice versa. It's just a totally different thing.

Chuck: We played at the Troc earlier on the tour...

Dave: In Philadelphia?

Chuck: Yeah. Have you ever been there?

Dave: No.

Chuck: It's massive. It's *ridiculous*! And we walk in and it's *scary*! And it was *full*! It was *overwhelming*, walking out there, looking at all these people, 1200, 1800 people all there to see our show.

Chris: And to see me try to figure out what the hell was broken. [laughter]

Chuck: And then to go from that to play a crazy, dirty punk show in Vegas for like a hundred kids.

Dave: How about the Warped Tour?

Chris: I don't know...we've never played anything like it before.

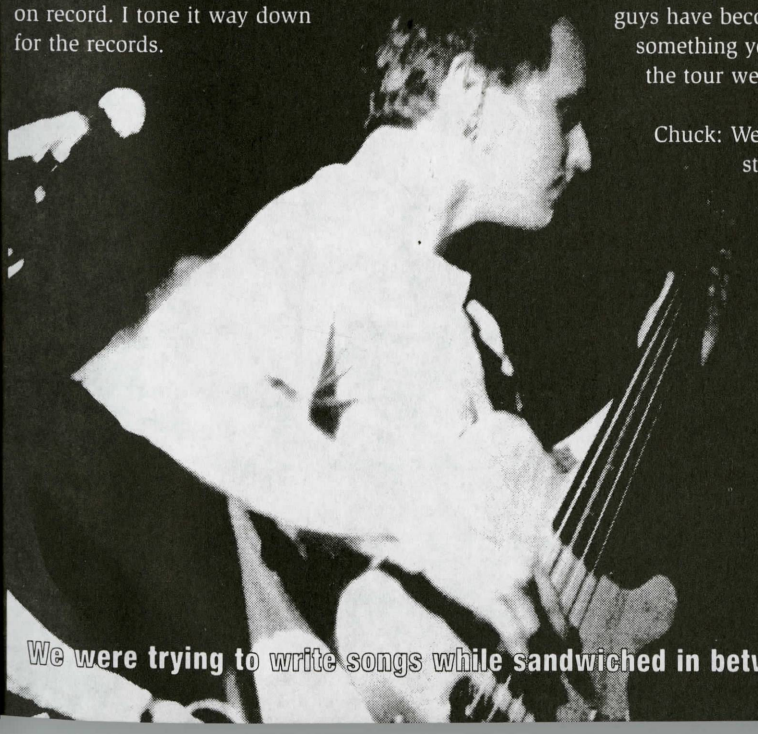
Dave: The Warped Tour itself is an interesting experiment in taking a small, intimate music and presenting it to a large audience.

Jason: We just got the itinerary for it yesterday. If you add up the capacity for all the places we're going to play, it adds up to like 600,000 people, and Kevin says he expects 450,000 to come.

Dave: How many dates are you guys doing?

Jason: The whole thing.

Dave: Which slot do you guys have?



We were trying to write songs while sandwiched in between tours. You can't write a song like that. — Chris

Jason: We're on the main-er stage, I guess. I'm not really sure how it works.

Chris: They let you know the night before.

Jason: I mean, there are certain band that will always have their times, like Green Day, NOFX and the Bosstones are like the headliners.

Dave: You're not playing over Green Day?

Chris: Well, we were gonna, but we told 'em to go ahead and take it. [laughter]

Jason: The bigger bands always play in the last four or five slots...

Chris: And the rest of the bands kind of rotate every day.

Jason: Toward the end of the tour, if it's apparent that one band's doing well at a certain time, a schedule sort of starts to get worked out.

Brett: How do you feel about this — there are obviously going to be a lot of little fourteen year-old girls there to see Green Day...

Dave: ...And the Bros will be there to see NOFX. How do you guys feeling about playing in front of the Bro Contingent?

Chuck: We don't know.

Chris: We're doing it because we've never done it before.

Chuck: It's the same as doing the Sick of it All tour. We didn't know what we were getting into at that time. And I know that the Warped Tour is a much larger thing than that, but we didn't know where we were going, what these people would like, or anything. We just went into it with the blind faith that we'll hold each other together through it. And we'll do the same thing with the Warped Tour. Who knows what it's going to feel like to stand in front of fifteen thousand people? I don't know, but if fifty or a hundred kids walk out that show thinking, "Wow. I thought what those guys were doing was pretty cool," or they pick up some record and think, "I can understand what these guys are getting at," it's worth it.

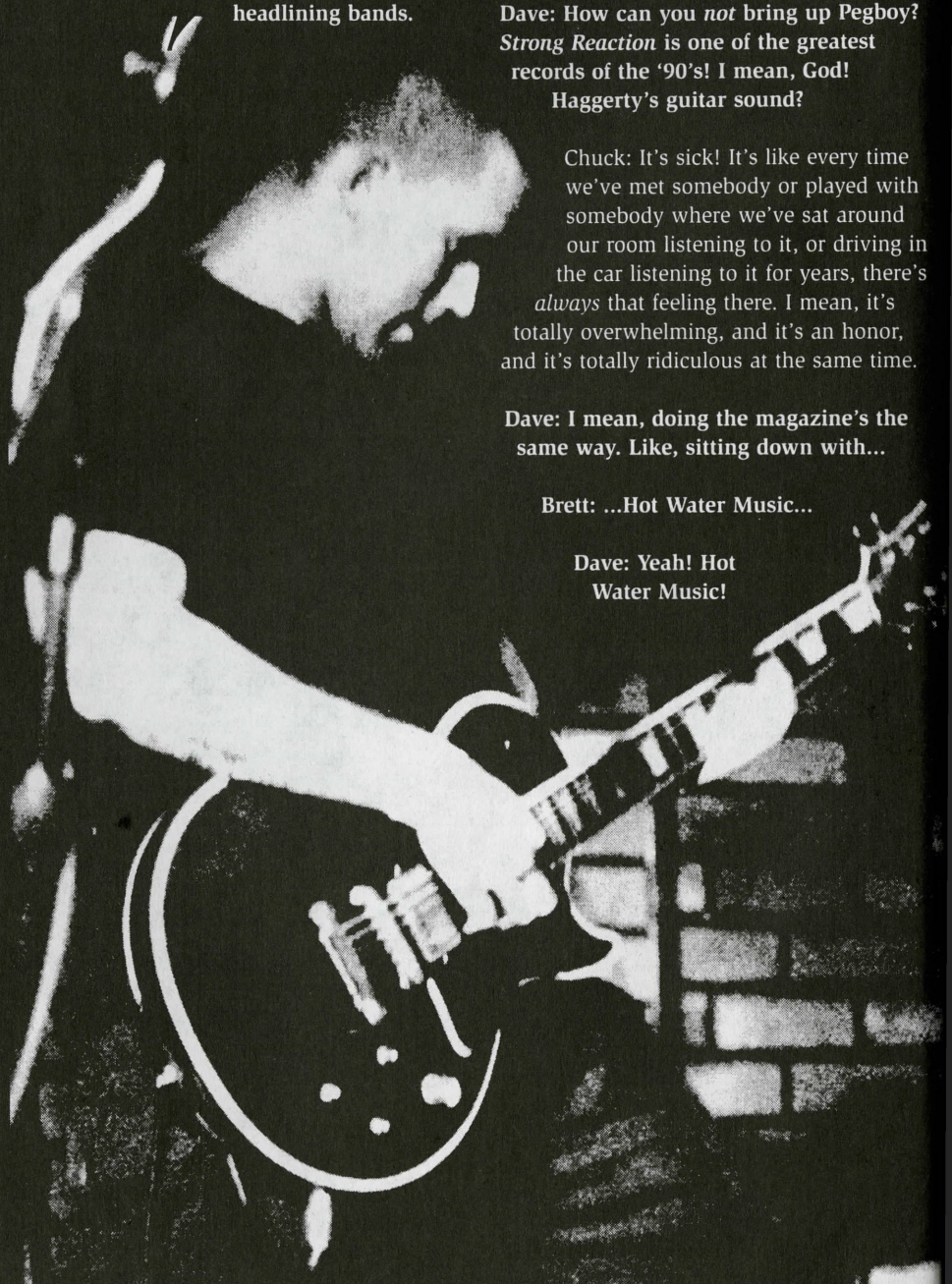
Dave: I've always thought it was an interesting experiment. Sometimes it works out better than others. I had a good time in '98, in '99 I wasn't interested at all. This year seems like it could be a real good tour.

Chuck: We've got friends on both sides that have played it. We've got friends who've said, "It sucks, it's the worst thing in the world, you're gonna hate it, you're gonna quit, you're gonna leave," and then we've got other friends who are like, "Oh my God, you're gonna freak out! It's like Punk Rock Summer Camp. You're gonna love it every day."

Chris: And then the people who are like, "Well...it's okay."

Jason: You kinda gotta do it to find out. If we hate it, we'll never do it again.

Brett: That's kind of what I was getting at earlier, though. Like, you're this small band, and suddenly you're getting invited on this massive tour with these huge headlining bands.



Chuck: Well, it was like when we got a chance to play with Pegboy, or Jawbox, or Sick of it All.

Dave: Why isn't Pegboy more popular? [laughter]

Jason: Because they sit on their asses in Chicago all year 'round!

Chuck: 'Cause they're lazy construction workers.who still live with their parents.

Brett: We were both so happy when you guys were in *Flipside* and Todd threw that question out there.

Jason: Somebody else just brought up Pegboy on this tour.

Dave: How can you *not* bring up Pegboy? *Strong Reaction* is one of the greatest records of the '90's! I mean, God! Haggerty's guitar sound?

Chuck: It's sick! It's like every time we've met somebody or played with somebody where we've sat around our room listening to it, or driving in the car listening to it for years, there's *always* that feeling there. I mean, it's totally overwhelming, and it's an honor, and it's totally ridiculous at the same time.

Dave: I mean, doing the magazine's the same way. Like, sitting down with...

Brett: ...Hot Water Music...

Dave: Yeah! Hot Water Music!

Who knows what it's going to feel like to stand in front of fifteen thousand people? — Chuck

[laughter] No, seriously! I mean, being able to sit down with bands that you sit around and listen to and they mean so much to you. To have been able to sit down with Joe Strummer, to sit down with J. Robbins, you know, musical heroes of mine, it's just the coolest thing in the world.

Brett: Now you guys are becoming to other people what Pegboy and Gorilla Biscuits were to you guys.

Chuck: That's *weird*.

Chris: Like on this tour, when we played St. Pete, which was the closest town to where we grew up where there was always shows. We weren't playing the same club that we always used to go to, but it was the same sized place, and I'm like, "I used to be *that* guy right there." It's like, I'm doing exactly what I used to want to be doing when I was doing that.

Chuck: When we played at the Ritz on the Sick of it All tour — same thing.

Brett: So how is it balancing a child while predominantly on the road?

Chris: It's the *best!* [laughter] It's stressful, what do you think?

Dave: That tension's gotta add some fuel. It seems like the whole record is family-oriented record. Not that I'm necessarily going to sit down and listen to it with my sixty-seven year old dad, but it goes back to the idea of shows being a gathering, of music being a celebration.

Chris: Like we said earlier, everything goes into this band. That's our life, and this band is our life. I don't really know how else to put that. I mean, we have an understanding. We're lucky to have understanding people around to back us up and support us. We take all of what we've got inside and put it into this band.

Chuck. I think it adds a lot of fuel to the fire because we all know that it's right here. Where you're at and what's going on isn't gonna last forever. I mean, the music that we play and record, it's recorded, set and stone, it's done, that's something that we can never duplicate, that's the way it was at that time. And *that* can last forever. But these tours, and just the *spreading* of it, we're doing it now, live, and it *won't* last forever. We take advantage of that while we have this opportunity. Also while people care to listen.

Brett: Let's dance while we still can.

Chuck: Yeah. We're lucky that we have loved ones and family that are into what we're doing and that support us, even though it gets chaotic to the point that sometimes we're at home buttin' heads, or on the phone buttin' heads.

Chris: It's a little bit easier now than it used to be. Five years ago, when ten people were coming to our shows...or *four* years ago, when I had my kid and fifty people were coming to our shows, I'm supposed to be quitting my band, getting a job, and supporting my family and I'm having to try to explain to everyone, "I can't quit this! I know this is good! Come check it out!" And they're like, "What're you doing? What the *fuck* are you doing? You're just stagnant!" I knew it then, but they didn't, and now they can kinda see...like in St. Pete, you knew it was right on. Like everyone in the room was like, "Yeah!" just breakin' out. Now my family can see this. Now they can understand it, because when you're at the show, you can't deny it.

Brett: Do you sorta have to justify it to yourself?

Chris: I don't *have* to justify it to myself. I get to feel this every day. I get to see this every day, and it's a good energy. It's part of the thing, what we're doing. It's the dream! We're doing the dream! We're doing what we've always wanted to do, and we all know that. I don't have to justify that.

Chuck: Well beyond what we ever *thought* we could do.

Brett: How did you hook up with Var [Thelin of No Idea Records]?

Chris: Var has done *so* much.

Brett: Var rocks!

Chuck: Everybody down at No Idea is amazing. It's like a whole 'nother family. I mean, they're like a family to us, but it's such a tight-workin' unit. I don't know how they keep their shit together. I mean, if you went down there and walked into the No Idea warehouse, you wouldn't understand what's going on! There's shit *everywhere!*

Chris: We put out the demo and then Shawn from Toybox put out the 7".

Chuck: Var was the only one really doing records then.

Chris: He's the only one who had been doing it for a while. So we were always asking him, "Hey, we should do a record sometime," and he'd be like, "Yeah, we should." He was like, "Yeah, I think we should, too." But then we'd never talk about it! We were fucking ridiculous back then...

Dave: In what sense?

Chris: Just druuuunk...fucking loaded all day long.

George: We just used to hang out together and get drunk and act ridiculous.

Chris: The way we hooked up with Var is that we were kind of a Toybox band, but we were getting ready to go on tour, so we were like, "Var! We're going on tour. Can you make a record *right now* and have it out in a month?" He was like, "Yeah." We needed somebody who could just hook it up, and Var did that.

George: I still remember, we were all sitting in our house, we'd just practiced, and Var came over. We were all nervous to ask him, finally I was just like, "Var, will you put out a record for us?" There was just this silence, and he was like, "Sure, whatever!" I was like, "This is it? This is all we had to do?"

Dave: So how did you end up on Doghouse then for *Forever and Counting*?

Chuck: Same thing. We know we're not going to last forever. We wanted to try something new. We always wanna do whatever, with whoever. I mean...with discretion.

Brett: I think it's amazing how Var has always backed you guys to the hilt. I mean, with all the colored vinyl and everything. I've got eight versions of *Fuel For the Hate Game*.

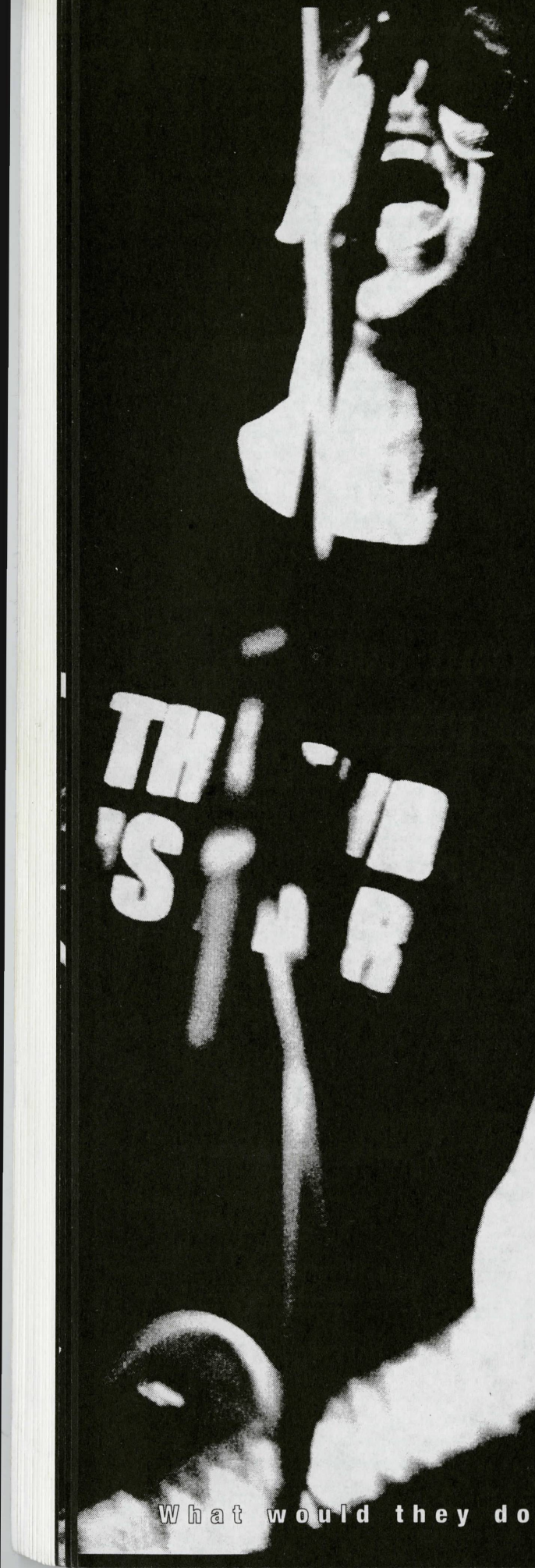
Chris: It was kinda weird for a few months. I mean, we never really argued at all.

Chuck: We've always wanted the freedom to do whatever we wanted. Going somewhere else, we didn't wanna hurt his feelings and we didn't wanna tarnish anything that we'd done with Var in any way.

Chris: We didn't wanna *leave* No Idea. And we didn't.

Chuck: We didn't wanna give the impression that we never wanted to do something with him again. I don't think we really knew how to express that the right way, so it led to miscommunications.

We didn't wanna *leave* No Idea. And we didn't. — Chris



Chris: Now, we have Var's advice on almost *everything* we do. He understands our band *so* well. He has a very different take. He has an *outside* take. Like, we can get kinda caught up in what we're doing and be like, "Var, what do you think? What do you think about what's going on?" That guy's fucking awesome. We kidnapped him for the beginning of the tour.

Brett: So how's your singles collection coming?

Chuck: We haven't decided on a cover.

Chris: It's done, we just can't figure out what the fuck to put on the front.

[Davey Havok of AFI walks in.]

Dave: How about a picture of Davey? [laughter] Get Scot Sinclair [the artist featured prominently on HWM covers] to do a picture of Davey! Like some weird thing with flashlights or something.

Chris: We weren't gonna have *any* artwork...now there might be! [laughter]

Davey: Okay...I'm gonna hit that kid! [laughter]

Dave: So it's gonna be a chronological thing? Like tracing the evolution of the band?

Chris: It's gonna have everything since the last thing like we did like this, which was *Finding the Rhythms*. Singles and leftovers.

Dave: Is it gonna have "Tradition" on it?

Chuck: Yeah.

Dave: Rad...that song fucking rocks! So let's talk about label stuff. Would you guys ever consider signing to a major? Or is that something that's not in your necessary vocabulary?

Chuck: Not at this point.

Chris: If we want to, and if it's good for the band, then we'll do it, but that's not what it is right now. We're doing what we do. We've never been approached by a major label. We've never *had* to think about it.

Chuck: It's not even something like, "Hey, maybe we *should* do this now." I mean, we're so far from it.

Dave: It's sort of surprising, since you guys get lumped in with that whole "emo" thing that's so hot right now, that there hasn't been any interest on the part of majors.

Chris: What would they do with us on a major label? We're not the kind of a band that they want.

Dave: Maybe...if you wrote some songs, like that other band from Florida, about "Nookie", then...

Chris: Aha! You're right!

Dave: What that band really needs, are 7-string Ibanezes like Korn.

Chuck: We've been talking Jason out of buying a six-string bass for years.

Dave: He *is* a real jazzbo, isn't he? So where did the dual vocals thing come from? Was it that you both wanted to sing, or did you really like

What would they do with us on a major label? — Chris

the Clash, or what?

Chuck: Seriously, it was...

Chris: ...He was supposed to be just the singer, and I was supposed to be just the guitar player. Then he started playing guitar and I started singing.

Chuck: We'd write songs together and totally just feed off each other's energy. I would write something, and Chris would have an interpretation of that, and then I'd follow it with something else.

Chris: It was probably like a lot of the back-and stuff turned into lead vocals.

Chuck: When we started the band, we didn't want a "lead guitarist" or a "lead singer". It was the four of us, and we just *played*. At the time, I wanted *everybody* to sing! I wanted Jason to sing some, but that didn't work out because he didn't really like singing too much.

Brett: So what happened to the beards?

Dave: Yeah? What happened to the beards?

Chuck: I *shaved*.

Dave: I remember the first time I saw a picture of you guys — I think it was *Fuel For the Hate Game*. Brett was like, "Dude, you *gotta* check out Hot Water Music." I opened the record and said, "Dude! They all have *beards*!" So it's become this big thing...[Brett even attempted to *grow* a beard just for the HWM show. Memo to Brett...dude, never *ever* try that again!]

Chuck. I got really, really drunk. The next morning, I had to do something to clean up!

Chris: *I* was tryin' to get really dirty, like Vegas-style, so I grew this handlebar thing, I don't know...I just wanted to go Vegas-style and this is what I think it is.

Dave: Would you ever go on tour with ZZ Top?

Chuck: No. If they played like they did in the '70's, yeah. We'd go on tour with Motörhead!

Dave: That'd be *hot*! Have you guys ever done a Motörhead song?

Band: Nahh...

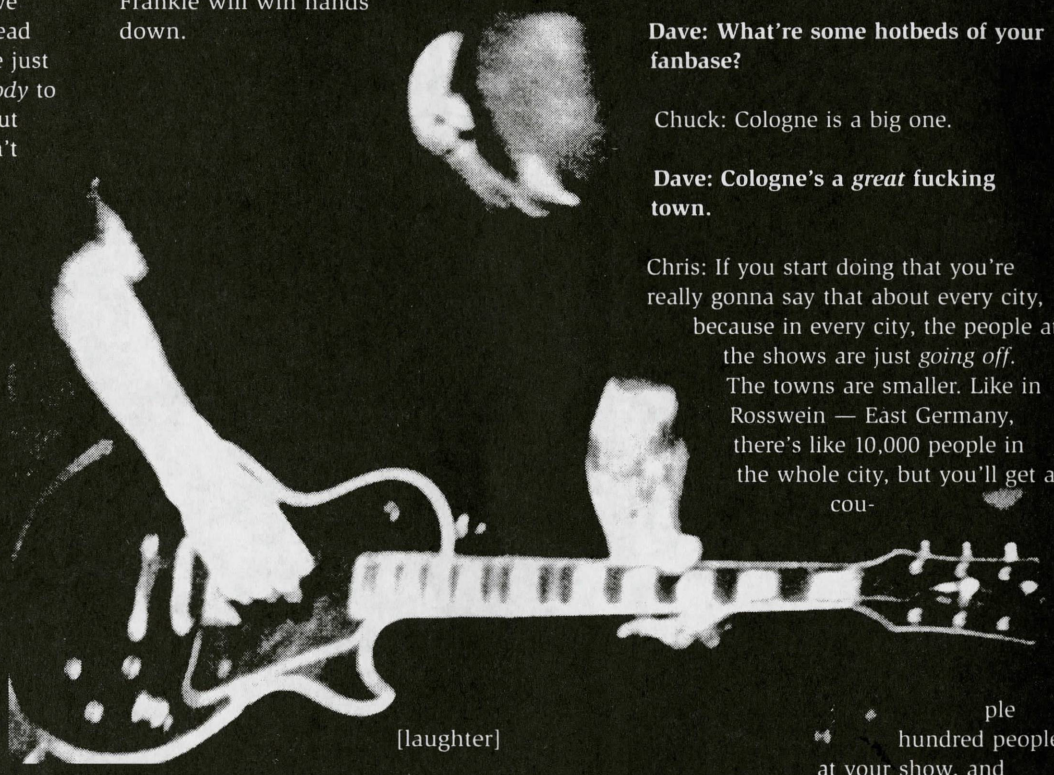
Dave: You should! You've got the Lemmy-voices down pat!

Chuck: That's because we've been touring for five fucking years! [laughter]

Dave: Did you get in a raspy contest with Frankie Stubbs when you were out with Leatherface?

Chris: No,

Frankie will win hands down.



[laughter]

Dave: How was that?

Chuck: All those guys are alcoholics and we never wanna see 'em again! Shittyface. Shitty shitty bastards [everyone cracks up]. It was everything that we ever wanted it to be and a lot more.

Brett: Did any of you guys pick up the "Stubbs Strut"?

Chis and Chuck: It's *impossible*? How could anybody pick it up?

Chris: I tried it a lot, but I could never, ever do it like he did.

Brett: Dude *waltzes* by himself. It's *awesome*!

Chris: I don't know how he does it...*while* he's playing the most *sick* guitar part! We've got a show with them next month in Lyon. I'm pretty stoked.

Brett: How do you guys do overseas?

Chris: We've only been over there twice.

Chuck: We've been there twice, but now it's getting to the point that we can go over there by ourselves.

Dave: What're some hotbeds of your fanbase?

Chuck: Cologne is a big one.

Dave: Cologne's a *great* fucking town.

Chris: If you start doing that you're really gonna say that about every city, because in every city, the people at the shows are just *going off*. The towns are smaller. Like in Rosswein — East Germany, there's like 10,000 people in the whole city, but you'll get a couple hundred people at your show, and *most* of 'em don't have a fucking clue what punk rock is at all, but they're just freaking out! It's awesome.

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At the time, I wanted *everybody* to sing! I wanted Jason to sing some. — Chuck

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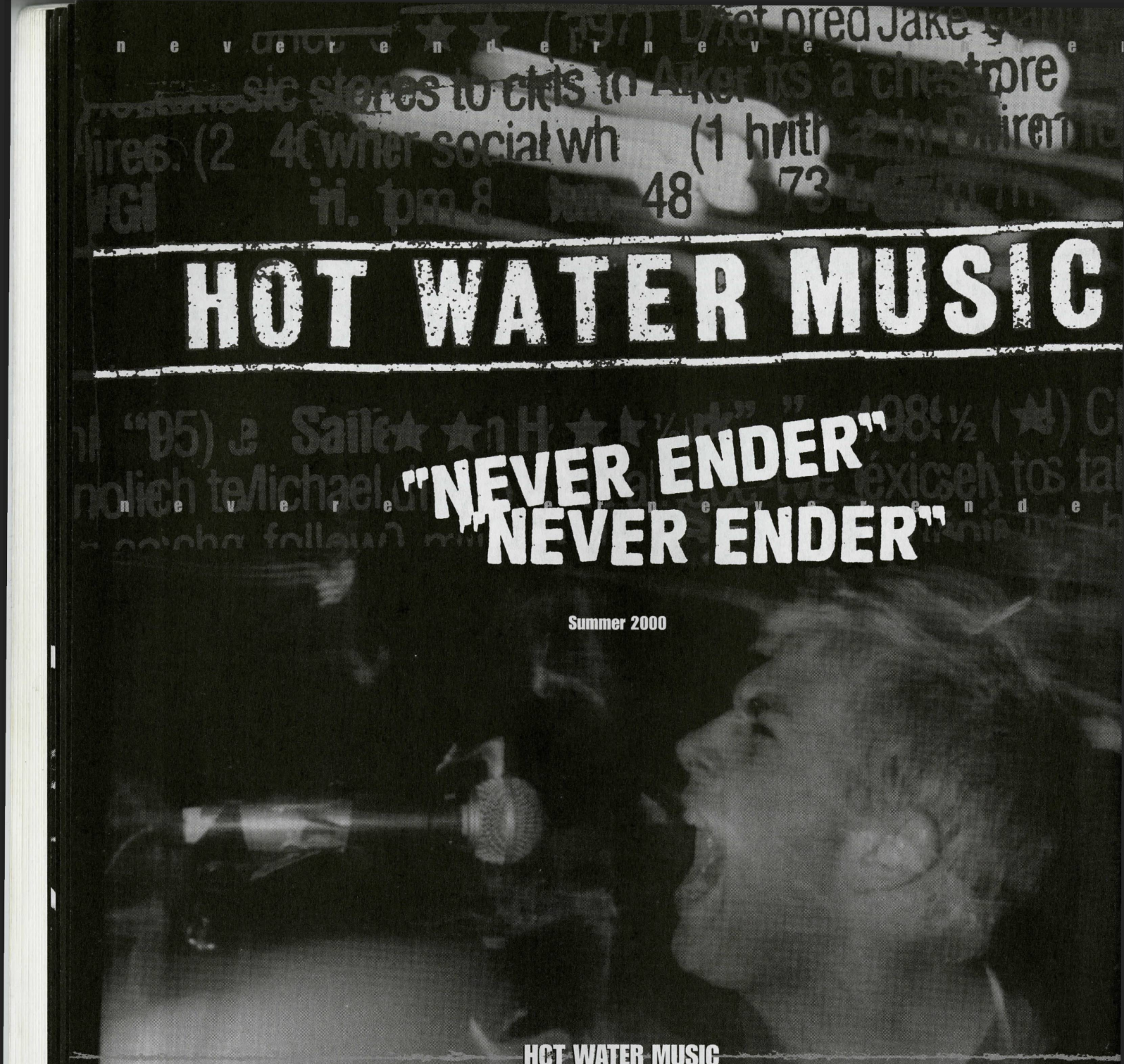

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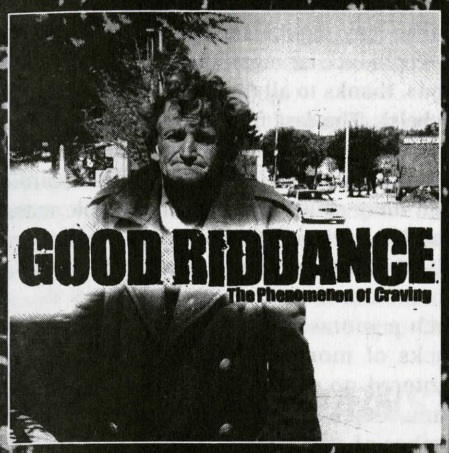

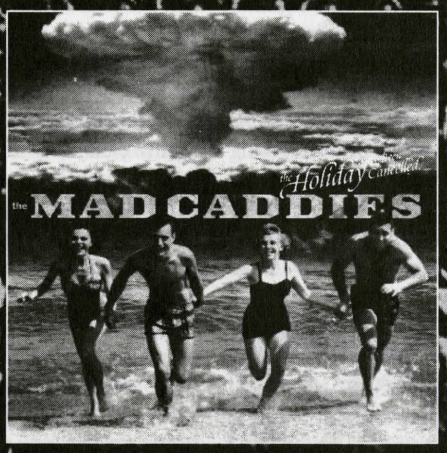



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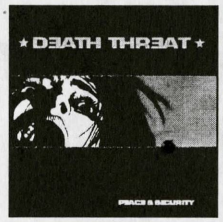

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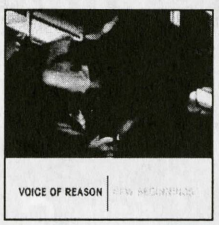

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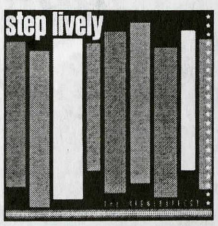

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HIT SQUAD



I'm assuming by writing this column, as I have in past columns, that there are plenty of *Hit List* readers with an interest in both its editorial columns and its garage/punk/rock 'n' roll coverage who also share an interest in many forms of non-commercial, underground music with heart. The kind that's been well-supported by small magazines like this one (by small, I mean smaller circulation than all the patently crap corporate magazines that care more about fashion and advertisements then content) and by college radio stations and the few decent commerical ones (ditto).

Basically, as I survey the previous year that has passed, I find myself even more disgruntled by these larger environs than ever. A magazine like *Hit List*'s review section is valuable to me in giving hints as to places I can look for inspiration in modern young bands, but I think they are becoming increasingly difficult to find. There are some arguments as to why, the foremost being that it is far too easy to release an LP on CD these days. In a mere 20 years we have gone from a situation where it was too hard - the greatest non-New York underground bands of the late 1970s largely never made any, despite selling out incredible gigs coast to coast in the few towns that supported such rebellion - to its very opposite. Each year a good 2500 CDs come through my door these days that are put out by bands who have never played live or, at best, have only played a handful of poorly-attended shows.

Needless to say, there is almost never any music of great value on these discs. The landfills are full of them. It's like vanity publishing, for the most part.

But let me assess the bigger picture, for the benefit of those plain old fans who do not have to endure such a massive pile of medicority on a weekly basis. What sort of year did we have last year, and what does it portend for our future? It was a most depressing one in every respect.

OVERVIEW: HOW DID WE GET INTO THIS MESS?!?!?

1999? Could it have been even worse than 1998? Could it! The music world is definitely in a protracted slump, worse than the lull of 1987-1989, and worse than any significant span since 1972-1975 (which at least managed to produce far more of lasting, creative value in its underground sections, thanks to all the interesting post-'60s art rockers and pre-punk rebels). The last few years may well have a fighting claim to the worst 2-3 year period for recorded music since the medium was invented a century ago. (The cylinder-era recordings I heard this past year had more soul than the unbelievable mass of stale, lifeless, imagination-less, pristinely recorded music that came through my doorway, 10-20 CDs a day strong, both little bands and major stars.)

As usual, out of such a morass, and by searching carefully through the record racks of more enlightened CD stores and importer lists, I encountered no difficulty in compiling a list of 70 good-to-great albums, even just of modern artists (not to mention the equal number of reissues and archival output that was this year even more exciting). So I still laugh at any creaky, cranky critic who mouths that old platitude about rock 'n' roll-oriented pop being "dead." But my laughter has a more hollow ring to it than usual. For if rock is far from dead, it is certainly stricken with a momentary paralysis while it contemplates its next move, apparently unsure where to look for inspiration/direction/enthusiasm.

This is especially true in the underground, let alone the mainstream. When someone says "What's happening in music now? I've been away so long," one replies with regret, "Well, you haven't missed much." For the second straight year, there was no absolutely sensational record produced in 1999, none that astounded the senses and held one spellbound, gripped in that old black magic of the experience of music at its most inspired, potent, and bedazzling. Major or indie, it was the same. None held me captive this past year, again. None made me want to put a little hurry in my homeward-bound step. There were plenty of good to great CDs, and some absolutely superb ones. Just nothing I couldn't stop playing. This is a hell of a disappointment, two years running. (Again, 1997 produced four, by Radiohead, Catherine Wheel, Gene, and For Against, all emotional battlefields that had me thinking and feeling for months on end.)

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Too many times in 1999, having tired of reaching for some tried and true favorite or recently unearthed treasure from some superior yesteryear, from the Dils, New York Dolls, MC5 and The Newtown Neurotics to X-Ray Spex, Buzzcocks, Ruts, Sugar and the Effigies, or older bands such as the Sonics, Yardbirds, Creation, Kinks, Little Richard, Fats Domino, and Buffalo Springfield, I went on a binge of new CD listening, searching frantically for that spark of genius. I got only hints, fragments, poorly-edited and hastily assembled paeans to spontaneity but no more. Mostly I got a lot of half-assed slacking around. As I was saying, there are too many bands and solo artists, too many labels, and too many producers, yet too little raw talent, songwriting ability, and too little zealous drive. Hunger and passion is lacking most of all. And where there is some reserve of that still left, original ideas are largely wanting.

And when one looked at the pop charts or mall chain stores for any relief, there were even more empty cupboards and empty pockets than usual. No one lifts a finger, it seems, while the heart of music lies bleeding on the sidewalk, crying "help me" and gasping for oxygen to keep pumping. It just beats, barely, almost unnoticed amongst all the litter refuse, vomit, broken glass, soiled newspapers, and discarded syringes on the pavement, all but unnoticed by the unconcerned or intentionally ignoring passersby in Slump City.

PART ONE: THE MAINSTREAM ROCK AND POP

Let me first look at the mainstream (in reverse order from last year's similar column), before turning to my more traditional post-1970 preserve of the underground which is of more interest not only to me, but to the average *Hit List* reader. For if the underground was looking for a cue from the overground (as, I must remind younger readers, it always did the past, especially in the 1950s and 1960s), it found nothing more than the usual thunderous bleating of a dead horse being kicked to submission. Thus, the biggest major stars, labels, radio, and TV are largely to blame for the current decrepit state of things.

Let's face it, in a general sense contemporary rock and pop is as moribund as a funeral parlor in between funerals, after all the flowers have been carried away to the grave site and nothing is left but their petals. There's the distinct, lingering feel of the horror of death (and having had the sad task of giving five speeches at funerals and memorial services this past year, I make that comparison with a heavy heart). The party is over, grab your stuff and go, and there won't be any hassle. Elvis has left the building, and so on.

Like any year of the last 25, only worse, mainstream music is the kind of travesty that would seem downright funny as a parody a la Spinal Tap, were it not so damn pervasive, following us into every hotel lobby, coffee shop, wine bar, or other commercial establishment and urban thoroughfare we frequent. Let us take it as a given that right now the record industry has sucked its way to the very bottom of the landfill trash heap, to its lowest low in history, as anyone who follows the record sales could easily conclude. After all, who is selling all the records nowadays but the worst pre-teen ensembles of pop rubbish?

It was bad enough that looks counted far too heavily in the industry right from day one, getting worse with every successive decade. After all, even the Beatles got signed by George Martin because he thought they were good-looking and funny, not because he thought they were any good. Now, it seems as if age counts against you too, like some kind of "Logan's Run" nightmare come to life. Whoever thinks Britney Spears has any real ability and lasting merit is the same person who will waste his or her time at a party arguing strenuously that Paula Abdul *must* have had some real talent 11 years ago, because after all, she sold all those bazillion records. Not that he or she can remember hearing a single helping in the last few years of "Straight Up," "Forever Your Girl," "Cold Hearted," or the other three #1 smashes the ex-L.A. Lakers cheerleader racked up in some parallel universe of our kitchy 1989-1990 imagination. (Nor, if pressed, will he or she admit to even wanting to!) Everyone knew she couldn't sing, but she was a hot number and she could dance, so she got the full backing of the industry. Now it's as if she never existed, her records are so forgotten. What does that tell you?

The only thing that could have made Abdul even more of a travesty would have been if she had been 16 or17, and had primarily promoted her pubescent appeal, like some kind of model girl from some sick "Barely Legal" publication for the betterfication (i.e. technical legalization) of the tastes of pedophiles everywhere. And lest I be mis-



understood, the Backstreet Boys and their ilk are the same thing - only given the way things work in terms of the hidden desires of men and women, I doubt that adult women pay much attention to the male teen pop acts' sexuality in the same way that males of every age implicitly understand and tune into what is being marketed to them with Spears and Christine Aguilera: the cheap near-Lolita come-on of teen flesh's teasing promise, the endless fetishization of a sort of man-girl love association found in these high school kids' videos. No wonder "American Beauty" struck such a chord with movie-goers this past year and took the Oscar for best picture. I can't be the only one who made this connection, can I? Don't Spears and her ilk represent the same thing as Kevin Spacey's pathetic fantasy in that movie?

For there can be nothing else to such music's marketing. (Not that I think that women above the age of consent don't have the right to express themselves sexually; it's just that when they are marketed primarily in this way, it makes any normal person pretty cynical if not outright appalled, for the reasons I just gave. There is already enough sexual abuse of minors in this country, I should think, to make sure that everyone gets my meaning here. If youth is the only ideal, and by youth we mean a *younger* age every year, this is a pretty damn unhealthy attitude even without the overtones of abuse.) I suppose one can say that the teen groups are too easy a target, but that is part of the deal when you sell the sort of boatloads of crap that they are, at the expense of the promotion and marketing of more developed, more mature music. If a critic must derive any kind of meaning from the habits of labels and radio/TV outlets, then who better to focus on than what is dominating those businesses. For whoever sells the records today is where the money goes in the immediate tomorrow!

And what these kid groups and their other pop-chart neighbors portend is nothing short of the abandonment of music itself as something of any cultural significance. It's only been a mere three decades since pop's evolution had come so far that a fun and often fantastic radio format called "Oldies Radio" can still pump the same 300 songs from that era over and over like they were brand new (and never lack for an audience or hungry advertisers). 1950s/1960s chart hits will still be spun with regularity in the decades to come, and I'll admit that I really don't get tired of hearing Marvin Gaye and Otis Redding and Sam Cooke, huge stars and big charting artists of their day. Yet only a short time later, when it comes to the charts, we are now producing *nothing* of import for future generations to admire. This is perhaps a bit of a stark exaggeration, but I wouldn't make it if I didn't see plenty of truth in it, having studied popular music's evolution for this 100 years since Edison and his invention kick-started the distribution of non-live music: There wasn't a single Top 40 hit song or multi-platinum LP produced in 1999 that will ever be played with that kind of regularity on any oldies stations in the year 2029. Not one. There wasn't even a Lauryn Hill this year, someone with at least some brains and at least a feeling of some kind of authenticity behind her approach and the overall effect of her singing/attitude, even if I don't much care for her music. (I should confess I heard very little of the Dixie Chicks and Shania Twain, but what little I heard didn't make me miss Pasty Cline any less. Likewise, Ricky Martin was just 1999's "Macarena," something we'll all make fun of three years from now.) Indeed, looking over all the mega-sellers of 1999, it seems more a contest of the "Worst New Artist" Grammy or "Worst Dog in Show" award than something with even a remote pretense of actual quality.

The simple reason is that the music is shit, the kind of shit that knows it's shit, manufactured and marketed by people whose business senses long ago led them to abdicate all desire to express what they all know ("this is shit"), who know full well that this shit will be flushed away at the first opportunity to make way for the next wave of shit, but by then they will have made themselves so infinitely fattened on the gorge of junk-food bingeing lard-rushes that they no longer even consider that music could ever have (or ever had) some kind of nutritive or purifying value. If Paula Abdul's records can't even sell in a used bin a mere decade later, let alone be any kind of nostalgic reissue seller down the road, let alone be fit matter for any radio format some day hence - and again, we all should have been astounded that an "artist" like Abdul pulled off the rare feat of releasing six number one hits and a #3 in the space of two years, a Beatles/Elvis sort of achievement - *then when exactly will we finally recognize that there is now a Grand Canyon-wide divide between what sells and what is actually good, even though sales and quality used to actually be related to one another* (if only imperfectly). And when will we come to grips with the dire fact that music consumers themselves have totally lost sight of, or even willfully scrapped, the idea that they could ever have both at the same time. To the record buying populace, the only music that matters is in fact that which sells, as if mere popularity of the most fleeting kind could ever confer any real substance to something, independent of its actual content. Were quality ever a concern of producers and labels, one could say that the best music rose to the top like some kind of Darwinian survival test. But when only the worst of the worst music is marketed and distributed, it's hardly a Darwinian formula at all that indicates the "fittest" competitor. In fact, it's the opposite. Only the shit can rise to the top, as it does in the toilet bowl, when the market is manipulated so crassly.

Like Abdul's music so long ago (which was infinitely more crappy than teen pop horrors of my own childhood, the David Cassidys, Sean Cassidys, Bobby Shermans, and Andy Gibbs of the world, and was nearly as bad as today's posse of pups like 98 Degrees), and the thankfully fading Spice Girls more recently, the music has become such a mass of stylized production and writing that we've reached the point where even the McDonalds' jingles in between the videos and radio spins have more immediacy, and feel more relevant to our lives. Worse still, we've reached the point where we can't tell any difference. A 98 Degrees song is no different than a McDonalds commercial, in sound or intent. Mass marketed junk food or junk music, what's the difference? The cash register goes ka-ching now and you pay for it later, when your system admonishes you for the opportunity cost of having passed up much better food. But by then, the mass marketing pervades your life again until you forget, and the next round of junk gets consumed ad nauseam.

Looking over the Top 20 LP sellers of 1999, the feeling is like that of retching after being force-fed this ghastly diet for 12 months. In addition to The Backstreet Boys (8.2 million) and Ms. Spears (7.2 million), we also got N-Sync's two year old waste-product (3 million), Aguilera's uncorking of a "Genie" better left in its bottle (2.5 million), 98 Degrees (2.3 million), and the previous Backstreet Boys "opus" (1.9 million). All told, this miserable list adds up to 25 million LPs sold, mostly to people ages 10-17, because let's face it, no one else in their right mind would ever go near this fluff but immature minds. What all this proves is that America's kids have far too much disposable income, and that the market has come around to serving them exclusively at the expense of giving them something they might actually like *when* they grow up, let alone giving anyone who has grown up anything to listen to.

(And kids reading this: good work! The music this mag covers actually might make you think, and might lead you to enjoy it in the decades hence! Perish the thought! Forget all your narrow-minded peers who think music is something handed to you and go out and keep digging!)

And if adults aren't buying LPs like they used to, most of it is because we've given them so little worth buying for $17, having artificially doubled the price for the privilege (even after adjusting for inflation).

Even when the labels gush out some guitar rock, the maturity level is not upped at all, which just makes it seem worse somehow (teen pop isn't even supposed to have artistic pretentions!). Limp Bizkit (4.3 million) is another band that is bought mostly by the pre-college set. Ditto Kid Rock (3.6 million). What else was there? If the cartoon likes of Smashmouth (2.1 million) turns out to be the only rock record without a rap/dance beat to sell anything this past year (and T.L.C. is hardly my idea of great R&B), other than the Offspring who are still living off their novelty hit, that says almost as much. The flight away from the Pyrrhic victory of Nirvana nine years ago couldn't be more complete (just ask Dave Grohl, whose Foo Fighters are certainly decent. You have to agree with him when he says how much he hates MTV punk, making me think yet again of that apocryphal story that Karl Marx's last words were "I am not a Marxist."). What a boon "Nevermind" was to the record industry in the 1990s! The industry never actually had to bend their Business-as-Usual practices at all, as English record companies had to briefly in 1976-'79, in order to sign acts with any real danger. They merely had to sell the danger itself as a marketing tool, like so many soft drink and sneaker ads. "Attitude is everything! Obey Your Thirst! Take our word for it, these guys we just signed have a 'tude and a half, that's all the credibility you need!" And when that nonsense no longer played, they just went back to the facile pop they were selling before. By showing us Aguilera's navel twitching.

"Attitude is everything! Obey Your Thirst! Take our word for it, these guys we just signed have a 'tude and a half, that's all the credibility you need!"

By focusing all of their energies on the kid consumer market, record labels have shot themselves completely in the foot for the future. Labels made money hand over fist throughout the decade by reissuing every lost classic they could find in their vaults, most of it a few decades old from the days when the term "artist development" wasn't some kind of dead joke. What a bonanza! The music is already made, just throw it on a CD, add some packaging, and it's all pure profit. There are no studio costs to underwrite, not even many marketing costs. It's like that old Honda commercial - the music sold itself. People who had all the Stones or Beatles or James Brown releases on vinyl went out and bought them all again on CDs, and these artists were discovered by new generations of younger fans. Ditto for the punk-era bands of my youth, who, it must be remembered, released the bulk of their best-known work 20 years ago via major label distribution. What popular music from 1999 will ever sell appreciably on reissue in 2019? The industry is killing off its own golden goose. By not only completely abandoning anything even remotely considered artist development, but also by divorcing itself entirely of such crucial issues of musical quality, they've only based their continued survival on a combination of newer and newer and older and older music, until the only records that will sell appreciably in the future will be those made very recently or several *decades* ago!

And there doesn't seem to be anything pointing the way out. No artist or label near the mainstream even remotely tries to do anything daring (Madonna came the closest, I suppose, in the last few years, but I've never liked her music either), a far cry from a time when such daring seemed to be paramount to artistic survival, let alone progress. (I.e., compare the difference between the Stones' "Time Is On My Side" and, within two short years, "Paint it Black", and then compare that with "Jumping Jack Flash" in another two. Or, perhaps, the evolution from the Temptations' "My Girl" to the psychedelic soul of "Ball of Confusion" in five.) Instead, as one poignant essay in *Request* put it, the only point of music today is "all about Jennifer Lopez's ass." The author was right. There is no attempt to sign, record, distribute, or develop any new talent that anyone old enough to drink in bars might genuinely admire for the rest of their years. An R.E.M. today would never get signed, and if they did, they would never be promoted. They would be dismissed as "too intelligent" or something like that. The few exceptions, such as Radiohead, are far too paltry to disprove this rule. The fast cash is all stuffed up the crack of Jennifer Lopez's ass, and the more she shakes it, the more she shakes the industry's sole moneymaker. Fashion, not art. Sex, not sexual awareness or complex relationships. Formula and style, no meat. Production, not warm sound. Beats but no non-synthetic grooves. Raps and no tunes, like commercials between infomercials. Just the man behind the curtain, no wizard. When Lopez grows older and loses her curves (or just gets her posterior thrown in jail for hangin' with her gangsta boyfriend), they'll just find some other well-apportioned actress or ex-Menudo member to throw at us instead.

I never played so many Sinatra and Louis Armstrong records as I did in 1999. Talent was once prized in our society, especially by talent scouts looking for a smash act they could promote with some pride. Now only ephemeral celebrityhood and the crunch of numbers matters. What a so-called artist or actor gives our collective souls in no longer a matter of consequence. And it sucks. They can do all the "Behind the Musics" and "Where Are They Nows" they want for every vapid, passing star that crumbled when their lack of any real virtue was finally exposed. But they can't change the fact that we all deeply hunger more for something to love, now and forever, not something to laugh at ironically like old yearbook photos. That the photos are now all from the JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL yearbook has just made them that much sadder and more pathetic.

HIT SQUAD

PART TWO: THE UNDERGROUND, OR, THE USUAL PLACE OF REFUGE FROM THIS YEAR-IN-YEAR-OUT OUTRIGHT CRAP IN THE TOP 40 AND THE LP CHARTS:

Oh where oh where has my little dog gone, oh where oh where can she be? As stated above, indie and cult artists thrashed about wildly in 1999 hoping to come up with the eye-opening sound or style that would galvanize the ever-splintering masses of disaffected rock and pop buyers, but nobody really got there.

I have heard only two records in the last two years that even really had the flitting feeling of something momentous for the future. Both were by bands that I greatly respected, if never really loved outright, in the past: Mercury Rev and Flaming Lips. And what stopped me in the past is what stopped me again now. I do not care for the voices of either singer. I said as much last year with Mercury Rev, much as I admired the backing tracks on their last LP. The same could be said for the Lips' 1999 watershed "The Soft Bulletin". In fact, the most excited I got over any song all year was the one song on it that was so good that it didn't matter a lick that I didn't care for the singing. The opening track, "Race For the Prize", definitely ignited some feeling in the friendlier record shops and clubs, just as My Bloody Valentine's "You Made Me Realize" made us think in 1988 that there might be something brewing around the corner after all (and there was!!!). But I liked MBV's vocals better, buried as they were, and moreover, what I like most about "Race For the Prize" and the other good bits of *The Soft Bulletin* is that it reminds me a little of MBV's wash of odd-tuned chords mixed with a killer hook. It would be nice if more bands who used unusual chords and tunings in the underground would get back to writing some sharp melodies, the way that MBV, Pale Saints, Lush, Catherine Wheel, Ride, Boo Radleys, Slowdive, Kitchens of Distinction, and even Chapterhouse did so breathtakingly a decade ago. But I'm not counting on it.

So what is new now, aside from Mercury Rev (who are now more the spirit of The Band, Rick Danko R.I.P.) and Flaming Lips? Almost nothing, it seems. It remains an entirely pathetic, ignorant, and altogether pretentious thing to say that "it's all been done before," since every generation that has preceded this one has adopted that all-knowing, ridiculously hipster seen-it-all-before pose (and that's all it is, a bad pose), only for the broad genre to continually reinvent itself with fresh ideas and the fresh blood of believers. The death knells have gone out so many times - in previous lull times such as 1960, 1975, and 1987 - that one wonders why we have to put up with this "Chicken Little" crap any longer.

Yet, a humble critic can be forgiven for impatience. How long will we have to wait this time, while suffering the indignities of a commercial marketplace of utterly disposable crap? Most of the best new music I heard this year, like in 1987 only worse, was classical in its intent and structure, with many echoes of better musical eras. And even most of these groups need to write better songs or refuse to release albums until they have stockpiled more consistent material.

For instance, the Elephant Six bands, such as Olivia Tremor Control, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Elf Power all have flashes of spontaneous pop greatness, but I remain unable to listen to any of their albums start-to-finish and feeling thrilled with every cut. This has been typical of every band of late, it seems. In a year where Guided By Voices *finally* made an LP that benefited from tight editing (after too much solo noodling from Robert Pollard), it almost seems like no one is paying much attention to him anymore. Perhaps all that messing about and releasing every under-developed fragment that came into his head exhausted the patience of even his most ardent fans, as well as an industry so primed for him when he first attracted notice five years ago. Likewise another old standby, Sebadoh, largely treaded water with a cautious if decent LP, leading most critics to think that Lou Barlow saved his more interesting, fresh work for the new Folk Implosion LP. And though it sure was nice to see XTC back after a sad seven-year exile in record company Siberia (ditto Joe Strummer, whose banishment lasted ten years), both made records based on their love of old sounds; in XTC's lovely case, a rather gorgeous amalgamation of orchestral and acoustic tracks, and in Strummer's case, a really soulful roots music feel that only needed stronger hooks to make it a bigger pleasure than it already is. (Likewise, Tom Waits wowed all the critics this year by just doing what he's been doing for decades, which proves that no one must be breaking much new ground! I mean I like Waits and all, but how is this the future of rock 'n' roll? If he's not overrated, or even overpraised, it seems as if he's at least under-criticized!)

What little I loved this year remains as foreign to most writers as what I loved in 1981-1983, which critics now all routinely praise as if it were always second nature but which was in fact totally ignored then.

Even my number one this year was by a veteran, remarkable artist who, like Waits, has basically been doing the same thing for decades in the underground. The difference between Waits and my choice, the Wipers' Greg Sage, two stubborn, admirable iconoclasts, is that Waits' cult following is so enormous that he at least peeks through the clouds into the consciousness of aware record buyers, whereas the same is only true for Sage in European theaters like Greece, Italy, and the big rock market of Germany. On his 11th brilliant LP, "The Power in One", Sage took his usual sense of unique guitar tunings, dive-bomb riffs, and beaten-suitcase sort of spirited vocal to old ground, and made a superlative LP that will go completely unheard yet again. You can't

really blame him for repeating himself when no other artist goes anywhere near his post-punk territory, yet it receives so little notice. Besides, even in repeating himself a little, there is so much fresh turf to mine considering his abilities as a basic songwriter (and as the best guitarist in all of America making any decent music), that it never sounds like you've really heard it before anyway.

But putting The Wipers #1 just reminds me of the ultimate futility of being a music writer, when I continually shake my head at how little legwork critics still do beyond what comes across their doorsteps for free and is hyped insistently to them by their fellow critics. What little I loved this year remains as foreign to most writers as what I loved in 1981-1983, which critics *now* all routinely praise as if it were always second nature but which was in fact totally ignored then (outside of tiny fanzines and spirited mags like this one!). Will even one other critic of prominence in this country even acknowledge the Wipers' existence, let alone hear their records, let alone vote for such a superlative LP in their year end summaries? Of course not. Reason being: *They'd probably have to buy the CD to review it.* And god knows the vast majority of critics wouldn't want to do that, particularly if they could never pitch such an LP to their editors who have never heard of Sage. What a farce! If Sage were a 20-year old college boy playing this music on tour on some hip label, he'd be crowned king of the scene, but there's no place for a genuinely unique veteran artist in this day and age. Is Pavement really the best we can do? I guess so when even the smartest indie kids only demand familiar formulae with the same conservative fervor of a born-again Springsteen fan.

And that's also the case with the rest of my top picks for last year. Four of them, Astrid Williamson's "Boy For You", Gene's "Revelations", and Mutton Birds' "Rain, Steam and Speed" especially, will never get any votes in any other writers polls, or even in a loose poll of your average underground music fan, because they are imports. Critics and fans used to buy imports, in droves. They can't be bothered anymore, I guess. They missed out on some amazing music, Ms. Williamson in particular. If there is a better female singer around now, I have not heard her, and her lush pop is beguiling. Likewise, if I spent 1999 listening to any LPs, it was the Mutton Birds' 1995 and 1997 albums which I missed out on until 1998 (since no one here ever talks about New Zealand bands any more; guess the fad has completely passed, but these guys are like Chills/Bats heirs with great songs), and the whole of Glide's back catalog (which I also missed out until 1997, because the same is true of Australian imports!), though the latest Mutton Birds' was almost as good. New Model Army's thunderous conviction never even got much of a look-see over here back when they were being pushed by Capitol and then Epic, let alone now that they only come out on German labels. But their "...And Nobody Else" double live CD was a stormer! And though Leatherface finally toured the U.S. and released only their second-ever record here, a split LP with popular Emo band Hot Water Music, the fact that Leatherface are genuine punk rock, and not that cookie cutter kiddie-punk, means that they are on an indie punk label, which further means no critic or fan would go near them without a bodyguard and a punk rock history road map that doesn't terminate in 1978 or 1983. I guess that's never happening. (Likewise Youth Brigade's best record in 17 years, their split LP with the Swinging Utters.)

Moose ("Baby It's Over" EP) and Wheat ("Hope and Adams") were truly lovely, and post-Mary Chain/Velvets post-punkers Ash ("Nuclear Sounds") turned the corner now that they are in their younger 20s and can really write and play, while Mike Ness's country-punk forays were the most genuine that that genre has ever produced ("Under the Influences, Vol. I" and "Cheating at Solitaire" were better than all the early '80s bands, save for maybe the early Rank & File). The great Joe Pernice captured that perfect pop sound of '70-'72 once again with a self-titled LP with Chappaquiddack Skyline, a disguise name for his Pernice Brothers, the most consistent live delight throughout 1999. Britain's rather beguiling, traditional popsters Shack thankfully garnered a U.S. release for "H.M.S. Fable", but while the Brit critics finally found something with real craft and adorable hooks to salivate over in this fine veteran outfit, the U.S. scribes and non-anglophile fans just yawned and passed.

As usual, it was the singer-songwriters, my last resort each year, that got me through, not only Pernice but a nice turn from Robyn "I've still got it" Hitchcock (the wonderful delight of "Mexican God" on "Jewels For Sophia") and the always steady Ron Sexsmith, he of the menthol voice like a love child of Tim Hardin and Astrud Gilberto on "Whereabouts". A couple of other old vets, Martin Phillipps of the Chills ("Sketchbook, Vol. I"), and Pete Shelley's Buzzcocks ("Modern"), showed there is plenty of wit and life left in their proud bones-more so than a thousand garage bands half their age. The Hangups ("Second Story") and Velvet Crush ("Free Expression") proved that power pop is nowhere near dead either, it's just in the hands of good fans without enough chops and songs. And Belle and Sebastian may not be our generation's Smiths (more our Field Mice, only way better), but it remains a blessing to see intelligence and love of songcraft celebrated *somewhere*, in some corner among the American underground cognoscenti. That leaves the decent return of Naked Raygun's Jeff Pezzati in his new band the Bomb, though I need to hear more than just one single.

That's what made my list for 1999. The year was also a good one for me (again, far from great, and really a holding pattern, like a plane endlessly in line for the runway), thanks to the new LP contributions of David Bowie, Kristin Hersh, the Frank & Walters, the Fastbacks, Australia's You Am I and Feverdream, Hugh Cornwell, Tobin Sprout, Paul Westerberg (his best solo outing), the Church, East River Pipe, the Apples in Stereo, the Saints, Velocette, Burning Airlines, His Name is Alive, TV Smith, the Hope Blister, Jello Biafra, Iggy Pop, Stiff Little Fingers, Matthew Sweet, Jets to Brazil, Fountains of Wayne, the Get Up Kids, Promise Ring, Superchunk, Astrid (an OK Scottish band), Travis, New Zealand's Stereobus, and maybe Paul McCartney's covers LP (well, the Fats Domino cover of "Coquette" is awfully good, and a few other tracks). No year sucks for those who look hard enough, but of course, in my opinion, that is precisely what separates the wheat from the chaff in criticland and the sort of fans I spend the most time talking to, exchanging finds. Most critics and indie supporters seem so lazy to me, waiting for other critics or other hipsters to sign off on an artist before they will give them a chance.

Lastly, because it is a lull time, I did what I do in all lull times. I spent a fortune on old CDs. Where would my year have been without George Jones, the really young, blues-singing Gene Autry, Howling Wolf, Bo Diddley, Ennio Morricone, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, Mary Wells, Sinatra, Gilberto, Armstrong, Benny Goodman, early Fred Astaire, Bessie Smith, Leadbelly, Paul Revere & the Raiders, Sonics, Yardbirds, Easybeats, Colin Blunstone, Doc Cheatham, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Jackie Wilson CDs that always seemed to fight their way back to my turntable. Yet even just sticking with the 1999 archive releases I bought, there was such a wealth that I was sometimes tempted to even forget that music was still being made, since the older records I'd never heard before were filled with such gold. In other words, if the choice is between a bunch of radio sessions Hank Williams recorded, even though he died 10 years before I was born, and some new work by some two-bit indie band who didn't deserve its deal until it got

a little more seasoning under its belt, it was a no brainer.

To wit, in addition to the Avengers (their "Died For Your Sins"-inspired reunion shows excited me more than anything else I saw on stage last year!), one of the greatest punk bands ever, the women's box set "R-E-S-P-E-C-T: A Century of Women in Music" was an absolute eye-opener on disc one, especially for all the 1909-1940 stuff I'd never encountered before. It was fun reliving my teenage fascination with the Ramones ("Hey Ho, Let's Go: Anthology") which has thankfully never died over all that time (now *that* is what a kid could listen to and still like as a senior citizen!). It was about time that someone did a big number on the Creation's godlike dirty greatness ("Making Time: The Complete Collection, Vol. 1 and 2"). The Beatles' "Yellow Submarine Soundtrack" reminded me of getting my dad to take me, enthralled, at the age of six to see the movie. Pete Ham's second volume of demos, "Golders Green", proved that he was actually a first-rate singer/songwriter folky hiding in the otherwise memorable Badfinger. The MC5's "'66 Breakout" showed me they were already an amazing rock band before they even caught their revolutionary fire. Big Bill Broonzy's "Warm, Witty, & Wise" gave me a huge hint of why all the Chicago bluesmen of the Chess era cut their teeth on his records and loved him so. And Eartha Kitt's purring on "Purr-Fect: Greatest Hits" was another bridge for me to all the delights of postwar, pre-rock music with edge and bite. Negative Trend's unearthed "The Pop Sessions" turned out to be some of the most exciting late 1970s San Francisco scene punk recordings ever, too! Holy cow!

But talk about the tip of the iceberg! On my reissues list for 1999, I was galvanized once again by the utter *genius* of the '60s Pretty Things, Hollies, Kinks, and Buckinghams, even though I already knew those LPs by heart from old vinyl copies (though the four non-LP bonus tracks on the Pretty Things' "S.F. Sorrow" absolutely blew me away like nothing else save for old Glide recordings, '91-'95)). Likewise the reissues of Naked Raygun, Morricone, U.K. Subs, the "Nuggets" box set, Thatcher on Acid, the Dickies, the Germs' charming, ramshackle first gig, Go-Betweens, the Sweet, Johnny Thunders' outtakes, and Television live.

But there were plenty of other archive releases that showcased more fresh material for these ears, including Jawbox, Cocteau Twins (BBC), Blind Willie Johnson, the Action, Big Star live, Red House Painters, Dennis Brown, the Ravens, Dave Davies, Willie Dixon, the Vibrators live in 1977, Field Mice, Isley Brothers box, Bill Monroe, and Joy Division live. Too bad the La's early tapes turned out to be so lousy, but I noticed that some stupid new TV show is using a neutered version of "There She Goes" as its theme (just like "That '70s Show" ruined the old Big Star gem!) so spoilsport, surly, but talented Lee Mavers at least will make some money. In general 1999 was a fantastic one again for making old music available to the public again. This alone will get anyone through lull times!

FINAL NOTE:

If I am even more pessimistic about the future, it's because the internet has done such a sad and thorough job of putting so many small, friendly, informed independent book and record stores out of business. Not because I was shipping my own *Big Takeover* magazines to them directly for two decades and lost an account, although that's how I always find out. But because it was these stores more than anything that allowed underground and non-commercial music to flourish throughout the '80s and earlier '90s. In the end, all the promotion in the world does not matter if people have no access to a record, and by the same token, the more access and information people have to a CD in bricks-and-mortar shopping experiences, the more they buy and become committed, loyal fans. The internet has its obvious advantages, but the pleasure and the learning experience of flipping through carefully curated bins for new and old music is rapidly becoming extinct, as what few off-the-beaten-track brick-and-mortar stores that remain forget about backstock and order new product in overly small quantities. The one-to-one communication of an informed sales person is infinitely preferable and interesting (and helpful as a human being looking for a richer life, meeting new people) to the cold reading of listings on a screen, no matter how much consumer feedback is included. Where is the community in that? Where is the shared experience? All of us sitting at home unconnected except through a modem? Ultimately, people will only search for familiar titles, and they'll never have their mind expanded beyond their specific searches, with no potential to just blindly stumble on something by seeing the cover and remembering having heard of it somewhere or liking the artwork. And music will be constricted all the more.

Maybe the artistic slump will be over soon. Maybe the internet will yet kick some life into music, as artists find they are more and more shut out of the major label distribution systems (the recent merger between EMI and Warner Bros. means another round of hundreds of bands that are doing something remotely interesting getting dropped, and thousands of firings of other people who might sign some new bands to replace them) and turn to the web as the ultimate means of distribution and salvation, bringing the mainstream to them. Though it will become a battle of how to draw customers to your unheard-of site, it will also be true that artists will be free to do more of what they choose, and will be able to control their own music. Here could be a place that the industry can get a good shake-up.

But I worry about this, too. If music is reduced to nothing but a file of information, easily downloaded with a few clicks, how does that ensure that people will love it more? How will we ever get back to the place where music is a devout experience for people, instead of just another lifestyle choice, just another thing to click and send? How will we ever reclaim that place where music flat out MATTERS. Instead, our attitudes grow more cavalier and the distribution becomes too ho hum, with little emotion or learning invested.

Where is the *experience* of music in the future?

I only hope there is something I can't foresee that will save the industry and the artists from themselves and their self-destructive habits. If music was a human being, then it would smoke, snort narcotics, drink heavily, fail to exercise, eat only pizza, live next to modern Love Canals, and watch lots of TV. We need more than just a doctor to reverse this. We need an entire change of attitude concerning what it's all about.

The only thing good about 1999 was that we finally got rid of bogus movie "soundtracks" (cash-in tie-in comps., more like it) as a driving force in the industry. Other than that (good riddance), 1999 was a big misstep.

May the sick patient be cured, and soon!

There will always be plenty to listen to. I will never grow bored as a music fan. But it cannot be denied. The music scene is at its best when we are looking to the present and the future as sources of genuine excitement. It is up to artists, labels, producers, and music fans in particular to start demanding something new and better. Or else I will be stuck at home listening to these CDs instead of hanging out in the clubs where I really belong, where the experience of music *really* happens. Hearing some band or singer perform real music with heart, instead of watching Jennifer Lopez's posterior.

To check out Jack's magazine 20-year-old magazine, The Big Takeover, have a look at the web site at www.bigtakeover.com. Sample issues are only $5 and subscriptions are only $20 for four issues.)

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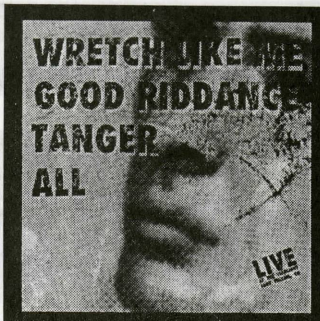

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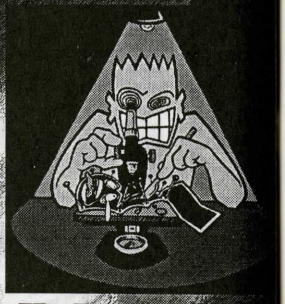

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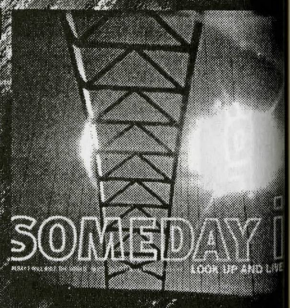

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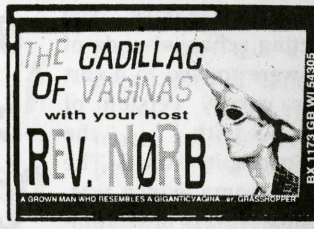
As of 3:37 PM CDT 4.15.2000 AD, the Smugglers are the best band in the world. Wait, can that be right? It must be, i typed it out. How odd. Perhaps this is a matter that requires further contemplation (as, in the interests of preventing the ongoing italic thefts that have plagued my column since the get-go, i am, at the behest of middle management, typing the words you see before you in the ultra-repulsive ClarisWorks™ program — a program which, if you'll recall, i once stated stunk so bad it should be retitled "Gary Works" [wow, that's an Indiana joke for three straight columns! I'd say that that must be some sort of record, but, now that i think about it, it probably isn't] — i am making no warranties, express or implied, as to the suitability of this issue's spewage for any purpose whatsoever. I hate this fucking program. Only Quark™ is good! Only Quark™ was named after a short-lived TV show from the 70's where Richard Benjamin played the captain of an intergalactic garbage scow whose crew included the vivacious and fucking stacked Landers sisters! Huzzah for Quark™! Boo for ClarisWorks™! And Boo as well for this fucking stupid "™" symbol! It's getting on my goddamn nerves!). Whilst i am contemplating this matter most weighty, i would like to denote a few things which i *am* shit-sure about: 1) That last word "am" was the first word i italicized thus far. 2) If i ever decide to make my living as a porno star, my *nom du pud* is gonna be "Crispus Buttocks." Some people think this is a stupid name, but i think it's Revolutionary (i told a resident of one of the original thirteen colonies of my choice of porn-star name, and she didn't get it whatsoever. What these goddamn kids need is two straight years of CBS's Bicentennial Minute!!! That'll learn 'em good!!!). 3) Japanese animation sucks. Please make a note of this in case you get clonked on the head with a sake bottle and completely lose your senses and begin to believe otherwise. 4) If you use flames or the image of a devil on your records, you are now officially gay. If you buy records with images of flames or devils on them, you are also gay. If you put out records with flames and/or devils on them, you are gay as well (i mean, there is a reason why they're called "FLAMING homosexuals," ya know). There is, of course, no shame in gayness, but if you are both associated with records with flames and devils on them *and* ensconced in the midst of a heterosexual relationship, you need to inform your partner of your new-found sexual identity immediately, and go your separate ways (you might wanna heist one of her Prada™ purses before you split; you might need it). For the record, i expect the term "rock & roll" to similarly fully signify gayness-and-little-else-but before the year is out. How could it not? The same people who, five years ago, approached the concept of "rock & roll" with the same trepidation and repulsion that one might find in a dog owner dutifully picking up that which has been freshly deposited from the south end of their northbound pooch are now the parties waving the tawdry banner of ROCK AND ROLL, DUDE! most vigorously — and, might i add, the most self-righteously. Let's face it: "Rock & Roll" is now nothing but a catch-all term signifying tired and formulaic excursions into woefully failed sonic self-aggrandizement currently favored by twerps and oafs; anyone who REALLY loves rock & roll knows that it's fucking DEAD as HELL (as usual), and the only sensible course of action is to wash our hands of it completely (well, okay, not completely. I exaggerate somewhat for purposes of making myself appear more radical and interesting than i truly am) ("Crispus Buttocks," get it?), let the dorks who are currently jabbering about "rock & roll" run it into the ground and fuck it all up, and then, when they eventually leave for greener pastures (as they most certainly will), reclaim it as our own. Of course, this sounds simpler than it actually is, because Punk Rock™, which is similarly dead, is scheduled to come back to life right before Rock & Roll™ (didn't i say fuck that stupid "™" thing? How can i be trusted with the grave duty of filling out the coroner's report on rock & roll when i can't even get my story straight on the "™" thing? Actually, maybe i'm not responsible for the "™" thing at all. Perhaps the same arch-fiend who has been habitually pilfering my italics is sneaking™ in™ to™ the™ *Hit List*™ offices™ and™ rampantly™ inserting™ "™"™ things™ for™ madcap™ effect™! *Drat™ you™, Mad™ Typographer™!*), which will surely confound the feebs to no end. Hell, it's even confusing me, and i'm the one making this shit up. Regardless, yeah, as the Teenage PhD's once said, Punk Rock is dead. Rock & Roll is currently like, who was it in *Monty Python & The Holy Grail*, Eric Idle i think?, when the Corpse-Collection-Cart guy was calling *"BRING OUT CHA DEAD! BRING OUT CHA DEAD!"* , and they're trying to toss him on the cart with the other stiffs, and he's like (feebly) *"but i'm not dead yet!"* — that is your fuckin' ROCK and ROLL, bay-bee. Eric Idle on the medieval dead body cart. By the end of the year, the cart driver will whunk him in the head to end his wheezing protestations, and it'll be all over. Then the rats can come out, fiddle aboot with the cadavers for a while, and eventually the whole cart — stiffs, rats, and all — gets made into Soylent Green™ (dammit! stop that!) and everyone's happy! (anyone who takes issue with my rather dim view of Popular Music™ [HEY! Do i have to get the yardstick???] is either a feeb, symp, dupe, dud, fool or gimp or knows where to get way, *way* better records than i've been buying for the last few years. I mean, has anyone familiar with my column over the years noticed the conspicuous absence over the last few fiscal annums [hey, "Fiscal Annum" — i like the sound of that! If i ever start some gay Irish street punk band, that's gonna be my stage name!] ["Crispus Buttocks," get it?] of formerly standard features such as 1) year end top ten lists; 2) public proclamations



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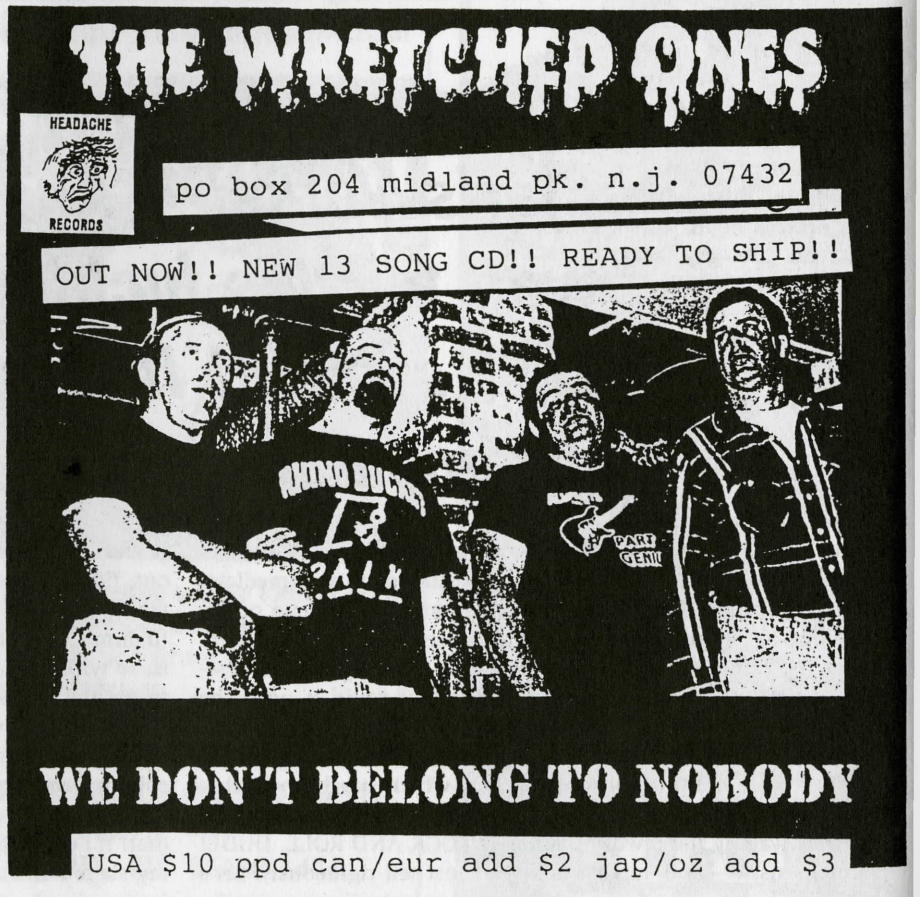
HIT SQUAD

of what the current Holy Trinity of bands is, and 3) timely, up-to-the-minute real-time updates on who the Best Band In The World is at any given split-second? Would anyone care to speculate on why such things should no longer appear? Well, *duh* [note: that was both italicized and bold! i'm off me friggin' rocker! my typographical derring-do knows no bounds!] — it's because *there haven't been three good bands or ten good records* for something like two years now. As far as the Holy Trinities of recent memory go, once the early-to-middish-nineties troika of the Rip Offs/Teengenerate/Devil Dogs went down in flames, down in flaaaaaames, the unsuspecting schweinhunds of America were treated to a sort of junior varsity version of same, with the Donnas/Spaceshits/Loli & The Chones threesome, which was, for its comparatively brief duration, a perfectly usable Holy Trinity. Then, when the Infections got good and the Donnas sort of tumbled into half-assed arena rock, i was able to perform a number of technical sleight-of-hand moves to get the Infections into the Donnas spot in the Holy Trinity without actually having to annul the Trinity, by claiming that the Infections took the Donnas spot whilst the Donnas were "broken up" when they entered college, as was briefly the case [however, let the record show that i think the most recent Donnas disco grande is at least three-quarter {possibly even seven-eighthed} assed arena rock, and has my respect, if only because it's SO FUCKING PINK {oh yeah, speaking of pink, i'm a fine one to talk on who's "gay" and who isn't, after my girlfriend recently asked me what guys i thought were "hot," i eventually remembered that when i was like five years old i told my mom i had a crush on David fucking Cassidy, for cryin' out loud! I guess i better go add some pseudo Von Dutch flames on the new Boris album cover! And Satan! And...and...some dice! Yeah, some dice! And an 8-Ball! And the number 13! And...and a cobra! And a skull with a monocle and a top hat! I'll be back shortly! I have to check on how my Bernaise sauce is progressing!!!} {actually, once i got to be about six or seven, i got all confused because my crush shifted to Susan Dey, but i didn't tell my mom because i didn't want to have to deal with the social stigma of being a known girl-liker}]. However, with the Infections broken up, and the Spaceshits sort of veering off at an angle from their earlier musical direction [however, let the record also show that that second album was VERY unfairly maligned by the general populace, and, whilst no "Winter Dance Party" by a long shot, is still a fairly great record], i can't see the Chones holding the whole trinity together by their lonesome, so that particular trinity decayed into nothingness and *nothing has come around to replace it*. As far as ten good albums in either 1998 or 1999 go, forget it. After a moderate amount of contemplation at year's end, i came to the horrifying conclusion that i'm not so sure i heard a record last year that was any better than my own band's '99 release, and if it was better, it sure wasn't better by much. "*That*," in the immortal words of Vince Lombardi when commenting on the selection of Baltimore Colts QB Earl Morrall as NFL MVP, "*is the sign of a weak league.*" [note: although this entire column is being sold as is, i *doubly* make no warranty as to whether or not Lombardi really said this, or if Earl Morrall was even MVP, but this is what my dad says happened, so take that for what it's worth. To this day, my old man still maintains utter contempt for Earl Morrall because he didn't see the open receiver in the end zone at the end of the first half of Super Bowl III {Morrall's celebrated excuse being that the Stamford marching band or some such entity was filing onto the sidelines in preparation for the halftime festivities, and he was unable to pick out the receiver due to the fact that said wide open target was standing in front of a marching band with similar-

i eventually remembered that when i was like five years old i told my mom i had a crush on David fucking Cassidy, for cryin' out loud!



ly colored uniforms, which sort of begs the question: *But Earl, were they all frantically waving their arms over their heads, too?*}, causing the unthinkable — an AFL victory — to occur. I feel his shame. We will speak no more of it. Allowing an AFL team to triumph in the Super Bowl is even more shameful than a crush on David Cassidy!!! Uh...we will speak no more of *that*, either] Pure and simply, i pretty much thought everything was shit. I have listened to some of the records people claimed to not be shit, and they were shit. If i was forced, under threat of, say, having flames tattooed on my forearm or something, to pick a "Best Album of 1999," i would either say the Connie Dungs "Earthbound For The Holiday" or that CD on Cleopatra of the techno remixes of Sweet songs, and my answer would be dependent on which CD i thought would outrage the querent more [for the record, i'm all for techno, IN THEORY. If you could find some way to eliminate the Fubu™ Factor from techno, i think it'd be great, but i don't think this is a reasonable possibility, so this will probably remain solely in the realm of theory for ever and ever, amen. I love the utter mindlessness of it all, and the fact that it sounds sort of like some kind of synthetic speedmetal that, unlike speedmetal — or ANY kind of metal — doesn't automatically suck. I mean, the sounds they're getting on techno records are WAY more fucked up sounding than the sounds the alleged "rock and roll" bands are getting, so maybe that's the final THWUNK on Eric Idle's head: Rock & roll couldn't even out fuck-up techno. Of course, the only techno record i own is the aforementioned Sweet remixes CD, and the one song off that new Dwarves record — both of which are great. I assume all "real" techno pretty much sucks {how could it not? look at the people who listen to it! look at the people who MAKE it!}, but i don't know, because i don't know anyone who listens to it — which is, of course, another point in its favor]. Regardless, there haven't been ten good records or three good bands in quite some time. *When i can think of three good bands or hear ten good records in the space of a year, i will let you know. UNTIL THEN, SIT THE FUCK DOWN AND SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!* [and, for the record, i do not expect the next Holy Trinity to come from the ranks of the "garage-punk" circuit, or whateveryouwannacallit. That particular rock-rock-rock-rock-rock and roll petri dish has been the source of the last two Holy Trinitii, it would be unheard of for them to produce another one. Besides, that Zodiac Killers album didn't do too much for me, and i don't see any type of "garage punk" {whatever} Holy Trinity existing without the presence of whatever band Greg Lowery's in, so i think the jig is up, whatever that means {i mean, i seem to be the only person that thinks this, but when i play that Zodiac Killers record all i hear is a band attempting to play faster than they're actually capable of playing. The drummer can't pull it off, the vocalist can't pull it off, they're covering "Steak Knife" for crying out loud! I kind of had my fill of bands trying to play faster than they're capable of and covering "Steak Knife" in like 1984 or something; i'm afraid fifteen years later it still isn't any more interesting. I mean, no offense, but fuck, dude, i stomped around a goodly portion of the early 80's with a bald head and combat boots, you're gonna hafta play a *lot* faster than that to impress me with the speed card! ((don't even get me started on the "hardcore" thing, or i won't stop. My girlfriend dragged me out to see these great new "hardcore" bands a few months ago, the first one was allegedly an "old school" hardcore band, who played music not unlike some loser band from 1985 or something would — remembering, of course, that there was no good HC after 1984 at the VERY latest, and that is WAY generous — which, of course, makes them NEW SCHOOL hardcore, not OLD SCHOOL hardcore, but no one seemed to know that, or even care that they didn't know it. The singer kept attempting to incite a, uh, "mosh pit" by uttering dynamic and brilliant phrases like *"Come on, Green Bay! Let's see what you fockin' got!"* I was appalled. The next band, Snapcase, was, as i understand it, "new school" hardcore. They played alt-metal not unlike Tool. I was on the verge of becoming physically ill. I don't really give a fuck if these types of bands want to play these types of music to these types of people, but to call it "hardcore" is blasphemous beyond belief. I have nothing but contempt for these bands, their fans, and their labels. I could write for ten fucking years and not be able to communicate how much i hate these bands, so i'll just give you the condensed version: DEAR CONTEMPORARY "HARDCORE" BANDS: I HATE YOU BEYOND BELIEF. YOU ARE A NOXIOUS AFFRONT TO THAT WHICH MANY GOOD PEOPLE ONCE BLED AND DIED FOR. YOU SUCK. I DESPISE YOU ALL, WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING. KILL YOURSELVES. GOODBYE! Love, Rev. Nørb. P.S. KEEP IT REAL!)) Shit, even the local Rip Off Records wanna-be bands who cover that song do it as "Poshboy's Cock!" Get a grip!} {amazingly, not only did i not like the Zodiac Killers record, but i found that i did like the Loose Lips album, which, after picking up their single, i debated not buying. I mean, Jesus *Christ*, Shane, button your goddamn shirt! Anyway, i started listening to the album, and i was like "yeah, this sucks, as i suspected" — i mean, let me quote some sample lyrics: *"my best friend known as Jism Jim/tried to nuzzle down on your queasy quim/but you backed out 'cause you got no clout/but Jimmy knows better than to scream and shout"* — it's like, fuck, who let THAT retard have a ballpoint pen??? He could hurt himself! Anyway, against all odds, about three songs into it i found myself reversing my opinion and quite enjoying the record, gay "Sympathy For The Devil" styled background vocals and everything. Their plodding tempos serve them well; i've always maintained that Wesley's arms were too fat to successfully drum rapidly anyway. NOW THAT I'VE FINISHED INSULTING EVERYBODY, WHERE THE FUCK WAS I???}. Further, Rip Off Records, undisputed Grand Moff Tarkins of said scene for lo these many centuries, are now in the unenviable position of having the vast majority of the bands who play Rip Off Records type music these days being nth-generation twerps whose primary influences for playing Rip Off Records type music is Rip Off Records, and i think the blatant

I don't really give a fuck if these types of bands want to play these types of music to these types of people, but to call it "hardcore" is blasphemous beyond belief.

derivativeness is pretty obvious to all parties concerned. This is nobody's *fault*, per se, but just the way things go {the obvious glaring recent exception to this being the Registrators double album which is, as of 6:51 PM CDT 4.15.00, the best non-greatest-hits double album of all time ((the best double album of all time, period, being the Beatles "Rock & Roll Music" 2xLP [[quite a concept — the Beatles marketed as icons of late 50's/early 60's Americana, *a la* tail fins and jukeboxes and Fonzie]], followed closely by the Beach Boys "Endless Summer")) ((the best triple album of all time, as of 6:53 PM, op. cit., is that Mudhoney "March to Fuzz" anthology, and fuck you if you don't like it)) ((Thought: Grunge killed Zubaz™! More later!)); let the record show that i heartily endorse the new Rip Off art fag direction exemplified by the Registrators "Sixteen Wires from the New Provocate" double album! Please, no David Cassidy jokes!}, MY POINT BEING that Rip Off Records and all the Rip Off Records rip offs are NOT going to save the day again; the next Holy Trinity is going to have to emerge from some type of wholly un-Rip-Off-esque quadrant {i assure you that Scandinavia will not be involved}]). Of course, with both Punk Rock and Rock & Roll either dead or on the corpse cart, one might assume that the Universal Hipster might find oneself occupying a market position just this side of untenable; to the alleviation of this end, whilst we await rockin' apocalypse and rebirth, let the record show that i consider the following musical subgenres a) eminently worthy; and b) currently underexploited, therefore c) fit areas of exploration for those who are currently frustrated with the state of sonic affairs: 1) Merseybeat; 2) Bubblegum; 3) Chad & Jeremy (They were on the best two episodes of "Batman" ever! Catwoman steals their voices and holds them for ransom, and Commissioner Gordon utters one of the greatest lines ever writ for stage and screen: *"Catwoman! How dare you break in here and bully an aging mogul?!!"*); 4) Glam (and, let the record show that Rev. Nørb™ [all right, now that's just getting downright humiliating!] does NOT subscribe to the notion of "American glam!" When i say "glam," i mean the REAL DEAL — Sweet and Mud and Slade and T. Rex and maybe Suzi Quatro and i suppose Gary Glitter [fuck Alvin Stardust!] — silver lamé from the British Isles, baby! Chapman/Chinn! Platform soles! Curious haircuts! I do NOT accept the New York Dolls as "glam!" They were, fuck, i dunno "Trash & Vaudeville" or something. These bands with the ratted-up dyed-black hair and the eyeliner and the open shirts and the leather pants trying to pass themselves off as some type of "glam" organism can suck my dick [actually, no they can't. I'm saving myself for David Cassidy]; i demand a much glammier glam than these tired losers can currently manifest. That whole New York Dolls thing has not been even vaguely interesting for like the last ten years [roughly contemporaneous with the time Johnny Thunders threw me out of his dressing room] [alas, not bodily], and will not become interesting again for most likely another ten years. Give it up, losers. I am wholly unimpressed [just as i am with the whole "U.S. Bombs, Jr." movement currently sweeping the nation for no logical reason]. The next band i see who use the word "glam" in their musical description [be it hyphenated, slashed, or otherwise impurified] better play a goddamn MUD cover and do strange, choreographed, sexually confused dance steps on stage or i'm gonna hit them in the fucking hair with a disco ball. *My kingdom for a serviceable version of "Tiger Feet!"*), and that's all i can think of except for techno, which i don't think counts because i don't ever envision anyone who doesn't suck making techno records. It is my considered opinion that the wayfaring hipster turn their attentions to one of the four aforementioned fields by year's end, because everything else is gonna be beat deader'n a goddamn door nail by 2001. 5) If i ever become a professional wrestler (which won't happen for quite some time as, as far as i'm concerned, wrestling, like rock & roll, can fuck itself these days for losing the one critical component that Pro Wrestling simply cannot be without: Misfit Appeal. Of course, now that i think about it, i heard one of the Misfits is actually wrestling in WCW. Uh, case in point), i dunno what my name is gonna be, but i know what my finishing move is gonna be called: The Corbomite Maneuver. I'm gonna make it SO feared throughout the squared circle that i will NEVER ACTUALLY HAVE TO *EXECUTE* IT, no one will ever *even know what it is* — my opponents will simply surrender merely upon threat of me going Corbomite on their ass. I am not at liberty to discuss the Corbomite Maneuver in a public forum; let the record show, however, that it involves plenty Corbomite. TONS AND TONS OF DEADLY CORBOMITE!!! *BWAH HA HA HA HA HA HAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!! Eat shit, Balok!!!* 6) *Magnolia* is the biggest piece of shit movie i've ever had the misfortune to sit through in my life. IN MY LIFE!!! It starts with a ten-minute lesbian folksinger rendition of a Three Dog Night song AND THEN GETS WORSE AND WORSE EVERY SECOND!!! AVOID AT ALL COSTS!!! Fuck the seven bucks, i want the three hours of my *life* back!!!

...Okay, that said, i have thought about my initial statement, and know it to be correct. The Smugglers are, in fact, the best band in the world, my reasoning being 1) They covered "Kings of the Party" by Brownsville Station (although Grant TOTALLY FUCKED UP the intro monologue! For shame, Hot Tongue, for shame!), and 2) see #1. I mean, after years and years of studio albums that sounded like the Canadian version of the Young Fresh Fellows in every respect (primarily the respect whereby the Canadian version is only worth about 70% of the American version), they have finally emitted an album — "Rosie" — that rocks as hard as their pewter-galoshed live shows, an achievement which they need to be properly rewarded for while there is yet a dim flicker of life in the breast of the near-dead Eric Idle of rock & roll. After all, these guys have been at it for a long-ass while — by the time rock & roll is born anew, they might very well be retired from active duty, enjoying all the benefits that high taxes and socialized medicine have to offer, and unable to have any type of "Best Band In The World" honors conferred upon them in anything but a meaningless honorary fashion. The Smugglers need to be the Best Band In The World while there is yet time, so POOF! It is written! The Smugglers are the Best Band In The World! Any band that covers "Kings of the Party" AND mentions Green Bay in their lyrics deserves treatment no less regal (i also found it quite amusing how they changed the numbers in the middle part [which was actually originally ripped off from "Sweet Little Rock & Roller" by Chuck Berry] from the original "fifteen hundred still waitin' outside the door" to just "fifteen kids still waitin' outside the door." Further: In "Sweet Little Rock & Roller," it says that there's ten thousand eyes watching The Artist leave the floor, while five thousand tongues scream for more — given that one generally finds two eyes for every one tongue [though i suppose it depends on the tongue], this seems to indicate that there were 5000 fans present, all of whom demanded an encore. In the original version of "Kings of the Party," however, Cub Koda sees fit to still have "ten thousand eyes" watching Brownsville leaving the floor, but THEN goes on to say that there is a bewilderin' "ten thousand tongues" screaming for more, which can only mean one of two things: A. There were 10,000 fans in attendance, only half of whom wanted an encore; or B. Brownsville Station used to fill 5000 seat rooms to capacity with pirates. Beats me, Michigan is a weird place)! In any event, my will be done — and just because i had a crush on David Cassidy doesn't mean i can't boss you around!!! The Smugglers might very well be to rock & roll what DJ Peterson & the Trooper were to the AWA; let us weep! However, i have shocking new evidence that rock & roll might have already reached its nadir, and that a resurgence may be underway soon: I went to go see the Lazy Cowgirls on Wednesday, and they didn't play "Goddamn Bottle." Rock & roll ain't gettin' much deader than that. Have a nice day.

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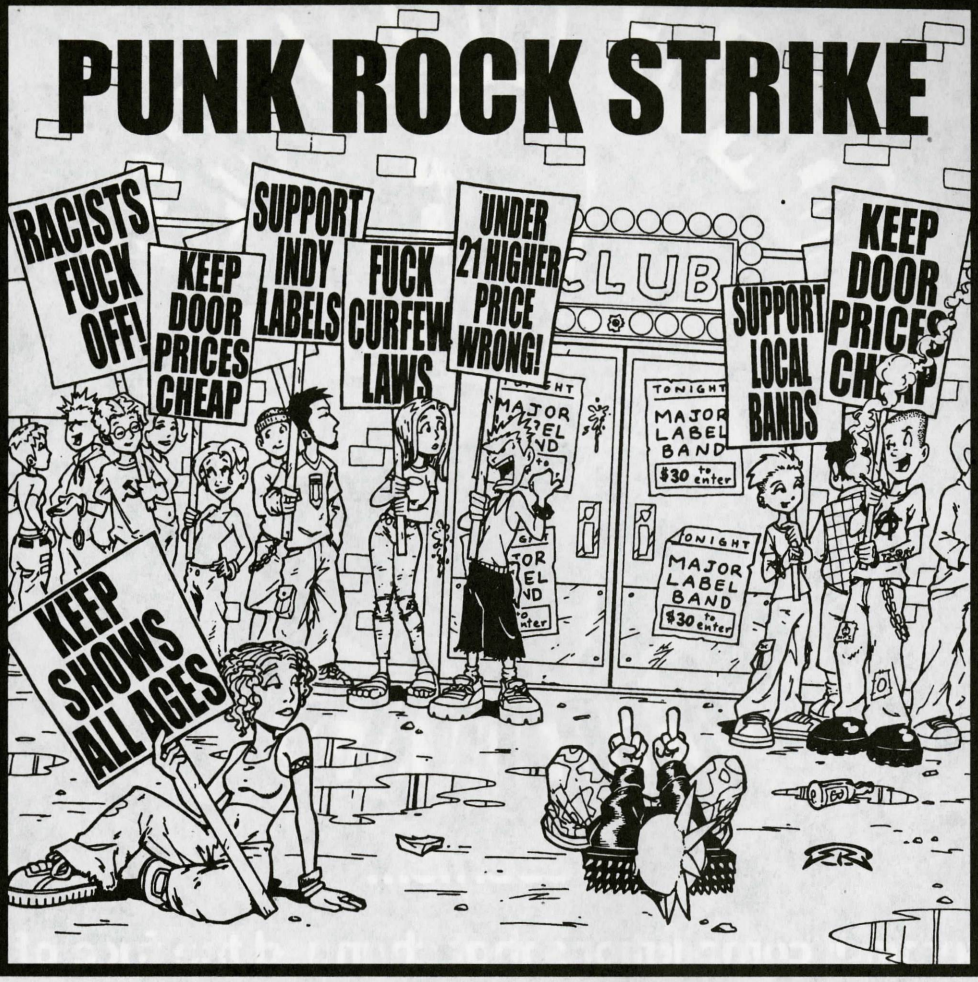

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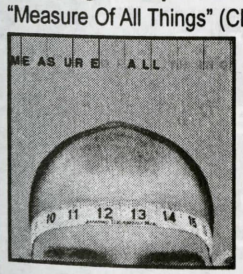

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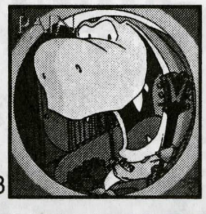

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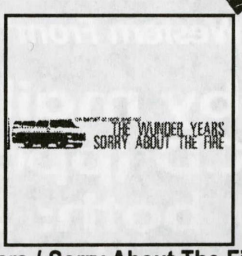

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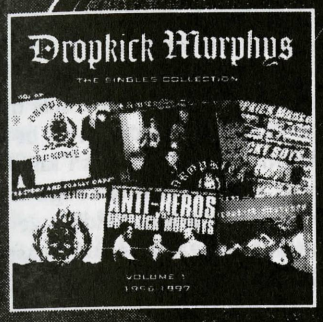

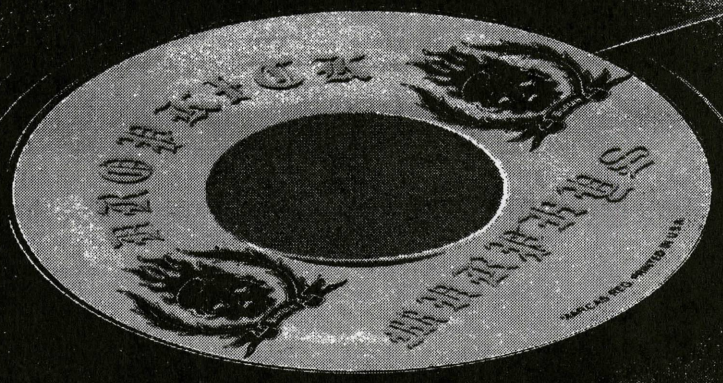

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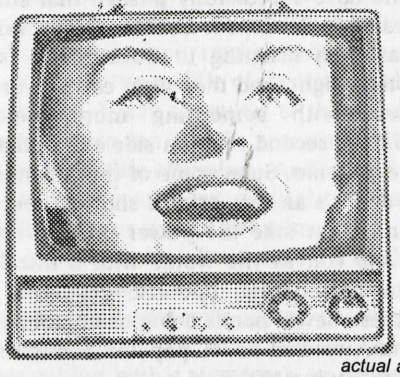

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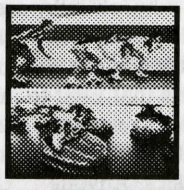





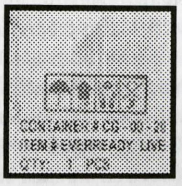

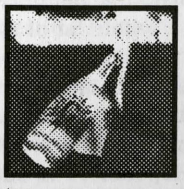



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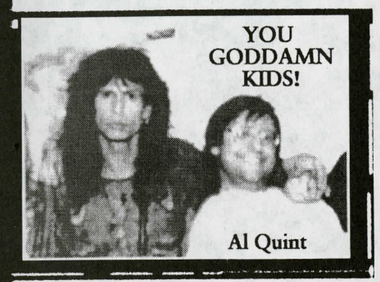
HIT SQUAD

Yes, I've returned, after skipping an issue. The deadline for *HL* #7 came shortly after Ellen and I returned from our vacation in San Francisco. This journey included a power-lunch with *Hit List* kingpins Dave and Brett. The high-point of that meeting had to be yours truly and Dave entertaining Brett, Ellen and my *Suburban Voice* West Coast compatriot Anna with an acapella rendition of the intro to Slayer's "Raining Blood." Jud Jud, the acapella hardcore band, had nothing on us there, let me tell 'ya. I'd also like to give tribute to the excellent record shopping out there — Amoeba and Rasputin's both put just about any record store in the Boston area to shame.



But I digress...After coming home to the usual deluge of mail, etc., I couldn't get it together in time for the deadline and decided I needed an issue off anyway.

Now I'm back and wondering what to rant, whine or pontificate on this time. Well, I just spent a whole day going through the review box of CD's for *SV*, figuring out what I'm going to cover myself or dispense to other writers. It's a frustrating process. There ain't much in there that really catches my ear. And the last two days' trips to the post office have yielded little else. A few things of note, but also a lot of utter softness. Little with guts. Little that will be life-changing or even particularly long-lasting in the consciousness, to be honest. Among the best items in that pile are the reissues, music that's 20 years old or more. I go through these periods of burnout every so often. I know I spent my last column talking about how certain music can still kick my ass, but the weeding-out process consumes too much of my time. It seems as though a lot of labels, bands and publicists just don't understand what I write about in *SV*. I continue to receive a ton of watered-down music — assembly-line, indistinguishable pop/punk, Oi/streetpunk, alternarock, singer-songwriter sensitivity, ska and, blah, EMO! It's a mill, a factory of mediocrity and I'm trying not to become a part of that assembly-line. I want to disseminate information about what music inspires me and why you should put down this very publication or that copy of *SV* and run right out to the store or mailorder away for a CD or record that's going to CHANGE YOUR FUCKING LIFE! That's the point — to preach the gospel of THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF ASS-KICKING MUSICAL GODLINESS. (A side note: please excuse the gratuitious over-appropriation of Rev. Nørb's CAPITALIZING POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED!)

I have to admit to a few pangs of jealousy or resentment as I leaf through the pages of *Hit List*. Nothing against this fine publication, but I had to claw and struggle for years to get decent servicing from labels who produce music I'm interested in covering and it's still often a case of getting a whole lot of swill I don't care about and having trouble getting the more scorch-worthy booty. Meanwhile, it seems as though these guys, after a year in publication, already get a MUCH better selection of music. I suppose if I published more than twice a year, it might help, but I've always tried to emphasize quality over quantity. Hopefully, I've succeeded in that regard. *Hit List* does accomplish both — quality and quantity, but do so with a larger number of apparently reliable contributors. But, to get back to my point, if there is one, I'd trade a boxful of that generic garbage for 5 or 6 good CD's from labels/bands that ignore *SV*. And I don't want to sound like the typical asshole who only sits back waiting for freebies, because I'm an active purchaser of music and do review records that I buy.

I remember getting into a philosophical argument with the editor of a late, not-so-great 'zine for whom I contributed reviews and articles in the mid-80s. He thought that you should only review records that you get for free. I didn't agree with him on that assessment. Actually, I think his real motivation for doing the 'zine, besides the usual perks of free records and entry into clubs, was attempting to get laid by the various female members of bands that he lusted after. Which explained the emphasis on those acts in the zine's coverage, musical merits be damned (although, to be fair, some of those bands were pretty decent). And, as far as I know, he never succeeded in those ambitions. Life's certainly rough sometimes, isn't it? Especially when you're a nearing-middle age zine editor and still living with your parents, as was this guy's case.

Back to emo. Sheesh...THERE'S an oversued term, huh? A loathesome term in some quarters
and the latest example of stylistic overkill. A sea of musical mediocrity and SOFTNESS. Every day, it seems, brings another group of earnest-looking young men and a press sheet either comparing said band or lauding live shows played with the Promise Ring or the Get Up Kids. As if that's a selling point. OK, to fans of those bands, it *is* a selling point, but I take the contrary point of view. Just like it's never a good idea to compare your band to Korn, Limp Bizkit, Godsmack, or Slipknot (and what's with those masks, anyway?) if you're trying to get my attention. That's a sure prescription for a one-way trip to the sell box or the Salvation Army bag. Hell, I even LOVE the music formerly known as emo, namely Rites Of Spring, Embrace, or Dag Nasty. Well, not Dag Nasty's "Field Day," a wimpfest which no doubt influenced many of today's current emo crop. The original emo was music rooted in hardcore punk. Other bands over the years have successfully pushed that emotional envelope from Jawbreaker to Samiam to Fuel to Garden Variety to Hot Water Music. I was even listening to Government Issue's "Joy Ride" album the other night, and they were early in the game of mixing aggressiveness with something more melodic. I'd argue "Understand," the second song on side one of that record, is a fine example of early emo. Sure, some of these bands would cringe at the emo tag and it's an easy critical shortcut, but what I'm talking about is bands that take the power of hardcore, add a surging melodicism and convey the words with a frazzled, frenzied, ultra-emotionalism. Soul-baring, but also delivering a gutteral sonic punch. But these newer bands being championed as emo are nothing more than watered-down pop for overly-sensitive collegiate types. And I'm having NONE of it.

There seems to be a snobbery connected with it, as well. Now I'll own up to my own biases
and snobbery. A matter of taste. But to quote those cultural linchpins Twisted Sister (and why, oh, why are those guys supporting Al Gore after the whole PMRC ruckus?), I wanna rock! Rocking out to listening to music that blasts your ears off is *verboten* in this new emo musical order. Labels that used to put out kick-ass music now put out stuff that wouldn't drive most kids' parents out of the room.

Admittedly, I've undergone a transformation in recent years back to the loud/fast basics. Anyone who has read my zine in recent years has probably noticed this. Maybe it's a midlife crisis. Maybe it's an attempt to get nostalgic, as I do dig out those records from the early 80s a lot more lately. But I also search out and seek newer bands to stomp all over my senses and throttle me emotionally and physically.

It can still happen. I saw Dillinger Four play recently in Boston. By the end of the set, I said, jokingly, "I just came!" OK, I didn't shoot my load but my body was covered in sweat, my throat raw from singing along, and I was exhausted and drained in a beautiful way. Hell, I even shed my shirt in public for one of the only times in recent years, and if anyone is familiar with my not-so-great physique you'll understand why that's an infrequent occurrence. But I figured if Paddy, D-4's bass-player, could get stark naked (and he's not a svelte guy by any means), why not? I just hope no one caught it on film! The point, though, is that here's a current band that completely blows me away. They connect with an immediacy on more than one level: with intelligent and impassioned observations about not only their own lives but also this fucked-up world we live in. Their lyrics have a resonance, a wit and, goddamn it, almost a poetic quality, without once getting sappy or maudlin. Then there's the music. There's a lot of power drawn from the members' punk and hardcore backgrounds, but they also write incredibly catchy, memorable songs with great hooks and combine those elements in a completely breathtaking fashion. I'm not lying when I say I've listened to both their albums, "Midwestern Songs Of The Americas" and "This Shit Is Genius" (a compilation of singles and comp tracks) literally a few hundred times apiece. I wake up in the middle of the night with those songs going through my head. I play air guitar to them. I sing along. It reminds me of why music can still be something that takes over your soul, that becomes life-affirming. And why I still feel no shame in being part of any so-called musical community that has bands such as Dillinger Four within its realm.

I saw Dillinger Four play recently in Boston. By the end of the set, I said, jokingly, "I just came!" OK, I didn't shoot my load but my body was covered in sweat, my throat raw from singing along, and I was exhausted and drained in a beautiful way.

Ellen says I'm closed-minded about music. I don't think that's completely true. I just know what I
like at this point, which is music with energy, passion, heart, burn, scorch, or at least a combination of some of those elements. I'm not even averse to something with a pop hook or melody in it. Such bands as Stereolab, Guided By Voices, and Slint still get time on my turntable or CD player. It doesn't even have to be particularly original — if a band draws on well-worn influences but does it with feeling, affection (that's as in love, as opposed to affecting a pose) and full-on fervor, it works for me. I'd rather hear a well-done retread of Chuck Berry by Johnny Thunders by way of Steve Jones riffage than some eunuch whining about losing his girlfriend, accompanied by weepy guitars and/or (blah) cello or violin. And let's get this straight — one of the only bands who ever used a string quartet effectively in a rock context was the Jam for "Smithers-Jones." That track still sends goosebumps up my arms, and Paul Weller's lament about a middle-aged worker getting the sack was well ahead of the curve on the issue of downsizing. I'm sure my illustrious compatriot Jack Rabid will argue to the contrary, starting with the Left Banke or early Bee Gees, but it's not my thing. OK, to completely eradicate my punk rock cred, I don't mind the Bee Gees' "Lonely Days" that much. Certainly better than their disco years. You want to know what torture is? Try two hours at a pre-prom party that your date hosts and the music consists of a seemingly endless loop of the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack. My revenge came later in the evening when I subjected *her* to the Clash, Pistols, and Buzzcocks at a not-so-soft volume on our way to the after-prom party. Take that, Susan Burke, wherever you are. I only regret that it wasn't 1982 instead of 1978 and I would have had the likes of Black Flag, Discharge, Negative Approach *et al* in my arsenal.

So I've vented and I feel better now. And I just played the new Dwarves' CD and, while it's not
on a level with "Blood, Guts and Pussy," at least it's not emo.

⌖ ⌖ ⌖

Here's some music that *has* caught my ear in recent months. By no means an exhaustive list,
but some highlights:

ARTIMUS PYLE — "Civil Dead" 12" EP

Lynyrd Skynyrd named their band after a gym teacher in their high school. Artimus Pyle have named
their band after a member of Lynyrd Skynyrd. No covers of "Sweet Home Alabama" or "Free Bird," though. This is a thick, thundering hardcore onslaught with slow buildups trading off with double-speed, blazing thrash. Crushing stuff with a dark intensity and one song, "Injustice Of North County," has lyrics written by a homeless person from their hometown of San Francisco. Not a lot of uplift in the lyrics, just ruminations on greed, gentrification, a lack of compassion...it's not always specifically stated as such, but considering what I've heard about the gentrification process in SF, the increase in homelessness and the criminalization of poverty, it's a pretty safe guess that Artimus Pyle's lyrics are greatly inspired by their surroundings. The anger is transmitted quite effectively in the band's full-barrel blast.

HIT SQUAD

(Prank Records, PO Box 410892, SF, CA 94141-0892)

CRISPUS ATTUCKS — "Destroy The Teacher"

Crispus Attucks was the first person killed by the British in the Boston Massacre, so maybe this selection reeks of that Boston parochialism I so often plead guilty to. But no matter the name, this back-to-basics hardcore band has it right and these short, aggressive songs hit with a refreshing intensity. Living to thrash, but mixing in melodic bits and even a few 7 Seconds-ish "whoooooahs" on "America's War" and "Dead Idols Dead." An undeniable early 80s hardcore sound, but I also hear echoes of Black Market Baby, an underrated band from Crispus Attucks' DC-area surroundings. Angry and powerful and taking issue with this mess of a world. Refusing to be fed the lies and bullshit and lashing out with a pointed musical attack.
(Soda Jerk Records, PO Box 4056, Boulder, CO 80306)

GOOD CLEAN FUN — "On The Streets Saving The Scene From The Forces Of Evil"

A mouthful of a title and only the most humorless sXe or hardcore devotees wouldn't get a chuckle out of this. The DC-area Good Clean Fun walk the line between parody and affection for the whole straight-edge/youth crew hardcore style. Moments of note: the techno intro for "WWZD" (what would Zeus do?), the pisstake on Gorilla Biscuits' "Start Today" for "On The Streets," complete with a harmonica break and some xylophone for good measure, and "In Defense Of All Life,"accompanied by some righteous, karate-kickin' metal/rap/hardcore stomp, ending with vocalist Issa waking up from a nightmare where he turned hardline. A tighter lineup than on their first release and delivering a furious dose of hardcore, along with much-needed wit.
(Phyte Records, PO Box 90363, Washington, DC 20090)

HAIL MARY — "All Aboard The Sinking Ship"

Dramatic, powerful hardcore — it's on Sam McPheeters' label and I'd be less than candid if I didn't say that I think this sounds somewhat like Sam's old band, Born Against, although Mark Telfian's yowl is more reminiscent of Sothira from Crucifix. Lurching and off-kilter, played at a medium-to-fast pace. Inventive guitar playing, blending powerchords and searing lines, accompanied by a hammering, cascading rhythmic flow. The cathartic desperation of the music is matched by lyrics in a similar vein—"I feel all hope is gone" and "Trapped on a treadmill, on a road to nowhere." It's necessary for thoughts such as those to be accompanied by a powerful soundtrack and that's the case here. Tucked inside a screened, cardboard sleeve.
(Vermiform Records, PO Box 603050, Providence, RI 02906)

MEANWHILE — "Lawless Solidarity/Same Shit New Millenium"

Good 'ol Swedish hardcore, how I love it. If I'm not mistaken, three of the four members were at one point in the band Dischange. "Lawless Solidarity" is a 1997 album and "Same Shit" is brand spankin' new, as if you couldn't have figured that out. Taut and aggressive in a somewhat Dis-sy way — and that's no dis (ha ha) — although Meanwhile also take a page from early English Dogs, too. Gruff vocals, basic structures, leads in the right places, and sung in English, which means you can understand every excoriation of cops, religion, repressive authority, and "asslicking journalists." Chords and volume with a minimum of excess and a maximum amount of pissed-off venom.
(Sound Pollution Records, PO Box 17742, Covington, KY 41017)

TILTWHEEL — "Hair Brained Scheme Addicts" CD

The fact that guitarist/vocalist Davey Quinn named a song after me (the illustrious "Al Quint Is An Emo Pussy," a tune with lyrics that have nothing to do with this writer) won't prejudice my opinion of this album one bit. Nope, I'm completely incorruptible. Besides, it takes more than such a tribute to earn a good review. Tributes of the green variety are way more helpful. Okay, enough wiseassery, although Mr. Quinn would probably appreciate it — this is a damn good album that doesn't require cash payments to make me state that point. It becomes obvious once the disc is placed in the CD player or on the turntable (and I've got both options available). From-the-gut, honest lyrics — Davey states "I'd be the first to say that something's not quite right about me," looking in the mirror at 2 AM and admitting to being "lonely, drunk and fat," but, as Stuart Smalley would say, that's OK. Sure, these are what could loosely be considered emo-type lyrics (OH NO, THERE'S THAT WORD AGAIN!), and if it were done with limp musical accompaniment and a whiny vocal it might be intolerable. That's not the case, here — those words are piggybacked with a knockout musical surge. Hard-edged and melodic and drawing on their admitted icons, Leatherface, and turned up a notch. "Battle Hymns For The Recluse Youth Part One" is certainly a "Mush" descendent. Gruff vocals, loud guitars that pack melody, feedback and buzz in one beautiful package and no shortage of hooks.
(CD available from Cool Guy Records: PO Box 2361, Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670/LP available from A.D.D., PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674)

ALQUINT

VOORHEES/DEVOID OF FAITH — split

DEATH TO FALSE HARDCORE! Those words are exclaimed on Devoid Of Faith's lyric sheet, and they were certainly a welcome antidote to the stale, static metal that stole hardcore's mantle for awhile. Unfortunately, they called it quits during '99. The two bands on this split reclaim the music's brutalizing roots and forge ahead with high-speed, punishing aggro. Harsh, angry and visceral and refusing to give in to society's conventions, even when long past the adolescent threshold. Devoid Of Faith, in particular, were inspiring to this aging writer and I regret never having seen them live. The Voorhees are on track, here, with a hard-charging, double-time 4/4 thrash assault, as opposed to the grindcore in which they've occasionally indulged on other releases, and the songs are the better for it. "Heavily Salted" slows it down to an effective mid-tempo, anthemic pummel. Feel the power...
(Gloom Records: PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212)

That's it for now. Any questions, comments or, if you'd like to get mailorder info or send music that doesn't SUCK for review, my address is PO Box 2746, Lynn, MA 01903; e-mail: alellen@shore.net

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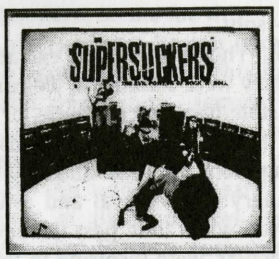

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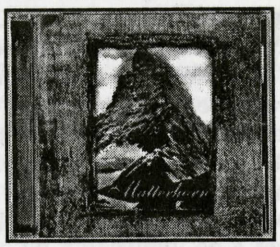

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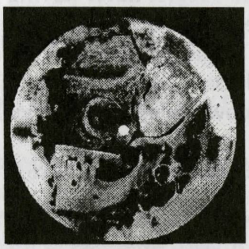

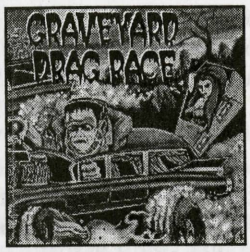

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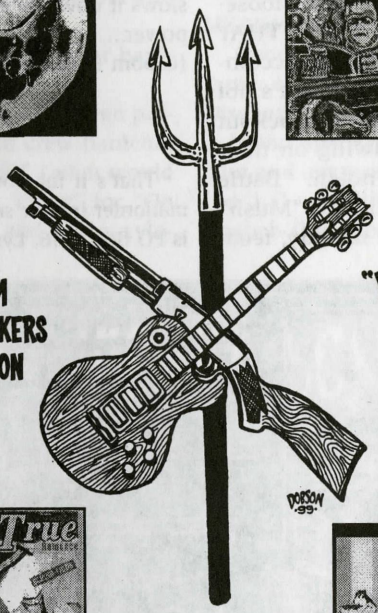

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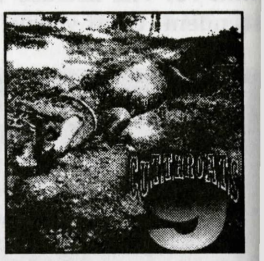

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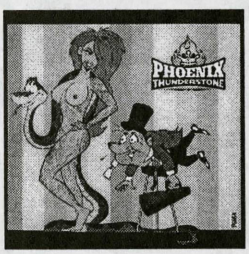

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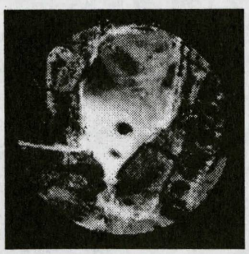

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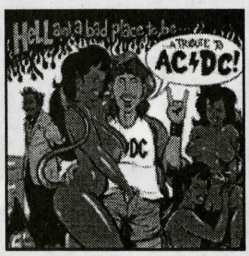

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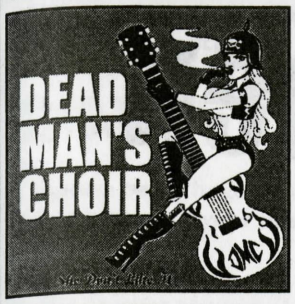

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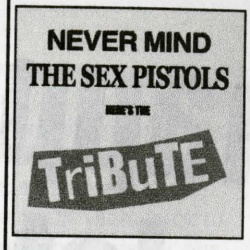

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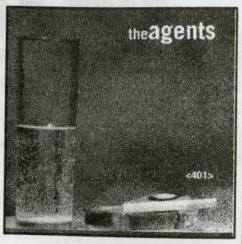



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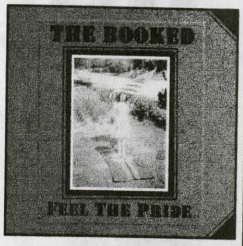



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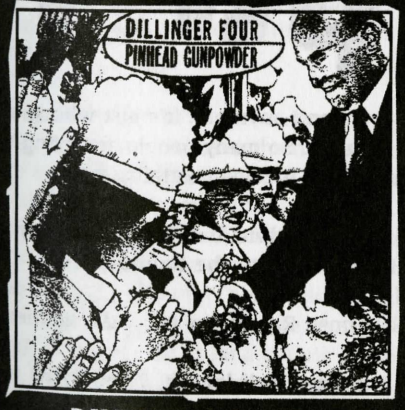

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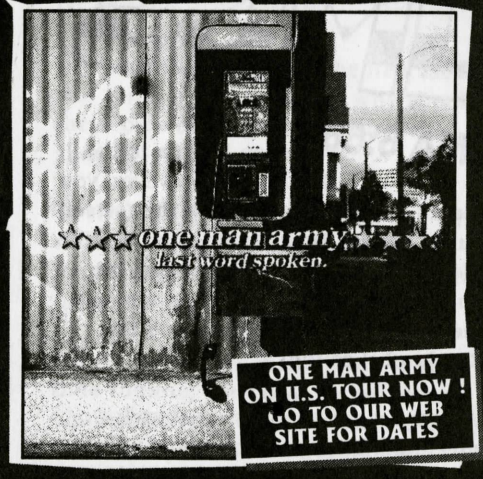
one man army



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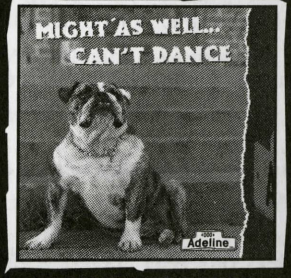

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RANDUMBS pt. 1

SONOMA 6:66

1) Who's who in the Randumbs (Name, instrument, where born)?

Mike Aucholder: guitars, born in a hospital.
Nome Sane: bass, born on a bed.
Aarron Mihead: drums, smokes, born in a hospital.
Thorton Melon: vocals, born in a swimming pool.
Devane Shrimps: guitars, born in an elevator.

2) When did the Randumbs begin, and how did they come about?

We are all gay. So what? We're proud of that!

3) I hear so many different influences when I listen to the Randumbs. However, you seem to be grouped in with the "street-punk" sound. How would you describe the sound and type of band that the Randumbs are, and what are some of the bands that have influenced the Randumbs' sound?

We always end up on these so-called streetpunk bills, we don't know why. I guess bands like to tour with us because we bring in so many people at our shows. We sound like a turd smells. We should be considered punk-hop or hip-unk. Slayer.

4) This newest line-up sounds to me like the Randumbs' strongest ever. How has it changed the band?

We don't even know who is in this fucking band anymore. It's just who show up, I guess. So many people are trying t ride on our fucking coattails...

5) What previous bands did you play i before coming to the Randumbs?

It has been Randumbs por vida, holmes!

6) Your new full-length, *Things Are Tough All Over* is about to be released on TKO Records. How do you think it differs from your previous releases?

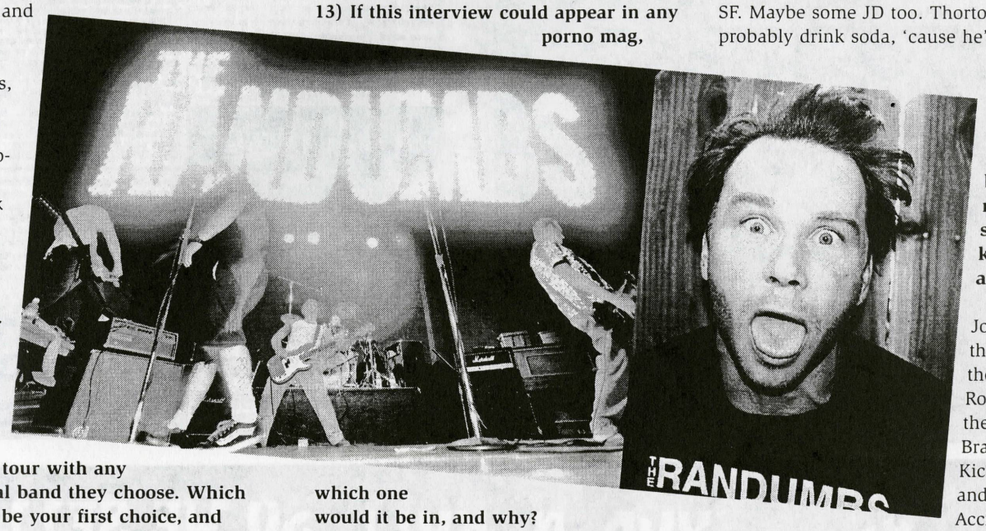
Well, it has a different cover, and the so titles are different. Some of the songs st with different chords.

7) One of my favorites on the new album is "N.A.M.B.L.A.". What exactly is this song all about? Is it just a social commentary, or are you drawing from personal experience?

Fuck you, you little smart-ass bitch. You wanna get beat?

8) Besides being huge punk rock stars, what are some of your interests outside of music?

We like to paint pictures of each other naked with oil on a nice soft canvas, a #4 or so. That and hunting. Shooting things. Cans, bottles, endangered species, people...who gives a fuck what it is?



9) The Randumbs found their way onto the cover of *Metal Edge* magazine and are able to tour with any heavy metal band they choose. Which one would be your first choice, and why?

Slayer. Because everyone knows that they rule the fucking wasteland.

10) What's your take on the San Francisco punk scene...clubs, bands, etc.?

We usually take 70% of the door, and 10% of the bar. We have the best selection of merchandise available, everything from combs, lighters, badges, shirts, satin jackets, and letterman jackets to baseball mits, golf shoes, skateboards, saddles, car bras, and sunglasses. There is soo much that I get a headache trying to remember it all. It usually takes us a couple of hours and five guys to set up merch and our pyros before a show.

11) What does everyone do to make a living?

Mike works at a golf course in Sonoma, Nome is a hair dresser, Aarron is a male model, Thorton is on the US diving team, and Devane is a piece of furniture at a bar. We all act in movies a lot, too.

12) You guys are no strangers to touring. Tell us about some of your craziest tour moments.

The last time we were in Japan, I think it was in '83, we got to appear in this Kung Fu movie. It's just cause we are huge like that. Way bigger than BeerZone or the Dropkicks. We had the highest pre-sale number in TKO history. Oh yeah, back to the movie - it was great exposure for our acting careers.

13) If this interview could appear in any porno mag, which one would it be in, and why?

Plump Magazine, 'cause those bitches are fat, just like our pockets!

14) Someone might buy the new album and think it kicks ass, but why should they come down and see your live show?

To show off their stupid tattoos at a dumb social event, and give us their fucking money so that we can make our new car payments on time!

15) Guitarist, you spend some of your time running your own record label, Chapter Eleven. What's it like running a label, and what's in the works at Chapter Eleven?

Listen, I would love to plug Chapter 11 Records (www.building13.com), since the label is now putting out the best real punk bands around, including Suburban Threat. The label is going to put out a Sacramento comp in September, featuring Pressure Point, Suburban Threat, and new blood like the Whiskey Rebels. Then the label is putting out a Badcocks/Impulse Items split 12"/CD in October. The label has also just signed a contract to put out an anthology by '77 punk legends the Feelers. But this is a Randumbs interview, and I don't want to take away from their valuable media time.

16) The Randumbs find a bag of money in a parking lot and go to the bar. What are we all drinking, and where?

Jameson Whiskey and Bud at O'Keefe's in SF. Maybe some JD too. Thorton would probably drink soda, 'cause he's a pussy.

17) What is the best punk band that no one seems to know about?

Johnny and the Dudes, the Immortal Root Stomp, the Foot Brawlers, the Kicking Boots, and Bait Shop Accident.

18) How did you all ring in this Y2K New Year?

Fucking each other in the ass.

19) With a brand new line-up and a brand new album coming out, what can we expect from the Randumbs this year?

We are going on a world tour this summer, and finishing work on another new studio record, a live record, and a video. There will be even more fame. MTV and major labels await. We're going to be movie stars, and there will be endorsements.

20) Any closing comments?

Yeah, the Bodies can fuck off. They suck, and they will never be as popular or make as much money as the Randumbs. We hid hundred dollar bills inside fifty of the new "Things Are Tough All Over" CDs and LPs, so go buy one. Then you too might end up with as much money as the Bodies made in the '90s.



The CHEMO KIDS new full length CD! 12 songs of snotty Ohio Punk Rock! Think Pagans, Dead Boys, Stooges, young, loud, snotty!!



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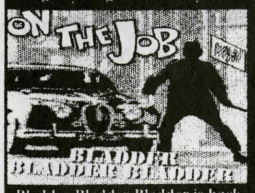

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The B-MOVIE RATS

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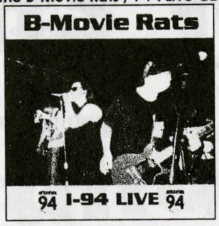
The Malakas

The B-Movie Rats / I-94 Live CD



The B-Movie Rats recorded live in Detroit on 10/17/99. 14 songs with no overdubs and all stage chatter left in. 100 copies come with bonus disc - live in Detroit 5/28/98. 10 songs (7 not on first disc) If you want the bonus disc, act fast and add $2 to the price.

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What separates The Malakas from the pack is their ability to write great pop songs. Nothing clean about that word pop either. It's dirty, and messy and fucked up, as typified by the lyrical content of just about every song. Take 'Born To Lose' which perfectly highlights the innate power of this San Diego trio. Lifting the pure, raw essence of 50's rock 'n' roll and melding it with tales of life on the streets, or drugs, or booze, or women or whatever takes your fancy, and you realise very quickly that the Malakas are the genuine article. Vocalist, guitarist and songwriter Cranford Nix has the ability to write heavily charged pop tunes, and with his raw and whisky fried vocals makes every song, every moment even, sound like it could possibly be his last. It's downbeat angst, and it's very, very good. 'Suicide Or Alcohol' harks back to earlier punk nihilism, with a nod to vintage Westerberg. 'All I Want For Xmas', trim and punchy and close to the best on the album, yet that nod goes to 'Met A Girl In N.A.' with it's pained reflection and stark lyrics, and a melody to die for. The style has few frills, like all great pop songs, and this is a great song from a band on the rise (if they can stay alive or out of jail). Well recommended.

Colin Gray - Cat Scratch Fever zine / Vicious Kitten Records

Trash Brats



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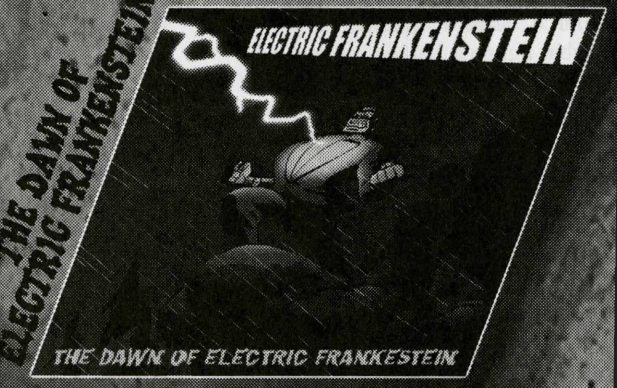

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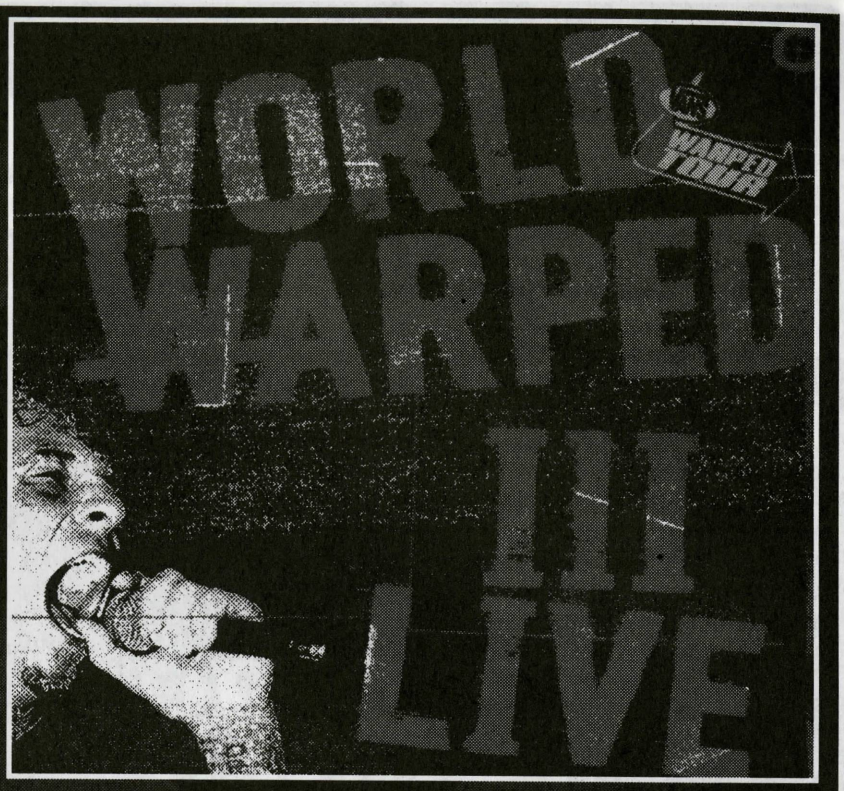

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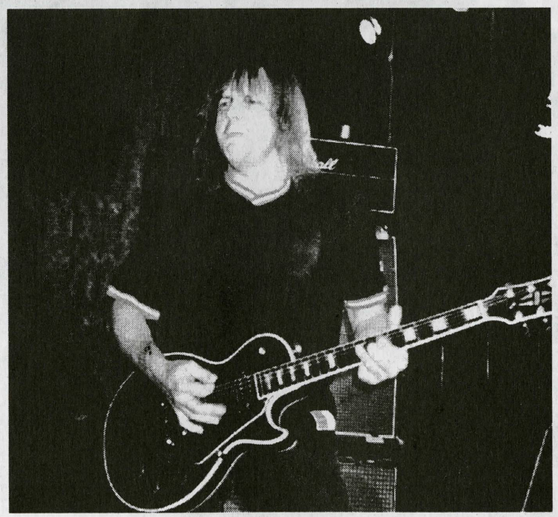
WHO WILL SAVE ROCK'N'ROLL?



No escaping the existential core of the matter. Rock'n'roll's about as withered on the vine as an unwanted lobster-tank lobster. The libidos and energy impulse of 14-year olds have more to do with Ecstasy and re-nutrient than the Sex Pistols or (gulp) REO Speedwagon. But, seems to these tired old eyes, there's nothing particularly ecstatic or nutritional (for the soul?) to be had from such simulated detachment. On the other hand, the case could be made that the Aesthetics of Rock have long been poignant or terribly interesting or...whatever. I'm sure you get the drift of this. When the Angry Samoans slogged through the last year of our official existence, in 1991, I wanted to apologize to the audience for not coming up with anything more original than plugging my guitar into an amplifier and emulating the requisite moves that'd been done > 10^9 times before. No different than that modern bastard progeny of another great institutional icon — pro wrestling. If you haven't figured it out yet, the WWF and the current crop of Vince McMahon's teevee wrasslers are a travesty to the tradition of a once-great sport — and I'm talkin' here about the era of Freddie Blassie, John Tolos, The Sheik, Andy Kaufman and alla the other fat, non-steroided distentions of sloth that have gone by the wayside. Once upon a tyme, bad guys were ASSHOLES (to wit: John Tolos pulverizing a burrito on live LA TV, ranting and raving about why he's not gonna lose to the Mexican National former Champeen — "cos they got all these beans floatin around in their guts — I EAT FETA CHEESE!" And it wasn't scripted.). And R'n'R was equally out of control. If you weren't there to see it, I can't explain it. I knew, oh I did, when Cindy Lauper teamed up with Lou Albano to market the "Rock'n'Wrestling Connection" that that was the beginning of the end. OR maybe the END of the end. But things don't die easily.



OK — I'll admit, it's hard to just roll over and throw in my picks. Mike Saunders at age near-50 can't do it with his reincarnated Samoans, I can't do it with my (new) Blood Drained Cows (recent released on XXX Records — in print, if you wanna order). I mean TRIED — moved to the high desert, collected petrified wood all wee end long. Y'know , who needs a bad cliche like "rock rock roc 'n'roll" to still hold onto? And yet...well, it's a character flaw. If I h any cajones, I'd do a final Townshend on my old Epiphone Rivie and Silvertone and spend more time with my petrified wood.

But last year, when I was "living" (if you can call it that) in Wors ter, Mass, a funny thing happened. I was thinking about these thing catching The Rock and Mankind on a friend's tape, and wishing th Andy Kaufman was still here to kick some female butt ("Zmuda, t CASE" !), and the Golden Greek to flying drop-kick a burrito, and t Weasel to lick the eyeballs of one of the Sheiks downed (fireba burned) victims. And I wound up the next night grooving to t Dictators, my all-time favorite band, playing in Boston. I had x paths with Andy Shernoff, self-proclaimed smartest man in roc 'n'roll and 'Tator songsmith, in NYC about a couple months befo (we hadn't seen each other in over 2 decades?). He looked great – mean, not like one of these repulsive ghosts or aging imitations what you remember from full glory! His enthusiasm for the new reinvigorated Dictators was quickly infectious. I looked forward catching the upcoming Bosstown gig, but (let's be honest — you, t *Hit List* Reader *et moi*) it wasn't entirely clear what the fallout wou or could be...I flashed back to (was it?) 1976, when me and Meltz met up in San Francisco to catch the first West Coast apparition of t Dic's. Wound up shooting hoops with Andy, Top Ten, and Ross a Manitoba (and Mr. Vom/Meltzer), and the cosmos of worn-out snea ers and worn-out 3 chords somehow met in the right moment at t right time. I won't bore you with a similarly worn-out review of l year's show in Cambridge. But suffice to say that the 'Tators were hot as ever, the songs, nouveau a ancient, were as rockin' (yup) as 1970-something, and they were fu ing LOUD! (I pray for hi-tech hear aids in 10 years, gulp, maybe even o-w...huh, what's that you said Possibly this show was even be than the best show I'd ever s them play. Andy's lead voice great, Manitoba's lead vokes w more than impressive and co manding and Ross, Scott (Top T and the rhythm section were tig and more powerful (if such a th can be believed!) than way b when.

Soooooo...was I ready to beli once again? After all, they got a CD comin' out with fresh new (r ly good) tunes — maybe (as bef the (re) emergence of the Dicta betokens a second wind for r 'n'roll? Well, I thought about alla this on my way back to the ca go home (to Worse-ter). I'd had on an old pair of leather pants th hadn't worn in years, just for that night, y'know, maybe in a pi attempt to resurrect the feeling of times gone by. And I shove ceedee of "Go Girl Crazy" into the receptacle in my dash, and it "Hippies are squares with long hair, and they don't wear no un wear..." And then I thought: YEAH!!!!! And I turned up the vol to 13 and the ride back to Gloomsville happened way quick.

GREGGTURNER

But then I woke in the morning...and caught Bachman Turner on the Oldies station and realized it's been > 10 years since I sang along to "Raw Power". Hmmmmmmmmm... FYI: catch the latest Dictators news and info on their fantabulous new effort on www.TheDictators.com. Just don't forget to tell Andy I sent you.



My questions for Andy (slightly different from what was originally asked, I'm still tryin' to remember the details!):

Gregg: In the incipient Dictators-era, you were known far and wide as "The Smartest Man in Rock'n'roll." Is this still the case, and how much of a burden has this been to assume over the years?

Andy Shernoff: I am the smartest man in rock and roll, but that's equivalent to being the smartest man in wrestling

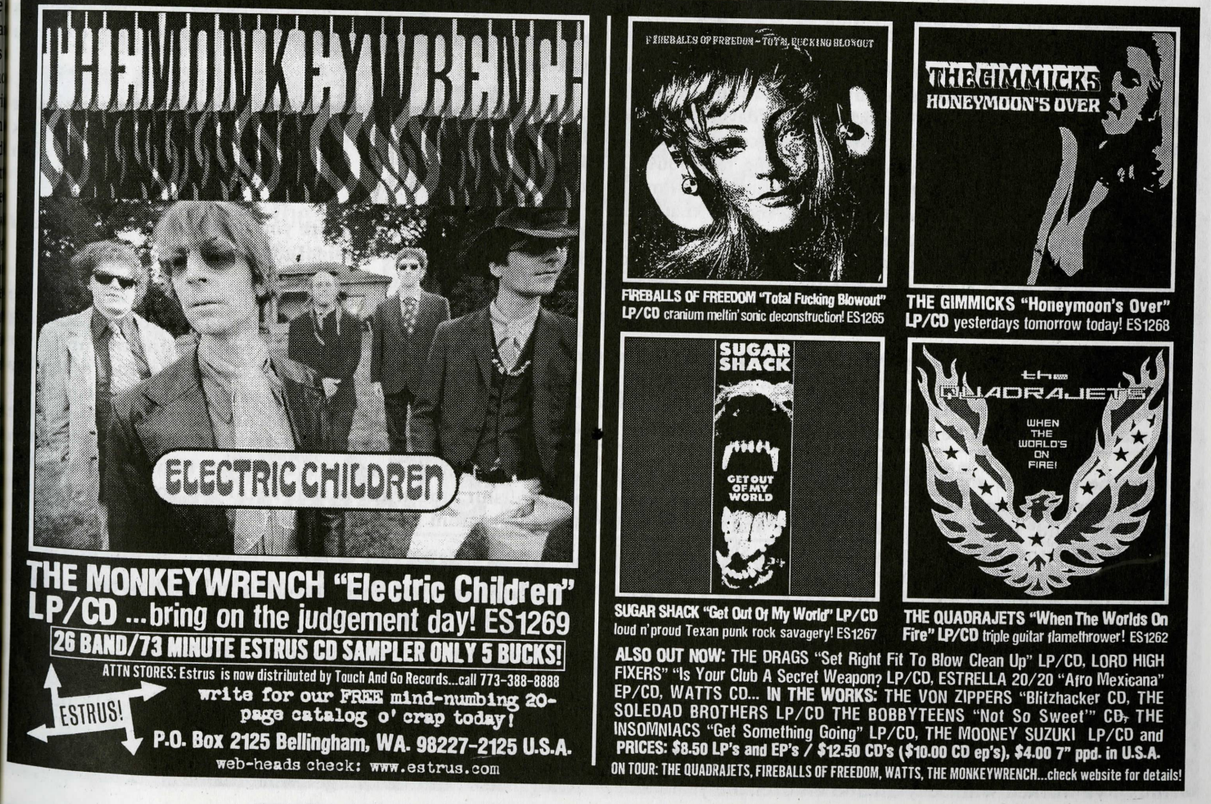
Gregg: "Cars, Gurls, Surfin, Beer" Does nothin' else still matter here?

Andy My mantra for the new millenium is..."The Sopranos", girls, the stock market, and wine.

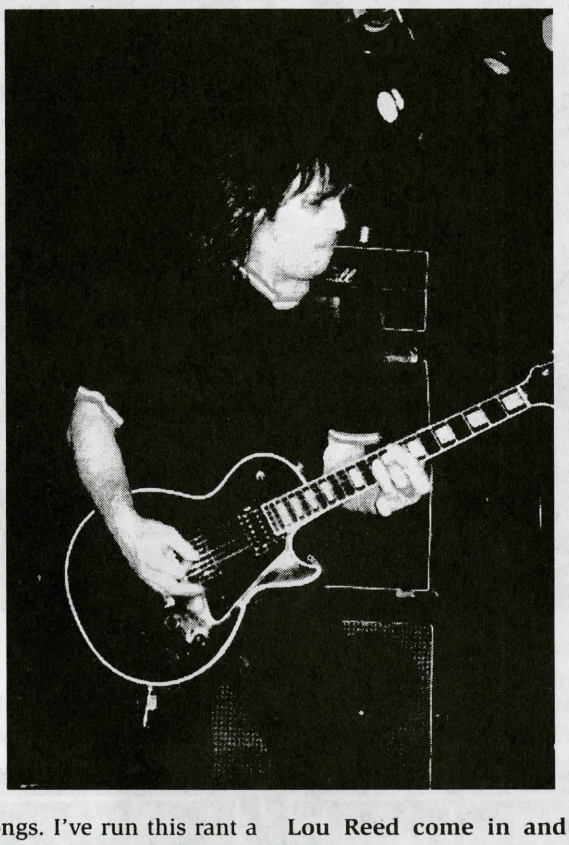
Gregg: What are some of the projects/musical endeavors you've been involved with in the span of time between (say) "Bloodbrothers" and the present. E.g., I'd heard you were involved (or attempted to be?) in scoring writing musicals, off/on Broadway? Any truth to this?

Andy: I've been involved in so many projects over the years. It would be impossible to mention them all. Basically, I played in a few bands, toured the world, I wrote some songs for other bands, I wrote some songs that were in some movies, I produced some bands, I learned the technical aspects of recording, and I did write the music for an off Broadway play over a decade ago the featured Mike Badalucco and John Turturro in the cast

Gregg: Your patron saint, Richard Meltzer (aka Mr. Vom) has tossed in his rock'n'roll towel — disowning the medium as "2nd hand dogfood for stray dogs" — or something like that. Why do you still relate? Do you think the cliche/stereotype has worn thin, or merely needs reinvigorating?



Andy I think Mr Vom is exaggerating, but he's not far off the mark. Being a rock star is a cliche and every rock star in the year 2000 is mimicking somebody from the past. The excitement is long gone in the field of rock music...I would say that punk rock has finally succeded, since these days everybody has a band. Now, how boring is that? Just because you can strum three chords doesn't mean you should get up onstage and actually embarrass yourself. But to be honest, I am willing to take some of the blame: in 1977 I did write "everybody should pick up a guitar" (from "I Stand Tall", on the "Bloodbrothers" album).



Gregg: Handsome Dick screamed plaintively at the Bosstown show (last year — the one I caught) — "Who will save rock'n'roll?" (maybe he plaintively screams this at every show?!) Judging by the airwaves, there's lots of saving that needs to happen — at least in this country. *If* it *is* savable, do you think there's a market for the next generation of kids? And in particular, what about the Dictators this time around speaks to the libidos of the 17-year old engulfed in techno raves??

Andy He screams it at every show because it's the title of one of our new songs. I've run this rant a few times before but here goes again...IMHO, Rock and roll is way past its heyday. There are only so many ways that you can manipulate those three chords. Think about it, these days it's parents that listen to rock and roll (that's why every car commercial uses a rock song from the 60's). What self-respecting rebellious kid wants to like the same music his parents listen to? Now I'm not saying there aren't kids who will be digging rock or that some good-looking kid with charisma and a great voice won't come up with a few "rock" hits...I'm just saying the rock era is over. Rock won't disappear, but it ain't gonna rule the airwaves or the cultural revolutions of the future

Gregg: What's the new record you're recording about? Title? When will it be "out"? And "out" where (i.e., stores, or strictly orderable thru the net)? Are you still writing most/all of the material? Will you be singing lead on any of these?

Andy The record is about 43 minutes long. There's no title at the moment. It sort of sums up the career (or lack thereof) of the band. It'll be available in stores and on our website: TheDictators.com...I wrote the whole shebang all by my lonesome (well, some songs were collaborations) and I will in fact be singing a few tunes

Gregg: You mentioned you were working with Joey Ramone on his solo project? How's that coming along? Are you at liberty to describe what it's like? How has it been collaborating w/him? Is this the first of such tagteam events?

Andy I've worked with Joey off and on over the years and it is always a thrill because he is one of my all-time favorite singers. His new record is gonna be very cool. I would describe it as Ramones plus...it sounds like the Ramones, but with extra touches like guitar solos and more variety in the rhythm section. It's a very personal album, as Joey is getting a chance to speak his mind and make some personal statement. I've been waiting to hear him do a solo record for years

Gregg: Do you all wear earplugs onstage (Ross especially?)? I know I'm starting to say "what" a lot these days — just wondrin' how my "colleagues" are dealin' with it (+ youse guys are really LOUD!)...

Andy I've been wearing earplugs onstage for years. Nobody else in the band does, though. You lose a little of the power and clarity of the band, but it filters out a lot of the highs so I can hear my bass better. And the earplugs make my voice resonate better in my head...what could be better than hearing more of me? Actually, I think the world would be a better place if there was more of me.

Gregg: Readers of *Hit List* might be interested in Mr. Manitoba's bar in NYC. Could you describe what goes on and how often he is there? Is this a R'n'R watering hole of sorts? Has Lou Reed come in and selected "Two Tub Man" from the jukebox?

Andy It's a cool little watering hole, very low-key with one band a night performing with a very small PA. The juke box is killer. HDM works a few days a week, but can be seen there most nights...

Gregg: What other things are you involved with, outside of R'n'R, in the way of musical projects?

Andy My main passion in life besides music is wine, believe it or not. I actually relate it to music. I spent years training my ears and hands. Appreciating wine means training your tongue and palate. It's a skill that takes years and a process that is never-ending. It is impossible to know everything about wine, just as it's impossible to know everything about music. Wine makes food taste better and it's fun tasting it in exotic locations like Spain, France, and Italy. OK, enough of the bullshit...the truth is that I still like to drink but I get hangovers from hard liquor.

Gregg: The 'Tators are popular in Europe, no?, like many Yankee bands that have more of a cult following overseas. What areas are the hottest?

Andy For some reason they really dig us in Spain...it must be that macho thing. If they're gonna love you some place besides your own country, Spain should be the place.....livin' *la vida loca*!

Gregg: Jeez, I think I forgot what that even was!

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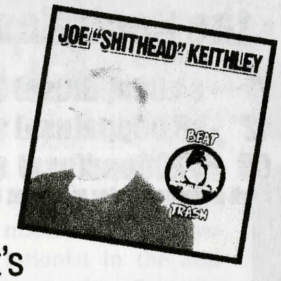

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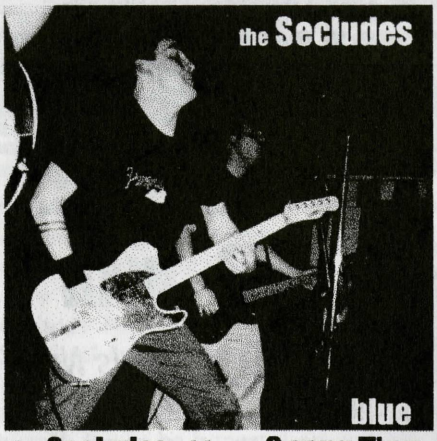

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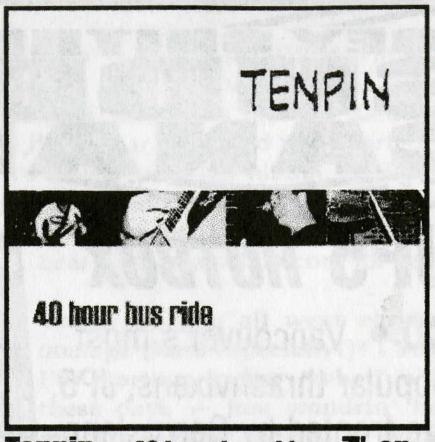

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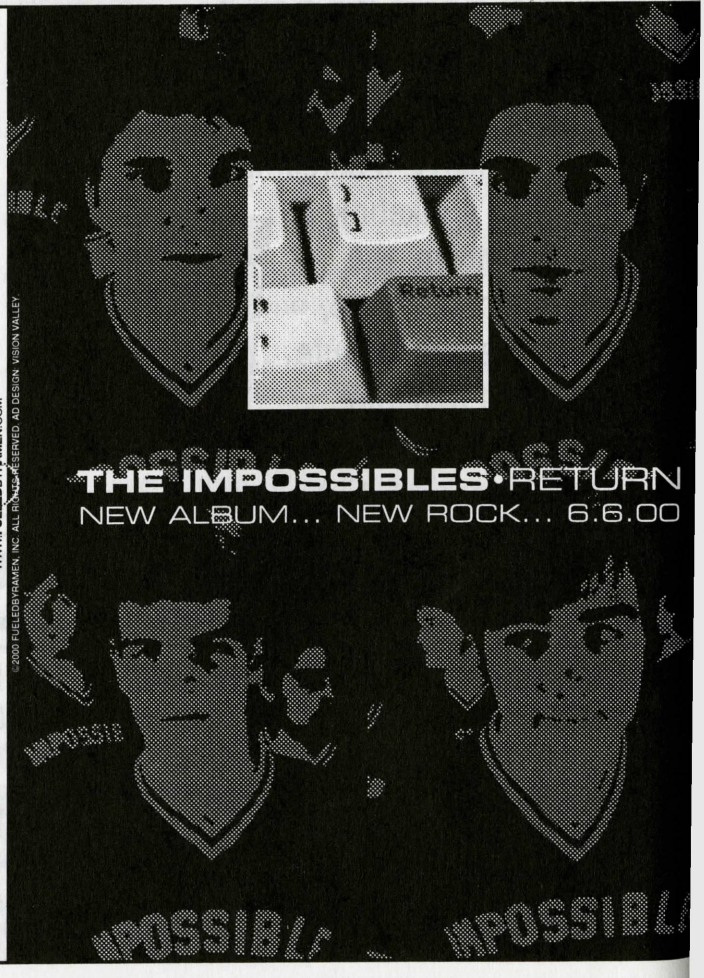


WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER SHERO

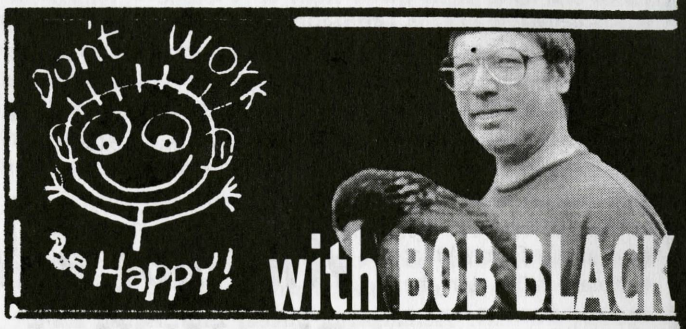
SHEROES: WOMYN WARRIOR CALENDAR. By ORSSASM (Organization of Revolutionary Socialist Sisters And Some Men). Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2000.

What to get for the feminist who has everything (except a life)? This calendar. For every day of Y2K it identifies an exemplary womyn ("We spell 'womyn' to take out the men," the authors explain, in case anyone was wondering). (Oddly enough, the editor is a man.) These women - as I shall refer to them in order to get the spell-checker off my back — are the "rebels and fighters against patriarchy, who opposed and fought invaders of their homelands, and who represent radicals and revolutionaries of their times and societies, who" - we are reliably informed - "if they were alive today, would continue to serve as sheroic examples." "Conquerors," "establishment feminists" and such are excluded. "Sheroes" is modelled on Autonomedia's "Jubilee Saints" calendar from which, in fact, many listings have been lifted. These socialist sisters admit to some "problematic selections," such as female monarchs, and they have "also included a few celestial and supernatural females important to a womyn-centeredness." But "most of the womyn contained herein represent the oppressed and exploited masses."

These criteria, however, are easier to enunciate than to implement. In a calendar ostensibly, and ostentatiously, male-excluding, what stands out is how many women are included only because they were the wives of heroes (usually black men). Among them are Cherry Turner, wife of Nat; Nancy Prosser, wife of Gabriel; Eslanda Goode Robeson, wife of Paul; Shirley Graham DuBois, wife of W.E.B.; Amy Garvey, wife of Marcus; and Hazel Scott, wife of corrupt black Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. This last listing is especially, as the sisters would say, "problematic," since Powell, like Coleman Young and Marion Barry after him, was nothing but a jive hustler exploiting black racism for personal profit. Also problematic is the sister of pro-British Iroquois leader Joseph Brant. Unless "stand by your man" is a qualification for sheroism, which is surely not the message the socialist sisters intend to convey, these listings are ill-chosen.

The socialist sisters insist that "this is definitely not a 'great women of History' celebrity calendar" - thus no listings for the likes of Queen Elizabeth or Catherine the Great - but you have to question some of their calls. Cleopatra, for instance, is improbably cast as an Egyptian nationalist struggling to save her country from "Roman destruction." Even setting aside the fact that Cleopatra was Macedonian, not Egyptian, her way of dealing with the Romans was to sleep with as many of their generals as possible. This would not seem to be the sort of sexual politics of which ORSSASM would approve. The Romans were bent on the exploitation, not the destruction, of Egypt, which, with Sicily, served them as the imperial granary. It was all the same to the *fellahin* whether Greeks, Romans or Egyptians seized their surplus.

The first version of this calendar came out two years ago and elicited a lot of derision, and not only from me. The twisted sisters don't identify the sources of their often bizarre and always PC squibs and they ignore specific requests for documentation. As Jim Fleming of their publisher Autonomedia recently wrote to me, some corrections have been made but the "look and feel" is essentially the same.



Let's look at an example. .Surely the most mind-boggling listing (for July 27) from the first edition is assassin Charlotte Corday. As no one would believe any paraphrase I might attempt, I quote the item in full: "'Never shall any man be my master.' French revolutionist in the anti-monarchy Girondist movement. She gained access to the French monarch Marat by pretending that she had news of a Girondin conspiracy and then assassinated him with a kitchen knife. She was arrested on the spot, tried and guillotined 4 days later." Corday was a Catholic royalist reactionary, not a revolutionist. She was not a Girondist. Jean-Paul Marat was a radical republican revolutionary journalist, not the French monarch (that would be Louis XVI, as I would have thought almost everybody knew). This is the current version: "'Never shall any man be my master.' French girondist and patriot. She gained access to the French Montagnard journalist by pretending that she had access to a Girondist conspiracy and then assassinated him with a kitchen knife," etc. The sistren have abandoned, reluctantly I'm sure, the absurdity of the notion that the Jacobin radical republican Marat was the King of France, but they are just unable to let go of Corday or acknowledge what side she was really on.

Were it not for the relentlessly humorless seriousness so conspicuous throughout the calendar, I might have mistaken it for a parody of feminist political correctness.

Were it not for the relentlessly humorless seriousness so conspicuous throughout the calendar, I might have mistaken it for a parody

of feminist political correctness, something Rush Limbaugh might have written if he weren't an illiterate moron. The socialist sisters are stridently supportive of indigenous resistance and Third World national liberation struggles, which makes some of their nominations puzzling, to say the least. Such as Awashonks, an Indian woman whose claim to fame, we are told, is that in 1679 she betrayed Narragansett Indian chief King Phillip "when it was clear that they would lose, at which point she made a bargain to return to peace in exchange for amnesty for her and her followers."

Some other nominees are, so to speak, problematic. Enlisting mythical goddesses to fill in some of the blank spots on the calendar is debatable but not necessarily damnable - but you have to question some of the selections. The Japanese sun goddess, for instance, who is supposedly ancestral to the Japanese emperors, all of them male monarchs ruling over an extremely patriarchal society. It would have made as much sense to list the Virgin Mary. Then there is the ancient Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar: our feminists are apparently unaware (although they have been informed) that her cult called for the annual sacrifice of a female virgin. The slogan of Brazilian slave rebel Queen Zeferina - "Death to the whites! Long live the blacks!" - is not exactly a summons to a rainbow coalition. As for Kali, the Hindu goddess of death: is this maybe taking the theme of female empowerment to an unwarranted extreme? The "ancient Gorgons" such as Medusa are also aboard. Why not a listing for Ilse, She-Wolf of the S.S.?

Why not a listing for Ilse, She-Wolf of the S.S.?

Several other choices come across as self-incriminating. Aphra Behn, for instance, the so-called "English Sappho" - sorry, sisters, an allusion to her literary talent, not her sexual orientation - is revealed to have been a spy for the authoritarian Restoration monarch Charles II. (By the way, Sappho - another listee — was not, as the sisters suppose, a lesbian, she was bisexual, judging from her poetry, which is all there is to judge her by. Several other bi women are also misdescribed as lesbians.) Artemisia is presented as a Persian sea-captain who, in 480 B.C., "devastated the attacking Athenians." There are any number of difficulties here. The battle of Marathon took place in 490, not 480 B.C. It was a land battle, not a sea battle. The Persians, not the Athenians, got devastated. The Athenians were not the "attackers," they were fighting in self-defense against the Persian invaders right outside the walls of their city-state. It is improbable to the point of absurdity that the virulently patriarchal Persians then, or ever, placed a woman in military command, or indeed in combat. Undoubtedly "Artemisia" - notice that the name is Greek, not Persian - was a propaganda concoction of the extremely misogynist Greeks to discredit their enemies by impugning their manliness, just as during the Reformation, Protestant propagandists fabricated the legend of "Pope Joan." At the very least, if there was really an Artemisia she was fighting for the wrong side, since, for all its flaws, compared to Persian autocracy, Athenian democracy was a libertarian paradise.

As is apparent from the inclusion of so many goddesses and she-demons, ORSSASM - rhymes with, but otherwise has nothing to do with "orgasm" - has trouble telling fact from fiction. They relate that "at her puberty ceremony," Lozen - an Indian, apparently an Apache - "was given extrasensory power to find the enemy." No doubt every woman needs "a room of one's own," but not a teepee in the Twilight Zone.

Some other female icons whose existence has been verified nonetheless require, and receive, like Aphra Behn, a lot of whitewash. France Willard is acclaimed as a "reform Christian socialist," which is not to wrong, as far as it goes, but it leaves a lot out. Ms. Willard was mos important as, for twenty years, the matriarch of the Women's Christia Temperance Union. The mission of this organization, eventually accom plished, was alcohol Prohibition, something not nowadays considered resounding public policy triumph. After Willard's death, "her legacy wa virtually disappeared as a radical idol," whatever that means. The revo lutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg, who by any standard belongs on calendar like this, is said to have been killed by "a mob of soldiers" (199 edition) or "reactionary soldiers" (2000 edition). That's not quite righ In the wake of the failed Spartacist revolt in which she only reluctantl joined, she and her comrade Karl Liebknecht (not mentioned by the sis ters since he had a penis) were arrested - not by soldiers - but by the para military *Freikorps* and unofficially executed with great brutality. Wha the socialist sisters conspicuously neglect to mention is that these proto Nazi goons were in the employ of a *Socialist* regime which was, as socia ists always are, determined t suppress any social revolution Similarly, the listing fo Elizabeth Gurley Flynn cal her, accurately, a socialist the a Communist, but never men tions that she started out wit the syndicalist Industria Workers of the World.

Lawrence Jarach finds "notable" - he is being polite - the listing fo Dolores Ibarurri, alias La Pasionaria, a member of the Central Committe of the Spanish Communist Party during the Spanish Civil War. Unquestionably she was a powerful orator, but, contrary to the calenda she invented neither of the quotations she is famous for. It was a Worl War I French general who said, "They shall not pass!" And it wa Emiliano Zapata who said, "It is better to die on your feet than to live o your knees!" A lifelong Stalinist, Ibarurri may have been a chick but sh was first and foremost an apparatchik. She shared responsibility fo Communist suppression of the anarchists, Trotskyists, left communis and revolutionary socialists in the Republican zone, slaughtered by th thousands by their Communist comrades. It should give pause "Revolutionary Socialist Sisters (And Some Men)" who dabble in histor that if they had been active in Republican Spain, La Passionaria mig well have had them shot. Incidentally, the grande dame is listed as st living - a rare tribute! - although she died eight years ago.

On occasion the socialist sisters commemorate collective female accon plishments, which is entirely appropriate, as women have often been be ter than men at collective action and not so supportive of egotistic gran standing. Come to think of it, celebrating "Sheroes" looks like gettin into a game the boys wrote the rules for. Unfortunately - and, I thin unnecessarily — the socialist sisters, instead of selecting their own ba tlefield, are taking on the boys on their own turf. This may well be th way to go in the end game, but now it is premature. What women ha accomplished so far is conspicuously more collective and less elitist tha what men usually have. This is not a value judgment, only an observ tion. It just seems to me that what's worked so far should be work some more until there is clear evidence that it doesn't work any mo The star system has a masculine bias. This is not the only or even t best reason to be rid of it, but for feminists one would suppose it is least a consideration. We don't need another shero.

The conscription of goddesses who, after all, never existed is eviden that the socialist sisters ran short of exemplars. So is the fact tha woman's crossdressing is pretty much all it takes to get her on the c endar. As is the annexation of social struggles, which are misrepres

ed as Amazonian accomplishments although they were actually carried out by both men and women pursuing common gender-irrelevant objectives such as higher wages and better working conditions. In the Sheroes version, for example, "20,000 womyn, both American-born and Eastern European immigrant," went out on strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912. So did 10,000 men (historians generally refer to some 30,000 strikers). Many strikers were neither American-born nor Eastern European, such as the many Italian-born strikers, the largest ethnic group involved. The socialist sisters neglect to mention that only one of the strike leaders (Elizabeth Gurley Flynn) was a woman and all five of them were then members of the more or less anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, which despised and disparaged political socialists such as the ORSSASM babes. The sistren twice get the name wrong, once as the "International Workers of the World" - didn't they notice the redundancy? — elsewhere as the "International Workers of the Worker."

Janis Joplin, we are told, "introduced her generation of Americans to the blues." The socialist sisters, usually so Negrophile, must not consider African-Americans Americans. I would have thought that B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf and a lot of other black bluesmen had something to do with mainstreaming the blues. Nor was Joplin the only white performer singing the blues - let's not forget such all-male bands as the Yardbirds, the Rolling Stones, Cream, the John Mayall Blues Band and many more.

This calendar is kitsch, so bad that it's good, like a pet rock or a leisure suit. It should be read by the light of a lava-lamp. PC feminists are so easy to ridicule that a lot of us have given up the game as unsporting. They are impossible to parody because they have taken care of that themselves. When Catherine MacKinnon writes that "women do not lie," who cannot but be reminded of the Cretan sophist who wrote that "all Cretans are liars"?

In the end the selection criteria remain enigmatic. I have no idea why the sisters left out Harriet Beacher Stowe, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Gertrude Stein, Voltairine de Cleyre, Mary Wollstonecraft, Lou Salome, Isabelle Eberhardt, Anne Hutchinson, Margaret Fuller and many more. Maybe because they were all, like the socialist sisters, white. If Janis Joplin qualifies, so should Dorothy Parker and Mae West. I have a pretty good idea why they omitted Dora Kaplan, a "womyn warrior" if ever there was one: this Russian Jewish anarchist unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Lenin. These ladies are lefties. But I wonder why they didn't list Valerie Solanas?

Two years ago I dropped a line to ORSSASM pointing out a few of their most egregious errors - such as Charlotte Corday - and also asking for citations to the sources of all their listings. Needless to say, I got no reply. This calendar is an exercise in mythmaking, a lot of which is going on, but rarely with such obvious contempt for reality. "Sheroes" is right down there with the fantasies of Afrocentrism and Amerindian indigenism, but with a much smaller market. You have to be both a feminist and a socialist to keep this stuff down without puking, and there aren't many victims of both these delusions.

The sad thing about all this is that it wouldn't be very hard to do a calendar commemorating memorable women which wouldn't have to lie about them or be padded with imaginary deities and superheroines. There's no need to conscript Xena or Wonder Woman, there are more than enough real women to fill all the slots. Putting in the bogus babes only discredits the real heroines.

1 Black Badger No. 2 (1998), unpaginated.

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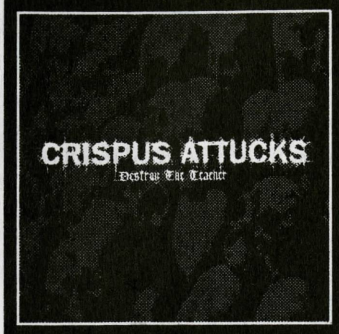

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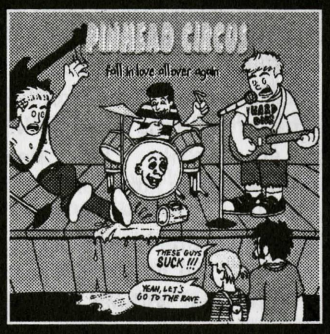

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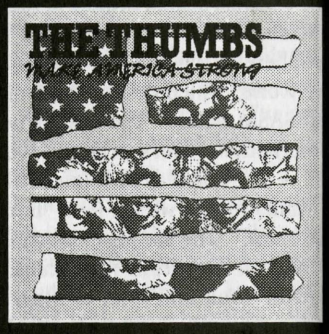

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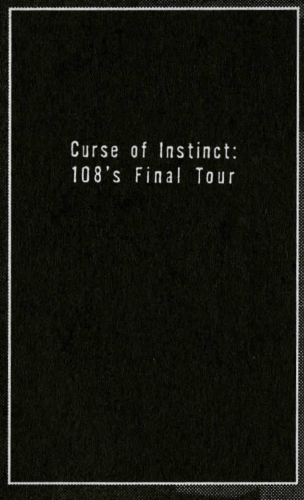

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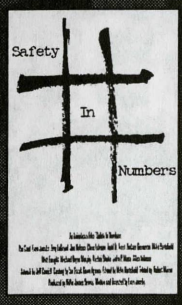

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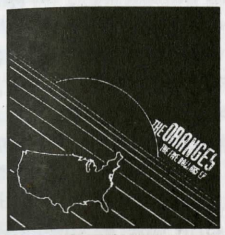

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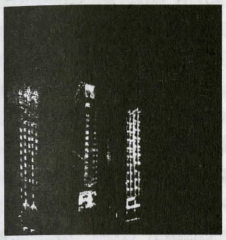

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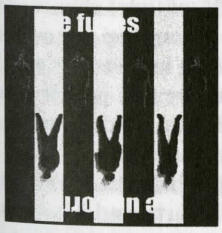

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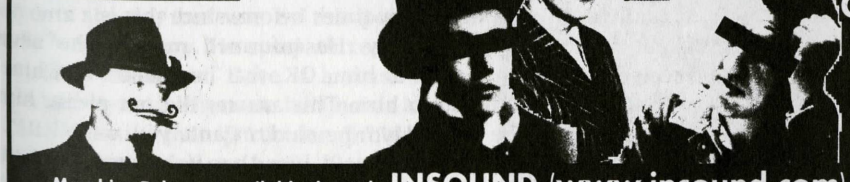

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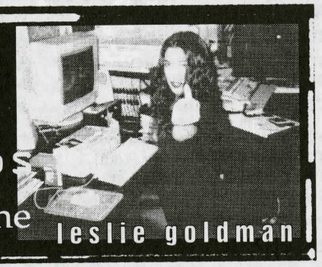

leslie goldman

I originally wanted to make this a light-hearted column. Really. I've been in a good mood lately and had intended to let my column echo that mood, but in the end, it was't meant to be. Today I was unfortunately provided with a little bit of, shall we say, "inspiration". Some writers are fortunate enough to be able to find inspiration in happy things such as flowers, kitties, or sunny days. Not me. I am inspired, at least as far as my writing goes, by the following things — anger, frustration, confusion, and boredom. Oh, and lust. Lust should probably come first, but I consider my lustiness to be a positive thing and I would categorize the other four influences as negative.

I used to have to look no further than my love life to find that kind of negative inspiration, but luckily that area got settled a long time ago. I thought that perhaps I wouldn't be inspired as often as a writer if I was in a happy, fulfilling relationship. However, I have learned over the past few years that it was very naïve of me to think that. There are still plenty of clueless, useless, ignorant people in the world. I may not have to concern myself with the possibility of accidentally sleeping with or dating one of these people, but I still have to concern myself with encountering them in my work. Over the past year I have become — for the most part — my own boss, so my work life has in turn become a huge part of my life as a whole. (Much more so than when I was a librarian, for example. Back then, although I always had to answer to someone else, at the end of the day I could lock up the books, go home, and forget everything that had annoyed me all day. When you work for yourself, that's not as much of an option.)

I'd like to tell you that being an intelligent, talented female has proven to be an asset in my work experience...but I'd be lying.

I'd like to tell you that being an intelligent, talented female has proven to be an asset in my work experience...but I'd be lying. Regardless of my intellect and the skills I have acquired, almost across the board I have been second-guessed and not taken seriously at every job I've ever had. This is partially due to the fact that I am female, although it probably also has a lot to do with the fact that most of my jobs were not "power positions." I realize that gender has little if anything to do with why bosses don't listen to underlings. But even as my own boss, I still often get little or no respect. Before I go any further I would like to say that this is no intended to be merely an exercise in knee-jerk "male bashing" although the person in the story I'm about to recount happens t be male. I have also been disrespected by other women in th workplace, but that isn't what inspired this column (that is whole other column in itself; I'm trying to keep this one relative ly focused). Let me give you a little background info so you ca better understand where I'm coming from with this.

My husband and I are business partners. We actually run thre "businesses" together: one being our zine *Carbon 14*, the secon being our recently launched book & record publishing arm, an the third being the one that actually pays our bills and support the other two, our graphic design business. Now as far as the zin and publishing things go, I consider us to be equals even thoug there are defined roles under which we work. I am the editor o the zine, whereas Larry is the business manager; he fills me in o all the aspects of the business side of things. Although I certainl give my opinions and make suggestions, I usually leave the fina decisions up to him on the financial front. I know my strengths and handling fiscal matters on that level isn't one of them. Th same holds true for the editorial side of things; although my hus band is perhaps a little more aggressive than I would like him t be in expressing his opinions, he does defer to my judgment whe it comes time for the final decision to be made. Not that he reall has a choice, but I still credit him for being man enough to ha dle having a partnership with a woman strong enough to tell hi when to shut the fuck up. The graphic design business is a whol other story, since in this case we are total equals. (Although eve in this capacity, I still prefer to have Larry negotiate our contract I also let him bargain for me at flea markets, since he's just bett at it.) What I mean b "equals" in this case is th we are equally skilled. I ca do all the things he can d and vice versa. We starte the business together an have mainly learned ever thing we know from tri and error; it's not like one us has a degree and th other doesn't. Because I st use my maiden name, imagine that most of th people we deal with behalf of our clients do even know we are marrie All they know, and all th need to know, is that our business is staffed by two people — o named Leslie, one named Larry. With all that said, here is t *Reader's Digest* version of the story that inspired this column.

We got a phone call from a guy who publishes a fanzine th one of our clients is placing an ad in. Both Larry and I have in vidually dealt with him a few times before, since this is a zine c client advertises in regularly. He informed me that he ne received an ad we mailed to him. OK, that happens. I told hi would overnight the ad to him. This answer did not please hi "Dude, I need the ad today," he said. "Can't you e-mail it? ignored the "dude" part and told him that if I overnighted package to him he would have it the following morning — he the term overnight delivery. I then told him that I couldn't e-m it to him because the file was very, very large — too large to be e-mailed — which is why we sent it through the regular mail in the first place. He responded with the following: "But dude, I need to get the ad today. Can't you just e-mail it?" (That's funny. I thought I heard myself answer that very question a second earlier.) Again I explained that no, I couldn't e-mail it and even went so far as to inform him in detail (using all the technical terms that tend to impress those people who have penises and doubt my abilities because I don't have one) how large the file was, although I got the distinct feeling that he was still not really listening to me. His response to that was, "Well, is Larry there?" Uh, excuse me? What the fuck was that about? Of course I knew exactly what the implication of that statement was as well as all the hidden knocks against me personally contained therein; and it took all my self-control not to totally rip him a new one, but I was still trying to remain professional here. Yes, despite the fact that I'm pretty certain the person on the other end of the line was sitting in front of his computer — only half listening to me in the first place — scratching his balls with one hand, packing a bong with the other, and looking at dirty pics he'd downloaded off the Internet while he was on the phone with me, I still treated him with some level of respect.

Why the fuck couldn't I get that in return? Of course, I should probably go easy on him, since aside from asking his Mom what time dinner will be ready or if his laundry is done yet, it's likely that he doesn't have much experience dealing with women in the first place. But why do I have to bear the brunt of that? I would like to say that this was the first time this happened to me and that that's why it set me off, but that is not true. We started our business in 1996 and I ran out of digits to count the number of these instances a long time ago. I proved to be the bigger person though, since I didn't end up yelling or cursing at him. I informed him in the voice that I reserve for misbehaving children and other people who don't know how to handle themselves in a grown-up fashion that Larry would be out of the office for the rest of the day, and suggested that if he wanted things taken care of immediately, he might want to change his tone, dude, or suffer the consequences. He didn't apologize, of course, but he did tell me that it was OK for me to overnight it; which was generous of him, considering that this was the only option he was given in the first place. Then I promptly hung up on him. (Ooops, did I do that? Maybe when Larry gets home he can tutor me on how to properly use the phone.) As I was all alone in the apartment, I had no one to complain to. My friend Dave called shortly thereafter and told me I sounded like I was in a bad mood (he's very intuitive that way), which I hadn't been at the start of the day but was by this point. I told him the story. He sympathized with me but, you know, Dave is a man. He can't really relate because he's never had to deal with that particular problem. Later, when Larry got home, I told him the story; he also sympathized and jokingly offered to "take the guy out" for me.

LESLIEGOLDMAN

A thoughtful gesture, but one that I declined to accept. He then offered me a foot massage and a glass of wine instead. This time I did accept, but in the end it didn't really make me feel any better. An hour or so later my friend Wendy called, and I told her the story. She totally understood because, unfortunately, Wendy's been there too. She managed to distract me for little while, though, with talk about her upcoming wedding (coincidentally to the aforementioned Dave), thereby completely changing my focus from how much I hated the world to what I was going to wear to said wedding. Even so, the whole thing continued to annoy me.

Then I sat down in front of my computer and typed in the bulk of this little mini-rant. Perhaps I'll forward a copy to the offending party at a later date, along with a note that says "Dear ignorant dickhead, The fact that you were born with a cock does not make you superior to me in any way. For your information I am smarter than you and, unlike your testosterone level and hairline, that will not go away any time soon. I realize this makes you feel like less of a man. Too bad. On top of that, I've had more pussy than you, too. Ha-ha! Seriously though, I pity you. Love, Leslie" Ah, there we go, now I'm feeling better. My mood is once again on the upswing.

I'm the editor of Carbon 14 *magazine. You can contact me at* C14/*PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125*

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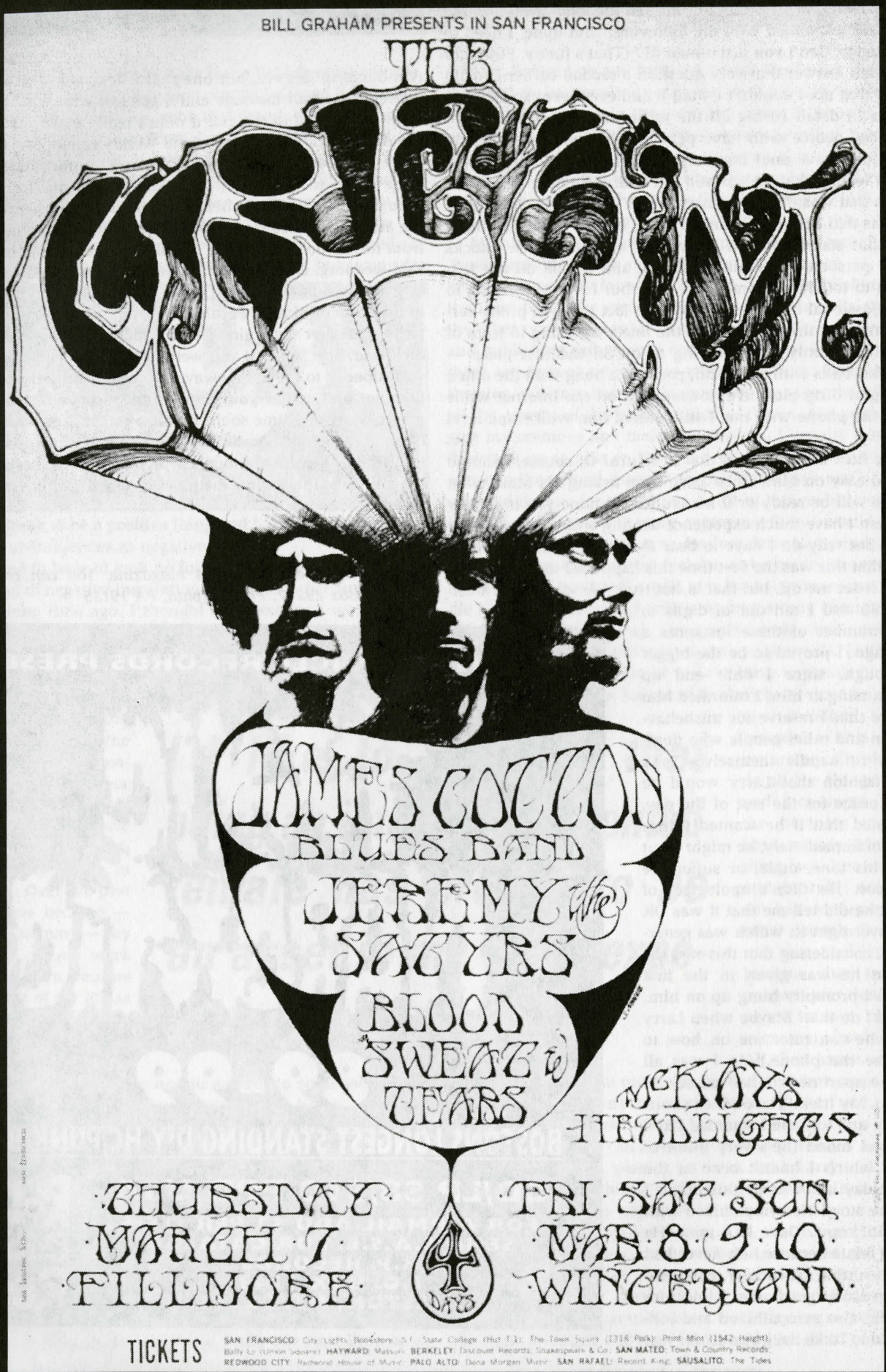


stanley mouse

PSYCHEDELIC POSTERS:

THE THIRD EYE OF GOD MEETS THE WAH WAH PEDAL

by Alan Bisbort

As Chad Hensley made clear in an earlier *Hit List* article ("The American Serigraph Explosion," Sept./Oct. 1999), rock music served as an impetus for transforming the poster art genre. While Hensley focused on the punk and hardcore scenes of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the stellar images created by artists like Raymond Pettibon, Shawn Kerri, Frank Kozik and, the TAZ-maniacs were descendants of an earlier era in rock. The so-called psychedelic era of the mid- to late-1960s.

*****

While it's romantic to think that all hippies everywhere existed in Woodstock Nation, waiting for Abbie Hoffman or Jim Morrison to instruct them ("They've got the guns, but we've got the numbers"), the truth is more elusive. It also makes for a more interesting story. Indeed, to most members of the so-called Love Generation the pen and the word were mightier than the sword, but neither held a lit bong to a well-designed poster.

Take the first Human Be-In, held January 14, 1967, on the Polo Grounds of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. If, in retrospect, the "hippie experience" could be charted on a topographic map, this event was Mount Everest, with the Monterey Pop Festival and the Magic Mountain Festival in Marin County being other, shorter Himalayan peaks, while the concert at Altamont Raceway played the role of Grand Bummer Canyon. But, at the time, the *Berkeley Barb* and the *Oracle* were heralding the event — its official name was "A Gathering of Tribes for a Human Be-In" — with rhetoric like "A new nation has grown inside the robot flesh of the old...Berkeley political activists and the love generation of the Haight-Ashbury will join together."

Any self-respecting hippie would have read that and, after nodding his or her head beatifically, said, "Sounds like boo-sheet to me." Happily, the event had the good fortune to also be heralded by the first explosion of psychedelic poster art in the Bay Area. Five separate posters for the Be-In were made and circulated on shoestring budgets, and the one created by former surf-punk Rick Griffin was a seminal work in 1960s art (as was his poster for a 1969 Grateful Dead concert, which they used as the cover of their breakthrough third album, "Aoxomoxoa"). Griffin's poster depicted a Native American on horseback strumming an electric guitar, an image that resonated more powerfully than any manifesto of would-be revolutionaries.

By then, such familiar and striking imagery seemed more trustworthy than TV or newsprint anyway. Almost intuitively, the hippies knew the media distorted, lied and fed Americans their daily dose of hysteria to keep them in line. (Ironically, the leading fomenters of the "hippie threat", Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Luce, owners of Time-Life, Inc., were regular users of psychedelic mushrooms, dating back to 1957, when *Life* magazine ran a laudatory spread about them). The psychedelic posters served as part of a secret language, counteracting the Luces and the Pentagon propagandists. And only the truly enlightened could comprehend it.

In fact, a compelling history of psychedelia, at its most intense flowering (1966-1969), could be told without words (Paul Grushkin came damn close with his massive *The Art of Rock: A Spectacular Visual and Oral History*). One could simply present an illustrated chronology of the posters created by artists like Griffin, Stanley Mouse (ne Miller), Victor Moscoso, Alton Kelly, David Singer, Satty, Bonnie MacLean, Wes Wilson, Joe and Irene McHugh (in Mill Valley), Tom Weller (in Berkeley), Don Ryder (in Oakland), The Ark (in Sausalito), Gary Grimshaw (in Detroit), John Van Hamersveld (in Los Angeles), Karl Heinz Meschbach (in Chicago), Walt Crowley, John Moehring and Gary Eagle (in Seattle). And on and on. What a feast!

From the time of the Be-In through the end of the decade, posters were the single most effective tool for rallying the cognoscenti. Brightly colored psychedelic poster art appeared in seemingly every shop window in the Haight, on every square foot of wall space inside each shop, and on every telephone pole and bulletin board. Like the aftershocks of a non-destructive earthquake, these same designs, this same visual language, began appearing in every urban area and college community in America; simultaneously, a similar renaissance of psychedelia was occurring in London, splashing across the Channel onto the European continent. These waves were picked up on by the underground press, which emulated the *Oracle* in San Francisco by spending as much time on the visuals as on the words. Some of the publications, like Chicago's *Seed*, Seattle's *Helix*, Atlanta's *Great Speckled Bird*, Milwaukee's *Kaleidoscope*, New York's *East Village Other*, the *Berkeley Tribe* and *Barb*, are still capable of, at a glance, bringing back all the wonderfully Alice-In-Wonderland aspects of that moment in time.

While the nation's (and the world's) heads may have simply assumed this brilliant artistry and graphic design had sprout-

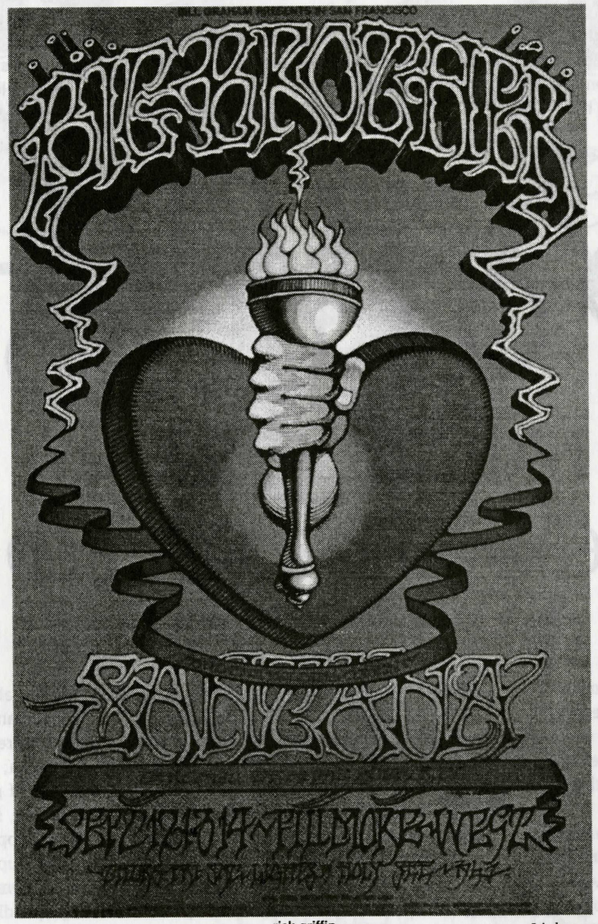
ed like magic mushrooms after an acid rain, the evolution of the poster depended on a number of creative confluences. For the visual artist, a new challenge had been presented by the musical goings-on in San Francisco and elsewhere, with ample opportunities for the most imaginative among their number. Naturally, they gravitated to the poster genre, a hybrid art form (commerce wedded to fine art) that had — with the exception of recruitment purposes and other propaganda — been out of favor for some time.

To meet the needs of head shops, progressive causes, record companies and concert promoters like Chet Helms, who produced concerts at venues like Winterland and the Avalon Ballroom, and Bill Graham, who opened and ran the vaunted Fillmore, new graphics studios popped up all over the Bay Area. In addition to Chet Helms' in-house Family Dog imprint, there were Bill Graham Presents, Berkeley Bonaparte, Neon Rose (Victor Moscoso's company), The Food, Sparta Graphics, Mouse Studios (Stanley Mouse), Western Front, and East Totem West. Each major American urban center and college community had their equivalents, though fewer in number.

History Meets Haight Street

As stated, the poster medium wasn't new. It wasn't even American, having been born in Europe in the 1890s as a means of advertising dances, theater productions, books and products like liqueurs, tobacco and rolling papers. At the end of the 19th century, the equivalent of psychedelia was Art Nouveau, an equally utopian flowering that took its inspiration from the Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris (who saw art and socialism joining together to change the world), Japanese flower arrangements, and an improbably wistful nostalgia for the art of the Middle Ages. The best known of the early poster artists were Jules Cheret, Alphonse Mucha, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; picking up on this vibe were Americans Maxfield Parrish, Louis Rhead and the great Will Bradley. While most of these artists would have fit in nicely on Haight Street in 1966, the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, led by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, might very well have been reincarnated as the Diggers. Were all of these artists' 19th century posters to be exhibited among the psychedelic art of the late 1960s, viewers unaware of the history would probably not suspect 75 years separated their work. In fact, Mucha's 1897 poster for JOB rolling papers is still one of the most popular museum reprints in the world.

While the psychedelic artists were fully aware and appreciative of their forebears, they approached the old form with new



rick griffin

ideas and from novel directions. Rick Griffin, for example, grew up in Southern California and was an avid surfer, and his surfing decals, T-shirts and cartoons were internationally known before he ever touched a psychedelic substance. Likewise, Stanley Mouse grew up in Detroit and came to the rock poster genre from the world of car culture, especially hot rods; he derived inspiration more from Ed "Big Daddy" Roth than William Morris. Victor Moscoso and Joe McHugh had extensive art-school training. And so on.

Regardless of how they arrived on the scene, the artists' goal was nothing less than visually interpreting an era that was unfolding on all fronts — an enormous explosion of light, sound, and motion — right beneath their noses. Obviously, they had a reverence for the work, a sense of being part of the fast-moving train of history and a kindred spirit with communal impulses. But they also had to eat and pay rent, so the commercial element of their work was inescapable.

Therefore, one of the most intriguing aspects of their art is the tug-of-war going on within each poster artist's soul between pure self-expression and commercialism. This probably explains why psychedelic script was so hard to read. That it was the ostensible raison d'être of the rock posters (after all, a viewer had to know the date, time, and place of the event advertised) seemed secondary to the artists, as if by obscuring the words they could further blur the line between commercial and fine art and draw more attention to these amazing images they were creating. Equally amazing was the prolific output of the artists — as many as ten different posters would be created every weekend in San Francisco alone — and the benign and friendly aspect of their competition.

Nationwide, a so-called poster boom had been ignited in New York in 1966 when someone got the bright idea to blow Humphrey Bogart up to wall-size. A still from Casablanca — Rick with shot glass and wounded visage — became a huge seller and was followed by similar shots of Brando (on motorcycle with leather cap), Bardot, Harlow, Belmondo, W.C. Fields, Stokely Carmichael — all the product of Personality Posters. The same East Coast wave brought reproductions of Andy Warhol's pop-art iconography and Roy Lichtenstein's oversized cartoons, as well as nausea-inducing optical illusions (a.k.a., op art). Soon enough, *Life* would reduce it all to "The Big Poster Hang-Up."

By 1967, shops devoted entirely to the sale of posters were springing up all over the country. Some moved as many as 25,000 a month. Posters were sold at public events, too, with enterprising vendors filling the trunks of their cars and setting up makeshift stalls at music and arts festivals. They became staples of promotion for the burgeoning rock industry, papering the walls of virtually every record store, head shop and suburban bedroom in America.

Paisley Meets Owsley

It would be a mistake or misrepresentation to ignore the role that LSD and other hallucinogens played in psychedelic art. The first posters widely circulated in the Bay Area were, in fact, notices for "Acid Tests" in Palo Alto in 1965. More valued as historic documents than art, they nonetheless caught people's attention with their rule-breaking designs and doodles (mostly by Ken "Sunshine" Kesey). As Joe McHugh, founder of East Totem West and a prolific poster artist, said, "I always thought what I was doing with posters had something to do with LSD."

Joe and his wife Irene McHugh took a novel approach to psychedelic art, creating posters that were purely art for art's sake, with no event or product tie-in. They formed a sort of loose-knit collective in Mill Valley and soon attracted a number of artists intrigued with the idea of poster as pure art: Satty (a brooding German expatriate who went on to illustrate acclaimed editions of Poe and Bram Stoker); John Hamilton (who gained nationwide attention for his paint job on Janis Joplin's Porsche Speedster); John Starr Cooke (who claimed to have taken LSD every day for two years while studying the Tarot and led a group of devotees called the Psychedelic Rangers); and Nick Nickolds (who was simply an extraordinarily talented artist).

McHugh explains: "The idea of a poster before then was to promote something, a product, an event. I was promoting something, too, but it wasn't a product. It was that acid change of mind. And I felt proud of it, blessed to be part of that whole movement, privileged to have the opportunity. I took it seriously. As a publisher I felt responsible for putting out a spectrum of what was happening. We weren't representing rock music, per se. We were representing a time and a spirit, the music included as part of the whole." Like the music that caressed the scene, psychedelic art eventually began to wane as exploiters, wannabes and novelty artists elbowed their way onto the stage. "Unless the energy came from the images," McHugh notes, "I didn't want to continue supporting the cause. What with all the novelty stuff coming out on the market — you know, like pigs and rhinos forni-

cating — the fine-art stuff didn't stand a chance."

The main popularizer (what they'd call a "commodifier" today) of psychedelic art was Peter Max, a self-promoting New York graphic designer, whose name was clearly and hugely branded on his every work. He codified the style by using bold colors and clear lines, and he quite consciously sought out corporate clients, including infamous polluters like General Electric, for his version of psychedelia. Soon enough, his familiar style began to infiltrate Madison Avenue ad campaigns, too. It also showed up on every conceivable commodity, from scarves and towels to clocks and inflatable plastic pillows. By late 1968, it was hard to find a mainstream magazine that did not feature elements of the Max style in their pages. Across the Atlantic, a German poster artist named Heinz Edelmann used a similar style to produce an animated film version of the Beatles' Yellow Submarine, a huge box-office smash in the U.S. the same year.

One final ironic note: While Madison Avenue and Wall Street both began banking on psychedelia, the artwork that was created — the real art of the times — was completely ignored by art galleries, art critics and art journals. The lone exception was Thomas Albright, who wrote for both the mainstream *San Francisco Chronicle* and the then-counterculture *Rolling Stone*. Albright astutely performed the same role for the Bay Area art scene that Ralph J. Gleason had for its music. Thanks partly to his efforts, this beautiful flowering that took place in San Francisco and then spread throughout the land is now highly valued by collectors. And the same old cry goes up from the artists: Where were you when we needed you?

Comic Books Forge A Head

It would be remiss in a discussion of psychedelic art, to leave out the underground press and underground comix. Both topics have been covered extensively elsewhere (notably Abe Peck's *Uncovering the Sixties* and Mark James Estren's *A History of Underground Comics*, respectively), and it would be impossible to offer a definitive account here. Nonetheless, events in the underground press and comix coincided and overlapped so completely with poster art and the music scene that, as Joe McHugh

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suggested, it's impossible to think of them as separate entities.

A Bible verse frequently hurled at young people in the 1960s was the one about putting away childish things (Corinthians I, Chapter 13). It went, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Right-thinking commentators and college presidents used it to castigate war protestors and "hairy hippies," and moms used it to prod wayward progeny into tossing out their comic books. As usual, parents didn't know or suspect that comic books were one of the "childish" things that were growing up right alongside their kids. If they'd only continued quoting from Corinthians I, they'd have gotten a clue. The next verse begins, "For now we see through a glass, darkly."

Indeed, that verse could have been the unstated credo of a new breed of print animation. Comic books grew out of the daily comic strips that began appearing in newspapers in the 1890s. Though there was always something a bit "underground" about comic books (read: disreputable), they became a well established publishing venture with the first issue of *Action Comics* in June 1938. This is the comic book that introduced Superman to the world.

But, by the 1960s, mainstream comic books had lost their appeal to the new generation simply because publishers would not change with the times. Actually, they could not change; they were hemmed in by a Comics Code. This bit of censorship was the result of a book by Dr. Frederic Wertham, called *Seduction of the Innocent* — first excerpted in the November 1953 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* — which posited that comic books turned young boys into junvenile delinquents as well as stunting their intellectual growth. Wertham, Director of Mental Hygiene at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, spent seven years developing his thesis, and its authority rang true to the moms who read the initial accounts in *Ladies' Home Journal*. (No mention was made of the psychological damage caused by reading *Ladies Home Journal*!). Wertham was particularly bothered by Educational Comics, or EC, the work of William M. Gaines, who'd inherited the wholesome-sounding imprint from his father, drowned in a boating accident in 1947. Young Bill turned it away from inspirational but poor-selling titles like *Picture Stories from the Bible* toward more popular fare along the lines of *Archie*. Gaines, and artists like Al Feldstein, Bill Elder and Harvey Kurtzman, moved the EC line toward horror and crime stories, and they hit their stride with *The Crypt of Terror* (later *Tales from the Crypt*) and *The Vault of Horror* in 1950 and, in 1952, *Tales Calculated to Drive You MAD* (later shortened to *MAD*).

The earliest issues of *MAD* may, indeed, have been the first truly underground comic books ever published. Truly subversive, iconoclastic, visually arresting and damn funny, they struck a nerve in the otherwise placid Eisenhower era, perhaps even forming the chink in the armor of postwar American world dominance.

Soon enough, the kneejerk anti-Communist hysteria that guided every move of the U.S. Congress kicked into gear, and the Comics Code was born, a legislated ratings authority that mandated the level of gore allowable in a comic book and required that good must triumph over evil in every episode. The comic book companies went along with it. Well into the 1960s they continued to approach their allowable subject matter with the black-or-white mindset of the "Father Knows Best" era. By then, though, even the dullest lad or lass could see that father didn't know shit from Shinola.

The one mainstream comic book publisher that did go with the flow was Marvel. Though started in 1939, Marvel didn't change dramatically until 1961, when a young street-smart publisher named Stan Lee launched two new titles (with artwork by Jack Kirby) that found a ready audience: *The Fantastic Four* and *Amazing Adventures*. While continuing to adhere to the Comics Code rule about good and evil, Lee allowed artists and writers to mine their imaginations for new twists on old formulas. New "super-hero" characters appeared, as complex and troubled as their times, including Spider-Man, Hulk, Silver Surfer and Thor. They clicked, almost instantly, with college kids. A 1965 *Esquire* article proclaimed Spider-Man to be more popular among radicals than Che Guevera. At about the same time, students at UC Berkeley took a poll of "World's Greatest Men" that ranked Bob Dylan #1, Fidel Castro #2, and The Incredible Hulk #6. Even London's underground *International Times* was moved to call Hulk "the first legend figure of the underground generation...One of the mastheads on a Hulk comic really sums it up — 'How can a green-skinned misfit with paranoid tendencies survive in our materialist society'."

Besides the characters, a dramatic change was evident in Marvel artwork. Panels were expanded, graphics and ink overlapped into kaleidoscopic patterns, landscapes were more otherworldly than they'd been since the glory days of George Herriman's Krazy Kat, a masterfully surrealistic cat and mouse saga that ran from 1914 to 1944. The greatest of the envelope-pushing comic book artistry could be found in *Strange Tales*, starring Dr. Strange, beginning around the tenth issue (July 1963). As depicted by artist Steve Ditko, *Strange Tales* was a visual feast, and the character of Dr. Strange was, well, unusual. "Unlike the other Marvel heroes," writes Les Daniels in *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America*, "he never punched anyone. Instead he cast spells and entered weird dimensions...There can be little doubt that much of the psychedelic art that was to emerge from the West Coast two years later owed something to the vistas explored in the Dr. Strange pages." A tell-tale sign of th connection: The first communal rock dance in San Francisco, held on Oct. 16, 1965, wa dubbed "A Tribute to Dr. Strange."

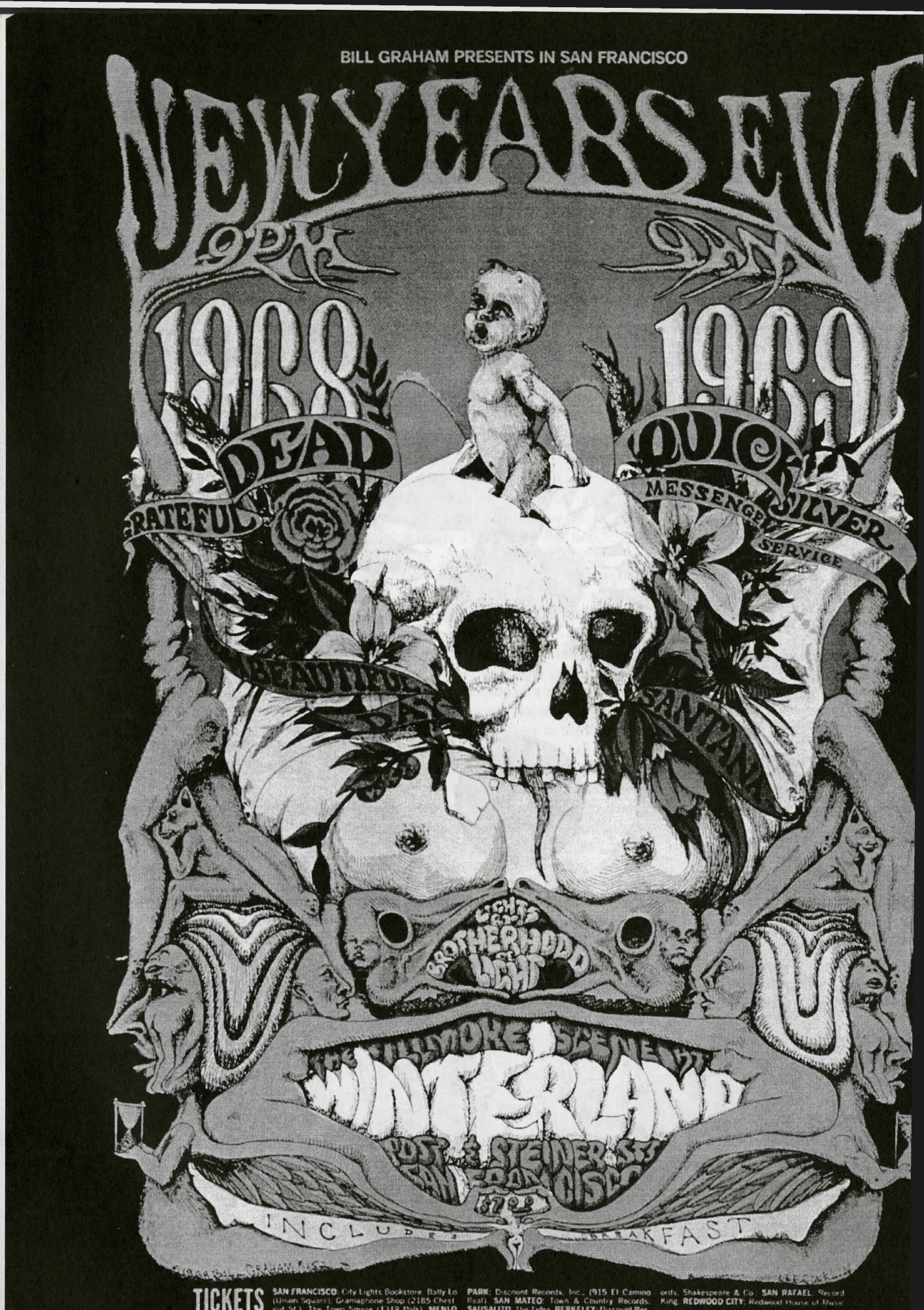
As Mike Gold summed it up in the 1969 *Seed* Comix Supplement, "The straight comic book medium is by and large almost as radical as today's 'underground music' — particularly when you consider comics are normally read by a younger audience. They fit in nicely as part of the youth culture which unfortunately depends upon establishment corporations for financing and distribution. The comic books...are far less rightwing than the bubble-gum music to which most comic readers listen. In terms o educating the people while entertaining them...'straight' comic books are doing a surprisingly effective job."

Superheroes Meat R. Crumb

Future developments in underground comics revolved around one man: the ubiquitous Robert Crumb. Though steeped in comic book tradition, Crumb had no intere in adhering to any code of censorship. Lacking outlets for his work, he nonetheles pressed on, hanging out almost daily in the fledgling community developing in the Haight in the mid-1960s. Naturally, he cam into contact with psychedelic drugs. The combination of hallucinatory visions and h own unmistakably eccentric graphic style led to his remarkable artistry (Robert Hughes called him "the Brueghel of the se ond half of the 20th century"). For various reasons, including a dysfunctional upbring ing in one of those "perfect" "Father Know Best" families, Crumb did, indeed, see "through a glass, darkly." But he also creat ed some archetypes for his age, including Mr. Natural, Eggs Ackley, Flakey Foont, the Vulture Women, and the "Keep on Truckin



rick griffin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lee conklin

dude. He also jumpstarted a trend in innovative album cover art with his drawing for "Cheap Thrills", the huge-selling album by Big Brother and the Holding Company.

In Terry Zwigoff's riveting 1994 documentary "Crumb", Robert Crumb explained the course of events that led from the coded wonders of Marvel comics to the no-holds-barred curiosities of his *Zap Comix*:

"All these hippie underground papers started up in 1966 and 1967. Every town had one or two of them. They would print anything related to psychedelic experience or the hippie ethic. So, I started submitting some of the LSD-inspired drawings I'd been doing in my sketchbook, and they liked them. Then, this guy came along and suggested I do a whole book, *Yarrowstalks*, which went over big. Then, this other guy says, 'hey, why don't you just do pychedelic comic books and I'll publish them'. So, I set to work and did two whole issues of *Zap Comix*."

Other comic artists followed his lead and "in a matter of weeks" (according to Crumb) an underground comix revolution was born.

Among the artists who entered this new uncharted, and unregulated — the "x" in comix wasn't just a semantic affectation — territory were Gilbert Shelton (creator of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers and Wonder Warthog), Spain Rodriguez (Trashman), Victor Moscoso and Rick Griffin (both of whom also did rock posters), Vaughan Bode, Kim Deitch, the Mad Peck (also reviewed rock records via comic strip), Skip Williamson, S. Clay Wilson, Bill Griffith, John Thompson and Art (then known as "Artie") Spiegelman. Most of these artists, plus Greg Irons, Dave Sheridan, Schrier, Willy Murphy, Carl Lundgren, Conick, Tellez, Martin, Gaccione, Gary Grimshaw, Lipking, Larry Welz, Dave Roman, Rory Haeyes, Tom Morris, Seltzer, and Buckwheat Florida Jr., came together in October 1969 to take part in "The New Comix Show" at the Phoenix Gallery in Berkeley.

As Gary Arlington, proprietor of the San Francisco Comic Book Co., on 23rd Street, near Mission Street, put it in the *Berkeley Tribe* in 1969: "My whole world died in the 1950s. A good comic is like a good hit, and from the 1950s on I didn't get any more hits until *Zap*...I was always worried about my car or finding a girl friend. Then the Revolution started...New comix in San Francisco are going to be like the music. The main worry is the sex thing and prison." The latter comment may now seem like an affectation, but at the time death and prison were viable options for any young man under age 25. While taboos regarding sex and drugs were being regularly broken and openly mocked, the ulterior motive, even if it was only subconscious on the part of the artists, was clearly to establish a rebellious state of mind. As Mark James Estren put it in *A History of Underground Comics*: "even a reader who is unwilling to take radical action himself will have his conciousness sufficiently altered by these comics so that, when others do take radical action to change society, the reader will support that action — or at very least will not oppose it."

So, getting back to Corinthians I, maybe the Bible did prophecy this madness, after all. Not long after the verse about putting away childish things, Paul's epistle to the Corinthians asks, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" and then advises, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." It certainly felt that way in the late 1960s, as it does in our own benighted age. AMEN.

Dosing the Underground Press

The rocket fuel that made the underground press fly contained these additives: sex, drugs, and rock & roll. To the generation of kids born after World War II — the ones given the unfortunate toe-tag Baby Boomers — each component of this holy trinity had a sacramental edge to it, and no publication created by adults spoke directly to any of them. Thus, comic books and teen beat magazines were vital equipment for surviving adolescence, and stroke magazines promised the insight the tight-lipped parental units couldn't bring themselves to supply. However, the ugliness of assassination, civil rights clashes, and an undeclared and escalating war in Vietnam promised to make the Boomers cannon fodder. So, it was goodbye Peter Pan, hello...Pan.

Arguably the first underground magazine that tried to make the leap into a new cultural epoch was *The Realist*, a monthly started by Paul Krassner in 1958. Krassner, a standup comic, writer for *MAD* and intimate of Lenny Bruce, was determined to create what he called "a *MAD* for grownups." The emphasis was on outrageous satire, taboo-trashing and borderline libel (e.g., his most notorious sketch was a 1963 fantasy of LBJ having sex with JFK's corpse on the way back from Dallas). "Irreverence is the only sacred cow," said Krassner, who soon found himself in hot water with the FBI.

He also found himself pulled into a new circle of people experimenting with — how to put it? — new lifestyles: Tim Leary, Richard Alpert (later Baba Ram Dass), Michael Hollingshead. As Krassner wrote in a 1993 memoir, "I became intrigued by the playful and subtle patterns of awareness that Leary and Alpert manifested. If their brains had been so damaged, how come their perceptions were so sharp? I began to research the LSD phenomenon, and in April 1965 I returned to Millbrook for my first acid experience. I was thirty-three years old, and I'd never been high." His guide was Hollingshead, "the baldheaded British rascal who had first turned Leary on," and his experience with pure Sandoz LSD was so life-altering that he shared every bit of it with his readers in *The Realist*. He also told his mom, who warned that "It could lead to marijuana." Where it really led, once Krassner let the cat out of the bag, was into the newsrooms of the underground press. New sexual boundaries had already been crossed in 1960, when the first oral contraceptive (Enovid) was introduced, and new rock 'n' roll borders seemed imminent with the arrival of the Beatles in 1963. Thus, when the wonders of LSD began to be widely touted in 1965, it was only a matter of time before the spirit of psychedelia would bring a new look to the old muckraking tradition.

Among the first (and best) of the regularly-printed underground papers were the *LA Free Press* (begun in 1964) and the *East Village Other* (in New York) and *Berkeley Barb*, started the following year. But no truer picture of the psychedelic zeitgeist can be found than in the Haight's own homegrown paper, the *Oracle* (aka the *San Francisco Oracle*). Originally started in the summer of 1966 as *P.O. Frisco* (for *Psychedelic Oracle*), it stopped after one issue while the political radicals jumped ship. Then it resumed in the fall of 1966 as the *Oracle*, financially backed by Ron and Jay Thelin of the Psychedelic Shop and rock promoter Bill Graham. Though it lasted only 12 issues, the *Oracle*'s influence was huge, primarily because it so perfectly captured the utopian but utterly apolitical mindset of psychedelia, and it was driven by the explosion of art that was beginning to appear on the rock posters. The modus operandi said it all: "designed to aid people on their trips." Of the hippie scene, *Oracle* "reporter" Steve Levine wrote, "A generation, considered by many to be the reincarnation of the American Indian, has been born out of the ashes of World War Two, rising like a Phoenix, in celebration of the slightly psychedelic zeitgeist of this brand-new Aquarian Age."

A countercultural phenomenon like that would not remain a secret for long. The message was spread among a worldwide underground press network that included

such psychedelicized publications as *International Times* (London), *Oz* (London; called by *Rolling Stone* "the best underground magazine anywhere, so hip they're insulting about it"), *Actuel* (Paris), *Om* (Amsterdam), *Puss* (Stockholm), *Eco Contemporaneo* (Buenos Aries), *Canadian Free Press* (Ottawa), *Sanity* (Montreal), *Satyrday* (Toronto), the *Seed* (Chicago), *Avatar* (Boston), *View From the Bottom* (New Haven), *Graffiti* (Philadelphia), *Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta), *Crocodile* (Gainesville, Fla.), *Kudzu* (Jackson, Miss.), *The Rag* (Austin), *Sage* (Santa Fe), *Open City* (Los Angeles), *Good Times* (San Francisco), *Free Press* (Washington), *Helix* (Seattle), *Guerilla* and *Fifth Estate* (Detroit), *Argus* and *Big Fat* (Ann Arbor), *The Paper* (East Lansing), *Kaleidoscope* (Milwaukee), *Connections* (Madison), the *Rat* and *East Village Other* (New York).

By late 1967, the movement gained enough steam that a self-described "informal association of publications of the 'alternative press' formed. Called the Underground Press Syndicate, it embraced about 50 publications from around the world and existed to "facilitate communication among such papers and with the public." The members of the syndicate were free to use each other's material, gratis. Among the visually groundbreaking (and mindblowing) publications that were members were Krassner's *Realist*, the *Black Panther* newspaper, the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *International Times* and *Oz*0 (from London), the *Seed*, *Kaleidoscope*, the *East Village Other*, *Rat*, *Barb*, *Avatar* and Leary's *Psychedelic Review*.

The net was cast — and in hindsight self-defeatingly so — to include everyone in the underground press definition. In an ad run in papers all over the country, the UPS answered its own question ("What are they about?") with this answer: "The Fugs, Allen Ginsberg, Tom Hayden, Berkeley, Columbia, H. Rap Brown, Alan Watts, Andy Warhol, Paul Goodman, Reies Tijerina, LeRoil Jones, Eldridge Cleaver, Michael Rossman, Dr. Timothy Leary, Huey Newton, Buckminister Fuller, Jean-Luc Godard, Carl Rogers, Cohn-Bendit, Mike Bloomfield, Jonas Mekas, Phyliss McGinnis, Bruce VanMeter, Frank Zappa, Kuchar Brothers, Grace Slick, Country Joe & the Fish, Gerard Malanga, Grateful Dead, Valerie Solais [sic.: the woman who shot to kill Andy Warhol!], Phil Ochs, Jerry Rubin, Jefferson Airplane, William Burroughs, Ken Kesey, Herman Kahn, Abbie Hoffman, Jimi Hendrix, Michael McClure, Robert Nelson, Eric Clapton, Kenneth Anger, Janis Joplin, Al Kooper, Grary Snyder, radical theatre, sexual freedom, the taboo against knowing who and what you are, communes, anarchy, draft resistance, light shows, peace, freedom, Peace and Freedom, hashish and a thousand other things and non-things, relevant, and irrelevant, real and imagined, ridiculous and sublime." It continued: "The underground press is the loving product of the best minds of our generation, running screaming through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry printing press. It took a while to get going; Burroughs, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Mezzrow, Huxley, helped on one front, Peter, Paul & Mary (sic), Dylan, Beatles, helped on another front, Tom Hayden, Carmichael, Dellinger, Muste (a veritable mob) took the dangerous front, and Art Kunkin, Max Scherr, John Bryan, Allan Katzman, Walter Bowart, Harvey Ovshinsky and others picked up the roach-torch to create a fresh thing, the underground press. Designed to reach a mass audience."



lee conklin

With a peak like that, who needs valleys? But, inevitably, they came. And they didn't necessarily wait for the Summer of Love to run its course. Even before then, portents were being forecast by Haight resident Chester Anderson, who printed and posted his own broadside and newsletter rants. In one particularly astute posting — headlined "Uncle Tim's Children" — he dissed the head-in-the-sand mentality that pervaded the new street culture: "Minds & bodies are being maimed as we watch, a scale model of Vietnam...And that goes for Uncle Tim too, who turned you on & dropped you into this pit." Disturbed by what he saw as an inevitable crash, Anderson left town to help start his own rock and roll magazine, *Crawdaddy!*. Another in-the-know music magazine, *Creem* (out of Detroit), debuted on March 5, 1969, and would serve as a reverently irreverent forum for Lester Bangs, Richard Meltzer, Nick Tosches and many other critics who would not let rock and roll die at the hands of corporate strangulation.

How deeply did the underground press penetrate? Three examples:

- *Fatigue Press*, out of Killeen, Texas, was an anti-military underground paper, written by members of the military (anoymously, of course). The editor was listed as Oleo Strut.
- *Om*, in Washington D.C., was first published out of the Pentagon (!) by a renegade Navy guy named Roger Priest. One issue featured a cover picture of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, with the legend, "People's Enemy Number One—A Pig by any other name is still a pig." Of *Om*, *Rolling Stone* said, "One of the gutsiest of the military undergrounders (there are dozens)...*Om*'s future may be uncertain. But what a past!"
- J. Edgar Hoover, in an effort to counter alternative journalism's power, created two underground papers run by the F.B.I. — *Armageddon News* (Indianapolis, 1968), and *Longhorn Tales* (San Antonio, 1969). I can only imagine what the record review section was like: five stars for Sgt. Barry Sadler, zero stars for "Sgt. Pepper". +

Alan Bisbort is the author, with Parke Puterbaugh, of Groovy, Man: A Trip Through the Psychedelic Years, *with an introduction by Howard Kaylan of the Turtles. The book is to be published by Rhino this fall.*

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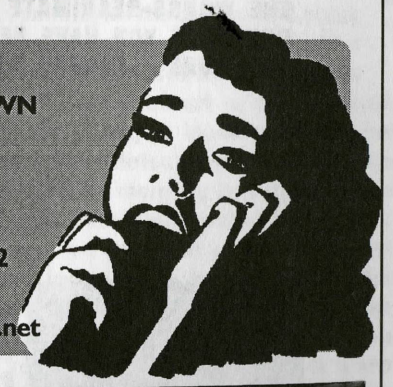

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SEVERAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE BOMBING OF THE MEDIA

A couple of anarchist crustcore kids were sitting at a cafe in my degenerating cesspool of a hometown. After their fourth double espresso, they began arguing over what would be the best target for a truck full of fertilizer and fuel oil. From under their trembling, lice-infested dreads they had narrowed down their choices to traditional "radical" targets like the Republican National Convention and the newly refurbished building downtown which houses the county, state, and federal offices. These little fucks probably wouldn't blow up anything, except maybe each other's cranks as they participate in the bisexuality fad, but they were breaking my concentration as I tried to read. I had two of my favorite comedic books, *The Turner Diaries* and John Stoltenberg's *Refusing to be a Man*. It was time for them to leave.

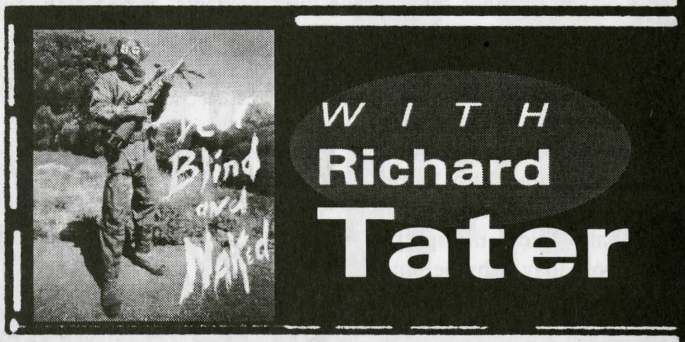
At some point in the conversation I edged my way in, and immediately disagreed with their choices. Self-righteously awaiting offence, figuring that I would counter their left hook with a punch somewhere from the right, they asked me what I would bomb. First, I explained that their reasoning was spurious and full of holes. Their targets of choice merely catered to the dominant paradigms of right and left and in actuality did nothing but support the present power structure. Bombing the bureaucracy has never been successful. At least not in this country, where there are too many redundant systems. Even if you nuked Washington D.C. into an irradiated pile of ash and rubble, a week later a functioning government would rise from the destruction like a hydra's head of a phoenix turtlen' out of Satan's shithole.

Furthermore, bombs have accomplished nothing but provoking legislation that is now competing with the "War on Drugs" in the race to chip away at our civil rights. Remember the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 that followed in the wake of the Okie' Boom. We have virtually kissed habeas corpus the fuck goodbye with that one. Ya'll haven't fergit' habeas corpus yet, have ye? It's that little right that can be traced all the way back to the Magna Carta. It's generally called the Great Writ, and it protects us from illegal imprisonment. Poof! Gone in a blast of fuel-scat, public paranoia, stupidity, and a corpo-political shitbarrel full of sinister rat-fuck-bastards capitalizing on the whole idiotic affair.

Still in disagreement with my arguments, and countering with the standard Charles Manson tack - "anything to bring about the revolution" - they pushed me to name a better target. Without thinking logically, I quickly said, "The Special Olympics." When pushed for a reason I said that it would make a "bizarre statement to the world. If you feel the need to drive a shit-bomb-truck somewhere to better society, why not blow the fuck out of those 'tards and their little beaming-with-pride guilt-ridden mongoloid helpers?!"

This Dadaist gesture fell upon deaf ears. They quickly made their exit, got into their Range Rover covered in "Free Leonard Peltier", "ANARCHY", and other myopic, left-wing stickers and drove away. Someday they'll join their daddy's marketing firm or live forever off a trust fund left by their granny. At the very least I had accomplished something. They were gone. I had gotten back my cherished silence. Unfortunately, I was left with the question, "Is there a target that would have a truly devastating effect on society and maybe cause a change for the better?" The Special Olympics would be a bit cruel. Besides, every town needs its share of the mentally retarded, drunks, and straight-out lunatics just to keep things interesting.

So, I pondered all this for a while. I've heard of arguments for bombing the next large gathering of cops as they group



around the casket of one of their freshly-killed colleagues. The pig mourning process usually brings out several hundred, and sometimes over a thousand of the homunculus, needle-dicked bastards to proffer heart-felt lies about one of their vicious martyrs. Crying cops, bagpipes, a 21-gun salute, and an exploding Ryder truck. No group would probably more richly deserve such a treat, but it's still a bureaucratic target and the same arguments against it apply. The totalitarian backlash that would follow, especially after the media spin-meisters got their fangs into it, wouldn't be worth all that cooked pork.

The media. It finally hit me. The Grammies had just finished, and the Oscars were being ruthlessly advertised everywhere you turned. The corporate music shit machine had just given its table scrap-eating "house niggahs" a few gold-plated trophies that they could sell some years later to support their heroin addictions. The future of Palookaville, smiling for the camera and doing a little soft shoe, stepped up to thank God, mom, and a bunch of Armani-suited, algae shake-drinking billionaires for the opportunity to peddle their rehashed, love song pabulum to the comatose consumers of pop music. We'll see if they're lauding these same music pimps when their one hit wonder doesn't carry over into the next album. Plummeting record sales, no more big bus, and bye-bye per-diem. Boo-hoo. Stretched necks, overdoses, slashed wrists and, worse yet, a desperate clinging onto that one hit in a series of honky-tonks and dives which we'll give a few of us much entertainment for the years to come. I recommend a Quiet Riot show at your local juke joint and about 7 grams of dried 'shrooms. I also recommend that you wear Depends, as you may not be able to contain your bladder when your diaphragm virtually shoots it out the end of your genitals in the rain of gut-splitting hilarity.

For now their mindless repetition is not only criminal in its stupidity but also operates, most likely unintentionally so, as part of a media-pacifier to placate the people with a somnolent hum of soylent green for the mind. What a shit parade. Fifth-, or by this week, ninth-generation grunge bands are swimming into the feeding frenzy. Gangster rappers are popping off the same ol' self-congratulatory

HIT SQUAD

krap with new gold-plated mouths and less harsh tones. Folksy songsters/ songstresses, guitars in hand, materializing out of the ether, bantering the same, albeit watered down, 60's mantras. R&B divas, howling the exact same love songs in pitches only dogs can detect, plop out of the music industry sphincter every week. College radio has gotten co-opted at such a frightening pace that every band, regardless of how much money is thrown into the mix, engineers their records to sound like they came out of the same halfwit's garage. Hell, even country music has gotten whored to such a point that the only difference between "New Country" and a Michael Bolton record is a steel guitar and a southern drawl.

BOOM! Just imagine a world without Mariah Carey, Kid Rock, Britney Spears, the Backstreet Boys, Whitney Houston, Kenny G, and a whole bunch of other schmoozing muzak robots. Not to mention sleazy fucks like David Geffen and his ilk. We may not know the names of all the plantation masters who live in mansions that cost as much as the infrastructure of entire Third World countries, go to spas in Palm Springs that would bankrupt the average workaday schmoe, and perpetrate shopping sprees that would make the Sultan of Brunei blush, but their missing presence would be felt far more than those of the cackling, leashed monkeys who earn the coins for them.

BOOM! Just imagine a world without Mariah Carey, Kid Rock, Britney Spears, the Backstreet Boys, Whitney Houston, Kenny G, and a whole bunch of other schmoozing muzak robots.

There only would be a few downsides I could see occurring if some deranged genius carried this public service out. "New Country" would gain a wider audience in the rockless void. The rock "talent" pool's deletion wouldn't be felt for more than a couple of months. The fact that for every band that has sucked its way to the top, there are a thousand more just as worthless who are ready take their place, makes the music industry just about as resilient as the government. Plus, album sales would go through the roof for all the dead stars. There wouldn't be enough TV time to cover the K-Tel commercials peddling the burnt graveyard of pop star corpse's.

Unless, of course, they had a great deal of free airtime to peddle due to lack of programming. That brings me to the next and far more effective target, TV itself. At first I thought the Oscars would be a better choice than the Grammies. Sure, you would still waste a whole shitload of producers, directors, agents, etc. The machine would take a devastating sucker punch. Movies do have an influence on the dunderheads that comprise the majority of this great, heavily-armed nation, but the movie industry has far less influence than TV. For every movie Joe and Jane Blow watch, about a hundred hours of "the national lobotomy machine" and its marketing whores get consumed. Hence, the Emmies become the #1, primo target. Nothing would so vastly affect the average American than turning just about every TV star, producer, and director into a mass of torn and burnt flesh. Killing off most the faces that the workaday schmuck knows better than his/her own spouse and children would have a lasting and chilling effect, from which the country would probably never recover completely.

Thinking back to the cafe L.U.G.s (leftist until graduation), th Marxist concept of "bread and circuses" came to mind. I think it wa Marx (I've never read much Marx, so don't quote me) who talke about this method of controlling the poor. Come to think of it, mayb it was Lenin who proposed this idea of keeping the poor and gene ally fucked-over fed enough to keep them working another day an keep their minds off of their own problems. Be that as it may, TV surely the modern electronic equivalent of the circus, complete wit its own sideshow freaks. Just check out any "reality" programming the talk shows. Simply shut down the boob tube pacifier and watc the discontent boil over rather quickly. You don't need a full blacko to cause rioting. Just shut down the tube and watch the black smok clouds in the distance. You don't think that would happen? Have yo ever had your cable go down for a few hours? Remember the ange Amplify that by 270 million.

Speaking of Marxism. The death of so many millionaires and qui a few billionaires would cause an instant redistribution of wealt Money would be sucked from th coffers of the mass-marketin propagandistic media machi and thrown into the hands of a idle class of young, country-clu bing morons. A veritable pim level of a spending spree wou be unleashed on the country, a the children of the dead did a they could to mourn the loss their media industry parents. course, a few would nepotistica ly rise to the occasion and co tinue their parents' work. Aft all it is Hollywood, the land nepotism. Fortunately, n enough of them would have t game to keep it up like dear dad or mom.

With TV programmin destroyed at its roots, the mov industry cut back a bit, and great deal of conspicuous spen ing by idle rich young idio burning through the media co fers, shit would change in this country. For the better or the worst, don't know. At the very least it would be entertaining, and ironicall that's all that counts nowadays. Just look at politics. From black o scandals to forty million dollar, big-girl blow-jobs. Tell me that we not getting closer to Orwell, Huxley, or Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

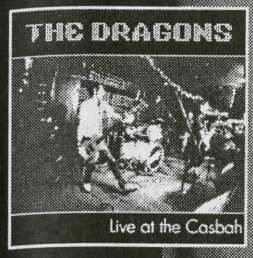
Once again, I repeat that I'm not really into bombing anybody. I always been a piece-loving guy. That's piece, not peace. But if yo absolutely have to, say, fill a large metal storage container full direction-molded explosives and .50" ball bearings, rigged with compressed mercury, flash-point, and impact charge, and then drop from a heavy lifting helicopter on some target, why not make it a ta get that'll do some good? If nothing else, it would provide for a co ple weeks of great news...after they find a few new talking heads replace those lost in the blast. In one fell swoop the country wou be in an uproar. With no new primetime programming to quell th vacuous desperation of the vast audience and help peddle the pro ucts of our consumerist plantation state, an plethora of violence wi medieval intensity may end up breaking out. If so, even Charl Manson would get an envious chuckle out of it as he saw the re lution he'd always dreamt of start coming down the road.

Yours in Cheesus
Richard Tater

DIRTY SMELLY IRRESISTIBLE



B-Movie Rats



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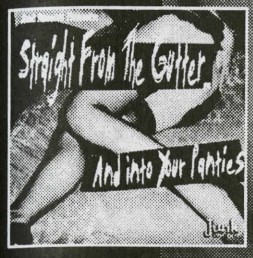

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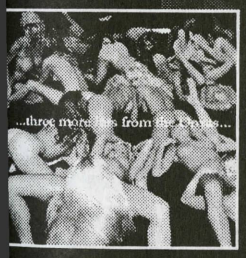

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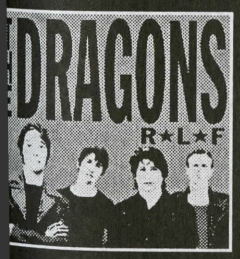

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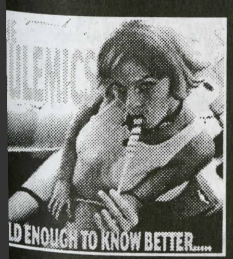

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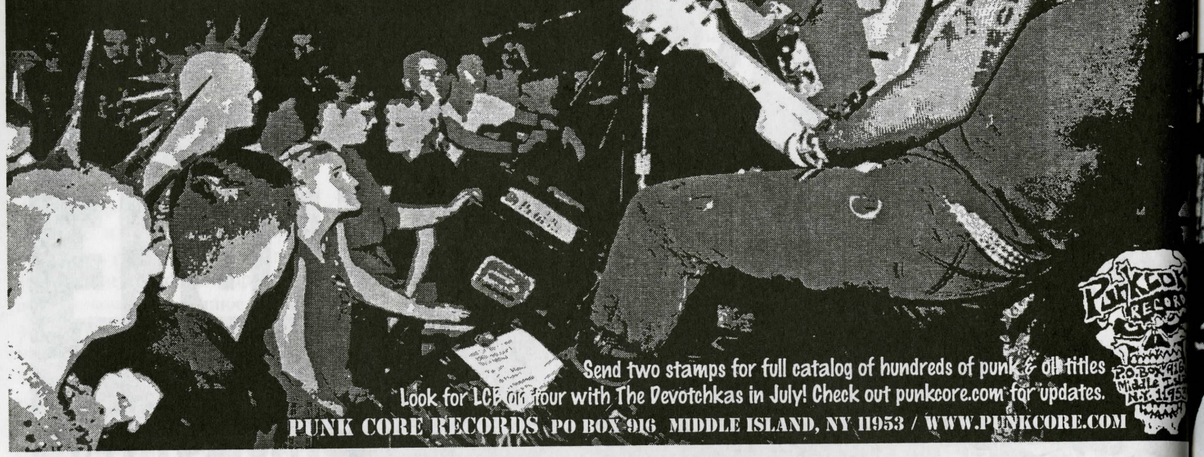

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DEAD



end cruisers

by Josh Rutledge

"I've been down and out and up and down/But I've still managed to breathe/And she's been there all along/To nurture, nurse, and feed/ She's a curse, she's a crime, she's a faith that's blind/She's a want, a lust, a need"

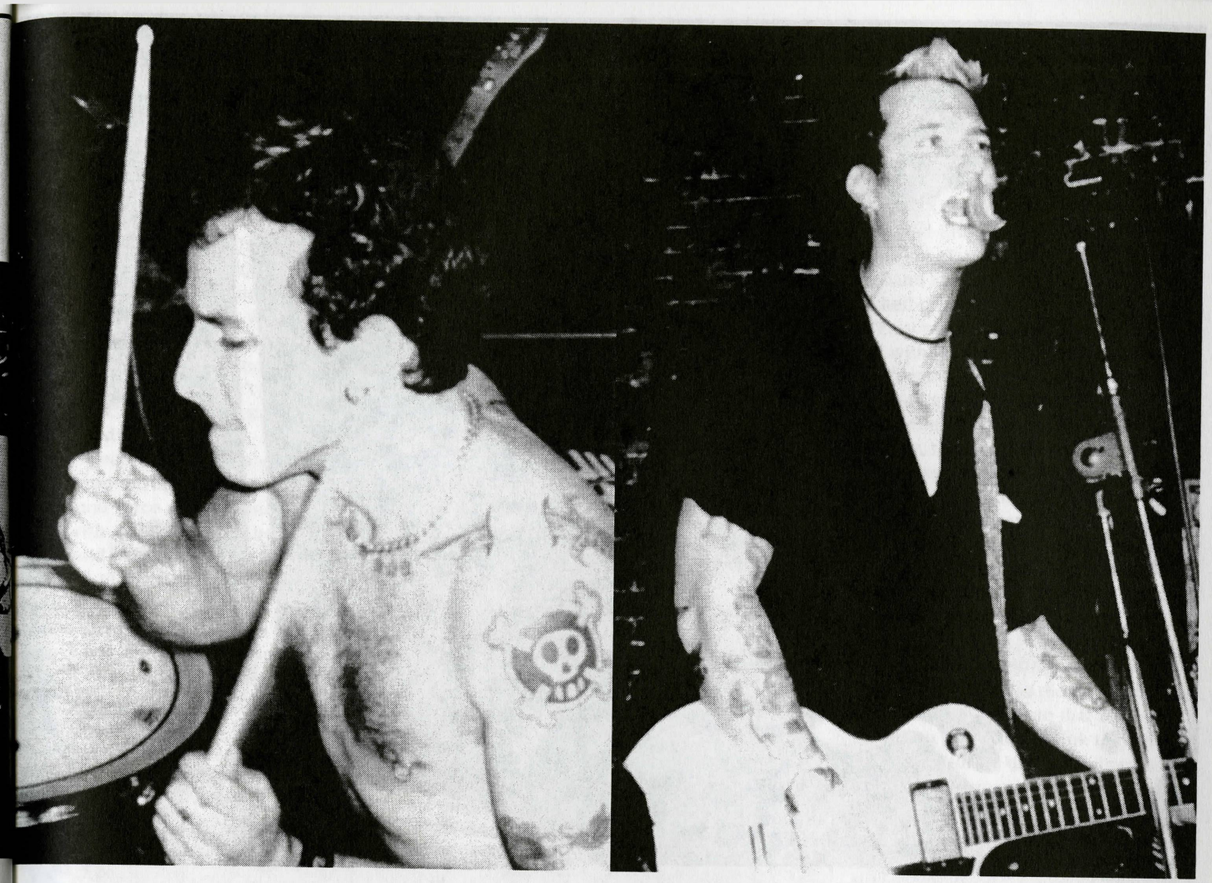
— the Dead End Cruisers, from "All Over Again"

Like all the greatest rock and roll bands, the Dead End Cruisers stimulate thrills.

The Cruisers are soul, swagger, style, passion, guts, and fury all rolled into one fabulously-inspired whole. How wonderful it is that such a band exists! How sad it is that so few have seen the mighty Cruisers in action.

Austin, Texas' Dead End Cruisers are certainly not alone in their obscurity. The currently sparkling state of underground rock and roll remains a criminal-





ly well-kept secret. The likes of the Beat Angels, Dimestore Haloes, Trash Brats, and American Heartbreak may not be destined for fame, fortune, and international adulation. But what a blast their fans are having listening to their explosive, fiery, and powerful rock and roll! The same goes for the Dead End Cruisers' faithful followers, who are now hearing one of the most remarkable American rock and roll bands of recent years beautifully hit its peak.

In February, Unity Squad Records unleashed *The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane*, the Cruisers' second LP. This sophomore album fully captures the essence of the band's energetic, guttural, spirited live show. It's a rock and roll record in the classic sense, as the band clearly draws from 50's rock and roll, early 70's glam rock, and 70's punk influences.

On the strength of fervent playing and fine songwriting, the band is able to avoid the retro trappings that befall so many "classic" punk bands. "The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane" sounds fresh and vital. When it's this good, tried-and-true rock and roll never loses its allure.

The new album establishes the Cruisers as a first-rate rock and roll powerhouse. Reviews of *Deep Six Holiday*, the band's 1998 debut album, were tepid for the most part. The band was frequently pigeonholed in the underground press as either a "street punk" band or as a second-rate Clash rip-off. And although "Deep Six Holiday" was a fantastic album, it probably did not give listeners a complete aural picture of what the Cruisers truly represented. *The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane* makes it evident that the Dead End Cruisers are a band with immense appeal.

"This album is what the Dead End Cruisers are all about," says Cruisers singer/guitarist Neil Curran. "With the first album, Graham (Mills) had only been in the band for a while. We ended up picking and choosing the best of the older songs we had, although there were also some newer songs on there. It (the new album) is certainly a better record as far as production is involved. It's in the same spirit as the first album inasmuch as our take on life, the scene, etc. hasn't really changed. But it is definitely a more mature album. The music we're doing now shows more of our individual personalities and musical interests."

So how do the Cruisers feel about the "street punk" tag?

"We don't want to pigeonhole ourselves," says Curran. "While we're definitely a punk band, I feel we're far removed from 'street punk'. We get the "'77" thing a lot, but I think that's got more to do with my accent than the mus itself. I think categorizing your style of music is a double-edged sword. If you're self-professed Oi! band, for example, you've immediately got an audience, i.e. skinheads. But that might be the only audience you'll ever reach, and it also gives you less room to broaden your mus cal scope. To me, we're just another kind of rock and roll band." "Rock and Roll," continues Curran, "is so diverse that I can't see how we could get bored with it That's why it sucks when some cunt labels you as a 'street band' or something I appreciate that it's necessary in a revie to describe a band for the reader's benef But unless you really do play JUST stree punk, I think it's unimaginative and lazy of the reviewer."

If "Deep Six Holiday" was the albu that showcased the Cruisers' wide mu cal range, "The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane" is the album that showcases the band's ability to integrate its varying influences. To refer to the Cruisers as merely a "street punk band" or a "'77 style punk band" at this point truly *does* seem severely insufficient. This is an outfit that has brought together several disparate musical elements and molded its own identity in the process. The new, more thorough mixture blasts with vigor and flows gorgeously.

Curran points out that the band will continue to grow without abandoning its solid punk rock foundation. "This new album," he says "has, if anything , explored our collective tastes more thoroughly. There are probably some new areas covered on the album...I suppose most obviously the spaghetti western intro and outro. I'm sure the band will continue to change. While I don't think we'll ever lose our punk roots, I think a band that's good can wander down new avenues while keeping its sound cohesive."

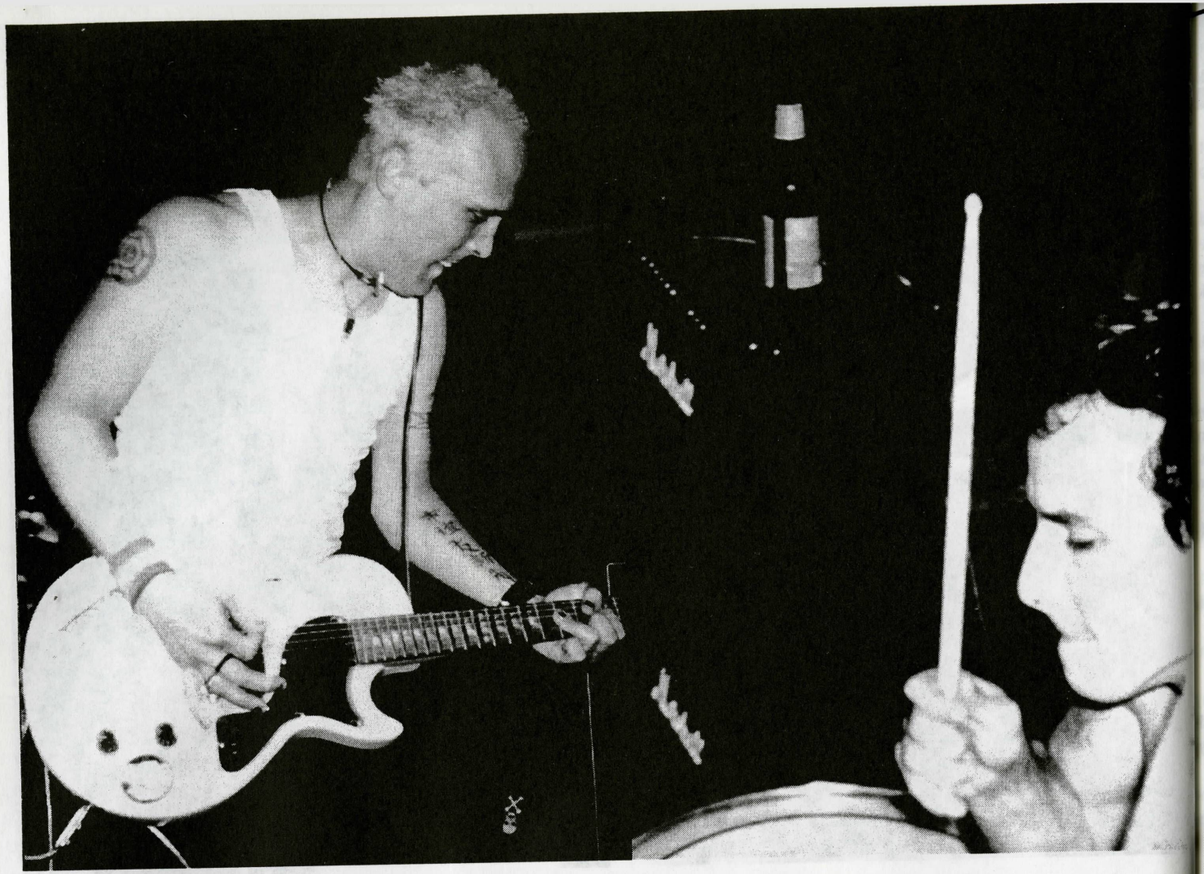
The Dead End Cruisers formed in May of 1994 and unleashed their first EP (*The Suave, The Distant, The Scummy, and The Gay*) a year later. The band has come a long way since that first record (which was released on Austin's Up Yours Records), but said vinyl debut can hardly be considered a weak effort. One spin reveals the band's knack for strong melodies and robust punk riffs. Not long after the recording of their second single (Scooch Pooch Records' *Who's Who*), guitarist Graham Mills joined the Cruisers. With the talented Mills on board, the Cruisers' line-up solidified. Mills, a rock and roll guitarist in the classic sense, is a master of melodic, hooky leads. His tasty guitar heroics accentuated the band's already stellar tunes.

The Cruisers hooked up with TKO Records in 1997. The San Francisco-based punk label released three great titles — the *Friday Nights* EP, *Deep Six Holiday*, and the *Field Operations* EP — for the band over a one-year period. By the end of 1998, the Dead End Cruisers were ready to hit the road and promote their batch of red-hot vinyl.

Sadly, 1999 proved to be a particularly trying year for the Cruisers. The band did three U.S. tours and spent a total of four months on the road. All three tours were poorly-booked disasters. When the band played at all (several gigs fell through completely), they played mostly to minuscule and dispassionate crowds. The Cruisers' excruciating, stifling summer '99 tour nearly broke the band's spirit. The arduous experience took its toll on the Cruisers, and the band is still divided about its future tour plans. "It depends who you ask in the band," says Curran when asked whether the band plans to tour extensively again. "We're not going out again without some guarantees. We weren't expecting much from touring last year. But when you get nothing night after night, it gets old very quickly."

The few rock fans that DID see the Dead End Cruisers on tour last year saw a band that played its guts out night after night. On stage, the band is energy and soul personified. Its sets are sweaty, vibrant, and unquestionably FUN to watch. Depending on who you ask, the live Cruisers are either an impressive force or a sloppy mess. In all likelihood, much depends on which night you see the band. But what never varies is the exuberance and the vigor of a Cruisers' gig.

The band's records are fantastic, but there's no doubt that the Dead End



Cruisers are most in their element when they take the stage. "The studio is a chore," says Curran. "It's great to have the finished product, and you get to fuck around with things you can't do live. But being on stage is what it's all about. That's what's a shame about the current opinion in the band about touring. As cheesy as it sounds, playing live is when we all come alive."

While on tour last summer, the Cruisers recorded two tracks for a split EP on Chris Bradley's Unity Squad Records. The resulting split — a collaboration with Utah's Throwaway Generation — quickly sold out of its first pressing of 1,000 copies following its fall '99 release. Unity Squad then committed itself to the Cruisers' second album, which subsequently was recorded this past winter. The album, recorded by Mark Nathan at Austin's Congress House Studio, is tighter, catchier, and more consistent than its predecessor. Nathan's beefy production gives the tunes the muscle they deserve. Curran's and Mills' guitars rock twice as hard as they did on "Deep Six Holiday". The band's fine rhythm section, drummer Brent Schumacher and bassist Dave Von Hoodlum, also benefits from a fuller, louder sound. The success of the record rests on the strength of the band as a whole: the marriage of powerhouse riffs and contagious beats is nearly impossible to resist.

But it is the tunes themselves that make *The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane* such a delightful blast. Hooky rockers such as "We Won't Go", "Nyquil Sweats", and "Drinkers And Heroes" rip and roar with vivacious energy. Meanwhile, the gorgeous "First Kisses" and "It's Gone" demonstrate the band's refined sense of pop craftsmanship. And new versions of two old single cuts ("Another Night" and the wonderful "Friday Nights") are every bit as potent and poignant as the originals.

The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane is the record that SHOULD establish the Dead End Cruisers as rock and roll heavyweights. And Unity Squad Records, one of underground punk rock's most promising new labels (Up-and-comers the Zillionaires, the Daggers, and the Statiks are already on board), seems intent on making the band its musical centerpiece. Bradley is passionate about the Cruisers and willing to forcefully push them towards the proverbial "next level". "We are extremely excited about wor ing with the Dead End Cruisers," say Bradley. "We are going to sell the sh out of their new record and get them all the press we can because anyone that knows them or has heard them live or on record knows that they deserve it! They're going to get out the road and hopefully play some gr shows with some good bands, and t world will be in the dark about this band no longer!"

"Unity Squad," continues Bradley, not the biggest label in the world. But one thing I will say is that we really g behind the bands that we believe in a work hard for them. We just signed a exclusive distribution agreement with IMD. It's a new distro run by Sonny a Bottlenekk. It is structured in much th same way that Mordam is. Coldfront Records, Pelado Records, and a bunch other great labels are along for the ri on this, too. So it's going to be great distribution of the Cruisers' new recor

Hopefully we will sell this record well enough that they will stick with us for their next one, too. We'll just have to wait and see."

But what happens if the Dead End Cruisers never do "make it"? What do Curran and his band-mates think about the prospect of never hitting that next level? "If we didn't get that big," says Curran, "I would be disappointed because of my belief in our talent and potential. But I certainly wouldn't be embarrassed if this was it. We've all given this a lot of time and energy over the years. And if we don't become really successful, it won't be because of something we didn't do."

The Dead End Cruisers embody the rarest type of rock and roll outfit — the all-around force that can match its sonic thud with wit, grace, and beauty. Catchy tunes and infectious rhythms are only one part of the Cruisers' allure. Sure, the band "rocks". But when one adds intelligence, idealism, and soul to the mix, the remarkably all-embracing appeal of the Dead End Cruisers becomes crystal-clear. Like the Replacements and Social Distortion before them, the Cruisers represent American rock and roll at its finest, the beautiful noise that delights the body, mind, and heart.

But what about those who don't "get it"? If you like the tunes but don't pay attention to the lyrics, are you missing the point? "Some people get it; some don't," says Curran. "It doesn't matter. It's great when a song you've written really touches someone else. But not everyone is into reading all the lyrics. Some people just like a good beat, and I suppose you're doing your job if you can do both."

The Patron Saints of Wheless Lane, like *Deep Six Holiday* before it, is raging collection of punk tunes clearly written from the perspective of a struggling but determined band that finds hope and inspiration in its trials. Curran's lyrical imagery paints vividly sad portraits of beautiful losers, dejected souls, and half-alive dreamers who drown their sorrows at the bar, which provides their sole refuge. At the heart of it all is the band itself, portrayed most ardently by Curran's acerbic pen. Four of the new album's tracks — "We Won't Go", "Contracts And Courting", "All Over Again", and "Drinkers And Heroes" — re-visit the lyrical territory covered on "Deep Six Holiday" tracks such as "Just As Well", "Say Goodnight" and "Around This Town". The songs radiate a ferocious tenacity, as they weigh the frustration of the band's struggles against the elation of the spiritual fulfillment one gets from playing rock and roll. The implied message is that all the adversity is worth the effort in the end. One gets the sense that it MEANS SOMETHING to be a Dead End Cruiser. And even if there's no glory at the end of the road, this band seems to be willing to make one hell of a run for it.

"Personally," says Curran, "I'm in a band with three mates. We're all really good friends aside from the band, and they're all good musicians that pull their weight when it comes to playing. Musically, this band is a pleasure to be in. When times are tough, I know I'll always get a song out of it!" "But," continues Curran, "it's an aggravating belief knowing that we're actually GOOD at what we do. If we knew we sucked, it would be different, although I'm not sure that anybody really knows when they suck. I couldn't throw it all away unless we absolutely weren't getting anywhere. I think we came close at the end of the last tour. But when things are that bad, they just have to get better. I think the new album is a result of that mentality and the determination it inspires." ⊕

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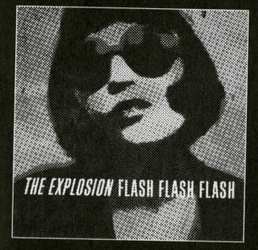

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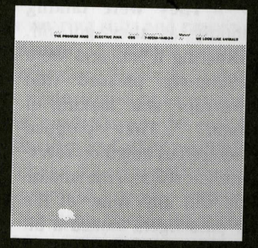

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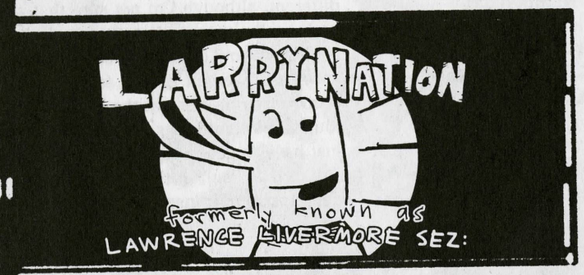
Race Matters

I get on the BART train in downtown Berkeley, headed for San Francisco to see Discount's last show. I find a seat at the back of the last car. The only passenger nearby is a middle-aged African-American man.

He's reading a book and looks happily oblivious to his surroundings. There's nothing particularly remarkable about him except his clothes: he's wearing the kind of threads that black hipsters used to wear when I was a kid. You got the idea that this guy decided what was and wasn't cool somewhere back in 1966, and hadn't seen any reason to change it since.

Which isn't necessarily a bad thing. When I was a teenager, my friends and I spent much of our time and all of our money trying to copy the young black dudes downtown, from the preposterous pompadours right down to the patent leather wingtips.



My reveries about how we got our hair to stand up so high were broken at the next stop when a gang of kids got on. Well, not a "gang" gang, a group, I mean. Four of them, to be precise.

You know how some people sort of slip and slide right by so you know they're there, but don't take any particular notice? While other people's every word, gesture and expression screams "Look at me"? These kids belonged to the latter group.

They were talking loudly as they got on, swearing a lot, and were obviously pleased that everyone was looking at them. They plopped themselves down on several different seats in the middle of the car, and some of the older passengers looked a bit nervous.

But not that much. Punk rock kids are a pretty common sight in Berkeley, have been for years. You can't get on the BART without passing a few of them spare changing on Shattuck Avenue. Berkeley scenesters will hasten to tell you they aren't "the real punks," but then punks are always saying that everyone except their friends and their favorite bands aren't "the real punks," so after a while, you don't bother listening.

I thought about asking this bunch if they were the legendary "real punks," but I was more interested in catching up on my reading. Ju when I had forgotten all about them, I noticed that they'd gotten u and moved to the seats at the back of the car. Right near me.

From the way they were talking and acting, basically loud an obnoxious, I decided I wasn't interested in trying to have a convers tion with them, and that I hoped they weren't on their way to th same gig as I was. At any rate, they'd found somebody else to ta to: the middle-aged black guy across from me.

"Excuse me, sir," says the youngest and smallest of the punk with exaggerated Eddie Haskell-style politeness, "I was wonderi how much you paid for those shoes."

He was pointing at the black and white wingtips, which we actually dead cool, even if I wouldn't have the nerve to wear the myself. The black guy looked surprised, but then smiled self-co sciously and said, "Oh, these old things? Only twenty dollars wh they were new."

The punk kid sneered. "Twenty dollars? I wouldn't pay two d lars for those." His friends giggled and snickered.

It sounded pretty rude to me, but the black dude was barely faze "That's all right, son, I wouldn't sell them to you anyway," he sa and went back to reading his book.

About thirty seconds went by before the kid was at it aga "Excuse me, sir, where did you get those pants?"

"These? Well, it's a funny story, but they actually belong to m girlfriend. We're the same size." More laughter all around, but it d n't sound like friendly laughter. It was obvious that the kid was t ing to wind this guy up. Why, I wasn't quite sure.

It went on like that all the way through Oakland. Every time t black guy would think the kids were finished asking him dumb qu tions and started reading his book, they'd interrupt him again.

Not all the questions were rude. They asked him about his acce a strange combination of British and Southern USA. He'd been b in Trinidad and raised in Alabama. They seemed fascinated, so continued, "Then when I was a young man I moved up north Chicago..."

"Did I ask you for your goddam life story?" one of the pun snarled. The black guy started looking a little nervous. It was cl that the punk kids were going to quit picking on hi and you could almost him counting the number stops until he could get the train.

About thirty seconds went by before the kid was at it again. "Excuse me, sir, where did you get those pants?"

But now we were the tunnel under the Bay there was no getting off fo least five minutes. The k took advantage of this opp tunity to harass him s more. I wondered if I sho step in, but I'll admit I kind of scared. Even tho I've talked to thousand punk kids over the years, some very nice and some very psycho, bunch were definitely on the psycho end of the scale.

Just then the youngest and most smart-mouthed leans over confidential way and asks, "Is it true you guys all got big dicks? H big is yours?" The black guy looked half-angry, half-embarras Me, I was just angry. I felt like punching the stupid kid in the but there *were* four of them, and at least a couple were bigger

me.

I was still calculating the odds when the kid asked, "Sir, I have to ask you, did you ever fuck a white woman?"

The black guy stared back at the kid, and you could tell that he was thinking carefully about what the right answer might be. Finally he said the obvious thing, the exact same thing I would have said, the only thing you really could say under the circumstances, "Son, why you want to bring your mama into this?"

The other punk kids tried but couldn't stop themselves from laughing; the kid who'd just been bested made a big show of how angry and insulted he was, and how the old guy had better give him a dollar to make up for it. He looked for his mates to back him up, but they got up and shuffled away into another part of the car. The one young punk kept up his barrage of threats and insults till the old guy got off at the first stop in San Francisco, nervously looking over his shoulder to make sure he wasn't being followed.

Okay, stop right here. Before you start writing letters to *MRR* demanding that something be done about racism in the punk scene, let me reassure you that I made the whole thing up. That's right, it never happened.

No, that's not quite true either. Actually, it did happen, but a few of the details were different. For one thing, the old guy was wearing different clothes, Converse sneakers and tight black jeans. For another thing, he was white. For a third thing, he was me.

And the white punk kids were actually black gangsta kids, complete with $200 Nikes and pants baggy enough to fit most of their families in there with them.

Right about now half of you will either be breathing a sigh of relief that your fellow punks weren't really harassing a defenseless middle-aged black guy or thinking, "Oh, that's no big deal, Livermore, you probably deserved it for stereotyping young black men and the way your white male capitalist culture has criminalized and oppressed a whole generation."

Jeff merely singled out one particular subculture for perfectly legitimate criticism, and somehow Arwen interprets that as dismissing all young black males as "idiots or worse."

"Yeah," someone else will be chiming in, "how dare you complain about a little aggravation when those young men have to live with racism and poverty and oppression every day of their lives?"

Well, racism and oppression, maybe, but definitely not poverty. As I noted, each of them was wearing shoes that cost more than my entire wardrobe. And these kids from the projects, either. Though they affected ghetto accents, they kept slipping back into more conventional English, and it was obvious that they were from a middle class background. Anyway, there were at least half a dozen other African-Americans in that BART car, and none of them were wearing hip hop gangsta-style clothes or picking on random passengers.

These were some of the thoughts going through my head when I heard Jeff Bale being denounced by the thought police over at *MRR* for daring to make rude comments about the clothes and attitudes of young black gangsta kids. An anonymous letter writer called Jeff's opinion "blatent [sic] fucking racism," and co-editor Arwen Curry was only slightly more restrained when she accused Jeff of "[dismissing] young black males with the wave of his hand as idiots or something worse."

The only "blatent fucking racism" I could see here was on the part of *MRR*, however. It's not Jeff, it's Arwen who's lumping all young black males together as a single entity. Jeff merely singled out one particular subculture for perfectly legitimate criticism, and somehow Arwen interprets that as dismissing all young black males as "idiots or worse."

I guess I could read this one of two ways. Either Arwen is of the opinion that all young black males wear gangsta-style clothes and exhibit racist, misogynistic attitudes (if so, she should get out of the house more often), or she's from the new (well, not so new; left over from the 70s) school of radical identity politics, in which any criticism of any person of color is treated as racism.

It's not, of course, racism to criticize white people, whether as individuals, groups, or the whole damn race. It would be a rare issue of *MRR* that didn't see someone moaning about such typically white subcultures as "jocks," "frat boys," "rednecks," "goths," "posers," "preppies," etc. etc.. One seemingly sincere anarchist even enthused over how she and her friends at the Seattle protests had surrounded and terrorized anybody who was wearing a suit.

So if it's okay to make value judgments about people based on how they dress (positive as well as negative ones; most *MRR* readers would be more likely to start up a conversation with someone wearing "punk" clothing than a cowboy suit), how is it suddenly racism to make value judgments if the individuals being judged just happen to be black?

Of course how people dress is only part of a whole package of values by which we judge them. Given a choice of walking down a street occupied by young black men wearing suits and carrying briefcases, or a street full of white gangbangers, most sane people would choose the one with the black businessmen. Similarly, if the choice were walking past of crowd of black businessmen or a crowd of black gangbangers, we'd still choose the businessmen, no matter how much we might profess to loathe capitalism and all its manifestations.

We also make snap decisions involving our personal safety or even our life or death based on how a person talks, walks, gestures, even by the way he or she looks at us. We don't always get it right, but mostly we do, at least if we've lived long enough to become familiar with our environment. It's generally called "street sense," and it's based on a combination of common sense and experience.

Racism has no place here. If someone is a white racist, he will automatically feel safer among white people; given the choice between black businessmen and white gangbangers, he will (stupidly) put himself at risk from the gangbangers. Similarly, a young black man might, fearing or hating all white people, choose to walk down the street where the black gangbangers were instead of the one with white businessmen. (Please note: I don't need to be informed

HIT SQUAD

that businessmen also commit crimes; the point is that those crimes don't usually include armed robbery and assault.)

Okay, so far all I'm putting forth is the standard liberal proposition that we have to judge all people by their individual merits (or lack thereof), without regard for skin color, but with regard to the way they act, talk, dress, and generally comport themselves. As I said, simple common sense.

Where it gets trickier is when it becomes necessary to draw conclusions about a whole race or culture. In standard liberal ideology, of course, we don't do this, but as I pointed out already, almost everyone, regardless of color, feels free to make generalizations about white people. In fact, few among us are more diligent about criticizing white society than white liberals and radicals.

As an example, I give you Scott Soriano, normally one of the voices of sanity over in *MRR*-land. In his column in issue #201, he enters into a veritable orgy of self-flagellation (needless to say, Scott is white) which starts out when he realized he is paranoid about driving through a poor black neighborhood, and escalates to:

By virtue of my skin color I am The Man or at least his representative. Because of the crime of racism - institutional and structural - my race has made the reality of counter attack both a reasonable and righteous opposition. If I punch another person repeatedly and without mercy, can I not expect a counter-attack?

I'd venture to say that Scott has seldom if ever punched a black man, let alone "repeatedly and without mercy," so just what is he on about here? What has Scott ever personally done to oppress black people in general or in particular? And yet he seems prepared to accept a fist to the face or boot to the head as his rightful due.

He goes on:

But realizing the shitty role white people have played in black/white relations and fearing black people are two different things. The former is acknowledging reality. The latter is succumbing to the very racism I feel guilty about.

No it's not, Scott. The latter is also acknowledging reality. Let me put it this way: how do you know that black people are the victim of racism? Two main ways, I'd say: your personal experience and statistical evidence. You only need to walk onto the streets of any American city to personally experience the less than ideal conditions in which many black people live, and statistical evidence abounds to back up those perceptions: more black men in prison than college, educational levels, incomes, life expectancies all lower for blacks than any other ethnic group apart from Native Americans.

But if it's valid to infer racism from that kind of evidence, why isn't it also valid to infer that you're more at risk in a black neighborhood when most people you know who've been mugged were the victim of black muggers in a black neighborhood? That's personal experience for most people, regardless of race. And the statistical evidence backs it up: crime reports for a recent year show that black people, who are 12% of the population, were charged with 61% of the robberies, 55% of the murders, and 43% of the rapes,

It doesn't make for pleasant reading, but those are the facts. Ignoring them or denying them won't do anything more to stop racism than Scott letting himself be beat up or robbed in expiation of the white man's guilt. You can (and should) put forth all sorts of theories and solutions for the problem, but first things first: you've got to acknowledge that the problem exists.

Here, try this quote on for size:

Anderson ... writes that "black males exercise a peculiar hegemony over the public spaces, particularly at night or when two or more of them are together." Wearing what Anderson terms their 'urban uniform,' consisting of sneakers, gold chains, sunglasses, and portable radios, these young men can often be seen laughing loudly, singing, cursing, or discussing their fights, robberies, and sex lives. Not only do they show little concern for others, Anderson notes, but their behavior seems designed to intimidate and terrorize.

Where'd that come from? A KKK web site, maybe? *MRR*'s paraphrase of Jeff Bale "dismissing black males with a wave of his hand?" Wrong on both counts. It's an Asian sociologist discussing the work of a black anthropologist. Now is it all right?

Apart from the deterioration of the environment, racial and cultural relations might be the single most important challenge facing American society. And yet most people are afraid to speak openly and plainly on the subject for fear of being branded a racist or a sellout. A sort of intellectual thuggery dominates. Can anyone in his right mind envision Al Sharpton or Khalil Muhammad or Mumia Abu Jamal as a worthy successor to Martin Luther King? The white revolutionary fantasists at *MRR* or the truly ludicrous Cambridge journal *Race Traitor* can.

The latter publication, largely the work of white intellectuals, advocates that we end racism by "abandoning our whiteness." What do they mean by this? That we all start listening to hip hop and writing graffiti and dressing and acting in antisocial ways. Remember, these are white people defining for us how one is "supposed" to go about being "more black." In their minds, the only valid black people are the thuglike ones, the kind who accosted me on the BART train. The black guy in a suit on his way to the office, the black medical student, the black teacher or police officer or train driver, in other words, the great majority of the black population, don't count. They're not interesting or relevant because they fail to live up to the stereotypes set out by a tiny handful of white "radicals."

Okay, the kids on the train didn't do me any real harm. Kids of all races occasionally act obnoxious and try to pick fights or annoy adults. Maybe those kids will go on to live very happy and productive lives. But if they keep acting in that stereotypical, hip hop gangsta style, their chances of doing so are greatly reduced. Sooner or later they will pull a similar stunt on the wrong person, an undercover cop, for example, or a Bernie Goetz (for you young readers, he was a New York City subway passenger who, when five young black men tried to rob him, pulled out a gun and started shooting).

Things could even have gone wrong with me; if I'd gotten more scared or more angry, it could have turned into a fight or a violent mugging. If so, and they'd gotten caught, there go four more young black men into the maw of the criminal justice system. And for what?

I was a gangbanger myself for most of my teen years. Most of the kids I hung out with then are dead; a couple are still in prison. And none of us were even black. Nobody romanticized our behavior, nobody explained away our random brutality and robberies as "an understandable reaction to the poverty and oppression of working class life." No, they said we were assholes, and they were right. They said if we didn't change our ways, we'd end up dead or in prison, and they were right. Most of my friends didn't change their ways, and guess what...?

It's true that the average black person has a harder row to hoe than the average white person. A lot harder. Things have improved greatly since the days of slavery and segregation, but they've still got a long way to go. But making excuses for, even romanticizing antisocial behavior will do absolutely nothing to help alleviate the effects of racism. If anything, it will worsen and perpetuate racism.

Until we can offer praise or criticism for any person or group of people without having to consider what color they are, we have not conquered racism. Until we can offer the same opportunities *and* the same responsibilities to people of all races, we are inviting disaster. Lumping all black people together the way *MRR* does, the way *Race Traitor* does, the way "progressive" white intellectuals do, is the most perniciously racist trend of our time. It's more dangerous than nonsense groups like the KKK or the White Aryan Resistance, who virtually nobody takes seriously anymore.

I've taken a long time to write this column, chosen my words carefully, taken great pains to put my thoughts forth clearly, and yet I know in advance that some readers will derive nothing from them but the conclusion that I too am a racist. I'm prepared to take that chance, prepared if necessary to be abused and called names, because this subject is too vital to be dominated by those who shout the loudest and think the least.

In 1967 I was privileged to hear Martin Luther King speak. It brought tears to my eyes - and still can today - because he was calling out to all of us to be more than we had been before, better than we had ever dreamed we could be. He was challenging us to live up the ideals that America claimed to stand for, and he united the people of this country in a way that they had seldom been united before and never have been since. In the precious few years that he lived and worked, he held a mirror up to America and said, "Is this who you really want to be?"

Because of him, millions of Americans looked at themselves in a way they never had before, and said, "No, we can be better than that." You know what? We are better than that, and we've already proved it. There is no longer a single legal barrier, and fewer and fewer social barriers, to any black person setting out in pursuit of any honorable goal. Within my own lifetime, we've gone from legal American apartheid to one of the most racially egalitarian societies the world has ever known.

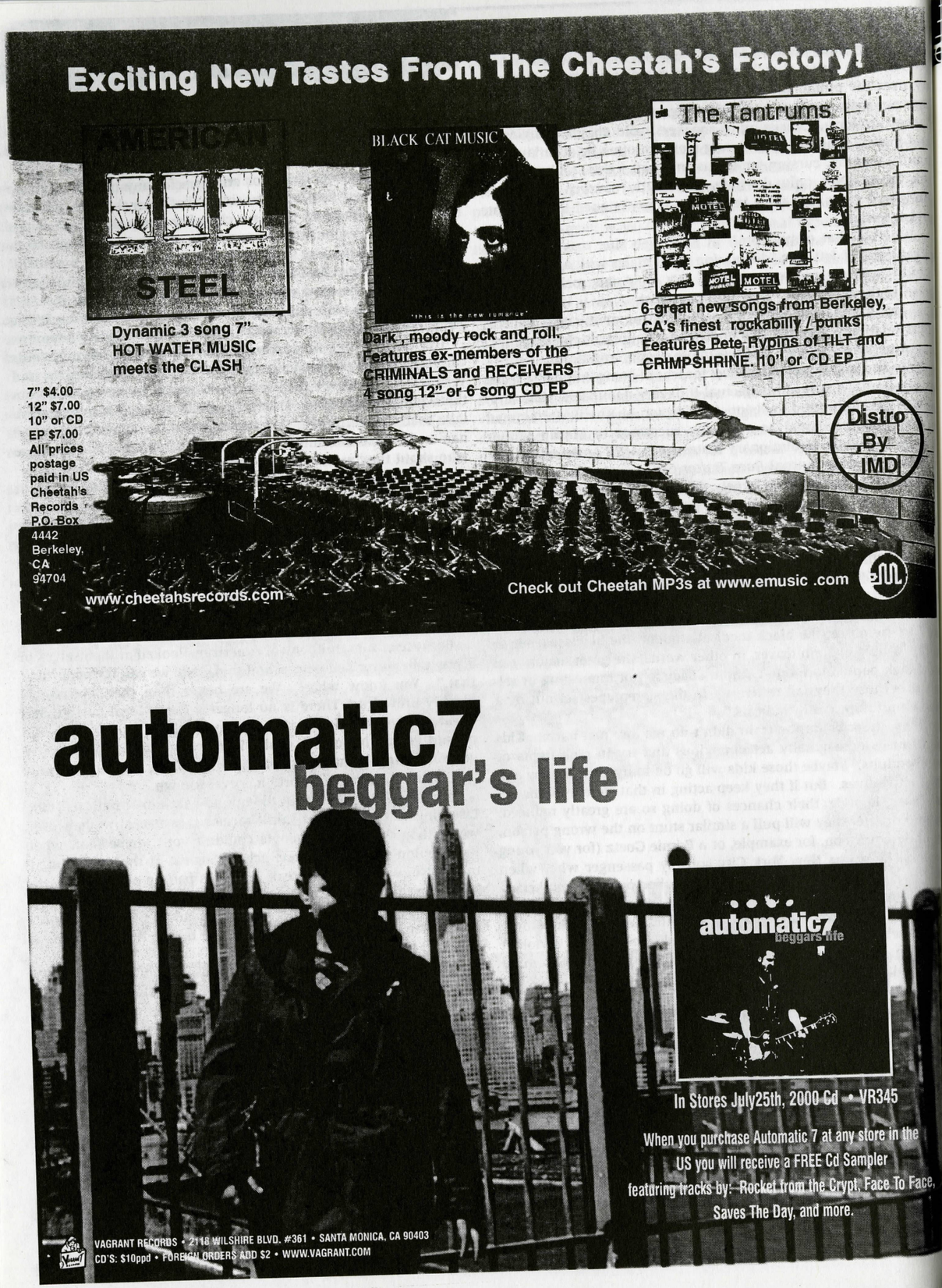
You would never guess it, though, to hear most "radicals" talk. Listening to them, you'd think racism is worse now than ever, worse than when black people couldn't vote, worse than when they couldn't go to the same schools or eat at the same restaurants. No, we shouldn't break our arms patting ourselves on the back, but enormous progress has been made, thanks to the courage and sacrifice of Americans of all colors who were willing to put their bodies and their lives on the line in the cause of freedom and justice.

They were inspired by the dream of Martin Luther King, by his idea that a man should be judged "not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character." They didn't march and go to jail and get beaten up, even killed for the rights of bullies and thugs of any color. They weren't working for a world where there were different standards of behavior for one race than another; they were working for a world in which race simply wouldn't matter anymore.

Obviously we haven't gotten there yet. Whole books are still being written on why not. Before this column risks spilling over into book length, I'll stop, even though I could go on and on, probably will in future columns. If I had the answers, I'd tell you, but mostly I've got questions, questions I'll keep asking no matter how uncomfortable or against the grain of contemporary political thought they might be. I hope and trust that you'll do the same. +

LARRY LIVERMORE





"90% of everything is shit." —Sturgeon's Law

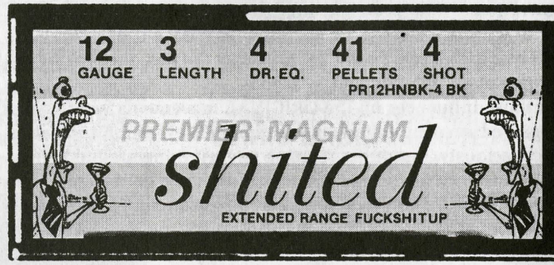
Ted Sturgeon was right. At least 90% of everything out there is shit, and usually the percentage is a lot higher. The reason that at least nine tenths of everything you encounter in the world is worthless crap is because of a lack of true creativity. Many people are without much imagination or originality — they spend most of their free time on the couch watching TV — so if they do ever make something, they often just imitate. This is also true in the world of music, which one might suppose to be a creative enterprise.

An imitator with some creativity will create an imitation which is vital and vibrant and interesting in its own right. Examples of this are the US Bombs doing the Clash, or Hot Water Music imitating Embrace. In both cases the bands project enough of themselves into their projects to make the music come alive. Bands of this type happen because someone in the band is in love with the bands being imitated — truly in love — and the result is a labor of love. But in these cases the love has been applied and focused into an expert recreation with a lot of hard work, much of it the mental sort where a clear understanding of the object of adoration is obtained, distilled, and applied. This sort of band does not suck, and is not really part of the 90 percentile of caca-oids.

Then there are those other guys. I'm not naming names. I could, and if I did I'd have hundreds of very angry young men looking to kick my ass. But kicking my ass wouldn't magically make them and their lame bands suddenly wonderful. These are unoriginal bands, many of which follow trends. We've all seen successive waves of trends go through the underground, imitative trends like NY hardcore, funkpunk, speedmetal, or later ones like melodicore, or that icky, mindless, fast, shallow pop punk which is the punk equivalent of third-wave ska. Here in SoCal the big trend is currently punk rock'n'roll. Most trendy bands are unknown, very young, and very hungry for some sort of attention. But some are older, experienced players who are looking to sell records by jumping on a hot trend and releasing an album played quite tastily, often in the hopes of getting at least mid-sized label attention, if not a record contract from a major. If I named any names here, several people would put out a different sort of contract...on me!

The older bands who do this are just whoring themselves — you know who you are! I'm not talking about only a song or two on their latest full-length, while the remainder of the CD is in the band's usual style. No, that's often just a case of a band hearing a new style from other bands they gig with and going, "Gee I never tried to write a song like that, I wonder if I could?", then sitting down and proving they can. No, the bands who are whoring themselves change their entire style of music, and release CDs that sound nothing like their old music. Sometimes these older bands succeed in getting the recording contract; an example from outside of our scene is Goldfinger.

Then there are the younger bands. I feel sort of sorry for them. They are such ignorant puppies that I find it impossible to hate them, while at the same time I loathe what they are doing. I see these young punk'n'roll cloners opening gigs all around LA these days. They manage to play the punk'n'roll style well enough be recognizable, but their songwriting is so awful that I usually retreat to another part of the club or go outside so that I won't have to hear their crap. I invented a word for this sort of band a while back; you might even have heard it somewhere else by now, since I've been making use of it quite a lot during the past year: "cloneabee". It was quite an easy word to create — I just spliced clone onto wannabee. It wouldn't surprise me one bit



if a dozen other people out there also invented the same word independently of one another, since it's a word that the world needs very badly.

There are two problems with imitation. First, people who are imitating because they can't come up with an original creation of their own are usually too stupid to grasp the motivation behind the style. By motivation, I mean that there are both philosophical ideas and emotions behind every style of music. Angry people and/or politically-oriented people rarely play happy Caribbean ska, for instance, because ska is intellectually shallow and mindlessly cheerful — sort of the Odie of music (a Garfield the Cat reference). Angry people usually create angry music. Cheery people create cheery music. It's obvious as hell that a person's emotional state will influence what they write, if it's something THEY are writing rather than something they are slavishly imitating. But if they are only imitating others the results can be pretty bleak, and occasionally unintentionally funny. A person who is bored trying to write something angry ends up sounding pretentiously self-important instead. And a discerning listener will notice fairly quickly that there's something about their songs that just sounds WRONG.

Angry people and/or politically-oriented people rarely play happy Caribbean ska, for instance, because ska is intellectually shallow and mindlessly cheerful .

Adherents of various philosophies will create music in line with the ideas they hold dear. An example of that is the influence of Dada in punk rock. Dada was an artistic and literary movement

which employed destructive street theater and chaotic imagery with the intention of annihilating unwanted elements of society, especially militarism. Many punk bands express this very same set of ideas through their music without realizing that they absorbed it from the hippies, who got it from the beat writers, who got it from the surrealists, who learned it from the Dada movement. Other influences on punk music have been the ideas of the Situationists and Existentialists. Most original movements within punk, especially the hardcore movement which germinated in '79 and '80, then exploded from '81 to '84, did not occur as a result of consciously incorporating these philosophical and artistic ideas. Rather, the hardcore movement was a product of its own era. The HC bands would react to social conditions and the discomforts of their own lives by adapting the aforementioned ideas, which had filtered down through popular culture and thence been absorbed through reading and watching TV, fueled by the rage they felt from their experiences at home and in school.

And those influences on the ORIGINAL movements were often unrecognized even by the people in them. They weren't usually acting consciously, but rather reacting to everything around them. A few, for instance in some of the art bands, had a deliberate artistic agenda. Most didn't. Therefore, latecomers attempting to clone the style ten or twenty years afterwards were not imbedded in quite the same cultural context, and therefore were and are not influenced by the same ideas. Thus clonabees usually haven't a clue what the bandwagon they've jumped aboard is all about, or where the hell it's going; they jumped on because everyone else did. Music (if you can call it that) which is created (if you can call that "creation") in this manner is boring, lackluster, and lifeless. It might succeed in getting the band members a bit of pussy from vapid women who are even more clueless than themselves, but it will not produce anything worth listening to.

A second problem is the negative effect on the band members themselves. Time spent imitating the sound of the moment is time not spent jamming with one another and trying out new things based on one another's quirks and unique personalities — which alone allows bands to develop their own style. A band which goes their own way, plays whatever the hell they want, writes whatever comes into their heads, and emerges from their semi-isolation with the resulting material will almost inevitably create something worthwhile and original. Bands which manage to develop a weird sound all their own RULE. Recent examples are the Conservatives of Cleveland, Ohio (not the Long Beach band), and locals such as Tongue and Shoegazer. Such bands are the exception rather than the rule in punk circles these days. Twenty years ago original bands with original sounds were much more prevalent. Of course, there are a lot more punk bands now than there were then. It's sad to see that an increase in the number of bands has not apparently resulted in an increase in the number of creative people — if anything, the reverse is true.

Remember, band people: if you are a clonabee, you suck. Instead of sucking, go your own way. Do your own thing. Do not slavishly imitate others. (I'm not talking about "liberating" a riff or chord progression here or there, everyone does that!) Be yourself, and if you don't know who you are yet, maybe you should go back into the garage for a year or two and find out.

—ShitEd, Tujungatrashland, Californication



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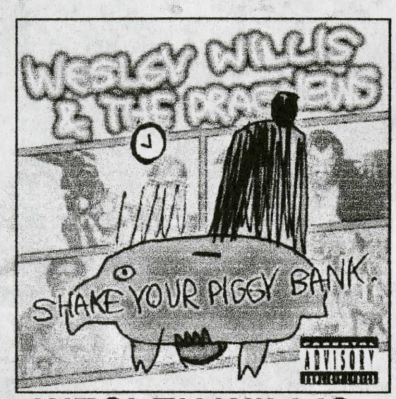

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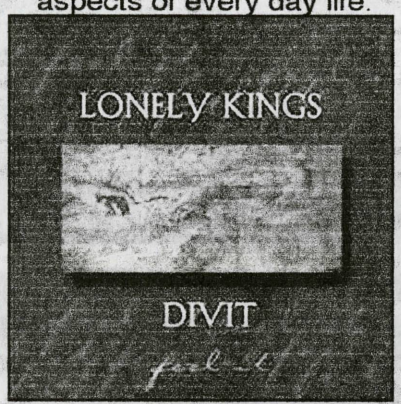

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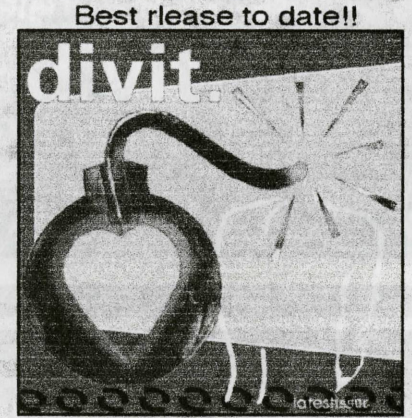

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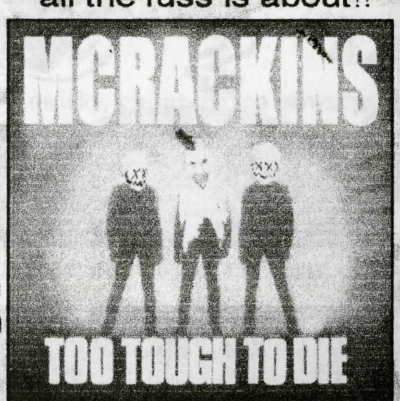

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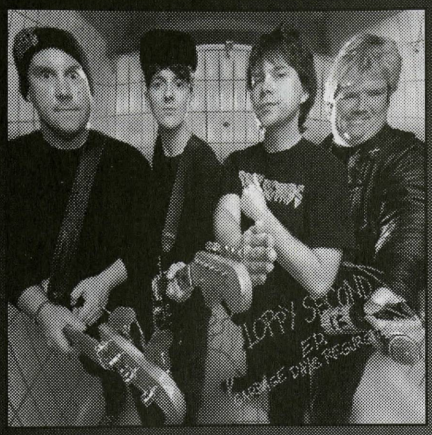

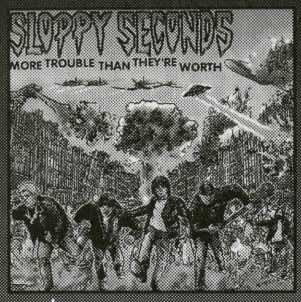

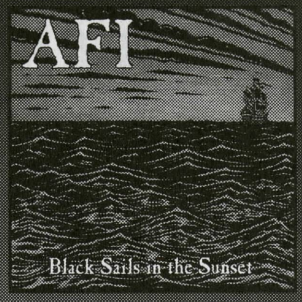



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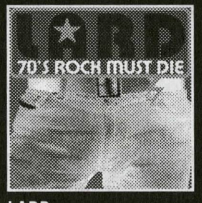

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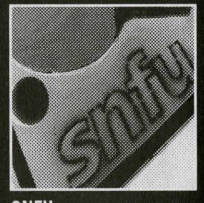

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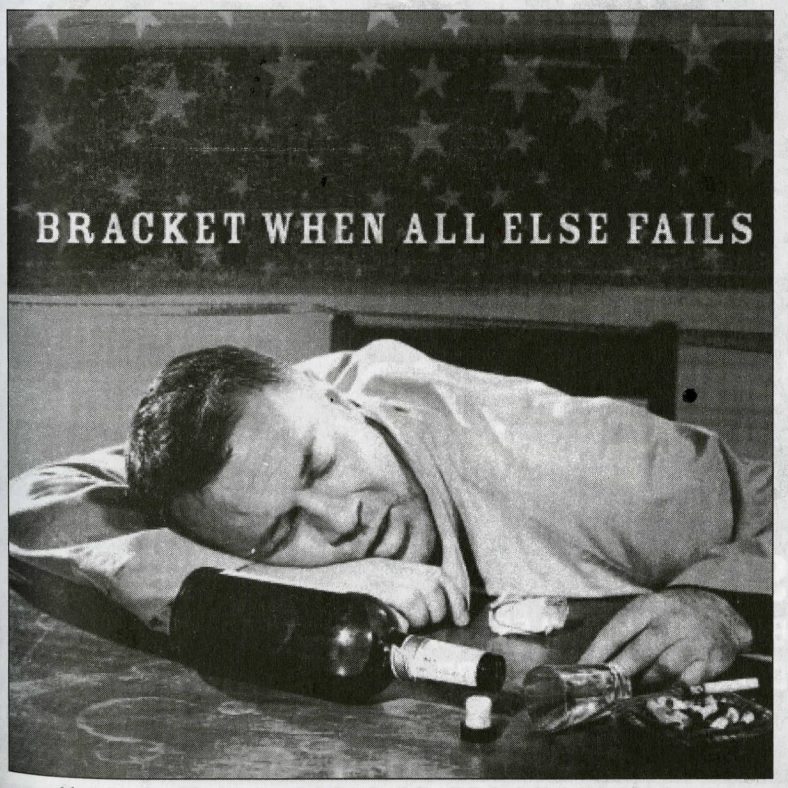

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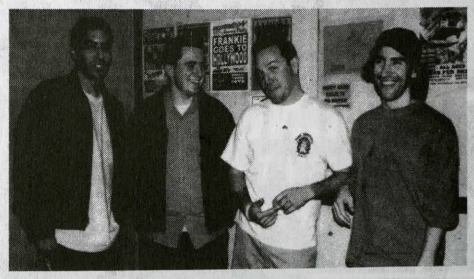

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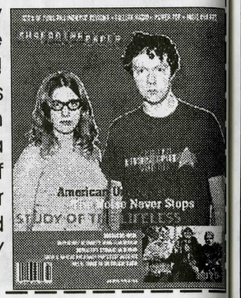
If you've enjoyed my columns in Hit List you might want to know that I also do my own fanzine called **Shredding Paper**. It's keeping me so busy that I can't find time to do Hit List columns anymore. I wish I could do both, but there's only 24 hours in a day. My zine is a quarterly with record reviews by the ton, including many indiepop, surf and punk things you won't find elsewhere. If you want the latest issue send 4 bucks to Shredding Paper, PO Box 2271, San Rafael, CA 94912.

I'd like to take advantage of my remaining space to say that the so called punk scene, or any scene, doesn't need Yellow Journalism! There is a Bay Area newsprint fanzine which some people refer to as the" teenage conformist loser's guide to fake rebellion". I used to write for the magazine in it's better days, when it was run by a friend. Sadly he died of cancer, and the magazine was inherited by a corporation who fired me for standing up for some of the principles that my friend had based the zine on. Although this publication preaches to naive kids about being "anti-racist" and "anti-sexist", the truth is that the Board of Directors who fired me was all white and all male. These people are despicable phonies, and sleazy beyond belief. In a recent issue they published a budget for their publication to convince their naive readers that they are non-profit. They claimed that they spent $11,000 buying records. The truth is that for that much you could buy every record they reviewed all year. In reality more than 90% of what they review comes free in the mail. In addition, they make thousands of dollars selling the records that come in that they don't review. Some individuals are lining their pockets off what used to be a community resource. These people act like they *are* the punk scene, when a reality check might remind them that they simply inherited the zine when someone died. Since then the magazine has been dispensing a monthly dose of hate and lies victimizing innocent people. I guess if they had inherited a gun they would have gone around shooting people. When innocent people were victimized in the Seattle WTO riots, they proudly ran it as their cover story, as if to take credit for it somehow! A more thoughtful publication might have had concerns about aligning themselves politically with a neo-Nazi like Pat Buchanan. Then again a more thoughtful publication might not be running columns preaching ethnic hate, and might not be publishing a column where that writer has to hide behind a pseudonym. A responsible collection of human beings might also know better than to publish anonymous letters attacking their competitors. The zine I'm talking about has seen their sales drop over 50%, for good reason! Let's all work together to get that figure up to 100%. There are plenty of good DIY publications, so don't buy a bad corporate one just because it looks "punk".



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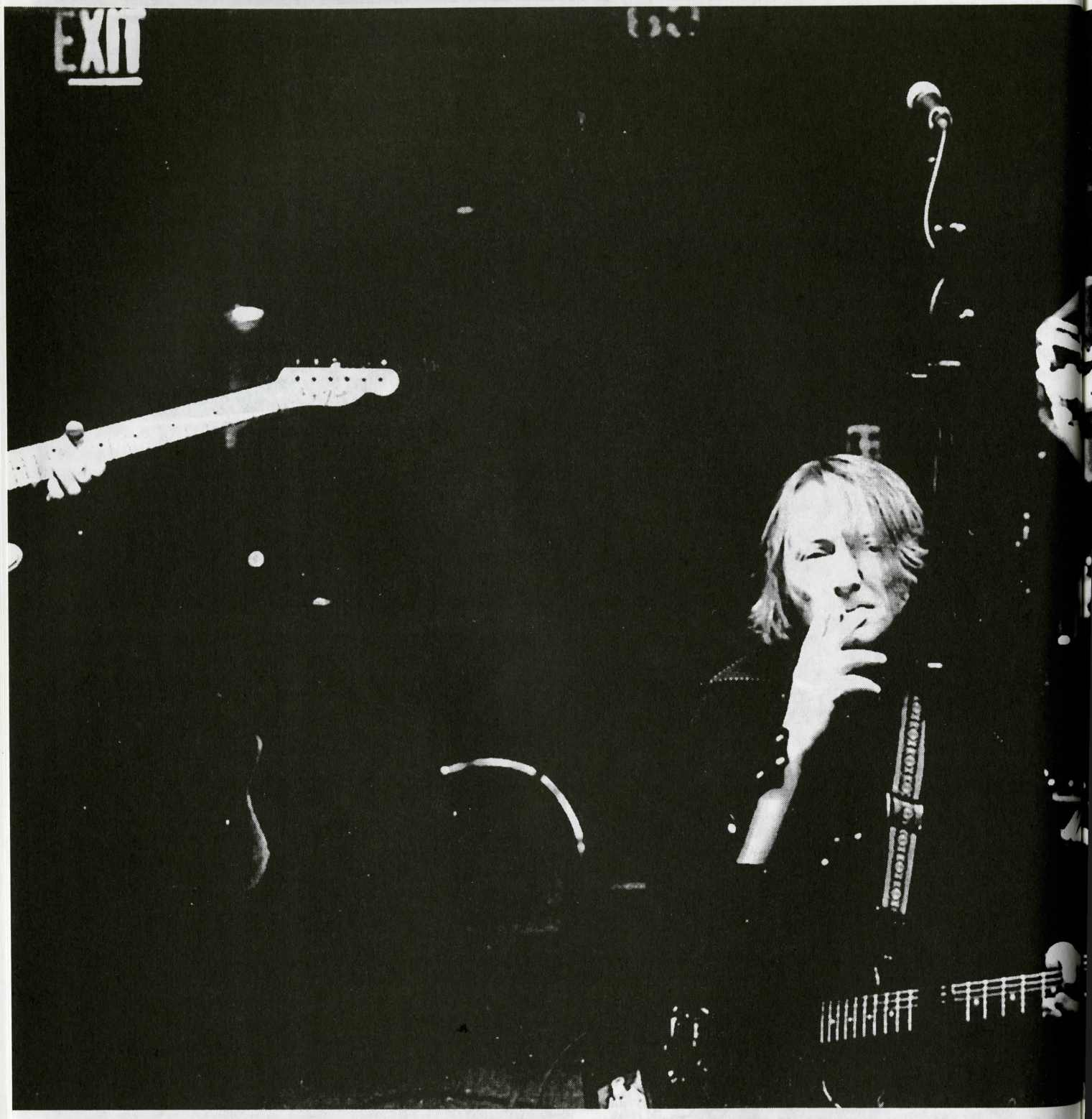
HERE'S

THE SOVINES!

INTERVIEW WITH BOB STARKER BY DIMITRI MONROE

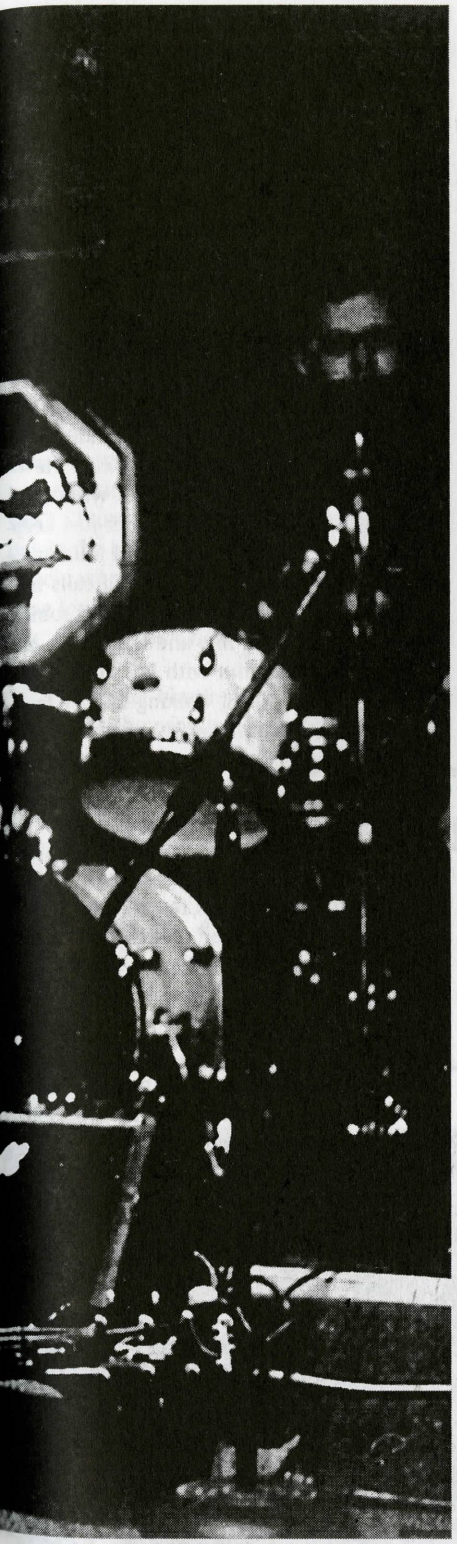
Obviously, Rocknroll was invented by a bunch of hip-spades and hick-hellseekers, and Gospel-groomed, Whiskey-ruined, defiant freakers with too much light in their eyes, and the best stuff is often made by desperadoes for desperadoes. Nowadays, it's all commodified, and everybody picks the music that matches the clothes they wanna wear. I call this not punk-rock, not glam-rock, or rebellion, I call this Image-Purchasing and Who Cares? All the supposedly meanest Gangsta Rap is all obsessed with Consumerism and Name Brand Threads and Status Symbols. The Punk-Goes-Yeeha!-Redneck-Metal scene is tired as hell, and mainly about dressin' up in the right bowling shirt with the flames on it, and peergroup-permission to wear cowboy hats again, riding in the long shadows of the 80's hairmetal cowboys. (Yawn!) The leading lights of the Nouveau glam/punk movement brag about their desire to play ball with Music Industry Weasels, making music with all the sincerity and ambition of Warrant. I mean, c'mon, are these guys trading on Flesh For Lulu melody-lines they hope you punx forgot, covering Bryan Adams songs fer chrissakes, and gettin' all lit up again about opening up fer the Famous Fratboys of Rap-Metal?

Then, there's the Dad-Rock of the Aging-Alkies in the Insurgent Country/No Depression Set, and well, being as how I'm awaiting the birth of my third child any minute, that kinda describes me, and despite my own personal distrust of most of these "No Depression", college-educated, trendy, Uncle Tupelo-derivative fake country bands, at least there's some attention paid in some of these sub-genres — like power-pop and hard-country — to songwriting and fire(!) that's sadly missing in much of today's 1-2-3-4 punk. My pals, the Sovines here kinda bridge the gap — 'blacksheeps amisdt much of the yuppie Torch 'N' Twang crowd, cuz they scare 'em live, with an Iggy-like commitment/disregard for their own physical safety. I love 'em, cuz like their forebearers — all the misfit drunkards and lonesome fuckups of the True Rocknroll Pantheon — these fellas pen songs from the bottom of their bottles with Soul and Reckless Abandon. Me and Sovines lead singer, Bob Starker, were unlikely Boston



room-mates during my Nitemare Years — "the Golden Age of Blackin' Out" — and when he sings, "Can't think of any place to stop on my way down, " in his song, "Whiskey Bottle Now", I know EXACTLY what he means. . . In-between drunken dramas with our motley assemblage of former housemates, I'd turn Starker onto the Humpers and the Joneses and the Beasts of Bourbon, and he would hip me to all kindsa shit — like X, Buck Owens, Ian Hunter and Jason & the Scorchers. When he moved back to Ohio, he hooked-up with these middle-American Badasses Ed Mann and Matt Benz — who shares Bob's talent for capturing picturesque, heartwrenching, scenarios in song, as evidenced in his "Lights of a Faraway Town". Together, they created the Sovines — part Lonesome Trucker Balladmongers, part Raw-knuckled Raunch, All Genuine Roots-influenced Rocknroll filtered through hard country, heartfelt pop and sleazy punk. If you're anything at all like me, I know how thirsty you are for a beer and a cigarette and a dbl. shot of the "We Mean it, Maan" real stuff, so check 'em out even if you don't like their trousers, and particularly if you're a fan of the Rolling Stones, Replacements or Outlaw Country (Steve Earle, etc).

-J. D. Monroe, Burntout Recluse



1) Who does what?
Lessee... I write, sing & play sax & guitar. Matt Benz writes & plays lead guitar (thank gawd, 'cause I'm a *shitty* guitarist) Ed Mann plays bass, sings some backups, and penned "Fallin' in Love with Every Woman I See", which'll be on the next disc. Gene Brodeur plays drums, and I gotta say right here and now that he's done a *killer* job of learning all our stuff and hittin' the ground runnin' after our original drummer freaked out and split. Kudos, Gene.

2) Origins of the Sovines...
Oh man... Back in late 95 Matt & I were both looking to start a band, and we just sorta wound up looking together. We had a lot in common, we were both into Trucker songs, punk stuff, old country, bad catchy pop tunes, etc... We got Pete, our drummer, by placing an ad in the paper. He was kind of a shaky drummer at the time, but he seemed real eager, *and* he was building a studio in his garage, so, you know... A few weeks later we were bitching to Don Hartman (from the late great Gunshy Ministers) about needing a bass player... He jumped up, ran out of the bar, and went next door to Ed's house and sort of told him he had to check us out. So, thanks to Don for that one. That's pretty much it.

3) What was the 1st music to excite you? Roots, etc.?
My granpa pumped a lotta Hank Williams and Johnny Cash into me when I was real small. The first movie I saw was *The Jungle Book*, and Louis Prima's voice made a pretty big impression on me. Then in 3rd grade, my Mom took me to a record store and said I could pick out anything I wanted, and I picked the soundtrack from *Shaft*. She actually bought it for me, God bless her. I was into KISS in Jr. High (I was about 12 when "Beth" was on the radio, so that's kind of a no-brainer) . In high school it was everything from AC/DC to the Pistols to Springsteen... When the first Stray Cats album came out in the states, I used to force everyone I knew to listen to it. I was kind of stranded in farm country, so it was a few years later that I finally backtracked and caught up on shit like The Dolls, Ramones Iggy, and all that. Basically anything that smelled like the opposite of boring. Anything that refused to lay down and be ignored, that's what I was on the lookout for.

4) Being as how you're the best saxophone player in Rocknroll since Jamie Heath of the Heartbreakers and Waldos and Oddballs passed away, how come there's no horn on the first LP?
There IS horn on the first record, ya dope! I played a solo I'm still real happy with on "Highballin' the Jack". I can understand you missin' it though, that song didn't get near as much play as some of the others. There'll be horn on 2 songs, next CD. I definitely don't play as much horn in the Sovines as I used to in other bands, but this is the first band where I had to sing and play guitar too... Doesn't leave much room to blow, y'know? Also, I think I stopped playing as much sax during the late 90's as a sort of bad reaction to all that lame-ass swing that was going around. Some of that stuff was AWFUL, and I didn't want any part of it.

5) Tell us 'bout the solo album...
It's uh... pending. I had basic tracks done for 4 out of 10 songs done when Pete, his studio, and my tapes fled Ohio last November. I just got my tapes back this April, so I really haven't had a chance to do much about it. The Sovines are in the middle of recording right now, and that kind of has all my attention for the moment. BUT... I DO wanna finish the thing, I just don't have the time or money to do it right now. I'm not anything close to happy about this. If Pete hadn't disappeared on me, I'd have the damn thing pressed by now. Fucker.

6) Rocknroll Low...
Probably playing horn in a Top 40 band in the early 80's. Blech. I had to Play "I Want a New Drug" 2 or 3 nights a week for like a year. That was also the last time I made any real money for playing music, but fuck it... I'd rather be poor.

7) Career Highlights So Far...
Sharing stages with people like The Bottlerockets, Mojo Nixon, the V-Roys, guys like that. Just hangin' out with those guys and talkin music shit, it makes you feel like you actually know what you're doing. That's what I always wanted I guess, more than being a damn rockstar; just to feel like I'm respected by the guys whose albums I buy.

8) Current bands you respect or give a shit about...
Well.... We played last night with these kids, The Peachbones. They stick everything from Hank Sr. to the Who into a set, and make it all work. They SMOKE my ass everytime I see 'em. There's a band in Lawrence Kansas, Fear & Whiskey that I really dig. I think they might have a disc out this year. There's a guy in Nashville — Lonesome Bob — who makes me cry every time I hear him. He's *that* good. I don't have much time for what's on the radio these days, so most of my favorites are guys like us who no one's ever heard of.

9) Artists/groups you actually listen to for pleasure these days?
The Bottlerockets, Shonen Knife, anything by John Doe or X, Bon Scott era AC/DC, Johnny Cash NEVER gets old, neither does Some Girls, Waits, Chuck E. Weiss, & Iggy Pop is always godlike. We just won't discuss that last album of his. Yipes.

10) Differrence between cowpunk/ya'all-



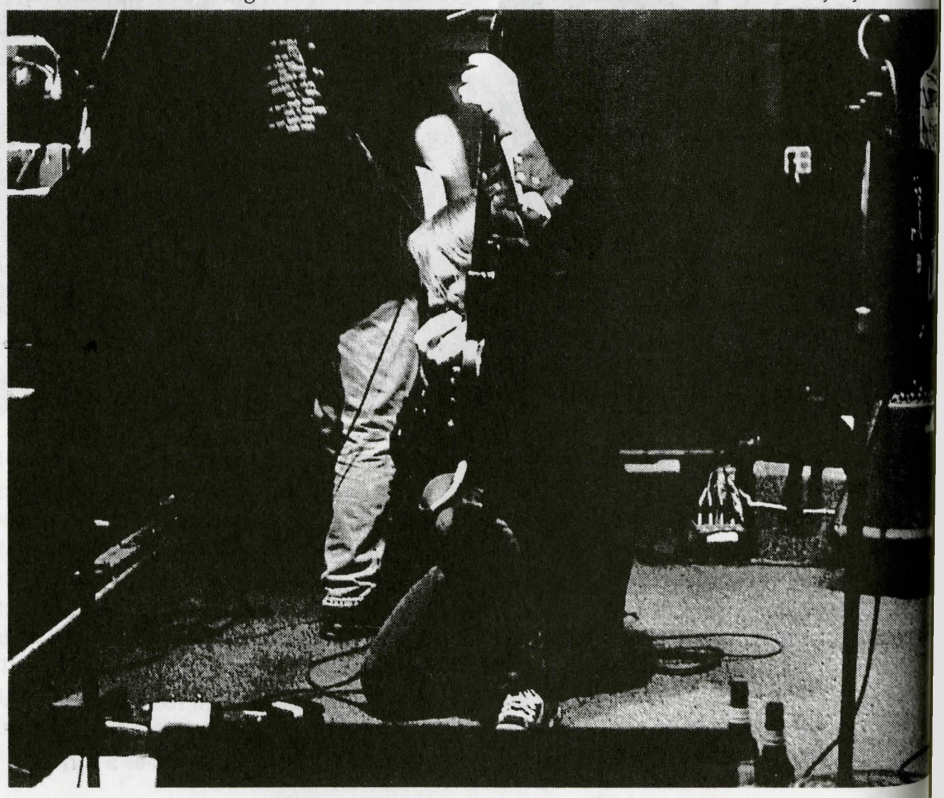
ternative/no depression/torch 'n' twang influenced, roots-based real rocknroll/hard country/new country/etc.
Oh god, you're asking for a book here... Bands that laugh at their subject matter suck. People who live in trailers don't exist just to amuse you assholes. Bands that used to suck, heard Uncle Tupelo and bought a steel guitar STILL suck, no matter how much they twang. Bands who do note for note recreations of old country artists are a giant snooze. The chops are impressive and all, but DAMN, don't these people have anything new to say? I mean, why bother? Bands that are just honest and passionate, no matter what style they play in, are always great. And there's never enough of 'em. At least half of what turns up in the pages of No Depression just bores the hell out of me, and a lot of bands that the N.D. illuminati shun are GREAT. The twang thing suffers from the same thing as the grunge thing. Basically, Nirvana and Uncle Tupelo were fresh, exciting, whatever, they really shook things up. Then we had to sit through 10 years of the awful bands they inspired. I'm not saying there hasn't been anything good since 1991, just that almost none of the good stuff got SIGNED. Feh. I need a drink now.

11) Cub Coda Story? Short version, cause I'm sleepy...
I was in this band in Boston, and we opened up for Cub at some little shithole in the burbs. I was playing horn mostly then, but I sang a few songs including "Black Coffee & Cigarettes"(one of mine), which Cub really dug. Later I got up with him and played on a few songs. That was about 10 years ago, and I hadn't met any of my childhood heroes at that point. I mean, this guy was in Brownsville Station man, he fucking WROTE "Smokin' in the Boys Room", and he was into MY SONG. That was a real big deal for me at the time, and I'll always be grateful to him for taking an interest. If you're out there reading this Cub, THANK YOU!!! That night was probably one of the things that made me stick with this thing.

12) Twangfest Stories?
Oh christ, there's just too many. We played the Fest the first two years, I went as a spectator last year, and we're gearin' up to play TF#4 in June. Most of the other people there probably have better stories about me than I do, cause those people are so much fun to drink with that I just destroy myself all weekend. Playing Twangfest was the best thing that ever could have happened to the Sovines, in more ways than I could ever count.

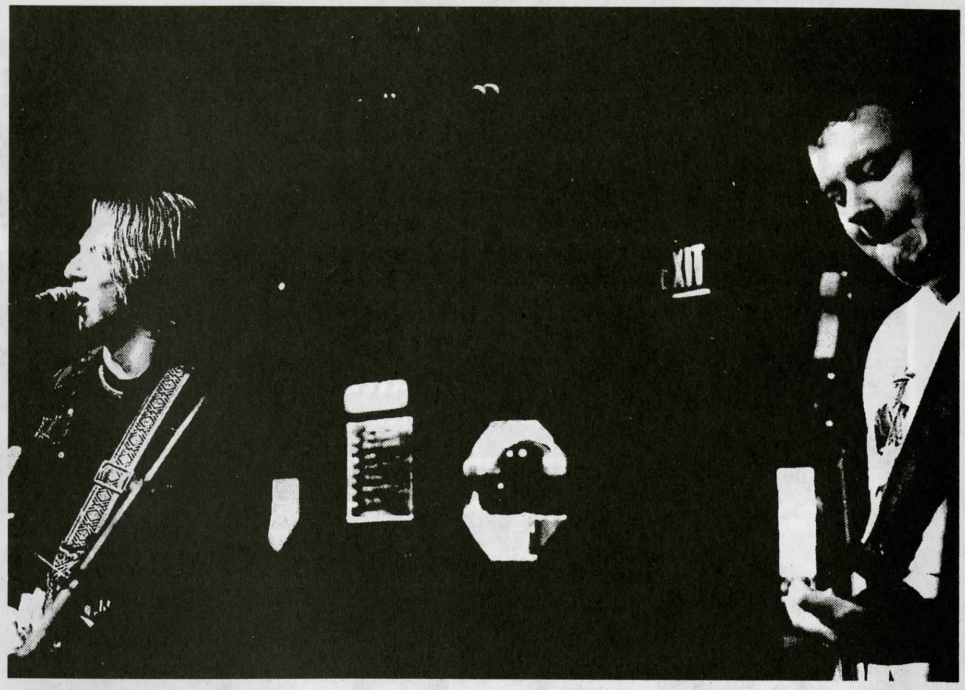
13) Sleepy La Beef?
Whew. Playing with Sleepy for 20 minutes is like playing 3 sets with anybody else. He jumps from one song to the next without warning, and it's a real ballbuster just keeping track of what key you're in. I must have done alright though, cause he still calls me up onstage if I go see him. He's said some real nice stuff about me, and that floors me. This guy has hung out with Bill Monroe for chrissakes! He's like a walking history lesson. Just seeing him play is like going to school for me.

14) CheaterSlicks? Heh heh...
I got to play sax on their last disc, and it's the best stuff I've ever done sitting in with a strange band. It's a great record, and I'm damn proud of that stuff. When I went into the studio, they were making everyone smoke out of this giant blue bong before they did a take... between that and god knows how much booze, I was smashed for the whole session, just swaying back and forth in front of the mic with my eyes shut.



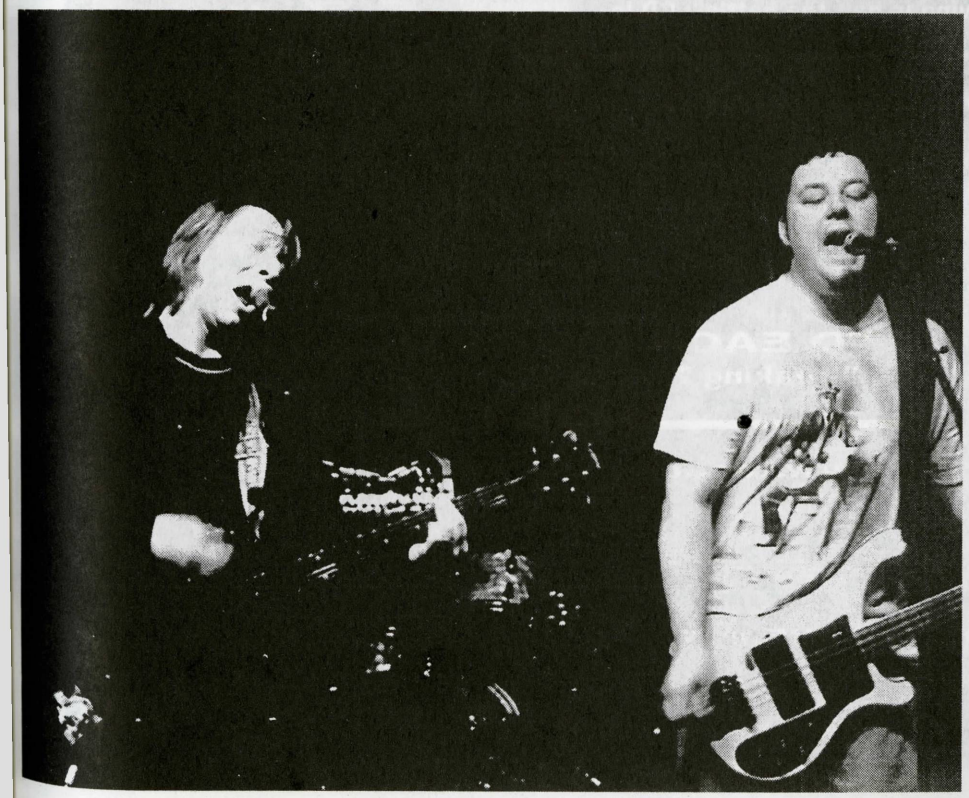
blowing my brains out. They loved it. The next morning I woke up with the flu, so I probably had a fever on top of all that. Anyway, I don't remember playing half of the stuff that's on that disc, but it's all me... I'd hate to get that fucked up EVERY time, but maybe I should!

15) Chuck Berry?
Never met him. Wish I had. I had a dream though, years ago... I'm riding in a cab, and the driver is a fat black woman... We're having an argument about cab driving, and she keeps telling me I don't know shit about it. Somehow, this turns into an argument about Chuck Berry (?!), and she sez "What do you know about Chuck Berry, you're just a white kid!"... I turn to the side, and there's Chuck sitting in the backseat with me, so I say "Well Chuck, what do YOU think", and he just looks a me for a minute and says "T. Rex baby, T. Rex". I STILL can't figure that one out.



16) Fill-in-the-blank story?
See, that's the problem... I get drunk a lot, and I can't fill in the blanks. Somewhere between the best and worst things people say about me lies the sad flabby truth. Poor poor pitiful me.

"Well Chuck, what do YOU think", and he just looks a me for a minute and says "T. Rex baby, T. Rex". I STILL can't figure that one out.



17) Web page address/contact info for CD?
www.sovines.com There's links to Miles of Music and Village Records on our site, both of whom are web based places to purchase our crap. They carry our CD's and all the Twangfest compilations we've been on. OR you can send me $10 per CD at 872 Summit St., Columbus, OH 43215.

18) Current events?
TWANGFEST #4, 2nd weekend in June at the Off Broadway club in St. Louis MO. Next CD should be ready by mid-summer.

19) Future goals?
East Coast gigs, maybe down South too... Get the new disc out, and hopefully finish my solo stuff... Soundtrack work, if I can get it... Find my shoes...

20) Who will save rocknroll?
Those of us who must, one little song at a time. And the shitheels who almost let it die will never even know what a favor we did them. ⊕

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LEAVING TRAINS' "Get Lucky" Tour Diary

We crossed the rest of Ohio and most of Pennsylvania in a long night and morning, and reached the industrial swamps of New Jersey by the next afternoon. The Ramones' "53rd & 3rd" was on the tape deck as we strained to catch our first glimpse of the jagged gray Manhattan skyline, which was like our promised Emerald City of Oz after all this rude weather.

Swinging low down the West Side Highway, I drove randomly, hungrily, by memory, through the stacked-up buildings to the Lower East Side. I think I was pleasantly surprised that so much of my favorite city was still intact after several years of Mayor Giuliani's banal and evil desecrations. There were definitely less homeless people on the streets, though, and entire neighborhoods that had once sheltered Puerto Rican and immigrant families, junkies, and artists were now homogenous yuppie enclaves of chain stores and charmless coffeehouses. There were occasional new, bland, orange-brick boxy buildings trying to blend among the sooty, authentic, ancient, stylish older apartments, and the mad, mean-spirited mayor was replacing many of the Lower East Side's tiny community garden lots with generic condos. Most of my longtime friends had either escaped to Brooklyn or somehow hung on to the little, flat impossibly expensive island of Manhattan, but all of the ones who'd stayed told distressing tales about increased police assaults and harassment, and the demolitions of favorite buildings or landmarks.

As usual, the first place we ended up in New York was the Odessa coffee shop across the street from Tompkins Square Park, and as usual, I celebrated our continental crossing by devouring potato pirogis and blueberry pancakes. We met up later with ex-Trains/Nymphs/Motorcycle Boy guitarist Bobby Belltower, who, having recently graduated from Columbia University, was finally starting to play music again, this time in a new band called $1.98 Beauty Show with wife Lizzie Avondet, the serene vocalist in Piss Factory and Emma Peel (whose "Play Emma for Me" CD a few years back on Sympathy for the Record Industry was a supersonic, incantational, thundering/moody masterpiece, one of the best - and most underrated - heavy dream-rock albums of the '90s).

Eventually we all straggled over from Lizzie and Bobby's apartment south of Houston to the Continental on Third Avenue in time to see Honeyburst, although we missed opening band the Cash Registers. It was so nice to revel, at least temporarily, in the company of our long-lost New York friends, like Little Pork Chop singer Lazy Susan, whose radiant country-blues turns stole the show from collaborator Jerry Teel (ex-Honeymoon Killers/Chrome Cranks) on their recent, and also criminally underrated CD on Sympathy for the Record Industry, this one with a more garagey roots-rock C&W warmth. Talk about your cowgirls in the sand and rubies in the dust; I can't think of a better place to hide a sweetheart of the rodeo than New York City.

We later ran into my childhood pal Skinny John McDermott (Reverb Motherfuckers, Von Lmo, Digitalis), one of about six people on the island who were politically subversive and trying to do the right things to save what's left of the city from Giuliani, like successfully protesting to keep the 6th Street & Avenue B Garden open, fr'instance. "Join us," Skinny John intoned, like a zombie, then laughed. He's the best person you'll ever meet; not just because he played such wildly scrambling noodles of lead guitar on "Goodbye Cruel World", the Reverb Motherfuckers' unknown, unreleased, grand masterpiece, but because even in childhood I always noticed him taking unpopular and brave positions and not being afraid of the mob mentality. Plus, we were still in grade school when Skinny John taught us the Funky Chicken.

Our mostly rockin' set at the Continental was a little annoying and preachy, as I saw the concert as my chance to solve all of the world's problems at once. I complained that "all you New Yorkers" were ruining my favorite city, and that we Leaving Trains were considering boycotting NYC until Giuliani was impeached, similar to how U2 used to refuse to play in Arizona until that state finally, grudgingly accepted Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a holiday. And of course I blamed everyone in the room for NATO's ongoing war. And the corrupt judging in recent international ice-dancing competitions. And the Yankees' unfair advantages in bidding for free agent baseball stars. But it was also a bigger and friendlier crowd than at our previous show two

Falling James III°
invoking the real ozzy

years ago in New York, at the regrettable faux-punk emporium Coney Island High, which had called in the cops to shut down our concert in midset when Inger Lorre jumped onstage and proceeded to destroy some mike stands and monitors because her boyfriend was being thrown out by the bouncers. Despite my big mouth this time, I didn't think the Continental would cut the power on us like Coney Isle eventually did, although I did question the sanity of our old friend Mark Yevlov, the club's booker, who'd foolishly added a Black Sabbath cover band to close the bill.

At one point near the end of our set, the soundman spoke to us through the monitors onstage (usually the audience can't hear these asides), saying that we had time for only one more song because the Black Sabbath cover band had to go on after us. I never react well when being told I'm being cut off at the bar or when the party is ending, plus I have an extreme case of stage fright, which often causes me to start verbally lashing out at any and everyone around me. I'm not good at slinking offstage on command; in fact, when told that we have one more song, I perversely insist on giving a slow speech and then playing our longest song. And it didn't seem right that I, the true illegitimate son of Ozzy Osbourne, whose dad had cleaned the real Ozzy's pool, should have to vacate the stage for one of those damned, mercenary "tribute" bands.

So, before leaving the stage, I told the audience that I was challenging Sabbra Cadabra (whose posters insisted that they were the nation's Number One Sabbath Tribute Band!) to invoke the magic spirit of Ozzy by updating the words to "War Pigs" to protest the current bombing of Yugoslavia. I also defied Sabbra Cadaver to write and sing their own songs, which is what the real Black Sabbath would do. I also wondered why the world even needed a Sabbath tribute band when the authentic group was currently on tour! In the backstage room downstairs, the lovely gentlemen of Sabbra Candelabra surrounded me and grunted, "Whassa matter? You don't like Black Sabbath?" And I said, "I LOVE Black Sabbath." Then paused. "But who are YOU guys??" While Sabbra Cad droned onstage, we all ended up on the sidewalk outside the club, where Miss Koko Puff interviewed our friends with the video camera. I was conversing with our pal Elizabeth from New Jersey, who I loved listening to because she has such a thick Lorraine Bracco-type accent,

which is like my favorite lilt, when Steve Halperin came outside to report that the petulant Sabbath clones were dissing us onstage! What a shock! The Ozzy manque was calling me a "faggot in a dress," which we all found amusing since such a Black Sabbath expert apparently didn't know that the real Ozzy also used to dress in drag! The fake Ozzy also explained to the audience that the reason his Cadavers didn't write or play their own songs is because "new music sucks my cock!" I guess he also meant Sabbath's newer stuff when he said that. I'd come to realize these unintentional jokers were a wee bit demented during my brief chat with them backstage. I'd gotten the distinct impression that they didn't even LIKE the real Black Sabbath, that they felt territorial and jealous that the real Black Sabbath was somehow competing with them and stealing their fans. They seemed like bitter employees in a private Disneyland hell; trapped in suffocating Mickey Mouse costumes of their own creation (well, actually re-creation). They had no idea how to recover their own personalities after faking it for so long as English rock gods. Musical lockjaw.

Afterward, we and our friends crashed a bunch of Lower East Side bars, ending up at one point in a place run by Handsome Dick Manitoba (the Dictators). Everyone was having a hilarious time, though I felt like I was decompressing a little, still hurtling with road momentum. It felt good to sit down at a table, and feel the hard room/floor of an old city that wasn't moving. When I closed my eyes, I could still see the alluring green depths of the Pennsylvanian forests rushing past. I felt tugged in many directions, by different places, by different people, by memories, bigger and faster. I was trying to soak up the feeling of one of my favorite places in the world in the few hours I had left there, but I was also distracted, and wishing I were a few streets away, with a lost love of my life. I could cross a continent but I couldn't cross a few blocks.

I was huddling near the juke box when I noticed a man who'd been standing near me for a few moments, and I thought, that guy looks a little like Matt Dillon, but not as famous. I leaned over to tell this to Miss Koko Puff and Melanie, and they recognized the film star immediately, getting very excited. Dillon soon went across the street to another bar, followed not very subtly (I thought) by Miss Koko and Melanie and Fred. Handsome Dick then went in the other bar as well, to yell at Matt D. for not moving his car, although Matt claimed it wasn't his car.

I always have a hard time leaving New York, and stalled the next morning for as long as I could. I kept borrowing the video camera to take furtive shots of this public garden or that magically looming building face, in case they were torn down by the next time I might make it back. But eventually, after tracing our own crop circles on various toll road clover leafs in fabled New Jersey, we were on our way back across the forests and mountains of Pennsylvania for a show in Pittsburgh, Honeyburst's hometown. It was a hard, tiring drive, having to focus a lot of attention and try to cut corners after such a late start. It was vulgar how many mountains and rivers we sailed blindly over. I needed to stop more, and untangle the shapes of the leaves from their blur of trees.

By the time we reached Pittsburgh, we realized that we didn't even know the name of the club where we were playing (Honeyburst's Michael had forgotten to give us the information, as it was one of the few shows Eric Stone hadn't booked on the tour). It was getting pretty late when Fred found a newspaper that listed the show and eventually we made our way through town to the Polish Hill section, where Gooski's was crouched across the street from an impressively domed, giant old church.

We pretty much missed Honeyburst's set, but more importantly, we barely had time to get pretty in the van, slap on our makeup furtively in the dark, pull up our stockings (hoping they were straight), then rush inside into the crowded bar with our equipment. I got tangled up in the excitement of getting ready and going onstage in a rush, and I don't even remember much about our show; I just recall that most of us ended up at some party a few doors down the street, which was a nice place to unwind, with its giant Kiss dolls and pleasant hostess. Melanie, Koko Puff and Honeyburst bassist Smith Hutching all drove off later to eat at a late-night diner, where they were royally entertained by a goofy waitress refilling the ketchup bottles or something. I don't know, I wasn't there, and it's hard to hear the waitress now on the video footage they taped in the diner.

I'd gotten the distinct impression that they didn't even LIKE the real Black Sabbath, that they felt territorial and jealous that the real Black Sabbath was somehow competing with them and stealing their fans.

Instead I stayed at the party, desperate to smoke some pot. Fred seemed to be hitting it off with Hopita, who, like Fred, also worked doing special effects in the film industry. Hopita had her blonde hair pinned up like a "Swiss Miss Gone Awry" (or was it "Swiss Miss on Rye"??), as Smith waggishly described her. Everyone was given nicknames that night by the saucy rock musicians. A foxy girl named Maria (but Koko and the rest of the band kept referring to instead as "Fancy Pants" because of her tacky jeans) seemed to be flirting with me, even to the point of taking a hit of pot and then pressing her lips against mine and blowing the smoke into my mouth, which is always a great way to get my attention.

Honeyburst singer Michael even took me aside and seemed convinced that Fancy Pants was hot for me, and I said, "Really? Do you think so?" When it came time to leave the party, Fancy Pants begged us to take her with us to Michael's house, where we were staying. Strangely, Michael didn't seem to want her to join us, but I playfully nagged him until he finally consented to let her come back with us. Up until that point, Fancy Pants had been all lovey-dovey with me, but once we were at Michael's well appointed, clean house, she stopped feigning interest in me and ended up trying to sleep with Michael. I felt so stupid. By this point, I was mad at everybody in the world and felt used. And ugly. Just when I thought someone was actually attracted to a faggot in a dress, I realized that such things were obviously impossi-

ble. I was a freak, for sure, and there wasn't enough pot to console me. Well, like Ozzy says, "Never say die." Or say it all you want, just try not to do it.

I woke up feeling better the next afternoon, and we eventually straggled out of Pittsburgh after driving downtown through its ponderous architecture of giant bank vault buildings with thick Roman colums and severe, sharp, foreboding angles, with so many buildings topped by dark, ominous statues that looked like gargoyles and looming, winged human vultures ready to fly off these roofs at any moment.

We crossed the vast expanse of Pennsylvania one more time on our way back to Sunday's show in Philadelphia. We saw occasional deer, and the thick forests were so inviting and beautiful to us permanent desert creatures, so lush and magical. At one point in our frequent cross-stitchings of the state, I was driving at dawn through a remote area as everyone else in the van slept. The forest was broken up with many ponds and small lakes, a swampy expanse, and everywhere there were these insidious little coils of fog tethered to the water by little ropes of steam. Each pond had its own miniature, distinct cloud hovering above the water; the steam looked almost like a white chiffon veil, delicate and hanging so lightly in the air, like the water couldn't really decide if it wanted to be liquid or steam. I wanted to take a picture, but everyone else was sleeping and I didn't want to stop, and now there's no proof it really happened, but I felt like we were sliding through the land of a thousand natural witches' kettles, all simmering and brewing up the ingredients to another day, before the sunlight seared through the mystic mist and dissolved the tiny clouds like so many puffs of breath.

We sliced through the mighty Allegheny Mountains through tunnels that cleaved through the guts of Blue Mountain and Tuscarora Mountain and Kittatinny Mountain. The shrouds of forest looked innocent and pretty, though they were probably still leaking radiation from Three Mile Island.

We saw our last deer standing like a sentinel on a steep, rocky hill at the edge of Philadelphia, and then we sailed through the city before landing on Second Street at Upstairs at Nick's. I don't know if the plague killed everyone in the area, but what had once been a lucky and lively spot for the Leaving Trains was now a non-rock & roll ghost town. We heard that even the legendary Hugh Cornwell of the Stranglers had drawn only a handful of customers to Nick's, and the Gaza Strippers had attracted about ten. So it wasn't just our fault. Every previous show on the tour had been well-attended, which was an unexpected surprise, considering that Honeyburst was still a largely unknown new group and because the Trains hadn't toured consistently in the past decade. This happy success everywhere else didn't prepare us for the small turnout at Nick's, and we played our sloppiest and most half-hearted show of the tour. Still, it was fun to hang out with our number one fan Steve Halperin again, and even Dave Panic and Sparkle Plenty of the 440s, one of my all-time fave spitfire-hellcat Philly bands. But our show was lame. At one point, I was too bitchy and impatient when I yelled at Koko Puff to turn down her bass, so I think she played the next song with her volume completely off, just to spite me.

This led to our second full-blown argument of the tour, sitting in the van as we were getting ready to leave after loading up our equipment. I was embarrassed that we had sucked so much, and maybe just depressed in a post-New York kind of way. I think I was also perplexed that the club had turned off the Shaquille O'Neal pinball game upstairs before I'd had a chance to play it, which meant I was a seething mess of unrequited sexual frustration (sometimes pinball is a decent replacement for lust). So I was ready to quit the band - again - although maybe I was just tired. But I was in one of those moods where we had to solve this problem now, if not sooner, because we owed it to our fans to try our best, and if we weren't going to try, then we should turn right around and head back to L.A.

I think I just panicked. I'd suddenly decided that my songs sucked and that Melanie and Miss Koko were going to quit the band any second, and if that was the case, I wanted to get it over with NOW, not later, because maybe if we hurried, we could still get back to L.A. in a few days, where I could at least go to the beach and use up the rest of my rapidly diminishing precious vacation time that I'd saved up for two boring years. Because I really needed to relax.

I was screaming these threats to Koko Puff when I turned around from the driver's seat and noticed that she was filming my tirade with that damned video camera! I yelled at her to stop filming, but she wouldn't turn it off. That's when I went Sean Penn on her, reaching into the back seat to shove the camera away from me. But before I could swat the camera, Melanie kicked me in the ribs with all the power of a colt, and it hurt, and then we all yelled at each other, and it ended up that I ordered the Cackling Witches out of the van. They ended up driving with Honeyburst to the next city, Washington, D.C. Since we had a day off before the show, Allen, Fred and I instead drove back to Bobby and Lizzie's in New York. Or at least we tried to. I think we all realized immediately that we were doing the wrong thing by splitting up the band and going in different directions, and sure enough, karma whacked us all upside the head with her typical comeuppance, which in this case was yet another variation of extreme weather.

We weren't on Interstate 95 for very long, heading north toward New Jersey, before we were caught in a wicked fog bank that was so thick that we literally couldn't see five feet in front of us. We noticed that almost no one else was on the highway, and we drove slowly like an old man who's lost his glasses and is fumbling around in the dark looking for them. We kept thinking at any moment we would rear-end some other vehicle stopped on the highway ahead of us. Or vice versa. Eventually we pulled off at an exit, but it was so foggy we couldn't find a motel or rest area and instead parked in resignation outside a 7-11, where I sulked some more and tried to convince Allen and Fred how right I was and how wrong the Cackling Witches were, and they insincerely agreed with me so I wouldn't yell at them, too. Then we tried to sleep in the humid van as dawn crashed on top of us.

After a few fitful hours of little sleep, we noticed that the fog had lifted and we got back on 95 and headed back to New York, where Lizzie was crestfallen that we'd returned without Koko Puff and Melanie, since she had planned on doing some girl-bonding and going shopping with them. Instead she and Bobby were stuck with three grumpy rockers who weren't sure if we were even going to finish the tour or just go back home in utter defeat.

I consoled myself by walking around the streets of the Lower East Side. Someone had painted some green footprints on the sidewalk, and I followed them as they went in a large loop around Tompkins Square Park and up and down the nearby streets. I kept hoping I'd suddenly find a job, or that the stenciled footprints would lead me to an inexplicably cheap apartment, or that I'd fall in love with somebody amazing, just by walking around. It didn't seem fair that all of these interesting and diverse people got to live on this little communal island together, while I had to exist in L.A. for decades, staring at the ceiling for hours, unable to sleep, thinking I naturally belonged in a different time zone, a place where there were green trees and rivers and people who stayed up all night walking the streets of the little, condensed village; the illusion of never being alone because there were always people frequenting the bodegas, or wandering the square grid of streets; it was life, it was an imitation of life; its attempted imitation of compressed life was in itself a sign of life, just by trying, just by not giving up and going to bed like people in every other city and small town in America. It was a city where you were allowed to honk your horn; it

HIT SQUAD

was just another, expected form of artistic expression. It was a metropolis whose denizens didn't get upset if you didn't say "Have a nice day" or take it personally if you disagreed with them; people here, like Bobby, understood the fine art of debating, of staying up all night being contrary, of being the devil's advocate, of talking things out, of trying on ideas for size like they were dresses. In L.A., people asked you how you were doing, with the implicit, unstated assumption that you were supposed to always be o.k. or fine and that in any event you weren't expected to give a detailed answer. If you were depressed or serious, it was better to keep such a disease to yourself, before it spread to the other insecure happy faces like a wildfire, before the whole false, enforced California social structure collapsed from too much unrequested/unrequited sincerity.

I walked by myself for a long time, usually ending up back at Tompkins Square. I hung on to a black railing and stared like a hungry lion at the never-ending parade of pedestrians. I seethed with invisible jealousy as a vaguely goth-looking guy marched by arm-in-arm with a gorgeous brunette wearing artfully ashy makeup, her silken and booted long legs cleaving through the slit in her long black skirt with each confident, determined, unintentionally devastating (to me) step, each clack of her boot on the pavement counting out their mutual happiness, that they had somewhere cool and interesting to go, and that even if they didn't have somewhere to go, they still had each other, beautiful and intelligent and bohemian; they were unwittingly imperious, they were better than losers like me, a victim of natural selection and the inability to fight back to save myself.

I'd always be permanently trapped under Sylvia Plath's mobile, invisible, clear bell jar of depression and loneliness, emanating wounded vibes that warned the other healthy animals in the park to stay away, my sickening blood only attracting vampires and other predators. Perhaps I could go swimming and be eaten whole by a shark, which would at least disguise my flawed body inside the sleek revisionist perfection of a shark; maybe I could start all over, my flesh refueling the earth like fertilizer. I'd never be able to go up to a girl I liked and make conversation and act like a confident rake; I'd never trust my instincts enough to save myself with words; it would always be easier to yell at the backs of my retreating friends than to dare to say something complimentary to someone I longed for. I wanted to be beautiful, I wanted to be a native New Yorker, part of this we're-all-in-it-together experiment, stuck on an island with several million other writers and models and creators and musicians and actors . . .

I started to resent Valerie Malone, the van that had magically brought me out of my Silver Lake rut (where I often didn't even leave the block except to go to work, trudging up and down to the 7-11 at the end of the block, waiting for redemption, waiting to be discovered, waiting to be told that my perceptions counted, that someone out there - since no one, of course, was up there - was noticing); that someone out there had the ability to notice, even, since most people seemed to be only barely able to watch themselves, much less gaze helpfully over the savannah looking for clawed-up zebras to repair. I started to resent Valerie because I knew that, despite her obvious transcontinental powers, she was going to drag me against my will out of the only city that made sense to me, again. My instincts told me, I'm here now, I should stay now, while I'm here. My half-hearted logic argued back that this was only a taste, an inspiration, that I'd remember how this affinity for New York felt, so much that when I returned to my L.A. hometown I would be burning with a new purpose, a real fire, all so that I would only stay in L.A. long enough to tie up the remaining loose threads in Lost Angeles, and then return to New York, where I belonged; and yet I knew that once I was mired again in the literal tar pits of La Brea that I would never leave L.A., or anywhere. I was too scared. I was terrible at leaving, even though I always was attracted to the thought of evacuations. I was the cat that didn't land on her feet. I was frozen by headlights into paralysis, sleepwalking on the highway. I was stuck in a tree, too terrified to come back down.

I stared up into the giant canopies of the trees in Tompkins Park, with their leafy, consoling cloaks, forming hollow shrouds in the shapes of porous churches, with walls made out of rippling, bowing branches and windows fused with stained-glass air. It had just rained and everything was still wet, and I couldn't help but follow, from a great distance, a young woman who walked through the park by herself, not marching like everyone else in some purposeful straight line. Instead I was attracted by the curves and gratuitous detours of her path; she didn't look like she was in any big hurry. She seemed to be going out of her way especially to splash with her rain boots in the mirror faces of big puddles on the pavement. And I vicariously enjoyed her private game, making sure that she couldn't even accidentally see me, as I trailed lazily behind. When she finally ran out of puddles to deci-

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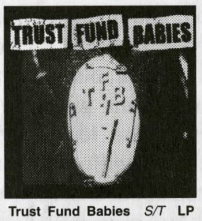

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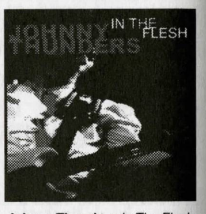

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mate and started up the street, I dared to walk by her, hoping some of her happiness or magic would rub off on me. I wasn't really attracted to her, although with her pale skin and unkempt light Northern Sea hair, she seemed cute, bundled up in her oversize coat, and we drifted parallel south down Avenue B, until I was afraid she'd see me, so I ducked into a bodega and bought some apples and bananas for the upcoming drive.

I should've headed back to Lizzie and Bobby's apartment to meet up with everyone, to find out if Koko and Melanie had called to let us know if they were going to still finish the tour, but I knew once I was in the van I would be disconsolate, looking backward, when I should be concentrating on Washington, D.C., and the cities down the road apiece. I wasn't ready to leave. My mind was blocks away again, and several streets away in New York can be another world.

So I kept following the painted footsteps on the sidewalk, until I was led away from the main avenues onto some quieter streets, and I ended up in one of those tiny public gardens, no bigger than the lot for a single apartment building, with ivy and flowers and stones laid into a small path. This wasn't like the blank, timeless vast expanse of nature I was used to from the California deserts or mountains; Manhattan's little oases of nature were more like an outdoor confessional; one could pause in them for a few moments, alone, before some other nerve-wracked New Yorker would intrude; there was always the unwritten assumption that everything was shared on this island; we were all breathing the same air, sitting elbow to elbow in cramped restaurants and bars. You couldn't dwell too long on one thing at one time in the city because someone else would come along and move you off the spot; you had to seek out these mobile interludes of calm, drink them up deeply and quickly, before moving on.

Just as I was walking out through the tiny walkway back onto the street of looming apartment faces, thinking, "Do I really belong here?," two sparrows swam through the air toward me, in a perfect flourish of weaving circles, synchronized fluttering with a grand sweep, landing near my feet, as if to say, "Yes, you do, and don't forget us."

That gesture of intertwined flight paths gave me the energy and the inspiration to start trudging back to Bobby and Lizzie's, not with resignation, and not with hope either, but with motion and nothing else, because movement was good enough for the wise birds, so there must be a sign or a secret hidden somewhere in it for me. So I tried to keep moving. As I crossed Houston and headed down Clinton to the apartment, I saw a wild-haired hippie-ish girl walking down the street toward me, looking at me right in the eye, so deliberately that I realized I wasn't imagining it. When she came up to me, we both stopped and she asked me how I was doing and we started talking for a few moments. She was a feral, tattooed, grungy looking girl who smelled like she needed a bath, like maybe she'd been living on the street or perhaps had been up for days. I don't even remember what we talked about for those few minutes, but it was almost like she had been divinely sent to tell me not to give up, that there were other people like me out there, somewhere . . . here. I'd like to believe that she just psychically sensed my depression, my revulsion over leaving New York - again! - with no clear plan of coming back, and it was like she wanted me not to feel too bad. It was the sign I was hanging around for, and it made it possible for me to finally get in the van and head toward Washington, D.C.



JUKEBOX JURY

by jeff jarema

Flipping through the latest issue of *Hit List* (April/May), I find myself turned off in a big way. The seeds of my disgust may have been planted in a previous issue, with credit due to none other than our fine friend Jeff Bale. The editor, as you may recall, went on a tirade 'bout bad aspects of fashion. Now, some of it was pretty humorous. However, I'm sick of all this long-hair "superiority" bull. I'm 37 in a few days, balding, bespectacled, and basically boring, or so you might think. But judging by the contents of *Hit List*, I suspect I have better taste in noise than half of you punk lifestyle slaves. Yeah, I'm a square. So what? You're subsidized by your mother.

Back to the latest issue of *Hit List*, what a bunch of awful whine from too many of the contributors. I've read most of it and the only solace to be found was in a humorous portion of the column by thee Whiskey Rebel on sorts of hideous interaction that can be expected at record conventions. Granted, WR was not breaking any new ground on this subject. I've read it and experienced it all before. But at least this guy has a handle on the hilarious side o' things.

What ain't funny is the wretched taste exhibited in an ad by Bro Prints (p. 26), though you might laugh your ass off, assuming that you're an utter moron. Hey Bro, do you have children? I doubt it. How would you like to look like this?! Not to get into a religion-fueled debate, knowing how unfashionable it is amongst you slugs to consider God, but Bro, if there is such a deity have you given any thought to the lousy position you've put yourself in? If Bro Prints' ad is Punk, punk sucks. (Jeff Bale will inevitably defend his crummy advertisers in expert, long-winded fashion, and to that all I can say is, yeah, I too would've found that deformed infant funny...when I was an immature pre-teen fool).

On the other hand, what I am enjoying this week is the latest issue of *Outasite*. What's interesting about *Outasite* is that Greg Prevost is less politically correct than the whole staff of Bro Prints combined (them again...) yet he don't wear it on his sleeve and instead presents his contagious worship for boss TV and rock 'n roll, cover to cover. Every TV show, starlet, rock 'n' roll band in his world seems to be in his "top five"! Instead of crying about '90s social developments that turn his stomach, he raves passionately about what oughta be uniting "us and them": Brian Jones vs. the Backstreet Boys, and other truly meaningful issues.

Greg's a lifelong long-haired rock 'n' roller and while I am fully willing to accept him thinking that I'm a square (after all we've met many times over the years, so he is entitled), he actually gives me the benefit of the doubt right in the pages of the new *Outasite*. Likewise, I would suggest Bale bail outta his pointless complaints based on fashion. Sure, if I could feed my family (i.e., continue to be employable: we can't all be pony-tailed code developers, after all) and still look like 1966 John Cale (by the grace of Rogaine or some other vanity drug that for me would cut too much into my valuable beer 'n' 45 rpm money, of course), no a problem. But in reality, I'm just trying to enjoy my fave noise and some inspired writing on same as I delve deeper and deeper into my post-teen years. Thanks, Greg. (BTW, pick up *Outasite* from sundazed.com, which also carries many issues of my own rag, *Here 'Tis*).

In reality, I'm just trying to enjoy my fave noise and some inspired writing on same as I delve deeper and deeper into my post-teen years.

Today, I was thinking about Doug Sahm. He trailblazed the long-haired punk fashion years before it was fashionable. Now lemme cry "bullshit" to all this '80s and '90s tatoos 'n' black leather malarkey plastered all over the pages of *Hit List*. Sure Doug was the first U.S. Punk with super-long hair back in '65, with the only other contender being drummer Moulty of the Barbarians. But even Moulty will tell you that he was pulling this off in free-spirited (gay) Provincetown, Mass. Sahm, on the other hand, was defying convention in the unbelievably hostile climes of Texas.

Doug passed away a few months back, and now his story is being re-broadcast with fine reissues of Norton ('San Antonio Rock' a much welcomed collection of his rare early sides when he was a fifties R&B-stoked hep cat) and Sundazed (two LP's of the primo Sir Douglas Quintet/Tribe Records recordings from the mid-sixties, including the all-time mover, "She's About a Mover"). Since this column is supposed to tie in with juke box enjoyment, I'm also pleased as punch to mention just scoring a second, playable Smash 45 of the '69-era S.D.Q. and the fave, "It Didn't Even Bring Me Down". (However, to really die and go to heaven — oops, more God references — sorry — I sure wish a 7" existed of Mott the Hoople's beyond-boss reading of the Quintet's "At The Crossroads". Sigh, sometimes comes from the strangest sources).

Arguably the most primitive, forgotten locale in the country is Utica, NY. Whatta dump. It's only too appropriate that Norton's 'Twistarama' reissue of Utica (iNePt) garage bands from '65 is the last word in crudity. After all, the most polished track is a sloppy R&B ode to the Flintstones ("Yabba Dabba Do" by the... Sorry, can't remember the name). Hey, all joking aside, I dig Utica. I used to pull over on road trips from Buffalo/Rochester/Syracuse, Albany-bound, to pick up an $8 case of Utica Club beer. They still actually brew this sub-swill, and at the very same hatchery that now makes the more pricey (but inspirational) yuppie froth, Saranac.

Lastly, Norton's BIG score this go-round is a 'Best Of' the Rivieras. They go after the whole Rivs/USA Recs catalog, picking the absolute cream of the keg. And it's more or less all uptempo. Good enough for the Ramones ("California Sun"), as great as the Trashmen. Fighting words, indeed.

Over to Sundazed, be sure to pick up the Leaves CD. Three "Hey Joe's", and the rarer-than-hens-teeth takes are even cruder than the hit version! Also out, a remastered 'Midnight Ride' by Mark Lindsay & the Raiders. And lastly from Sundazed, amongst boss new 45's my fave has to be "Nothin" by the Ugly Ducklings (Kinks + mega-snarl).

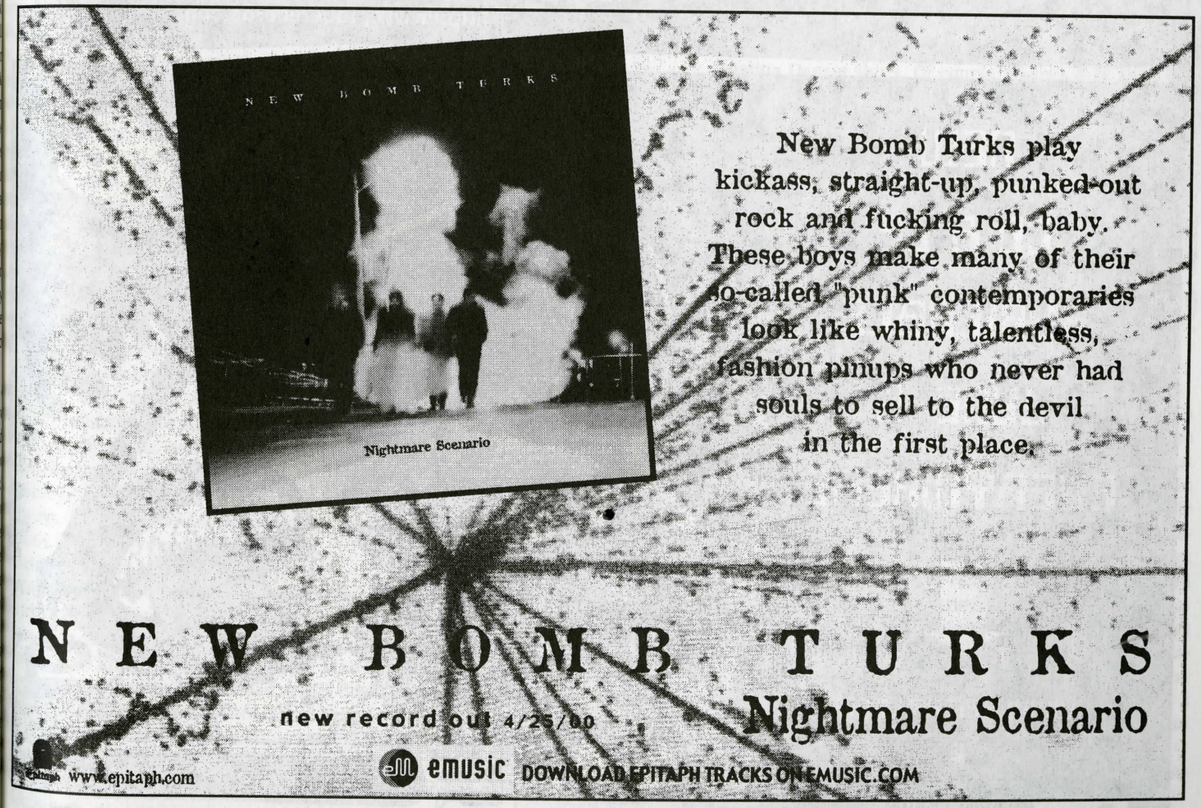
Crypt's 'Teenage Shutdown' series returns with four new volumes. Sound-wise, the quality is light years beyond what sixties garage punk fans have long been forced to swallow. These just @#$%ing BOOM. Tops among these is titled "Howlin' For My Darlin'", a volume that more or less does not let up from start to finish. If you dig Them, the Pretty Things, and most importantly Limey & the Yanks, this is your drink.

JEFF JAREMA

Besides *Hit List* and *Outasite*, the other recent reading around here is Jim DeRogatis' excellent Lester Bangs bio, *Let It Blurt* (Random House). This book was devoured almost overnight, which is a testament to DeRogatis' ability to pull together an engrossing tale based on nothing more than the short life of a wasted rock critic. Of course, Lester wasn't just any scribe. While pioneer, punk-natured crit Richard Meltzer gets his due in the early pages of *Blurt*, the A-list of seventies rock writers, especially Robert Christgau (not to mention crass publisher Jan Wenner), come off with way less heart 'n' soul than was showcased in a single Bangs/*Creem* feature.

On the other hand, on a personal note this book manages to destroy what may be my last rock 'n' roll illusion. While Lester was a true punk, swilling Romular cough syrup for fifteen years, neither that nor the sex (which is tame by rock standards) surprised me. Far more devastating was the exchange between Bangs, Velvet Underground apostle #1, and one of his back-up men (Joey Ramone's bro, I think) who laughs at the would-be musician's admiration for Lou Reed's guitar on "Heard Her Call My Name". See, Lester thought the absolute most of that soloing, and I too have always dug it as the absolute pinnacle of pure noise. But the "legit" muso snickers at the technical nothingness of it all. Jerk. "H.H.C.M.N." remains the all-time ultimate.

So, what does this column have to do with juke boxes. I'll let you know next issue. ✚



Hey Kids!

Check out the new record from What Happens Next!



Your Mother at Gilman St. Jan 8, 2000, photo by Toddles

Just kidding. I was getting your attention to let you know that the guitar player for What Happens Next? is Craigums from Your Mother. Of course, Craig never recieved the same level of respect as a member of Your Mother that he does now in WHN? Your Mother was often unfairly tossed in the geek-core junk pile or very wrongly labeled as "melodic punk." The truth is they were a kick ass punk band for ten years. Behind the goofy facade they had more heart, dedication, and good songs than ten serious hardcore bands combined. They managed to sell 3,800 copies of their "One Big Inside Joke" CD on Probe Records despite the fact that it was Probe's debut release and had little distribution. Your Mother toured the world and was the first foriegn punk band to ever play in Israel. Anyway, I'm telling you this because **Your Mother has called it quits**. They sold out their last sold at Gilman in January. They have a brilliant new 10" (a tribute to Weird Al) and a 7" out on Little Deputy Records and that will be it. I still have copies of the A.Y.C.E./Your Mother split 7" (which I will give away free to anyone who sends in an order for Probe stuff and mentions this ad). It has three good YM songs on it, but is otherwise the worst record I've ever released on Probe. Everything else on Probe is guaranteed quality.

Check out the catalog at **proberecords.com** Jeanette and Tracy have allowed me to post new photos of them on the site. Some of these were never printed in The Probe. I will keep the site updated with news, photos, and new record, zine, video, and book reviews. The people at **punkrocksex.com** have also made Probe issues #4 and #5 (both long sold-out) available online at their site. You can also check out yourmother.com and order a cassette copy of Craig's **Love Songs** which includes many of the songs that would have become Your Mother songs if they didn't break up.

Coming soon: Probe's Video Fanzine #1. It will be just like a video version of the zine.

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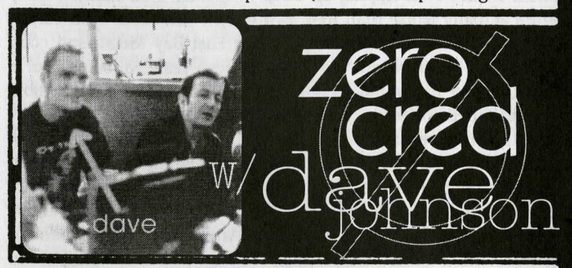
Abbreviated Metal Up Your Ass

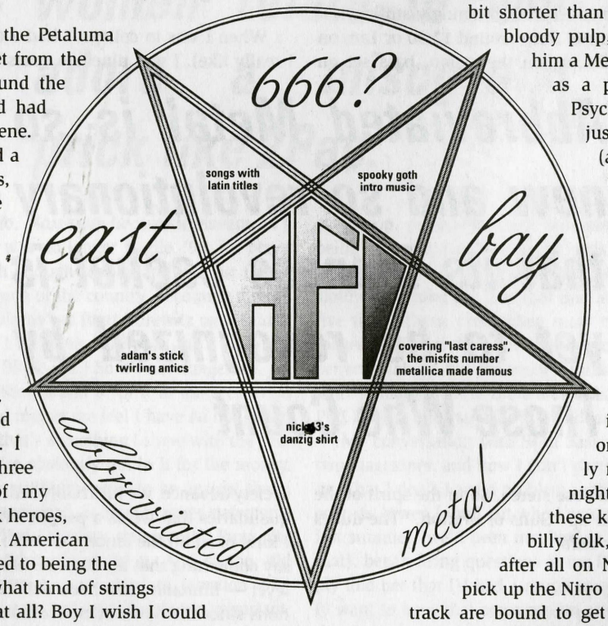
So I went to the AFI show in Petaluma last weekend. Jade, Davey, Hunter, Adam and unofficial fifth member/Tiger Army frontman Nick 13 are five of the nicest, coolest guys you'd ever want to meet (not to mention great musicians). But I never particularly cared for AFI — that is, until, Jade joined the band and they began playing Abbreviated Metal. I mean, for *years* I've seen the jackets, T-shirts, hats and stickers proclaiming the band as "East Bay Hardcore". That's all well and good. Fine, there's hardcore in the East Bay. Count me out. The only hardcore bands I've liked since the demise of Gorilla Biscuits are Lifetime, Kid Dynamite and Avail — and none of them are strictly "hardcore" bands. I never liked Redemption 87 and never cared for Link 80's oddly-named "East Bay Youth Core" (especially strange since they're essentially an Op Ivy clone with tougher guitars and a bit of the tried-and-true Youth Crew vocal stylings thrown in). And I certainly wasn't into straightedge crap like Earth Crisis or Vegan Reich (though I was once straightedge *and* vegan). But I really like Jade, I really liked his old band, Loose Change, and as previously mentioned, the kids in AFI are just swell people. When I got back from Northern Ireland last May, Brett picked me up at the airport. He was cranking this great punk/metal hybrid on his stereo. He told me it was the new AFI. Wow! A couple weeks later, I got a copy of *Black Sails in the Sunset* for review. Again: Wow! *Black Sails* could possibly be the best combination of punk and Metal since Metallica's *Kill 'Em All* (the record that changed my life at thirteen). Though Hunter doesn't offer up a fuzzy bass solo, Jade mercilfully dispenses with the Kirk Hammett wankery and Davey wails like a pack-a-day banshee. Hardcore? Not exactly. Abbreviated Metal of the highest rank? Yes.

My friend Kari and I went to the Petaluma show together. Kari's a Gilman vet from the days of Op Ivy, who's lived around the country since her salad days and had basically dropped out of the scene. Since she's moved back, she's had a renewed interest in going to shows, though at 28, she's no longer one of the kids. She works with a cute little girl named Sasha. Sasha's probably like 17 or so. Anyway, Sasha *also* went to the AFI show. In fact, most of the kids there were probably eight to ten years younger than me, and 12 to fifteen years younger than Kari. Frankly, it was a little weird. I'd always felt like one of the kids. I mean, I'm the youngest of the three main *Hit List* staffers; many of my friends are older than me; my rock heroes, with the exception of Ruairi from American Steel, are all older than me. I'm used to being the dorky little kid going — "Dude...what kind of strings do you use? Is your amp rodded at all? Boy I wish I could have your silverburst Les Paul, Doug Sangalang." We ran into Sasha after AFI's rocking and exhausting Abbreviated Metal set (they're possibly the most kinetic live band this side of Hot Water Music). She was sweaty and fresh from avoiding my friend Cisco's fist-pumping, crowd-surfing antics. The next day, Kari and Sasha were talking to their boss and Kari said, "Hey, guess what? Sasha and I went to a Metal show last night!" Sasha's indignant retort? "It wasn't *Metal*. It was *East Bay Hardcore*." Ahh how youth is wasted on the young...

First of all, I understand AFI's hesitance to throw themselves in with the El Camino-driving, speed-snorted-off-the-fender-of-a-Camaro, mullet-sporting hesh-brigades. I mean, the closest thing to long hair that any of them get is Davey's purple-dyed pseudo-devillock, but let's face it — the guy is *way* too sweet and smiling to ever convince anyone to worship Satan. Not only that, he likes the *Cure*! So yeah — the AFI kids aren't particularly Metal in and of themselves — they're punks *playing* Metal. But as a caveat, c'mon — Nick was up there (he did a couple songs with



AFI, including a Tiger Army number) in a Danzig shirt. Not a *Misfits* shirt, but a bona-fide *Danzig* t-shirt. Now how often do *you* see punks wearing Danzig t-shirts? You see Metalheads wearing Misfits shirts, you see punks wearing Misfits shirts. You see Metalheads wearing Danzig shirts, but you *never* see punks wearing Danzig shirts. Of course, though Nick is a bit shorter than me, he could beat me to a bloody pulp, so I'll stop short of calling him a Metalhead and respect his status as a premier rocker of American Psychobilly status (and I'm not just sayin' that to kiss his ass (and thus protect my own ass from being mercilessly pulverized). Listen to the Tiger Army record. It's true.)



Nevertheless, AFI are a Metal band (albeit of the Abbreviated sort) — see the attached chart — and Sasha is wrong. It got me thinking. In the American Steel article in the last issue, I commented that I felt old in the punk scene. Not like Jeff Bale or Mel Cheplowitz old, but definitely not young. Being in Petaluma that night only reinforced that fact. I saw all these kids dressed up as skinheads, rockabilly folk, Mohicans and even Bros (AFI *is* after all on Nitro. A percentage of people who pick up the Nitro comps for the unreleased Offspring track are bound to get hoodwinked into liking AFI — I skillfully avoided stat class in college by majoring in English, but I can at least make an educated guess that it's statistically inevitable), were not nearly as cool as the people five years older than me when I was their age who dressed as skinheads, rockabilly folk, Mohicans, and well, maybe even the Bros.

Rollin' in my Nine-Oh

Then I started thinking about Sasha. So she's like 17 years old, trapped in the affluent suburban hamlet of Walnut Creek, and is desparately trying to annoy her parents, assert her originality and individuality and take for her own a piece of that treasured American commodity known as "hip". And Hardcore, while not as hip as Electronica, has a higher hip quotient than Metal. I mean, Metal is so...so...so...*Concord*. Besides, the last East Bay Metal band to make any sort of dent in the mainstream scene was Machine Head, whose worst sin wasn't even ripping off Deep Purple for their name — they were/are actually *worse* than that. Seriously. I saw them with Slayer. They unequivocally suck. A lot. So being East Bay Metal isn't cool. Being East Bay Hardcore *is*. And to a seventeen year-old, being cool is *everything*. How many rad, creative, unpretentious girls do I know who've admitted to being cheerleaders in high school? Hell...even *I* was in student government at seventeen. And I suppose I'm still not immune to the allure of hipness, although I generally consider sport-utility vehicles, cell phones and Donna Karan clothing to be pretty much the antithesis of hip. Frankly, I think it's much cooler to cruise the strip cranking the Clash's version of "Armagideon Time" than the latest from Tricky (who, incidentally, recently signed to Epitaph). At the same time, though dressing dead-on like a rockabilly guy from 45 years ago, replete with chopped '49 Merc and perfectly pomaded pompadour is kind of cool, it also has sort of a Brian Setzer/Mike Ness contrived sense about it. I mean, c'mon, the fifties had their good points, but *I* wouldn't wanna live there. In fact, one night, in a bout of silliness inspired by sitting in traffic on I-5 for a good seventy-five miles (In the middle of the faceless, expansive-yet-frighteningly-stifling San Joaquin Valley), I rolled onto the Sunset Strip around 12:30 or 1am on a summer Friday night. *London Calling* on the stereo, bass set on "stun" (unfortunately, I am not stereophonically advanced enough to have a "kill" setting on my bass knob); two LA club dudes in a late model Mustang convertible pull alongside. My car is *not* particularly hip. It has four doors. It is not lowered. It does not have a tailpipe suitable for launching tennis balls. I'm afraid at this point I can't afford to add a large yet aerodynamically ineffectual spoiler to it. It's an aging sport/luxury sedan. But it *does* have a fine climate-control system, as well as a pretty nice Bose stereo. So in the spirit of the Strip's look-at-me lunacy, I cranked up "Guns of Brixton." The dudes looked over at me. "Dude! What *is* that?"

"It's the Clash"

"The Clash?"

"Yeah, the Clash."

"Whoa..."

Dudes then proceeded to pull away, geniunely impressed by a twenty-year old record that no doubt smokes anything they had loaded into their thumpin' system. I read once that secret knowledge makes you cool. Apparently on the Cruise, the Clash counts as secret knowledge — much in the same way that DJ Shadow is hailed as a genius for drawing on disparate sources for samples on his hailed-as-revolutionary *Endtroducing...* record. Much in the same way graphic artist Mike Mills (not the bassist for REM) is lauded for recycling and recontextualizing the visual iconography of the last twenty or thirty years. Much in the same way that Rancid, though they *do* sound an awful lot like the Clash, are a completely recognizable band with great songwriting and arranging skills. It's not so much secret knowledge as it is a rebirth of a forgotten history by those who care enough to remember — and care enough not to slavishly imitate, but rather to expand upon and recontextualize. For example, take the recent *Give 'Em the Boot II* comp on Hellcat. Rancid serves as the backing band for various reggae artists, including Mad Lion and Buju Banton. Rather than aping the Clash's venture into Mikey Dread's territory with "Armagideon Time" and "Bankrobber", Rancid turn it around and bring the Jamaicans onto theirs. And it's that subtle shift that keeps the reggae/punk fusion fresh. Where Metallica took seventies Metal and mated it to early eighties hardcore like Black Flag and Minor Threat (as well as a liberal dose of the Misfits) and begat thrash, AFI took nineties melodic hardcore and fused it to eighties pop-and-speedmetal (with an even bigger dose of the Misfits) and begat Abbreviated Metal (still called "hardcore" for hipness' sake, as Abbreviated Metal is so new and so revolutionary that its hipness cachet is yet to be recognized by Those Who Count) [Late addition: Brett Reed made a pretty interesting case to me last night about Metal/Punk fusions — he posits that Slayer and Anthrax were more punk-influenced than Metallica, a proposition which has a solid basis in musical history, but neither of those bands had the inital impact of Metallica, or made a first record as good as *Kill 'Em All*, though Slayer's "The Antichrist" *does* smoke just about every song on *Kill 'Em All*, and is *miles* ahead of anything on *Fistful of Metal*.]

Abbreviated Metal is so new and so revolutionary that its hipness cachet is yet to be recognized by Those Who Count

Killing Cops and Reading Kerouac

When I was in college, I had a chat with poet Marvin Bell (whom I really like). I was nineteen years old and writing fairly crappy poetry that had me really frustrated. I wanted to say something new. I wanted to be earth-shatteringly revalatory. Marvin told me this. "There's nothing you can say that hasn't been said — the trick is to say it in your own way." A year or so ago, I was really frustrated again (about something else) and mentioned to Vic Bondi (whom I really like) what Marvin had said to me. Vic vehemently disagreed with me. Vic feels that there is something new that can be said. And of course there is; in a sense. As technology and society advance, we invariably will run up on new obstacles and moral quandaries that we as a people haven't faced before. So in that sense, I kind of sit on the fence. I *want* to believe that I still have a chance to say something that no one else has, but at some level — the very base level — humanity has been debating the same basic existential questions since the dawn of civilization. In that sense, writers I considered revolutionary when I was younger, like Albert Camus and Jack Kerouac, weren't necessarily saying anything exactly *new*; what they were doing was articulating new ways of dealing with the essential crux of life in the face of a society advancing at a more rapid pace than any in history. They were simultaneously saying something new and not saying anything new at all. But both men had a deep sense of a forgotten history: the long struggle of humanity to come to terms with itself.

Joe Strummer (in *HL* Vol 1. #5): "Punk's only following the Beats, and whoever else is in there — the Beats, and Hippies, and the Jazzers, and the Smokers, and the Free Thinkers, and the Bohemians — they're centrally slamming on to the main deal, which is 'Are we being born to be wage slaves?' Or not? And if not, then what?" So if we're to identify ourselves as punks (which I would say most of our writers and readers do), what does that mean to us 25-odd years on? Certainly people who try to be "Beats" today are fairly worthy of ridicule, as they were twenty years ago, roughly the same amount of time that punk's been a movement today. That doesn't mean that Ginsberg, Corso, Kerouac, Ferlinghetti and crew didn't pump out some brilliant literature that's still relevant and touching today. It means that slavishly adhering to what these guys were about in the fifties is a pretty silly thing to do. It *also* means that slavishly adhering to what was going on in '77 is an *equally* silly thing to do.

The Positive Aspect of Occasional Thinking

So it's been nearly twenty years since the founding of *Maximumrockroll*. And you know what? *MRR* was a good thing. As we all know (unless we're 17 years old and still insist on calling AFI "hardcore"), the punk scene we know today wouldn't exist without it. It gave people a sense of community when they were the only one with green hair in their one-horse town in Iowa. It told kids they didn't have to follow accepted norms. And for that, I held the magazine in high regard for a long time, even if it didn't particularly interest me (I've never been more than a sporadic reader of that particular publication). But you know what? Somewhere along the line, somewhere between the Punk Rock Explosion of '94 and the present, generally pinpointed as the period directly following the death of Tim Yo, *Maximum* became irrelevant, in a sense. The punk-rock infrastructure was no longer fragile. '94, for better or for worse, infused the scene with enough money and interest that it solidified on its own. Certainly, in much of the country, becoming a punk is no longer "taking a vow of unpopularity" as Brett Gurewitz once said of his own punk rock youth. (Though I *do* think it's ironic and a little sad that his old band is now *opening* for Blink-182.) So it's not *dangerous*, *per se*, but it's still a fucking blast and there's still a spirit to the scene that keeps me here, keeps me hooked and makes me feel I have an obligation to give something back. And I know that's something I share with the people who work at *MRR* — face it, we're *obviously* not in it for the money. When movements are young, and everything seems to be against them, it's perfectly acceptable (and often necessary) to issue blanket statements and make demands; draw up so-called "mission statements". Punk did that. The Pistols did it. The Clash did it. Crass did it. And so too, did *Maximumrocknroll*. But as movements age, we need to question why we're still here; why this is still vital; why what we're doing is important. Or if it's *not* important, is playing at revolution as harmless a diversion as sitting in front of the PlayStation for hours on end? The overwhelming feeling I get from the editorial staff at *MRR* is that they're doing *MRR* because *MRR* is there. They're holding on to a forgotten history, but not recontextualizing it. They're not doing anything new — other than lowering the magazine to even more of a petty shooting gallery than it already was.

Culture's in a bad state if women relate to and adore a misogynist prick like 2Pac.

I had an interesting discussion with *MRR* coordinator Sean Sullivan a few weeks ago. We were chatting about the hullabaloo that's been caused by an anonymous letter to *MRR* in which Jeff was accused of "blatent [sic] fucking racism", in his *HL* Vol. 1 #6 column, where he took on various youth fashions. Now Jeff's column may have been a bit misguided and even silly, [I mean, I'm sorry, I love ya and all, Jeff, but you're one of the last guys I'd look to for sartorial guidance] but it was *hardly* Jeff "dismissing black youth with a wave of his hand" as Arwen put it in her column. It was a comment on the idiocy of an inordinantly large portion of hip-hop culture. Which, strangely enough, is for the most part peddled by old white men with millions of dollars. Certainly, there are constructive and insightful hip-hop artists, such as Spearhead's Michael Franti, KRS-One, or Public Enemy's Chuck D (whatever I may think of Professor Griff's anti-Semitic idiocy or Flavor Flav's crack-smoking), but if it's all about bitches 'n' Benjamins, I'm out the door. I mean, c'mon, the lionization of Tupac Shakur is a little weird, don'tcha think? I remember once in a class I took on black male writers, I mentioned that I wasn't particularly sad that Tupac had been killed. Suddenly, three black girls got all up in arms at me and said they felt he spoke to them; that he was a poet. I dunno...Amiri Baraka is a *poet*. Tupac Shakur? I'm not so sure. I'm sorry, but culture's in a bad state if women relate to and adore a misogynist prick like 2Pac. Black or white, the guy was basically an asshole. So by what standard is Jeff dismissing black youth if he comments on the thuggery and intolerant posturing unfortunately so endemic to hip-hop culture? As Danyel Smith wrote in her "Dreaming America" column in the November '92 issue of *Spin*, talking about the role of the black woman in hip-hop culture, "She knows that *biiiiitch* mostly says racism is still getting fed healthy portions of patriarchy, meaning that she better stop thinking so much, she better get with the program or she'll end up by herself or soul-kissing her girlfriend, just like everyone says. Finally, she stands up, pissed-off at the coolness, the pseudo-power, and the fun of being a hip-hop boy." Funny, as I was trascribing that, I realized that being *MRR* is much like being Smith's hip-hop boy — there's a sense of responsibility to a role; the idea that one is better, tougher and more authoritative than others, even when more often than not, one's head is firmly lodged well past the anus in the wrong direction. I realize that's not the *perfect* analogy, but the more I think about it, the more it fits. But even among the *MRR* crew, there are Michael Frantis and Chuck D's to Arwen's Puff Daddy; folks such as Mykel Board, George Tabb and Pete Menschetti.

My conversation with Sean basically consisted of a discussion of our two magazines, and how I don't particularly want any bad blood between us. That I don't have a problem with him, but that I didn't enjoy how as soon as Arwen found out who I was at the Mordam convention after-party last summer (we'd been involved in a fairly friendly conversation before that), began firing questions at me like an overzealous prosecutor. I simply told her that I'd had a rough week, was kinda drunk, and didn't really want to have that conversation and walked away. Sean's response was that he understood how she felt — how would I feel if a publication talked shit about something I devoted so much time to? Hmm...who talks more shit about *Hit List* than any publication under the sun? I'll give you one guess and a clue. It starts with an "M", ends with an "l" and in the middle is "aximumrocknrol". That's fine if they have issues with our maga-

HIT SQUAD

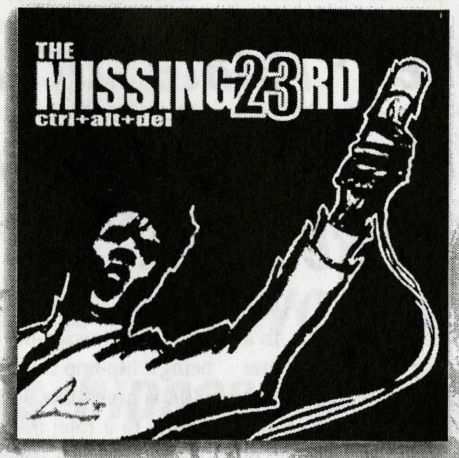
zine. Hell, sometimes *I* have issues with our magazine (most recently, the ad for Bro Prints — a company owned by one of our contributors — we ran in our last issue). But it doesn't make me think the *MRR* kids are evil — or even think they're bad people. But at the same time, I get mad when I see *Maximum* seemingly refuse to grow. And I get mad when *MRR* holds us to double standards, or portray us as the Great Satan with no accurate analysis of what we do (other than Pete Menschetti's column a few issues ago). And yeah, Jeff, like Mel Cheplowitz and Jello Biafra, can be a crotchety old guy on occasion. Sean asked me why we owe these guys anything. Was he kidding? In a lot of ways, we owe these guys our lives. It doesn't mean we have to agree with them, but how many lives were changed because of *MRR*? Because of Dead Kennedys records? Or by that first Jawbreaker album? C'mon...even if we don't always agree with them (and believe me, I've gotten into plenty of arguments with Jeff and Mel — Jello doesn't actually give you space between words to get an argument in edgewise), I respect them — and all the punks who've come before me who tried to make a positive difference in this world; those who've encouraged people to think and question their surroundings; people like Greg Graffin, Joe Strummer, Ian MacKaye, Chris Hanna of Propagandhi, Jesse Michaels, Henry Rollins and Aaron Cometbus, to name just a few. We *do* owe these guys something. They had the guts to get out there and inspire us — and did it before it was cool to do so. I can't say I agree 100% with all (or even any) of these characters...sometimes not even 50%, but the fact is, they all inspired me, and I wouldn't be who I am today without them. And though the individual musicians may be different in your case, I'm willing to bet you wouldn't be reading this magazine if the same thing hadn't happened to you.

The Revolution Will Most Likely Not Appear Monthly on Saddle-Stiched Newsprint For the Forseeable Future

And personally, I feel that's where this magazine comes in. No, I don't agree with everything we publish, but that's what I think makes *Hit List* so great. I can't think of anything better in a punk magazine than Larry Livermore and Frank Discussion taking different sides on the situation at the WTO riots. Or having Lefty Hooligan and Mel Cheplowitz writing in the same issue. Or the upcoming column of Feral House honcho Adam Parfrey after the brouhaha that resulted after the publication of our article on Black Metal. Certainly, if one reads *HL* through a purely Leftist filter, we're right-wing, racist, homophobic, capitalist, sexist and practically any other epithet you can throw at us. Then again, if you read us through a Rightist filter, we're a bunch of pinko, nigger lovin', feminist fags intent on turning over all that's good and decent in this country. Hey kids — guess what? We're not here to spoon-feed you much in the way of ideology. We're here to cover the underground music scene, present some (hopefully) interesting political articles on people and groups of various stripes across the political spectrum, and most importantly, I think, to ask you to think for yourself. In the year-and-a-half or so we've been doing this magazine, I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about the punk scene. I've learned a lot about the world. In fact, being a part of *Hit List* has been one of the most formative experiences of my twenty-four years. But the thing I think I've learned the most from doing this — the most valuable lesson — was something I already knew but at some level had sublimated over my years in the punk scene: to keep asking questions. And I know that's a thread that keeps running through my columns, but it becomes more and more apparent to me just how valuable that idea is with every passing day. And it's only by questioning that we keep forgotten histories alive — whether they be the shootings at Jackson State (subsequently overshadowed by the Kent State shootings a short time later), why that guy in *High Fidelity* was offbase in his assesment that Green Day were primarily influenced by the Clash and SLF (though admittedly, the first thing I thought of upon initially hearing GD was a poppier *Inflammable Material*, and Billie certainly *does* have Strummer's Electric Leg down pat), or simply why *MRR* is the way it is today. If you don't ask, you don't learn. Of course, if you don't ask, you're never have to admit you didn't know, either. Which, ultimately, may be the toughest part for both us and our colleagues across the Bay. And when histories aren't questioned and the knowledge gleaned applied to today's situations, they're either forgotten or become one-dimensional parodies of their original complex constitutions.

First time as revolution, second time as farce, kids? ⌖

— xoxo,
Davey



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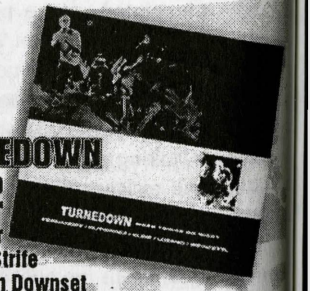

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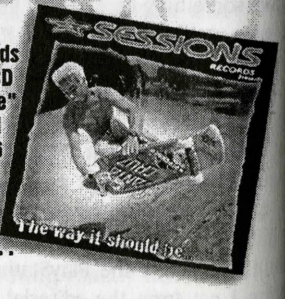

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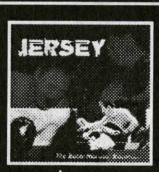

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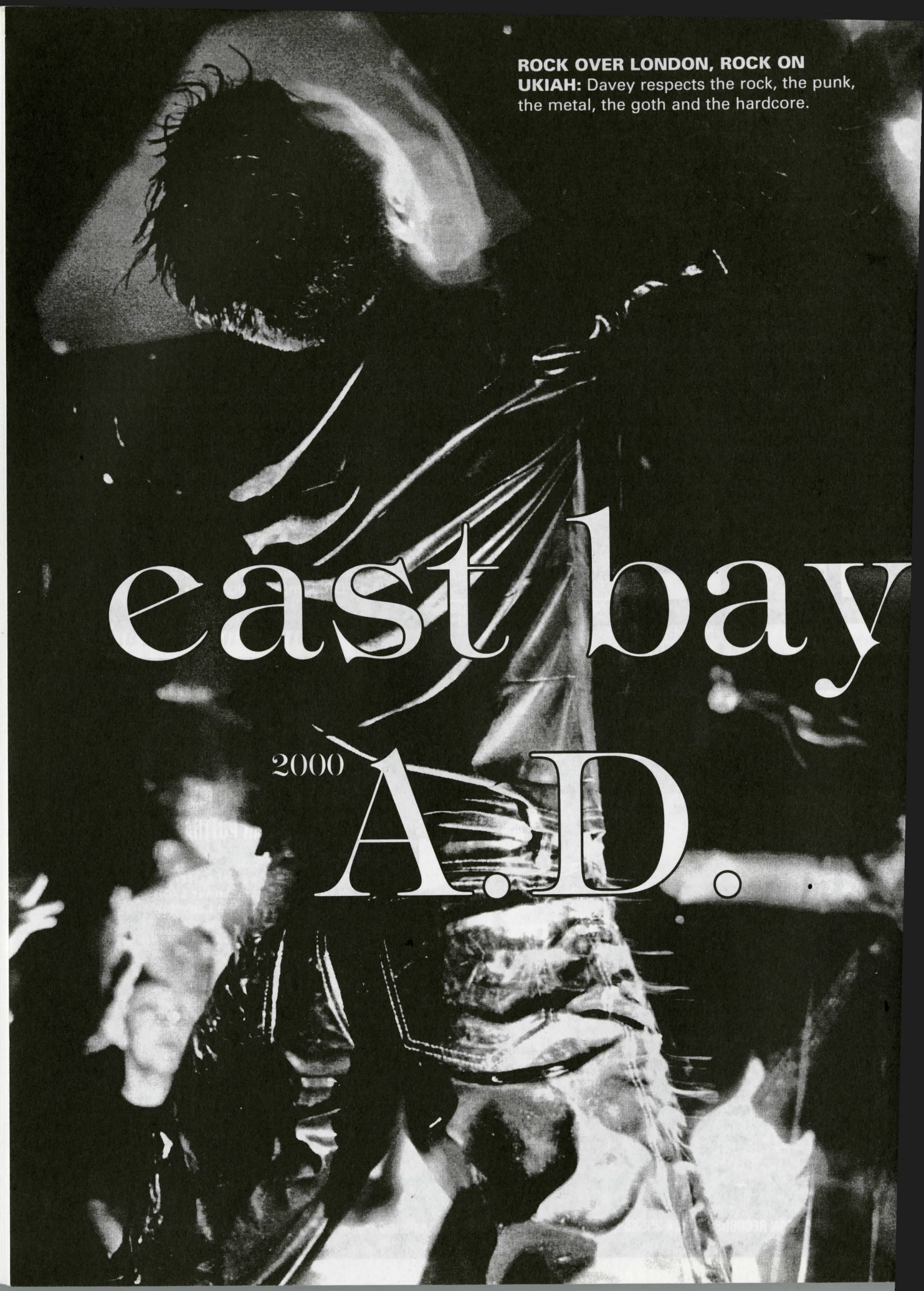

ROCK OVER LONDON, ROCK ON UKIAH: Davey respects the rock, the punk, the metal, the goth and the hardcore.

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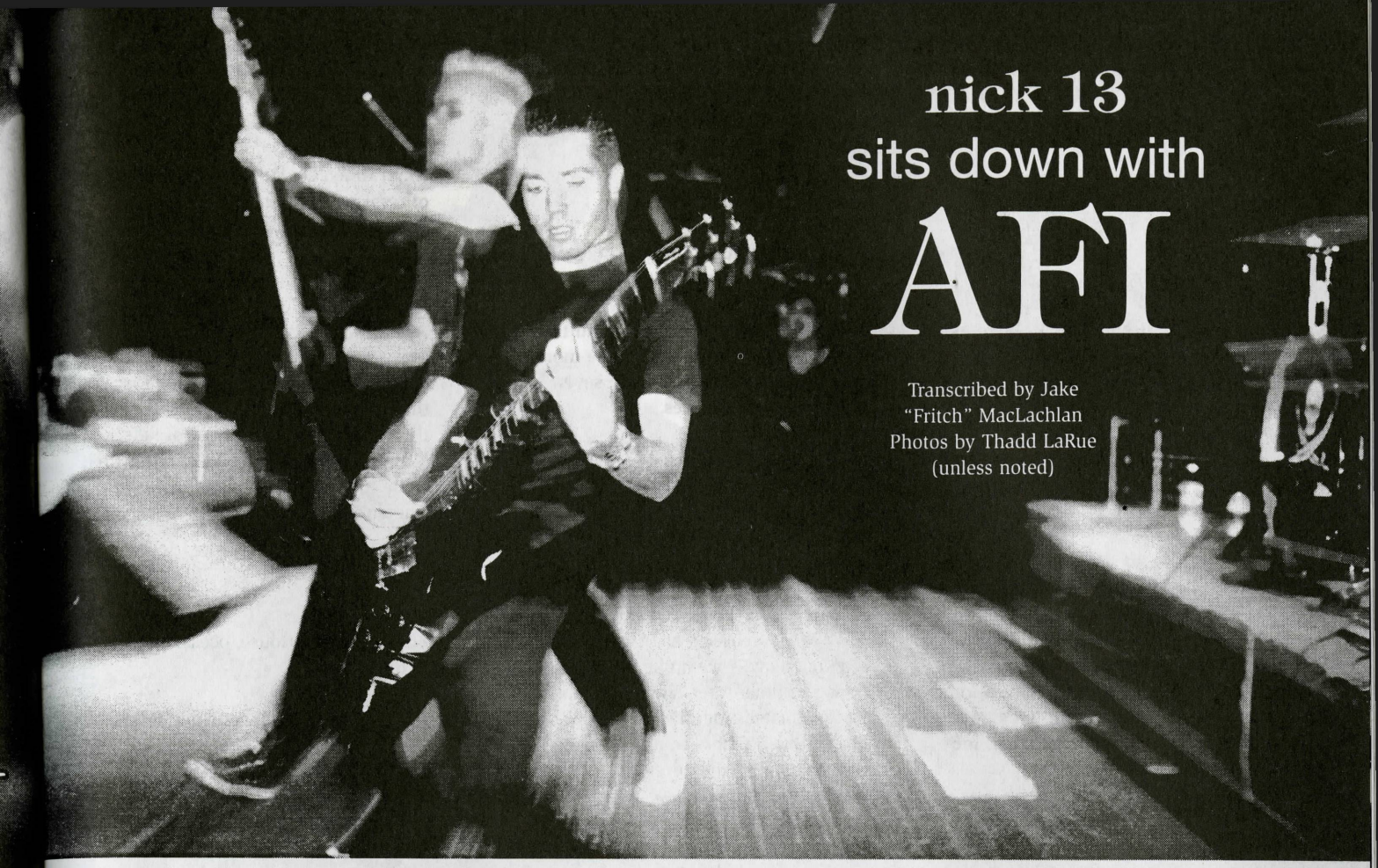


nick 13 sits down with AFI

Transcribed by Jake "Fritch" MacLachlan
Photos by Thadd LaRue (unless noted)

Some bands gain widespread underground recognition by making great records, others do so through the strength of their live performances. Some bands earn respect simply through the plain hard work of heavy touring and a life away from home. Rarely can all of these things be said of the same band, but Berkeley's AFI is an exception. An overseas publication once mistakenly attributed the words "Aggressive, Furious, Intense" to the initials that comprise their name. These adjectives all describe their music accurately, but it is also at times somber, melodic and beautiful. Not content to stand still artistically, they still possess the same manic energy they did when they first burst onto the East Bay punk scene via 924 Gilman Street in the middle of last decade; AFI has also forged ahead musically into new territory with each release, pushing the limits of the hardcore punk genre and redefining it in the process. I've had the privilege of watching this evolution from their first performance in a living room almost ten years ago to their latest brilliant performance in a hall packed with their rabid following — their last before entering the studio to record a new album due out this fall. On a beautiful Berkeley spring day near March's end, I sat down with the band in the dimly lit room of lead singer Davey Havok that is known as "The Clavet" (closet + cave), for a conversation on all things past, present and future in the world of one of the most exciting bands in underground music today.

— Nick 13

Nick: Okay, let's start with the rank and file: names, instruments.

Davey: I'm Davey Havok, I sing.

Jade: Jade, guitar.

Adam: Adam Carson, I play drums.

Hunter: Hunter, bass.

Nick: Okay. I'm sure you've all been asked this question a thousand times, here's your chance to answer it once and for all, if you wish. What do the letters "A-F-I" mean?

Davey: A Fire Inside.

Jade: A Fire Inside.

Nick: Okay, I guess that settles that once and for all. [laughter] Maybe it used to mean something else, maybe it didn't. That's what it means now, there you go. Okay now, Brett has asked me for a long interview. With this in mind, let's go all the way back to the beginning. Tell me about the earliest days of AFI.

Adam: Um, AFI was conceived when we were in high school, we were sophomores. I think Dave and our original guitarist Mark were sitting around at lunch and came up with the idea of starting a band, which is kinda funny because no one knew how to play any instrument, no one really owned any instruments. But they decided it was going to be Dave singing, Mark playing guitar, Vic Chalker on bass, and they knew I had a drum set so I was asked to play drums. And we just started practicing. It was a long time before we played our first show, it was several years before we wrote a decent song. [laughter]

Nick: Okay, and your thoughts on it, Dave? You started jamming, eventually you started playing shows in your hometown area...

Davey: Yeah, yeah. Adam had it pretty much to the "T" there, I mean we were sitting around and bored, you know — didn't have anything to do living in Ukiah other than skateboarding and listening to music, and so, Influence 13 did it, so we figured we'd give it a shot. And yeah, so we just started writing songs and we played our first public performance I think at Skippy's house, if I remember correctly that was the first one... We played, I think we had about six songs.

Adam: We played them three times each, I think.

Davey: Yeah, we played six songs each three times I think, much to the dismay of everybody at the party.

Nick: I was into it...

Davey: Except for yourself, I think. [laughter] Yeah, that was... that was it.

Nick: So that's high school. And then you kept playing, things got a little more serious, you guys released some seven inches [vinyl 45's] yourselves...

Davey: Yeah, we released — the first seven inches we released ourselves, the first being a split with Loose Change, Jade's band. Geoff joined on bass shortly before we released it. And we did that, then we released *Behind the Times* and *Eddie Picnic's All Wet* all ourselves. Actually, *Eddie Picnic's All Wet* was released after we played a reunion show— we broke up for a short period of time. After Adam and Mark and I had graduated from high school, we broke up, and then that year, around Christmastime when everyone was home visiting their families, we were encouraged to do a reunion show, even though before then, no one cared about us at all. Every time we would play, I mean with the exception of yourself and Jade [laughter] and a few other people, no one really had much interest in us. But some of the kids in Santa Rosa and Petaluma were saying that our seven inches since we had broken up had been selling really well at the local record store in Santa Rosa, and they said we should play a reunion show, so we did. And it was great, it was the first time that I remember a bunch of kids singing along and knowing our lyrics, which was definitely one of the best feelings ever, and we were like "Whoa, this is great. This is what we want to do for the rest of our lives." You know, "We're gonna keep doing this. We're gonna keep going."

Nick: So that's when you knew that the band was what you wanted to dedicate your lives to...

Davey: Absolutely, it was — I mean, before we played that reunion show, we really never thought we could do anything. We really didn't think it could be anything serious, we were just doing it because we love it. And we still do it because we love it. Luckily, other people have come to appreciate it. And it was at that point that we said "Yeah," you know, "This is so much fun, there is nothing else that is going to make us as happy as doing this, there is nothing that is going to be as satisfying as this," you know, "Fuck school, fuck work, let's do this. This is what it's all about."

Nick: Okay, cool. So at this point, AFI kind of reforms, this time based in the Bay Area. The East Bay.

Davey: Correct.

Adam: Right. We started playing shows every weekend, two or three a weekend for about a year, and it was during that time that we built up a pretty decent following in the Bay. You know, a group of kids — fifty kids, maybe a hundred kids, that would come to see us at all the different places, at Gilman Street or uh, oh jeez...

Davey: Like Cloyne Court and the Chateaux...

Adam: Pill Hill House, occasionally a show in the city...

Davey: A really seminal show for us was our first show at Gilman Street that we were actually booked on the show. I mean, I think we jumped on stage once and played a couple songs at a show that Rancid was playing I think that we were all there...

Adam: It was Rancid — Oh, the show that you're talking about, in June of '94 was Rancid, Total Chaos, the Parasites...

Davey: No, that's not the show — I mean that show that I was talking about was the show that we jumped on, what was that show that we jumped on stage? Do you remember doing that? We played like two songs...

Adam: That was Rancid and like Chickenhead or something.

Davey: Yeah, something. But anyway, yes, the Rancid/Total Chaos/Hellbillys show was — and Parasites played that too, was, you know, our first confirmed show at Gilman Street, and that was... that really was great. It was a great show, of course, our friends Rancid put us on that bill, and from that point on, people paid attention to us. They put us in front of a lot of kids who were very receptive, and after that, people decided that they would come see us every once in a while. [laughter]

Nick: So you guys built up a following at Gilman Street, and in the East Bay in general, and that led to the recording of your first album.



LIFE SLIPS AWAY AS DAVEY COMES FORTH: Mister Havok unleashes the banshee's wail — don't tell Siouxsie!

Davey: Yeah...

Nick: Tell us about that.

Davey: We recorded our first album for Wingnut Records, this guy Josh decided to start a label. I don't know if he decided to start if for Screw 32, but he decided to start a label, and he was signing Screw 32 and he was putting out a record with them, and we were very good friends with them. And Doug [Sangalang — former Screw 32, Limp, Big Rig and Dread guitarist, now fronting One Time Angels] was telling me that "We're doing this record on Wingnut, and I bet he would really want to put your record out, you know, put out a record for you guys," and we were like "Okay, cool." And we met him and we talked with him and he said "Yeah, we'll put out a record for you." And they did. [laughter]

Adam: I think he intended the label to be, you know, a decent label.

Davey: Yeah.

Adam: I think he had good intentions. However, his...

Davey: His business sense wasn't there.

Adam: Exactly. It got to the point where we were going on tour and we needed our records, and we couldn't get our records, and everything just sort of fell apart for him. He's since been asked to not sell our record, and I know he — I believe he still does.

Davey: Yeah, it was really easy for him to not have them when we were on the label, but now that he's not supposed to sell them, he does an okay job of selling them, I think. [laughter] From what I hear.

Nick: And you guys don't get paid for that, right?

Davey: No, any records sold by Wingnut or purchased that are on Wingnut, we don't see any royalties for that, and we haven't for years and years and years...

Adam: And we barely ever did.

Davey: Yeah, we barely ever did, so if anybody is thinking of buying our first record, and you care about us at all, please don't buy the Wingnut version. [laughter]

Nick: Okay, so how did Nitro Records, Bryan Holland from the Offspring's label, come into the picture?

Davey: Well, they had heard us, we had sent them a demo tape long before our first album was ever recorded, and then I think after the first CD came out, they got a hold of that — this guy Jason who used to work there and listened to incoming stuff got a hold of it and really liked it. And he called me up at my house one day and said that he was really excited about it, and that he thought that Dexter would really like it, and wanted to know if we'd be interested in having him play it for Dexter, and if we'd be interested in being on Nitro at all if Dexter was interested, and I said "Yeah, sure. Go ahead." And Dexter listened to it, really liked it. He asked to meet with us, which he did at a show that we played down at the Palace shortly thereafter. And we all met with him and talked to him. He was a really nice guy, and having been in a punk band for a large part of his life and knowing what it was like to have very few people care about you, and struggle doing really small tours, he knew exactly where we were coming from. I mean, the Offspring wasn't always selling millions and millions of records. I mean, there was a time when they couldn't draw more than, you know, sixty to a hundred kids at Gilman Street. And so he knew what it was like and he seemed really cool, so we decided to go with his label.

Nick: Cool. So the band found a home at Nitro Records. They re-released your first record, they released your second album, *Very Proud of Ya*, and at this point, after touring on the record, Geoff leaves the band, correct?

Davey: Correct. Geoff's final tour was the Sick of It All tour, right Adam?

Adam: Right. We started that tour with I think fourteen shows with the Offspring. He quit on the first day of that tour, but he finished the tour.

Davey: Which was good.

Adam: We were scheduled to have to have a few weeks off, and then do another tour with the Offspring. And we were without a bass player, so we asked Hunter...

Hunter: That's me. [laughter]

Adam: ...if he would be interested in filling in.

Nick: So this is when Hunter hooks up with the band. What was it like for you, Hunter, coming into the fold and playing bass on the *Shut Your Mouth* album and all the tours surrounding that?

A really seminal show for us was our first show at Gilman Street that we were actually booked on the show. I mean, I think we jumped on stage once and played a couple songs at a show that Rancid was playing. [davey]

Hunter: It was crazy. It was like, you know, I've been in plenty of bands *[Including Badical Turbo Radness! — Ed]*, but it was completely different than any other band I'd been in before... For me it was just an amazing opportunity, as a temporary bass player, to be able to tour with a band like the Offspring, you know, suddenly, after I'd just played really small crummy shows. And to suddenly be put in front of these crowds that I've never played in front of before — huge crowds — it's just like an amazing opportunity. I thought that this was like, "This is the best thing." And then of course when it was over, I was kinda "It's too bad this is over," but then I was asked to record on *Shut Your Mouth* sessions, and I thought "Well, you know, another great opportunity. I get to be a session bass player..."

Nick: And then of course, you were asked to join the band as a permanent member, and you've been here ever since.

Hunter: Exactly.

Nick: Okay. So, at some point, the original guitarist Mark is no longer in the band. Any words you'd care to say about that situation?

Davey: It just became painfully clear that Mark was no longer interested in being in the band on any level. He wasn't interested in being with the band members, he wasn't interested in playing with the band members, he wasn't interested in touring or playing shows. So there was really no question as to what was going to happen.

Nick: Okay, and then that brings us to Jade. Jade, you're the most recent addition to the band. When did you start playing guitar for AFI?

Jade: Oh, I think it was November '98 was when I... [stops]

Nick: Okay, you joined the band. You played on *Black Sails in the Sunset*, the fourth full-length album, as well as the *All Hallows* CD-EP, but AFI is far from your first band. For people who may not be as familiar with you as they are with the other members, tell us about your musical history, maybe some of the bands you've been in...

Jade: Well, I've been in I guess four bands including AFI. Influence 13 was the first one, when I was in high school, a little bit after... That was with you, you know... [laughter]

Nick: That's right, I remember that. [laughter]

Jade: ...Geoff Kresge, before he was Kresge, and a couple of guys from our hometown. And that was fun. We played in the early 90's, we played with Green Day when they were coming up, that was kind of our high-point, I think. Then I was in and kind of still am in Loose Change. I haven't played any shows for a while, but they're, they have a record, we have a record on Coldfront. And I was in Redemption 87, which I'm sure some of you might remember...

Nick: With Eric Ozenne, now in the Nerve Agents...

Jade: The Nerve Agents, yeah. "Sherrick D." And now AFI.

Nick: Now, your sound has undergone some evolution since the early days, and even since the first two LPs. How would you all describe the changes in your sound, from then until now?

Davey: I think the songwriting has become far more complex, far more advanced and mature from looking at say the earliest seven-inch to *All Hallows*. For me, lyrically I've become more comfortable with what I'm writing now. The lyrics have become less frivolous than they were. They hold more meaning to me now than they ever have in the past.

Nick: What do you attribute that to?

Davey: I attribute that to just kind of getting really bored — I mean in the beginning, the first lyrics I was writing was when I was fifteen or sixteen years old, so my interests were a little bit different then than they are now, and some of the lyrics were funny. At the time I was writing those lyrics, you had the Vandals, you had NOFX and D.I., and there were a lot of bands who were writing lighthearted funny or satirical lyrics, and that was appealing to me at the time, so there was a little of that which could be seen in my lyric writing. For me, all of those bands did that style well and pulled it off, but for my own lyrics — well, they were meant to be funny, I don't know if anybody thought they were funny. [laughter] They were really lighthearted lyrics, and really quickly that became very boring for me to write and to sing those lyrics, because for me, when I was on stage and I was putting everything into the singing and into the performance and screaming my heart out, to be singing about cereal or bowling, I mean it's just like "Wow, this is stupid." You know, "This is just lame." [laughter]

Nick: Mm-hmm. And the rest of you? Any thoughts on AFI's musical progression in the last couple of years?

Adam: I think any time a band undergoes lineup changes, there's going to be drastic changes in the evolution of the band. I think that we were headed this direction, but I think with the addition of Hunter and Jade, who are principal songwriters, that it has most everything to do with them.

Nick: Okay now, there's been much talk about a "darker" direction in AFI's music and lyrics. What's behind this?

Davey: Lyrically, as I've said, I've steered away from the lighthearted lyrics, and my lyrics have become more introspective and more based on my personal feelings and my personal experiences. And I think that, in this world, if you do not recognize the darker side, then you are completely walking through this world blinded. I mean, not to sound generic, it's just the truth. You have to recognize both the lighter side and the dark side in order for there to be a balance. Also, at times I think that which is perceived to be dark or evil or negative is in fact the complete opposite, the antithesis of that. I think that, in our culture, in the Western world here, things have been misconstrued and misunderstood at times, and I think actually that a lot of the stuff that we do that is considered dark may fall under that category as well.

Nick: I see. Okay now, you guys are getting ready in about a week's time to go into the studio and record your fifth full-length album, correct?

Davey: Correct.

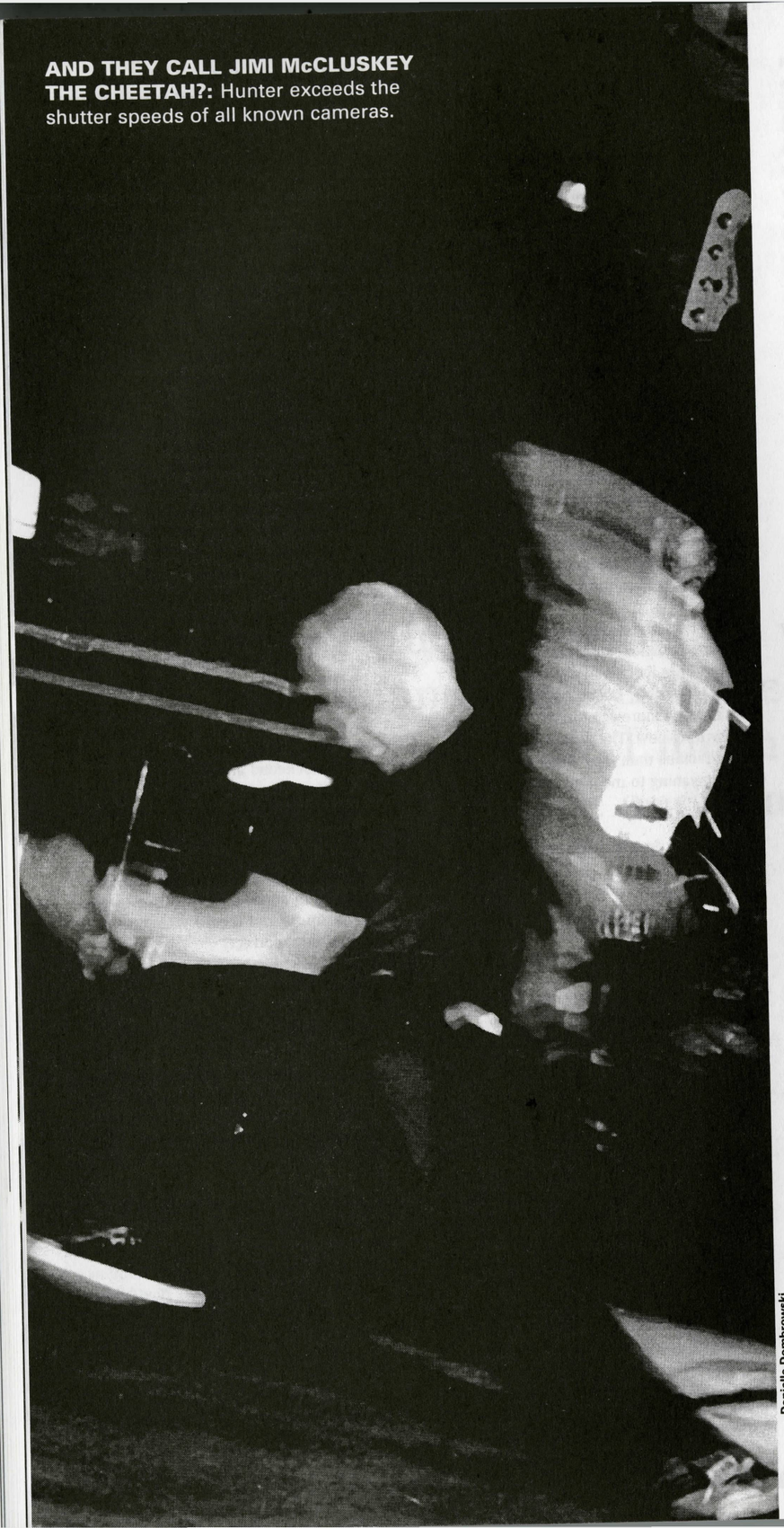
Nick: Tell us about it...

Jade: We don't want to give anything away, but... [laughter] We're pretty happy with it, we think it's a pretty natural progression, it's not anything out-of-the-blue. We think it's just better.

Nick: Okay. Can you give us an album title, or is it too early?

Davey: I'm gonna hold off on revealing the title for now, but I think it [the new album] seems like an extension of the *All Hallows* EP. It's hard to describe for me. It's always hard for me to describe our music. It sounds like AFI to me. [laughter]

Nick: Okay, and that's gonna be recorded starting in April?



AND THEY CALL JIMI McCLUSKEY THE CHEETAH?: Hunter exceeds the shutter speeds of all known cameras.

Danielle Dombrowski

Adam: Yeah. I think on this collection of songs, at least songs that Jade wrote — Jade and Dave got together and came up with a more complete song. In the past, there was a lot of brainstorming with the entire band, but this time a lot of the songs were really close to being complete before they were even shown to Hunter or I. And it was actually interesting, because I could see exactly what they were trying to do, and in a way it helped, at least for me... it helped me to choose my parts. But I really think that the teamwork that they had to create the songs, they're more based around the vocals, and I think that's important. I think it was really successful...

Jade: Yeah, I think it's kind of along the same lines as *Black Sails*, like...

Nick: You were writing a lot of the actual music.

Jade: Well, me and Dave usually... You know, we'll get together in my room. I think maybe I got together with myself a little more in this one. [laughter] Like, I didn't want to go out on my own too much on *Black Sails*, 'cause I was new in the band and I didn't want to, like, just take a bunch of chances with a band that was already there. I didn't want to go too far and screw things up...

Nick: I see.

Jade: ...on accident, not meaning to. [laughter] So I made sure that a lot of stuff I wrote you know, Dave was there. But, I think, with working together, just trying to come up with the bare bones of stuff and making sure the music and the melodies come together at the same time — is the best method. I mean, it's like tried and true so far.

Davey: Yeah. I mean, we'd sit there and work on stuff, and sometimes we'd get stuff that would — boom — like right away, "Okay, there's a song." You know, it's gonna be cool, it's gonna sound good. And then sometimes there'd be stuff that we'd work out almost in entirety that would never even make it to the practice pad at all, that Adam and Hunter had never even heard cause we decided it sucked [laughter] before we ever got out there.

Nick: So, you two worked together on a lot of the stuff, but you [speaking to Davey] don't play any instruments, right?

Davey: Yeah, that's right.

Jade: He tries to pick up my guitar sometimes [laughter], but I have to snatch it out of his hand before he causes any damage. [laughter] He plays a couple of atonal parts that quickly get left in the fuckin' garbage can.

Davey: Yeah, I can't play a thing at all. I cannot play an instrument. I do a lot of "nah-nah-nah, doo-doo-doo" kinda stuff. [laughter]

Jade: A lot of parts, I had a tape recorder with me on the Sick Of It All tour. It was a really long tour, so when I got back I had a lot of parts, so I played some of my favorite ones and tried to... I think on this record I put all the parts that I wanted to use into songs, so I'm kinda happy with that. Like, everything I wanted to do, I've kinda done, so...

Nick: That's cool. So the vocal melodies, does Dave come up with those, or do you both come up with them?

Jade: I think we kinda work together on that.

Davey: Yeah, yeah.

Jade: Because a lot of times, I'll have ideas already for vocal melodies, like, you know, if I write a part and I'm by myself, it's just natural to think of vocal melodies. And so I'll run those by Dave and we'll work with them, tweak them a little bit. And then he always has good ideas for melodies, of course.

Davey: Yeah, some of the stuff is straight Jade, some of the stuff is straight me, some of the stuff is combination, just as far as melody goes. I mean, some stuff I'll think "Oh wait, did I write that melody or did Jade write that melody?" I don't know. [laughter]

Nick: So basically, you guys just get together and it goes from there.

Davey: Yeah.

Nick: Now, if you each had to pick a favorite song to play live, what would it be? One song.

Adam: Well, it used to be "God Called In Sick," but I think I'm leaning more toward "Totalimmortal," which we've just recently put into our set. It's fun to play.

Nick: [Johnny Carson voice] "Totalimmortal." [laughter; apologies to the readers for introducing one of those reoccurring inside jokes that annoy me to no end in interviews I read]

Davey: [Johnny Carson voice] "Fall Children."

Nick: Dave, what's your favorite song to play live?

Davey: I think "God Called In Sick Today" is probably still my favorite.

Jade: "God Called In Sick," but I'm leaning a little bit towards "Fall Children" a little bit.

Hunter: I don't know, dude. It used to be "Half-Empty Bottle," like three years ago. [laughter] That's all I can remember. Yeah, I like "Totalimmortal," just because we haven't really been able to play that until recently.

Nick: Okay. Now, if we weren't talking about the songs as being played live, but strictly as creations, what's your favorite AFI song?

Hunter: Jesus...[sound of crickets chirping, then —] Mine's "Totalimmortal."

Jade: Yeah, I might have to agree.

Davey: Yeah, I'm gonna have to agree, too. Yeah, either "God" or I think "Totalimmortal." Yeah.

Nick: Adam's thinking. [laughter]

Adam: I really can't narrow it down.

Nick: Okay, fair enough. If someone was gonna pick up one AFI release, which one would you want it to be? Which one are you the most proud of?

Davey: *Black Sails*.

Jade: Yeah, *Black Sails*.

Hunter: Yeah, sure.

Adam: I think the *All Hallows* EP is really good, but I think *Black Sails*, you know it's just longer, so it gives you a better idea of the band. It's more rounded. But, definitely *All Hallows* is something that I'm really proud of, too.

Nick: Okay. What kinds of things *outside* of music influence the band, be it art, authors, movies, comics...?

Davey: Yeah, comics. [laughter] As horribly nerdy as it sounds, for me. I read these titles by a guy named Jhonen Vasquez and a guy named Roman Dirge, and this comic called *Gloomcookie* by Ted Naifeh and Serena Valentino. I really enjoy those comics a lot, and they actually do have a lot to say. A lot of them do.

Nick: Anyone else? Anything that's not a band or a record, that somehow influences what you do when it comes to music?

Adam: I'm just the drummer, man. [laughter]

Hunter: I don't know, maybe this might technically fall into the category of music, but I go see movies almost every day. That influences me in a way, you know, I try to pull some of the cinema into the music.

Nick: I hear you. What are your favorite movies?

Hunter: My favorite would be *North by Northwest*...

Nick: Hitchcock.

Hunter: ...directed by Hitchcock.

Davey: I love a lot of stuff by Tim Burton. *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands*...

Jade: *Cool Runnings*. [laughter]

Davey: ... *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Nick: Did Burton do *Cool Runnings*? [laughter]

Jade: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Nick: I thought he did, yeah.

Adam: How about *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*?

Davey: I really like the John Hughes films. John Hughes' stuff is really good. And then, other 80's movies like—

Jade: *The Breakfast Club*.

Hunter: How many favorites do you have, man? [laughter]

Davey: *Lost Boys*.

Nick: Yeah, the question was your favorite movie, Dave. Or maybe some of your favorites, but not every movie you've ever seen in your life. [laughter]

Davey: Sorry.

Nick: Jade, favorite movies?

Jade: I don't have such an impressive favorite movies list. Mine's more along the lines of *Caddyshack* [laughter], *Breakfast Club*, *Red Dawn*.

Nick: So you're kind of on the 80's tip.

Jade: Oh, yeah. Of course.

Adam: Yeah, I think I am as well. John Hughes films. *Indiana Jones* trilogy.

Nick: *Remo Williams*?

Adam: *Indiana Jones*. [pause, then laughter]

Jade: Yeah, *Remo Williams*...

Nick: How about *Alan Quartermain*?

Adam: Yeah, *Alan Quartermain and the Lost City of Gold*. [laughter]

Jade: I'm also backing anything by Chuck Norris.

Davey: Word.

Jade: *Forced Vengeance, Invasion U.S.A., Delta Force*...

Davey: Oh, you know what? We have to qualify the John Hughes films as the early-to-mid-80's John Hughes films. I was informed of that recently. I guess he went on to make some crappy films. [laughter]

Nick: Yeah, who cares about John Hughes in the 90's? [laughter]

Adam: Fuck that guy. [laughter]

Jade: Ho! [laughter]

Nick: Poor John. [laughter] While we're speaking about art in a sense, tell us about your association with Alan Forbes, the artist of some of your recent album covers.

Davey: Alan Forbes has done the art for us for *Black Sails in the Sunset* and the *All Hallows* EP. He also did a record-release poster for the *Black Sails in the Sunset* release shows. And he's just our friend, he's a really cool guy that does great work, and he's going to be working on the new one as well. He's going to be doing the front and back covers, and then also a few different images on the inside.

Nick: Interesting. So, it would seem like his work strikes a chord with you or relates to your music.

Davey: Yeah. He's... the reason I was interested in him at first was I saw a lot of his rock-art posters that were up in store windows, and I always liked his a lot because, thematically, he based it on the macabre or spooky stuff — monsters — and he did bands like Bauhaus and the Cramps and the Misfits. And it wasn't hot-roddy, like most of the poster art is these days. And he really stood out to me, and I thought "Wow, that guy's really cool, it'd be cool if he did a poster for us someday." And then it just came that he was willing to do album covers for us.

Nick: I see. That's cool. That brings me to something else... Dave, why did you "go Goth?" [laughter] You used to have a mohawk — and you had those Korn-style kinda braids for awhile...

Davey: I hate you. [laughter]

Nick: Okay. Now, you've done some interesting tours since I last interviewed you for a zine called *Six Point Mutiny*, including a tour opening for the legendary Danzig and Samhain. If you guys could tell us about that experience...

Davey: It was a crazy experience. It was really cool, it goes without saying. We got to tour with Danzig and Samhain and that was just amazing. Just being able to see Samhain and Danzig perform every night, they were so powerful, Danzig singing both sets flawlessly. It was great, it was such a great show. And it was a really great experience to be able to play to their crowd, which is a really different crowd than we've ever gotten to play to before. And, for the most part, I think we went over really well. I've said before there were a couple people yelling "faggot" at me every night, but it was only like one or two... [pauses]...instead of like groups of people chanting it. [laughter] And, at the same time, there was a large group of people who I think really enjoyed us, who had never seen us before. And, also every night, which was really, really cool and made us feel really good, was there were a very large group of kids — of our kids, of AFI kids — who came out just to see us. Every night, there'd be a huge group up front singing along. And after the shows, these kids would come up to me and say things like "You guys were really good, I've never heard Danzig or Samhain, what are they like?" or "I don't like Danzig or Samhain, I came just to see you guys," which not only was amazing to me because I can't understand why anyone wouldn't like Danzig or Samhain or not have heard of them, but at the same time, these kids were coming and going out of their way to see us play for twenty minutes. And that made us feel really good.

Adam: Just before that tour, we came off the "Life On the Ropes" tour, which was also really enjoyable. It was Sick of It All, Hot Water Music, Indecision and us. And that tour was... what was it, like six weeks or something?

AFI's Favorite Albums

I thought it would be interesting to see a list of each band-members five favorite albums of all time. In retrospect, it would have been better to ask for ten since it is admittedly much harder to narrow it down, but in the words of the kid at the end of American Me, *"Fuck it, holmes." Since such a question must be pondered, I had them write them down and give them to me days after the interview so that they had ample time for consideration. They appear in no particular order...*

Davey's:
Misfits, "Walk Among Us"
Samhain, "November Coming Fire"
Minor Threat, Discography cd
Cure, "Pornography"
Guns 'n' Roses, "Appetite For Destruction"

Jade's:
Bad Religion, "Suffer"
Slayer, "Seasons in the Abyss"
Minor Threat, Discography cd
Guns 'n' Roses, "Appetite for Destruction"
Black Flag, "First Four Years" or "Damaged"

Adam's:
Misfits, "Walk Among Us"
Rancid, self-titled
Elliot Smith, "Either/Or"
Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, "Henry's Dream"
Jawbreaker, "Dear You"

Hunter's:
John Coltrane, "My Favorite Things"
Prince & the Revolution, "Purple Rain"
Elvis Costello & the Attractions, "This Year's Model"
The Clash, "London Calling"
Blatz/Filth, "Shit Split"

Davey: Yeah.

Adam: And the camaraderie and the friendships that were started because of that tour was... it was just great. It was probably one of the best tours that we've ever done.

Davey: Absolutely. That tour that Adam was talking about, that was one of the best times of my life. It was so fun. Everyone had such a good time together, and we became friends immediately, and it was just like hanging out with your friends every day and getting to play shows at the same time. Really good shows.

Adam: And see three incredible bands.

Nick: Sounds great. Now, the Danzig/Samhain tour... was that a lot different than all the other tours you've done?

Adam: Yeah, absolutely. It was more of a production. It was definitely a rock show. There were many people on the tour— crew members, people in the bands, that we didn't interact with as much, but there were also lots of people on the crew that were really helpful and nice. But it was just a different vibe, just a different way of touring, you know?

Nick: Mm-hmm. Did you meet Glenn?

Davey: Yes. I got to speak with Glenn. I think I got to speak with him like three times, really talk with him. And he was really cool. He's kind of elusive, he's hard to find. [laughter] But, when he was around, he would talk to me, and he was really nice. The rest of the guys were around a lot, and Lazie would take pictures of us every night. And we had known London before we had gone on tour with Samhain, having met him like a year or a year-and-a-half before, and we became even better friends with him. He's a great guy, and we still talk.

Jade: And Dave almost backed our tour van into Danzig's bus while Danzig was on the bus, which Danzig saw. [laughter]

Davey: Okay — I don't even — they don't let me drive the van, for this reason exactly. But none of them are around, and some security guys yelling at me to move the van, so I'm like "Okay, well I think I can..." All I had to do was back it up a couple feet. I'm like "I think I can handle this." So, of course I get in the van, and I seriously get inches away from backing our trailer into Danzig's bus while he's sitting in the window looking out, and he came out of the bus...

Nick: Not a good thing. [laughter]

Davey: No, I was terrified, but the security guard totally helped me out, and explained that I didn't hit it.

Nick: So Danzig hates you guys.

Jade: That's true.

Davey: Now he does. [laughter] No, actually, he was really cool when I was talking to him. I think he knew... it was funny, because I was really kind of nervous talking to him, because he was such a big influence on me. Everything he's done, I love so much and really I wouldn't be doing what I was today if I had never heard his music.

Nick: So he is an influence.

Davey: Oh, huge influence. Huge influence. And, when I was talking to him, you know, I was just like "Wow, this is really cool." [laughter] I was a total fanboy. And I think he could tell, so he was especially nice to me.

Nick: That's cool. What other bands kind of inspired you guys when you were growing up?

Adam: I'd have to say Rancid was a big influence on us. Part musically, but also because the were very willing to... they were just really helpful. They taught us a lot, mostly just by observing them, we could see sort of the right things to do. We used to see them a long time ago, when they were a much smaller band, and were able to watch how they handled getting bigger and how they handled their success. And, though we haven't at all even gotten close to the size they are, we were able to learn from their decisions. And I can't think of a band that has helped us, has had our back so much and continues to have our back.

Davey: Going to a Rancid show was and is awesome. I mean, it was always awesome for us. We'd be looking forward to it every weekend. I mean, you remember, we'd like at least — well, not every weekend — but at least once a month, whenever we could, they'd be playing at Gilman Street and we'd drive down. And watching them is like watching no other band. I mean, you see them and you're like "This is awesome, this is amazing." Their force as a band is undeniable and seeing them is just like "This is great." And it just — what Adam was saying — it was like "We have to continue to be in this band, and we have to continue do this band." They were just really inspiring, to be at their shows. And it was just so fun. So great. And, like Adam said — we became friends with them, and they have done everything for us. Everything. And continue to do everything for us.

Nick: Much respect.

Davey: Yes, much respect.

Nick: Jade and Hunter... early punk inspirations? Not necessarily just influences... Inspirations, either on live or on record?

Jade: There's probably too many to name. It would be like a real-time story. [laughter]

Nick: Hit me with a few of them, just off the top of your head.

Jade: Youth of Today, Bad Religion, Minor Threat, Misfits...

Davey: Flag.

Jade: Black Flag, of course.

Davey: The Germs.

Jade: Not so much the Germs, for me.

Davey: Sorry. For me. [laughter]

Nick: Hunter?

Hunter: Well, a lot of the same bands. I also listened a lot of late 80's Bay Area stuff in high school like Filth, or Operation Ivy, of course...

Jade: Yeah. Crimpshrine...

Hunter: Crimpshrine, and Blatz...

Jade: Green Day.

Davey: Samiam.

Jade: Jawbreaker.

Nick: Word. Alright. Adam, you're usually hidden back there behind the drums and, as a consequence, you're the least visible member of the band. [laughter] What's Adam Carson all about? What kind of things are you interested in?

Adam: It's about all areas. [laughter]

Nick: Let's see, that was my next question. Is it about all areas? [laughter]

Adam: You know, at the time I'm not sure it was. But nowadays, it's definitely about

all areas.

Nick: It is now?

Adam: Yeah.

Jade: We like to get stupid in the area. [laughter]

Nick: Okay.

Adam: What was the question?

Nick: The question is, you know, who's Adam Carson? What's he into? [laughter]

Adam: You know, I couldn't answer this question last time, and I'm gonna have a hard time with it again.

Jade: He's too biased. [laughter]

Adam: I really couldn't nail it down.

Davey: He *is* Adam Carson, how do you expect him to answer that question?

Nick: Okay. Well, let's talk about me, then. [laughter] Now, you've been a long time honorary member of Tiger Army. You play the drums on the self-titled Tiger Army album. What was it like working with Nick 13? Is he a genius, as some say? [Some roll their eyes, others smile and others simply sigh and look dejected — they've heard it before.]

Adam: Well... I think it was enjoyable. It was a little different because, with AFI, I have complete creative freedom. I mean, obviously, if I'm doing something crazy wack, they're going to tell me to tone it down. But usually, I try to strike a balance between playing the songs and really trying to find out what the songs are doing and making sure I don't get in the way, but also having a small part of my parts having a little bit of creativity and a little bit of flavor and doing something interesting.

Nick: And on the *Tiger Army* record, you just didn't give a shit?

Adam: No... [laughter] with the *Tiger Army* record, you were very precise about what you wanted to hear, so I tried to sneak things in, but, inevitably, the drums were real stripped down. And I think, as a result, it worked really well. I think the songs really flow well, and I definitely don't get in the way. And also, it's more difficult with psychobilly — you have the stand-up bass providing a lot of percussion — and the drums can fuck with that balance, they can get in the way of what's going on rhythmically with the stand-up bass. So it was best for me to just put down a solid beat. I hope I did that.

Nick: You did. Enough about Tiger Army... But Adam is definitely a very versatile and talented drummer, and probably underrated. I don't know if drummers always get the credit they deserve. [doorbell buzzes]

Hunter: Does that mean the time is up? [laughter]

Jade: No, it was like "Wrong." [laughter]

Adam: Survey says...

Davey: Survey says... [Davey makes buzzing sound]

Nick: Sorry. I tried, Adam. [laughter] Okay, now you guys recently did a very cool surprise show with the Nerve Agents at Bottom of the Hill, under an assumed name, and that was a great gig. And you played a couple other recent Northern California gigs. It seemed like your set list showed a lot of variation in all of these gigs — playing some new songs, other songs that haven't been played live...

Davey: Yeah, we figured since we were playing places that were so close together that we would change the set list up a little bit, just because we knew a lot of people would be coming to more than one of the shows. Which I think was the case, so I think we ended up playing most of the songs we know how to play between the shows.

Nick: There's of course the infamous cover of Rancid's "Rejected" with an appearance by Lars Frederiksen...

Davey: Yes we, as "The Boys Who Destroyed the World," actually covered "Rejected," and I believe Lars came up and played Jade's guitar with Jade.

Nick: That was cool.

Davey: And we, for the second of the consecutive Santa Cruz shows, we did one of your songs, a Tiger Army song as well. We did "True Romance."

Nick: That was a lot of fun.

Davey: We also did that in Petaluma. And that was a lot of fun, too. All those shows were really fun. It was really cool.

Nick: I think so, too. Now, what are your plans, if any, for live shows during the year 2000?

Adam: Almost immediately after getting out of the studio, we're going to Europe with Sick of It All. I think the tour's gonna be about two weeks, two-and-a-half weeks. After Sick of It All, we fly to London, and I think we play one show. And then from there, we're gonna play a show in Louisville, a festival called...

Davey: Krazy Fest.

Nick: Louisville, Kentucky?

Adam: Yeah, Krazy Fest. We're gonna play that on the way home. After that, we're gonna do a Canadian tour in late June, early July, which will probably have a few U.S. dates. Perhaps Portland and Seattle on the way up to Canada. And then just a few on the way home, I don't know what those places are. But after that, we won't be playing any shows until our record comes out, and then you can expect a U.S. tour in the fall.

Jade: You can expect us to be crashing off the road, because we'll be touring in the winter.

Adam: Pretty much.

Nick: Sounds good, except for the crashing part. [laughter] Alright, now it's my understanding that you're going to be filming your third music video this week. Tell us about that...

Hunter: It's going to be filmed by Brent...

Nick: The Batboy.

Davey: The Batboy.

Hunter: On Super 8, which as you may or may not know is black-and-white and very old-school. So we're kinda playing up to that. We're gonna add some interesting dark old-school imagery.

Nick: Mm-hmm. And what's the song?

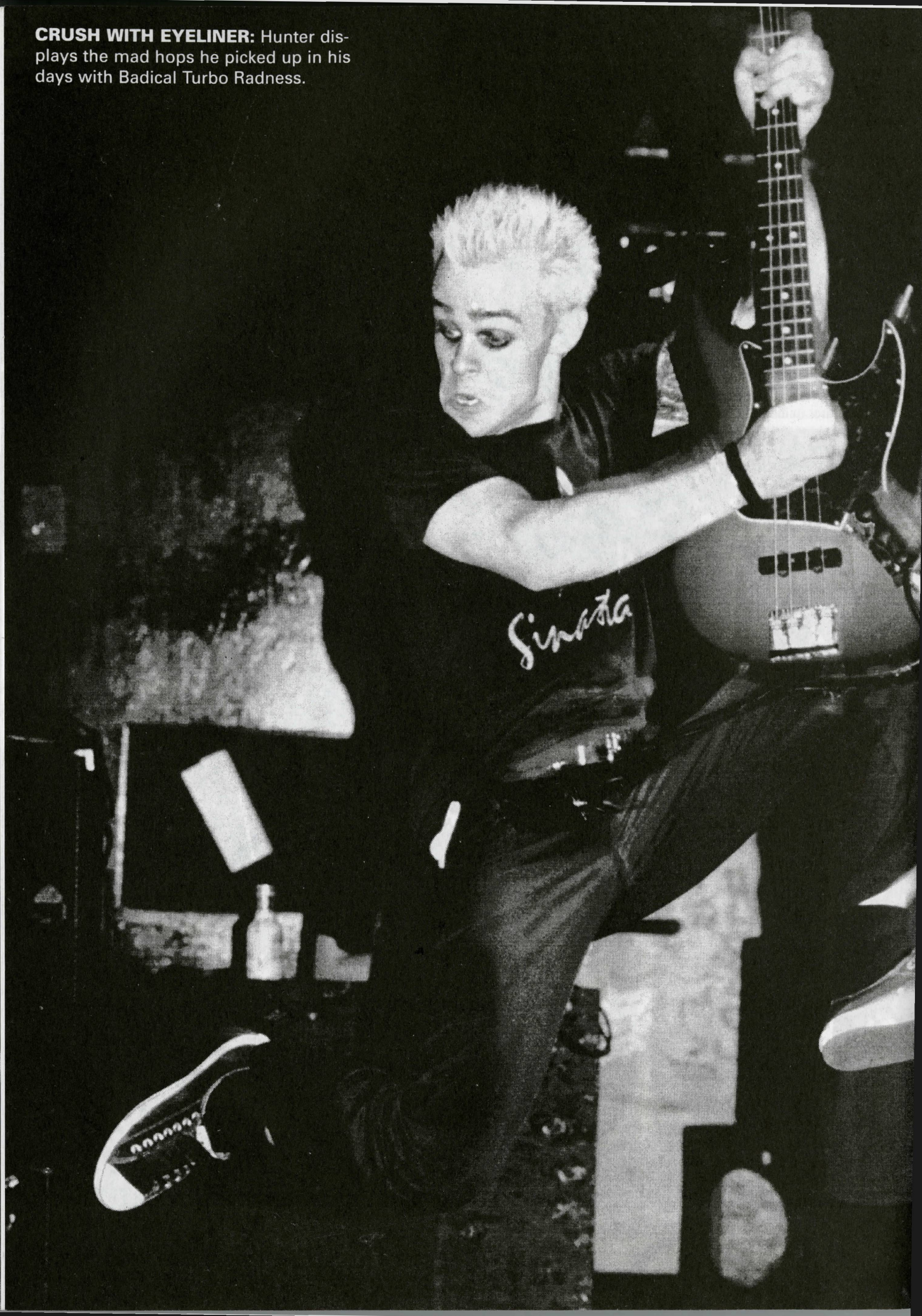
Davey: Oh, we're doing it for "Totalimmortal."

Jade: [Johnny Carson voice] "Totalimmortal." [laughter]

Nick: Spoken like a true Johnny Carson. Alright, and what are your plans for this video?



WHO *IS* ADAM CARSON?: The world may never know, but hey, we've got a full-page picture of him here...



CRUSH WITH EYELINER: Hunter displays the mad hops he picked up in his days with Badical Turbo Radness.

Davey: We really just wanted to do the video because there was no video documentation for any of the past two releases, and we had shot a video for *Very Proud Of Ya* and we shot a video for *Shut Your Mouth*, so we wanted to do one for something more recent, as well. I think Nitro's going to do with it what they do with all the videos, they're going to send it —

Jade: Public access TV.

Davey: Yeah, I'm sure you'll probably be able to see it on public access, all those public access shows that do the video shows. And if Louis does another video compilation, hopefully he'll ask us to be on it again. Hopeless Records. So wherever you've seen our videos before, maybe you'll see this one.

Nick: There you go. Okay, now there are a few questions I've got to ask. I know you've heard some of them many times, but they're asked with the idea that this is a definitive AFI interview, thus you can give the definitive answer. Dave, your lyrics make frequent allusion to religion. What are your thoughts on religion in general? Not necessarily organized religion...

Davey: Religion in general, meaning...

Nick: Okay, how about Christianity?

Davey: Christianity. Christianity can work for some people. There are a lot of basic ideals in Christianity that I think are very positive. I think there's a lot of hypocrisy that is very obvious through the dogma. When looking at the dogma of Christianity, when you look at their actions and you look at their beliefs, they conflict at times. Christianity is a very strong force in the Western world, and I think it can be a dangerous thing, I think it can be a positive thing. It just depends on the individual. I think religion in general can also be a dangerous thing or positive thing, depending on what you take from it and depending on how you use it. Personally, I don't subscribe to any one organized religion.

Nick: Some of your merchandise bears the symbol of your pentagram, and some the legend "666." What do these things mean to you personally? Do they relate to your lyrics?

Davey: In a sense they do, because I think both of them are images that evoke questioning of one's self, and I would hope that my lyrics do the same.

Nick: Who to you is the Devil? [laughter]

Davey: Who to me is the Devil? The Devil is Lucifer. Lucifer would be the light-bringer. He evokes change. He is the destroyer.

Nick: Okay, I'm gonna give you a B-minus on that one.

Davey: Okay.

Nick: What's your definition of evil?

Davey: Alright, Nick.

Nick: Come on, man.

Davey: My definition of evil... oh, my God. [muffled laughter] Evil is... okay, for me... Evil is self-destruction, disrespect, selfishness. It is complete disregard for personal happiness, whether it's in yourself or whether it's in other people.

Nick: Okay. Now, this is another question I'm sure you've heard before. Maybe you care to set the record straight. Is AFI a straightedge band? What do you think about straightedge as a movement?

Davey: No, AFI is not a straightedge band. I think straightedge is a positive movement if it is done correctly, if it is real, if the people who are part of the movement actually believe in it and believe in is for the right reasons. I personally am straightedge. I think that there are a lot of straightedge kids who are true and are in it for the right reasons. I think there are a lot of kids who are not in it for the right reasons, and give straightedge a horrible, horrible name. Unfortunately, they're the ones who are focused upon the most often. They're the loudest, they're the loudest and they last the shortest amount of time.

Nick: Alright, explain the origins of the term "East Bay Hardcore."

Davey: East Bay Hardcore originated... I think we stole it from this guy, Steve, who just started making East Bay Hardcore patches. And Screw 32 had it first. We co-opted it, and we use it for lack of a better means of describing exactly what type of music we play. It's hard to say... a punk-rocker will say we're not punk, a hardcore purist will say we're not hardcore. I don't care what you call us, so when people say "Well, what do you sound like, what do you play?" we say "Oh, we play East Bay Hardcore."

Nick: It's just your own style.

Davey: It's just our own style.

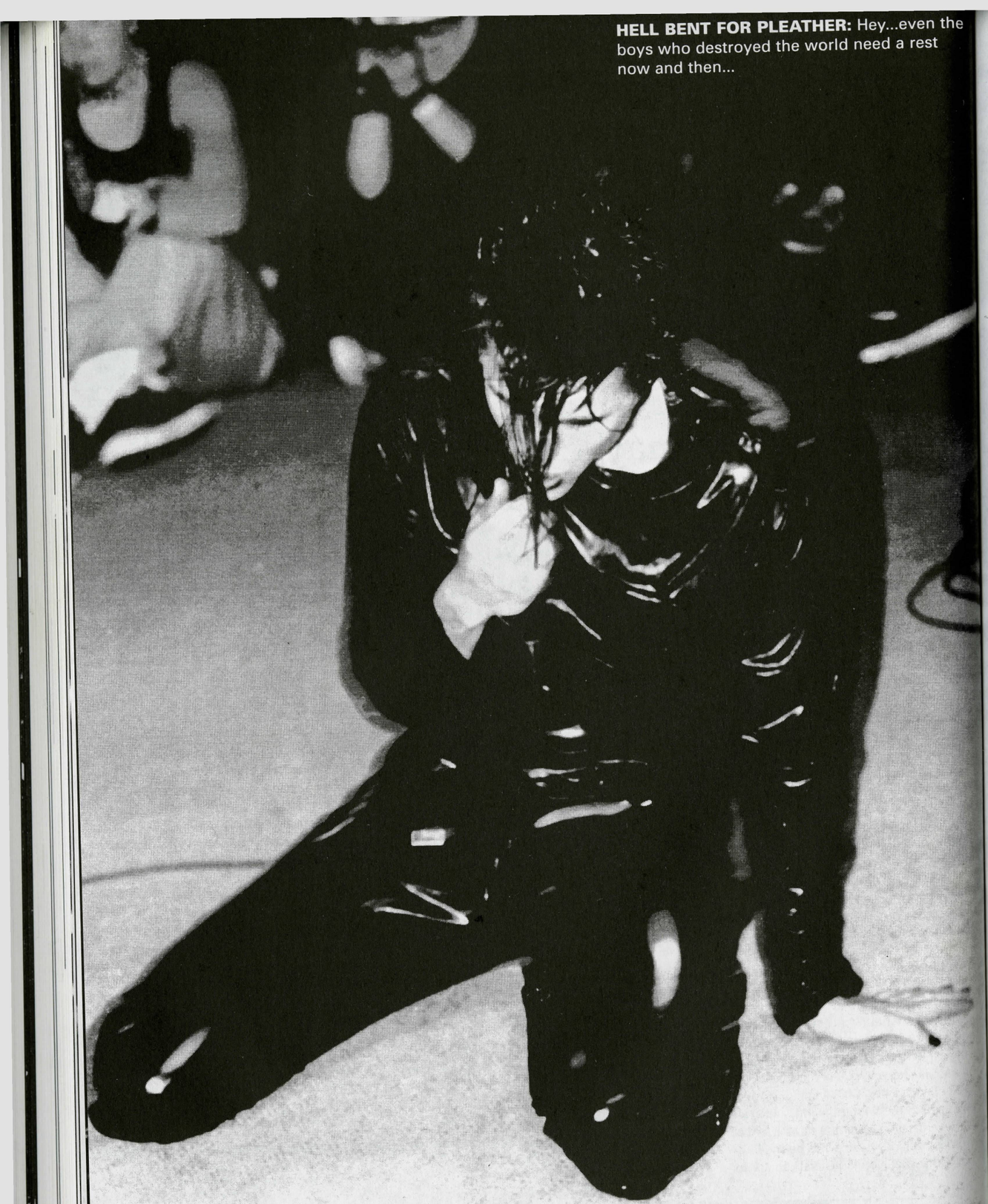
Nick: Dave, does your girlfriend know that, according to some on the Internet, you're gay? [laughter]

Davey: Yes. Yes, she does.

Jade: She knows that he is, in fact, gay.

Davey: Yes, she's very aware of that.

I don't know, maybe this might technically fall into the category of music, but I go see movies almost every day. That influences me in a way, you know, I try to pull some of the cinema into the music.
[hunter]



HELL BENT FOR PLEATHER: Hey...even the boys who destroyed the world need a rest now and then...

Jade: She's just come to terms with it.

Davey: But she loves me, anyway. [laughter]

Nick: That's good, I hope you guys work things out. [laughter] Okay, now as a band, you have a pretty active presence on the Internet. You have an official website that's frequently updated. There are a lot of unofficial fan sites. What do you think about the whole on-line phenomenon in general?

Jade: World Wide Web. [laughter]

Davey: Oh, gosh.

Hunter: I think it's as much of a blessing as it is bringing people together that wouldn't necessarily ever meet each other. It's also a curse, in the fact that it can be very gossipy and often times a very small number of kids are controlling what a very large number of kids are reading.

Davey: Yeah, I completely agree with Hunter on that. Fritch and I were talking about this the other day, and... I mean it is a great means of conveying information and getting news spread very quickly and very far and wide. However, a lot of times that news is the equivalent of tabloids. Although news is spread, it's like the *National Enquirer*.

Nick: Sure. There's a lot of untruth in addition to the positive aspects.

Davey: Exactly.

Nick: Is there a message, political or otherwise, that you'd like to convey to your listeners? It could be inside or outside the music...

Davey: I really would hope that through my lyrics, a lot of people would realize that there are others out there who feel the same way they do. My hope is that there are people who feel the same way I do in that respect. And that has been realized for me, in that very often kids come up to me and they say how much they appreciate my lyrics and how much they can relate to them. And I just hope that people can really start to focus on responsibility and respect for themselves and respect for others, and just really kind of look at the world in a different way then maybe they had before listening to us.

Nick: Okay. Now, outside of this interview, I've asked you to compile of list of your individual all-time favorite albums. Aside from that stuff, what about stuff that you've been listening to lately?

Davey: I was just listening to At the Drive-In. I was listening to Adam Ant a second ago. Adam AND the Ants. I was listening to Skinny Puppy before that. I was listening to Jane's Addiction and Hot Water Music and the new Nerve Agents.

Nick: Mm-hmm. Just another motherfuckin' day, basically.

Davey: Yeah, you know...

Jade: Hot Water Music, Tiger Army, Dillinger Escape Plan. A little Get Up Kids, sometimes. A little this-and-that. A lil' sumpin' sumpin'.

Nick: Uh-huh. Somethin' to listen to.

Jade: Yeah.

Nick: Hunter?

Hunter: Let's see, uh... Prince's second album, entitled *Prince*.

Nick: A lot of people think that's his first album, but it's his second.

Hunter: Yeah, it's his second. [laughter] Lonely Kings, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Refused.

Nick: Cool, cool. Adam?

Adam: Nerve Agents, Tiger Army, Elliot Smith, Radiohead, Hot Water Music. The list can go on. How much tape do you have?

Nick: Okay. Well, we're getting ready to wind-up this definitive AFI interview for the new millennium. [laughter] Now, here's kind of a theoretical question for you guys — if you were going to be put to death by the state in the electric chair or whatever they use nowadays, what would you want for your final meal? Dave let's start with you...

Davey: Of course, ask the vegan first. [laughter] Let me get over some moral shit while you're starting over there. [laughter]

Nick: Yeah, would you sell out your "V"?

Davey: I think I'd sell out the "V". I think I'd want one of my grandmother's Italian meals. I don't know which one, though, so give me a second.

Hunter: Seeing as how I'm a vegetarian because I don't like meat, I'd probably have to go with my all-time favorite meal: cereal. I'm not sure which one, though... that would be too tough to ask.

Nick: Alright. You'll have some time on death row to think about it, so...

Hunter: Okay, cool.

Adam: Just give me a moment here.

Jade: I don't know if I would eat, because, you know like how you lose control of your bodily functions when they kill you? That would be kind of...

Nick: You're gonna die, though, so you know...

Hunter: Yeah, it doesn't really matter.

Jade: I want to have dignity in death, though.

Davey: I'll eat the food. And I know what I want. If I was about to die, and I was gonna be probably dead [laughter], my grandmother's eggplant parmesan. If it could be given to me...

Adam: How pathetic is a Round Table pizza? That's kinda pathetic, huh?

Nick: I don't know, what's on it? [laughter]

Adam: Probably just cheese and olives.

Jade: Pathetic...

Hunter: Sounds good.

Adam: You know, maybe some of my mom's tabouli, but that's about it. I don't know. Coca-cola Classic.

Jade: Oh, am I answering again? Alright. Chicken and granola bars.

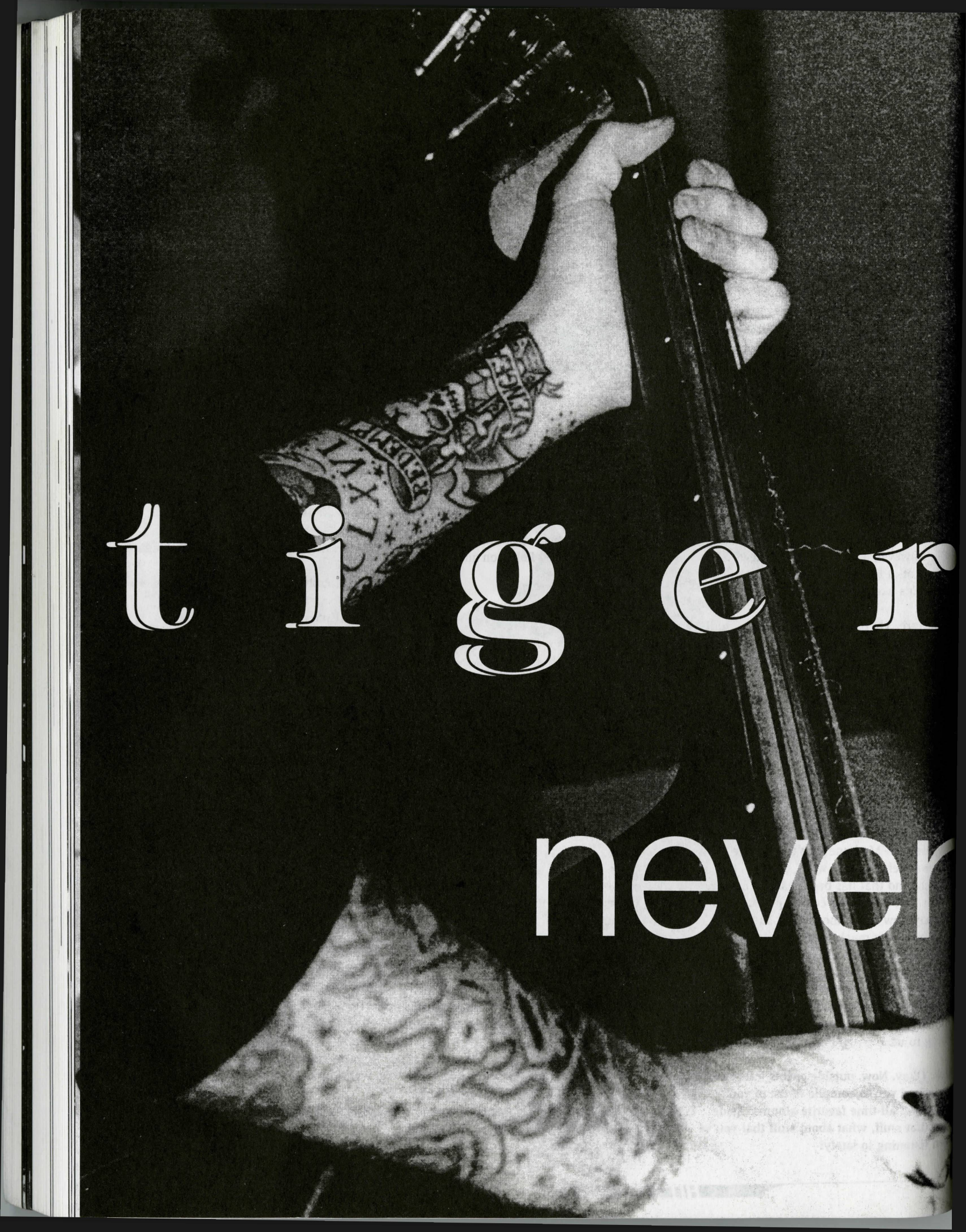
Nick: And so like life, this interview must come to an end. Any final words for the *Hit List* readership?

Adam: Thank you if you've read this entire interview. You can scope our website at www.punkmusic.com/afi You can write to us at P.O. Box 4522, Berkeley, CA 94704 If you do not send me a stamp, you will not get anything. You can put that in bold. [laughter]

Hunter: If anyone's interested in Prince's central album, you might also want to check out my mp3.com site, it's at www.mp3.com/hunterevenge

Davey: Thanks!

Jade: Check, please. [laughter]


tiger
never



tiger army die

interview by davey havok

Tiger Army is one of the most ferocious, undeniably amazing new bands to grace the underground music scene in a long, oh so long, time. Their self-titled debut on Hellcat Records sits comfortably in the number one slot of my top albums for 1999 and has created a huge buzz among all fans of purely intense music. On the first floor of our abode, in the shadows of my room "the Clavet," I met to speak with the band's frontman and creative force, Nick 13. Our conversation, for your enjoyment, went as follows...

- Davey Havok, April 2000

photo: Bob Welsh

Davey: You call your music "American Psychobilly"... For those who aren't familiar, could you explain what psychobilly is?

Nick 13: Let's see... It's a little hard to explain until you check some of it out. Psychobilly basically originated in Europe... The roots of it come basically from punk rock and 1950's rockabilly music, but it's more than just a combination of the two. Musically, it's been around as an actual style since the early eighties and it's kept evolving from there. It usually has a stand-up bass and can be every bit as aggressive as punk. There's also a distinct horror influence in the lyrics and the look. It's both a music style and a subculture, with its own outlook, style of dress, and all that. As for why "American Psychobilly," well, our sound definitely owes a lot of inspiration to European psychobilly, but we still have our own distinct take on it that has to do with American punk, roots music and whatever else, so that's just how we describe our style.

Davey: That's cool. How did you get into it?

Nick 13: Well, I was exposed to punk at a pretty young age by skateboarding, and that became my first true love, musically. But I also loved 1950's rock'n'roll, you know, stuff that I would hear from my Dad or whatever. By the time I was in my early teens, I listened to both and I was fascinated by the connection between 50's music and punk. I began noticing things — the way the Ramones sounded like 50's rock'n'roll in terms of melody and chord progression, only with a lot more distortion and attack... pictures of Joe Strummer dressed like a Teddy Boy in the early days of the Clash... Some of my favorite tracks on *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* by the Pistols were their covers of Eddie Cochran so I started checking his stuff out. The Cramps, "American Nightmare" by the Misfits. Stuff like that. You know, a lot of guitar solos in '77 punk are almost straight from the fifties... Listening to the more accessible fifties rock-'n'roll and rockabilly side by side with old punk and hardcore — I was pretty into that whole trip by the early 90's. I found a Meteors record and loved that, but I had no idea that there was a whole scene for this type of music. In '93 I drove down to see them from Ukiah and you saw 'em with me, remember that?

Davey: Yes, I do. Some skinhead wanted to kick my ass because I had a mohawk.

Nick 13: Ah yes... the good old days [laughs]. Well, in '94 I moved to Berkeley from the small town I grew up in, where it was next to impossible to find punk, let alone psychobilly, and when I discovered how many bands over there were doing this music that mixed punk with rockabilly with horror imagery, I was like a kid in a candy store, buying records every week — it was like this perfect hybrid of everything I loved.

Davey: So you're a big fan of rockabilly as well?

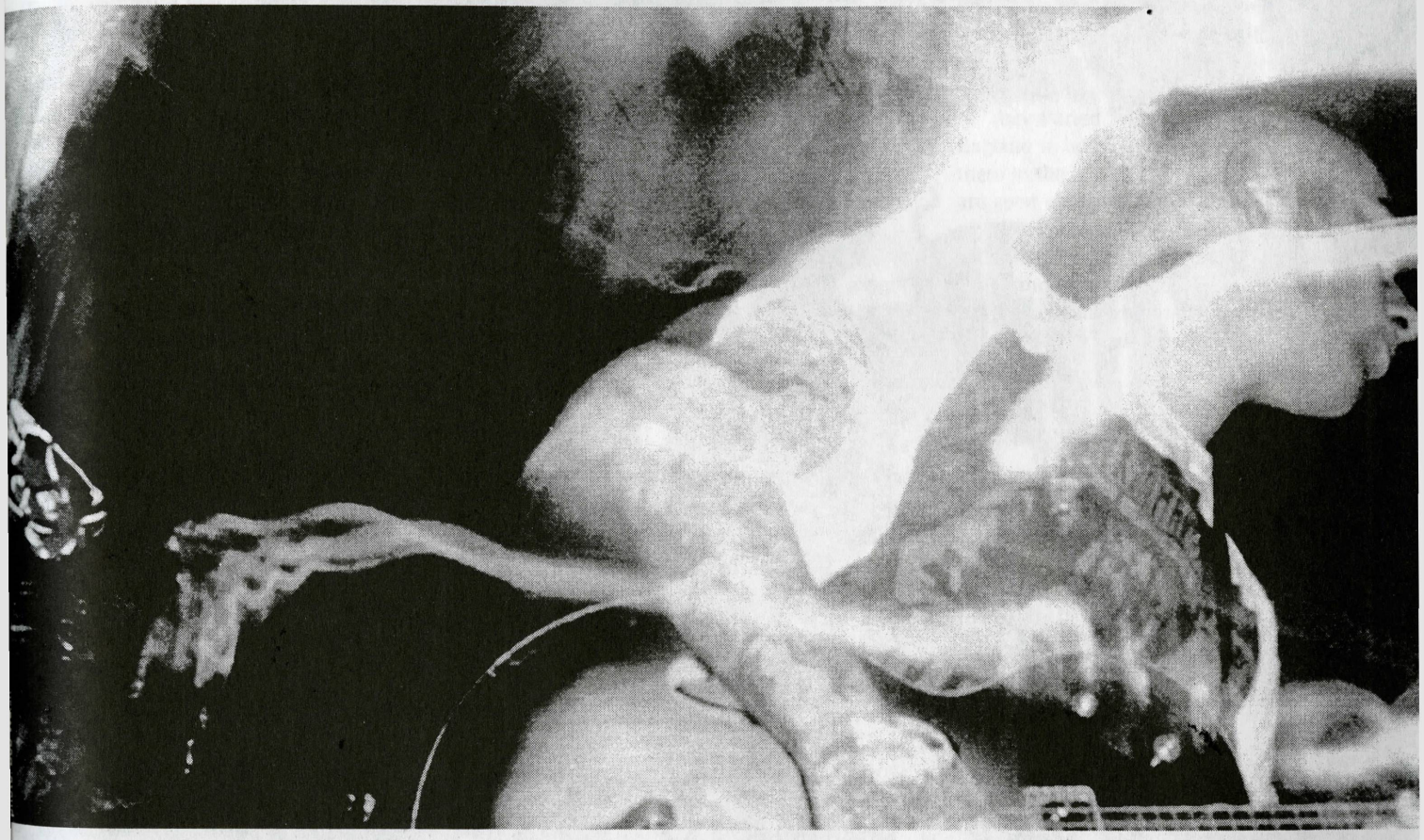
Nick 13: Well, yes and no. I'm a big fan of 1950's rockabilly, the good stuff — Sun records, Rock 'n' Roll Trio, Charlie Feathers and all that. That music will live forever, but I don't like most of the rockabilly music that's around today. Sometimes it's musically accurate but it's missing the most important ingredients, it's tame. Some people are so worried about trying to sound "authentic" that they miss the point. They think that if they play with too much abandon, that'll it degenerate into psycho or punk rock, that it won't be cool anymore. What they like to ignore is that all the original rockabillies were going as wild as possible when they played, they didn't give a fuck. That was the punk rock of the fifties. The psychobilly scene is about digging the music and having fun, period. It's sad to say that the same isn't so true about the rockabilly scene, and that's turned a lot of people off, myself included. That's nothing against people who like rockabilly, because I like it myself. What I don't like is some of the bullshit that's sprung up around it. And it's not that I don't appreciate subcultures, I'm a psycho — but we play for the people who like our music and I don't care if they're into punk, psycho, rockabilly, hardcore, goth, oi, coun-

On a certain level it's about us and them, "us" being anyone who looks at life a little differently from the herd or even has the potential to. If you split too many hairs, there is no us.

try, black metal or whatever, because I like stuff from all those styles. On a certain level it's about us and them, "us" being anyone who looks at life a little differently from the herd or even has the potential to. If you split too many hairs, there is no us.

Davey: I completely agree. To shift gears a bit, what bands where you in before Tiger Army?

Nick 13: I tried more than once to get something going during my early teens in Ukiah, but I didn't get my first real band, Influence 13, going until I was almost 17. That started in '91 — it was me... uh, Jade, who you know. [laughter from all] Geoff Kresge played bass — he learned stand-up about 3 years ago and has played all the recent Tiger Army shows — a guy named Jolson was the drummer and a guy named Jevon was the singer for most of the time, I took over on vocals at the end. I wrote most of the songs, Jade wrote some too. We never had any releases, but we had a lot of fun, played some cool shows, and it sure taught me a lot. We broke up in '93...



Davey: So after the great Influence 13, how did Tiger Army come about?

Nick 13: Well, in '94 I had no band and I knew that I wanted my next band to play in this style. I was just going to school and waiting to meet the right people, specifically a good stand-up bassist. In the summer of '95 I got a chance to visit Europe and go to a psychobilly festival in Germany. Mad Sin, Godless Wicked Creeps, saw some great bands. That whole experience was so inspiring — I met some very cool people, the music was great, the wrecking, just seeing all the visual aspects of psychobilly first-hand. It really lit a fire in me to try and make things happen when I got back. That fall I met Joel, who played stand-up and we starting jamming. I already had a set of songs written. By the end of '95 we were resolved to do something. We got on our first gig, which you guys [AFI] put us on, I figured we'd come up with a drummer somewhere in 3 months or whatever. We wound up borrowing yours [Adam from AFI] and he did a really good job! [laughs] That was March '96 that we played our first show, at Gilman Street.

Davey: What happened next?

Nick 13: Our second gig was at the Berkeley Square, opening for the Meteors. That's something I'll always remember. Paul Fenech is like the Godfather of Psychobilly. He more than any other single person is responsible for making it what it is today, so that was an honor to play with them, and we had a pretty good set too! Anyway, the idea was to get a permanent drummer, but that never seemed to happen. We played sporadically throughout 1996 whenever Adam wasn't on tour, and we went in the studio and did a demo. Three songs from that were released on our first record, a 45 that's now way out of print. It was released by Ian and Noah from the Randumbs on their label, which I don't think exists anymore. We did some gigs with our friend Greg of the Swingin' Utters on drums, those were a lot of fun. In late '96 we went back in the studio and cut an early version of "Nocturnal." In early '97 Joel quit and we played our last gig for a long time.

Davey: So how did the association between Tiger Army and Hellcat come about?

Nick 13: Well, Joel quitting was just one of a string of unfortunate events in my life at the time. I was done with school and wound up having to move out of Berkeley and back in with my parents, over a hundred miles away from the Bay Area, no direction, no band. Which for me, was very hard, since music is basically the only thing I care about, you know, other than the well-being of my family and friends. So there's this message on my answering machine one day from Tim Armstrong saying that he loves my music and that I need to give him a call. Words



can't really describe the way I felt right then I guess, I was pretty fucking happy to say the least. Adam had given a mutual friend of his and Tim's our demo awhile back, with "Nocturnal" and a few other songs, I'd forgotten about it. Anyway, he told me that he wanted me to make a record for his label. I was overjoyed, but I had to tell him that I didn't have a band right then. He didn't lose any enthusiasm, he still wanted me to make a record, even if it was as a solo artist or whatever. So that gave me my direction back and as of spring/early summer '97, my plan was just to get moved back to the East Bay, which I did, and try and get things happening with the album.

Davey: So would you consider the band to have been broken up at this point?

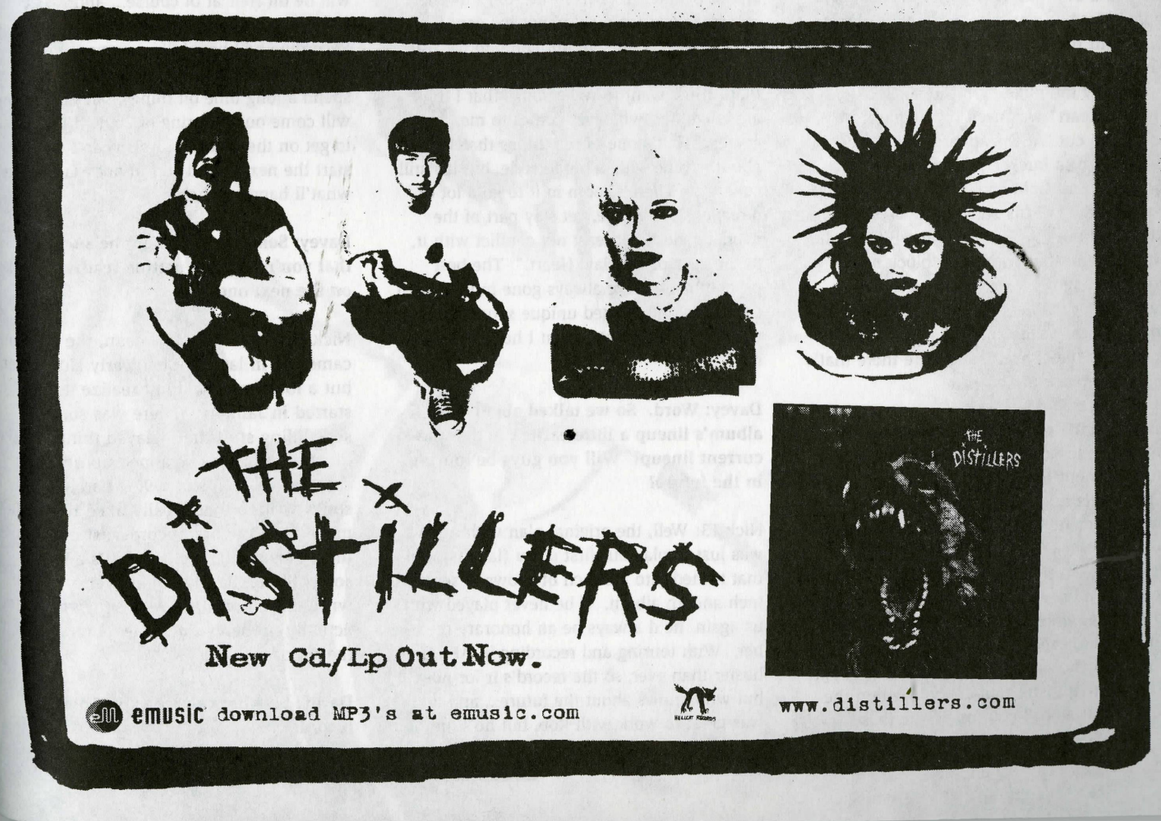
Nick 13: Well, not really. To be honest, there were a couple weeks where I didn't feel like I had the heart to go on. But I would get down to the Bay Area for shows and people encouraged me to keep it going. So I'd resolved to keep the band going and somehow make a record before I got the call from Tim, I just had no idea how I was gonna do it. This might sound weird, but even though I was the only member, the band was never broken up to me. That's what "Tiger Army Never Die" is about. Keep going, MAKE what you want to happen happen. Believe in yourself, in the power of your own will. Members have come and members have gone. But I'm gonna keep doing this until I can't do it anymore. I write everything, so there will always be a continuity in the music. Maybe things can slow us down for a finite amount of time, but we'll keep coming. This record, the next record, the record after that, every show we play, I want to create something that will last beyond my material existence in this world. That's the goal.

Davey: Well, you're off to a great start. So let's see, you get the call from Tim and then...

Nick 13: All right, anyway, it was awhile before we went into the studio to make the album, early January '99. In that year and a half prior there was a lot going on, Hellcat was just starting to get going and had a lot of releases and new bands to take care of, Tim was on tour for *Life Won't Wait*. I just kept working on songs and trying to figure out who I was gonna record with and where, but I knew Tiger Army was going to return.

Davey: Amen. So how did the lineup for the album come together?

Nick 13: Well, when everything came together to get ready and go in the studio, Adam had a big block of time off before recording *Black Sails* with AFI. He was just kind of chilling out while you guys were writing... so I asked him to cut the record with us, which he did. Did a great job too, a very versatile drummer. We had months for me to show him the songs and for us to practice, which I think contributed to us being pretty tight when we finally recorded. The stand-up bass player on the record was Rob Peltier, who was in a band called the Quakes. They were kind of trailblazers as far as being arguably the first, best and one of the only true American psychobilly bands — they started as teenagers and moved to England to be a part of the psycho scene there in the late 80's. Stand-up bassists who are good enough to play psycho — and I say that because it can be a lot more technically demanding than rockabilly because it's faster and has more double and triple plucking — bassists who understand and dig the style and do it *well* are unfortunately pretty



hard to come by here in the States. I hope a lot of kids take it up and learn to play it right, and that in a few years there will be plenty! Anyway, Rob flew out from Buffalo, New York where he lives to do the record. I'd sent him our demo, he dug it, so I sent him the songs on tape, he came out here and we just did it. He did a great job as well and it was very cool to work with someone from a band that I've dug for a long time.

Davey: Now, some of the recording was done in Southern California too, correct?

Nick 13: That's right. We started it at the beginning of January '99 at the Art of Ears studio in Hayward, CA with Andy Ernst behind the board. He's a great engineer and helped me out a lot. Everything took a lot longer than I initially planned, and we had to clear out of the studio because AFI had the studio booked (laughs) for *Black Sails In The Sunset*. About half of our songs were entirely done, but the other half needed vocals, a couple needed guitar work, some production, plus mixing. So Tim said to come on down to LA and we did some stuff there at his studio, Bloodclot, with another very talented and helpful engineer, TJ Johnson, who's worked with Rancid and a million other bands. We also worked at a studio that used to be called Crystal studios, that was a cool place. A lot of history there, I guess Motown cut a lot of their 70's West Coast stuff there. "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye was recorded there. Supposedly the mike I cut the vocal to "Outlaw Heart" was used by Michael Jackson to cut "ABC," apparently he stood on a chair or a bucket or something [laughs]. And Gold Star studios, where Phil Spector did all of his stuff in the 60's and Eddie Cochran cut "Summertime Blues," the former site of that was half a block away. Unfortunately it's a strip mall now. Oh yeah, *End of the Century* by the Ramones, too. I bought sodas and candy bars many times from the convenience store there that's on hallowed ground.

Davey: That's rad. So that brings me to another of my questions, about the song you just mentioned, "Outlaw Heart." This song stands out a little from the other material for its distinct country influence...

Nick 13: It does stand apart from the rest of the songs a little, but I felt it was still a Tiger Army song, which isn't the case for every song I write, even if I like the song. True country music — and I'm not talking about most of the bullshit that gets played on the radio that they call country music these days, I'm talking about the real thing, my favorite era being the 1940's through the early sixties — can be a beautiful thing, and that old stuff is what inspired that song. Without rockabilly and rock'n'roll in the fifties, there would be no punk. And if you're into rockabilly, you realize that it's based on two things: country, then known as hillbilly, and the blues, or rhythm & blues. Some people don't care about that kind of thing, they just like what they like and that's fine. But I've always been interested in where music comes from. It might seem like a big jump from hardcore punk to country, but it's not to me for whatever reason. Maybe it's because both of them are about emotion at the core, I don't know. Maybe you have to reach a certain age to appreciate it, I think I did. By the time you're 20 or so you've probably had a broken heart at least once and can relate to the subject matter a little more than when you're 15. A lot of country deals with regret in one way or another, so it might be harder to appreciate it when you're so young that you don't have many.

Davey: Good point. Do you see Tiger Army going more in this direction in the future?

Nick 13: It's definitely a possibility. It's kind of funny because I thought that might be one of people's least favorite songs on the record, but instead it's one of the songs people like most. But I'm not going to try and write another song like it just because of that. I just want to write songs that I think are good, and whatever comes to me, comes. That's one of the things that's great about psycho. It's a broad style, but it's still cohesive. There's room in it to go a lot of directions song-wise, yet stay part of the overall style, or at least not conflict with it, in the case of "Outlaw Heart." The best psycho bands have always gone in their own directions and created unique sounds for themselves and that's what I hope we can do.

Davey: Word. So we talked about the album's lineup a little earlier, is that the current lineup? Will you guys be touring in the future?

Nick 13: Well, the original plan with Adam was just to play our first show (laughs), but that turned into a bunch of shows, a seven inch and an album. If he never played with us again, he'd always be an honorary member. With touring and recording in AFI, he's busier than ever, so the record's it for now, but who knows about the future... and it was great to work with Rob, but he's on the East Coast, I'm here and he's got his own life. I'd love to play with him again sometime, but most likely the record will be it. We did shows around California with Geoff Kresge on stand-up and the mighty Joe Fish from Santa Cruz shortly after the record came out and those went great. A lot of people didn't even realize it wasn't the record's lineup, so I'm not worried about a drop in quality. I'm moving to Los Angeles in a couple of weeks, just got a place, and that's where Tiger Army is gonna be based. It's easier for me to do the band there, so that's where I need to go. Geoff will also be relocating to L.A. Joe is Nor Cal based, so we've got a new drummer down there, but Joe is Tiger Army Por Vida as well (laughs). I don't want to say who the new drummer is just yet, because I don't want to jinx anything, but we're very excited about playing with him. He was in a band that's one of my all-time favorites. We should be gigging by early summer, and we'll be on the road soon after.

Davey: Cool. Now personally, I think that the debut Tiger Army album is amazing, I know many agree and are wondering if you have any plans for a new album anytime soon...

Nick 13: Thanks [laughs]. I'm working on the songs for the second album now, that will be on Hellcat of course... and it's actually coming pretty close to being fully written. Recording will hopefully commence in a few months, sometime this summer, and I like to spend a long time on things, but hopefully it will come out in spring of 2001. I can't wait to get on the road, but I also can't wait to start the next record so I'm not exactly sure what'll happen when.

Davey: Some people might be surprised that you're already getting ready to work on the next one...

Nick 13: That's true. I mean, the first one came out in late October/early November, but a lot of people don't realize it was started in January. There was some scheduling stuff that delayed things a little bit so it didn't get wrapped up until the summer — that's of '99. I had a couple songs written that I really liked that didn't make it on the first record, just because of time constraints, etc., so that's a few songs there, then I've had over a year to write on top of that. As a songwriter, I'm actually probably on the less-prolific end of the spectrum.

Davey: So what can we expect on the record?



Nick 13: It's a little bit of a progression in certain ways I guess, but there's no major stylistic change from the first record. I'm gonna spend a little more time on it, try and get even more atmosphere, but in general, if somebody digs the first album, I can almost guarantee they'll like this one. I think it's a strong collection of songs, I'm really happy with them from a writing standpoint, so I can't wait to get back in the studio.

Davey: So you enjoy recording?

Nick 13: Actually, I hate it. It's incredibly physically and emotionally draining for me. But it's kind of like getting tattooed, it's not too fun while it's happening, but then when you're finished, it's one of the best feelings in the world.

Davey: Just to get a small insight into Nick 13's interests, name a book, comic, video game, movie, cereal and cartoon that you enjoy or think is noteworthy.

Nick 13: Okay, give them to me one at a time.

Davey: Book... or author... or what you're reading right now. What was the last book you read that was good?

Nick 13: I've been reading a lot of nonfiction... I love reading biographies of musical artists I'm into, I love reading "true crime" stuff, be it about serial killers, the Mafia or whatever, I'm finishing a book about the Yakuza right now. Fiction — I like John Fante, H. P. Lovecraft, Poe, Hubert Selby Jr., Barry Gifford, those are some of my favorites.

Davey: Comics. Do you like comics at all?

Nick 13: Yeah, I don't really keep up on what's out today, but my favorite comics ever are definitely the E.C. horror and crime comics of the early fifties...

Davey: Great comics. Video games?

Nick 13: The "Resident Evil" series for Playstation.

Davey: Movie?

Nick 13: Like my favorite movie, or the best one I've seen lately?

Davey: How about lately...

Nick 13: *Beyond the Mat*, the wrestling documentary. I just saw that the other day, I thought it was great. It would be hard for me to pick an all-time favorite... Goodfellas is definitely one of them. I'm into most of Scorcese's stuff. A lot of old horror movies, 1930's though very early sixties, the black-and-white stuff... *Psycho*, that's another favorite. The original of course.

Davey: Word. How about a cereal?

Nick 13: Probably Boo Berry, from the Monster Cereals. General Mills.

Davey: Over Frankenberry?

Nick 13: It kind of depends on my mood, there are times when I'd prefer Frankenberry, so there's not as much of a clear-cut favorite. I'm not super-into chocolate, so Count Chocula would definitely place third here.

Davey: I'm going to have to agree with that. How bout a cartoon?

Nick 13: Hmm... probably *The Simpsons*.

Davey: Nice. Well, before I wrap this up, want to ask you a question that I meant t ask earlier. How has the album been received in Europe? Do people over there like it?

Nick 13: Yeah, we've gotten a lot of pos itive feedback, letters from psychos, we've done a lot of interviews for zines over there, it's been cool. I've gotten some nice compliments from members of psychobilly bands whose music I love, so that's the best thing of all. Their music is a big part of the reason I play this style today. We got an offer to go to Germany this summer and play some psycho shows so I hope that works out.

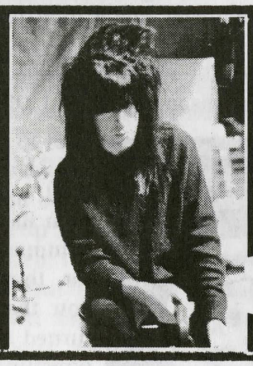
Davey: That's great. Any final words?

Nick 13: Just want to thank you and *Hit List*, and all the people who took the time t read this. Thanks to everyone who's supported us — big ups to AFI, Rancid, the staff and bands of Hellcat Records and psychos worldwide. We'll be playing soon, so come check it out. If you want to find out more about the band, come to the webpage at: www.tigerarmy.com

Tiger Army Never Die!

Davey: Tiger Army Never Die.

It kind of depends on my mood, there are times when I'd prefer Frankenberry, so there's not as much of a clear-cut favorite.



GREG PREVOST

YEAH, THAT

What's really been irritating me as of late is the big shower of shit better known as the masses or — more generally — mainstream society. If you're reading this magazine, I know that you have a mind of your own and assume that you would probably agree with me about this. What currently passes for music in the eyes of the brainless masses has got to be the worst garbage to have surfaced since mid-70's disco, which has now even developed a "nostalgic' appeal to all the assholes who wrongly thought it was "cool" back then. Even worse, their worthless retarded kids are now following in their moronic footsteps. I read something the other day that really killed me—ultra-GEEK Ricky Martin is now claiming that he will be around for fifty years, as he thinks he's the next Frank Sinatra. This fool thinks he's hot shit on toast because a billion fat housewives like him and because thousands of air-headed pre-teens think he's the cat's meow—even though as soon as their pubes pop up, they'll forget about him as quickly as they forgot about Hanson and the New Dorks on the Block. Let's face it, this guy shouldn't even be mentioned in the same sentence as Sinatra. Wow! He was in Menudo! What a feat! He was on General Hospital! What an epic that is! Senor Martin will be eating his own shoe within the year...fifty years, what a joke. For that matter, look at all the other disposable crap that's been coming out of late. There hasn't been a single milestone in the so-called music industry in years. All the morons that have been brainwashed into liking the rubbish that's on MTV, or whatever else it is they watch nowadays, must have an IQ equivalent to a piece of cardboard, along with an attention span of about 3 seconds. And that's pretty much the whole story—a bunch of fat cats have been cashing in on these losers while they remain focused for those 3-second intervals.

Television is, as I've said before, as dreadful as the current music scene. I had to laugh when I saw an ad for some sort of mini-series about the "True Story of The Partridge Family" — as if they had once made some important contribution to the world. They were useless back then, and they're still every bit as useless today. Another thing that recently galled me was a lame 90's version of the 50's mini-series called "Shake, Rattle And Roll". It should have been called "Shit, Rattle and Roll". All the parts were played by 90's geeks, and it included an absurd cameo of the over 50 B.B. King (whom I really like) playing the part of himself in the 1950s. Isn't that a bit pathetic? Plus, the series' basic plot line concerned some loser who wanted his girfriend to play bass in his band — a much more recent trend that was almost unheard of in those days. I guess the producers felt that they should tell all the people in the audience, most of whom were surely too young to know the truth, "the way it WASN'T". There's nothing like rewriting history in an effort to pander to current sensibilities. Don't get me wrong, I didn't actually waste my precious time watching this swill; I merely saw the ads for it during the commercial breaks in various football games, and that was more than enough for me. No doubt this mini-series was forgotten about ten minutes after it aired, as is typical these days. Whoever wrote this script probably got all their info from one of those Michael J. Fox movies where he returns to the 1950s and plays some Van Halen-type crap at the high school hop.

It seems as though everything that comes out now is geared toward halfwits. I suppose that big businessmen (i.e., the government) recognize the potential here and then decide to cash in by dumbing everything down to the lowest common denominator. That's exactly how people like Clinton, Dole, and Bush Jr. get elected—by pandering to masses of idiots. As I recall, Clinton once tried to act "hip" by playing sax with Springsteen or Streisand or some other famous relic at the White House — something that could only appeal to middle-aged squares who once thought events like Woodstock were cool.

Another thing that recently galled me was a lame 90's version of the 50's mini-series called "Shake, Rattle And Roll". It should have been called "Shit, Rattle and Roll".

Speaking of Woodstock, I just reminded myself of something else that really irritates me. Why would anyone try to romanticize a bunch of too-high motherfuckers who spent most of their time wallowing around in squalor? I can think of better things to do than swimming around naked in my own excrement. Plus, anyone who tries to re-create all this "peace and love" stuff in the nasty 1990s is deluding themselves — as the most recent Woodstock festival demonstrated. I hate to clue the dopey promotors of these events in on a secret, but there is no longer a massively unpopular war going on and the Civil Rights Act was passed 35 years ago. Personally, I wouldn't mind it at all if the Pentagon fired a neutron bomb in the direction of the next Woodstock festival. Not only would it be funny to see bands like Korn and Kid Rock burn up onstage, giving the word "smokin'" an entirely new significance, but the long term presence of radioactivity at the site would ensure that there would never be another damn outdoor rock festival in upstate New York, which is altogether too close to where I live. Thank God.

FUCK MOM AND POP...

It's 4:14 AM here in Hostile City. I've been drinking a variety of corporate beers (Bud, Rolling Rock, new Pabst draft) for many hours. A birthday bottle of Jim Beam is sitting on the mouse pad. I've lowered the drinking level significantly in the last few hours. I'm not blind drunk as I sit here, although I'll admit that a less experienced alcoholic would probably cash in his chips right now, this minute. Fortunately, thee WHISKEY REBEL sees a drunken mood like this as an opportunity for enlightenment. YOUR ENLIGHTENMENT, that is. Let the fucking squares sleep...it's time for another booze-fueled intellectual joyride with thee Whiskey Rebel.

First off, a few comments about the wrestling scene. Now I know that a lot of you would be disappointed if I DIDN'T cover wrestling now and then in these columns. But for those of you that are turned off by wrestling — and I don't think there are too many of you, judging by the mail I get — I'd like to point out that when I write about what may seem like mundane doings concerning professional wrestlers and the latest storylines the various promoters are blessing us with, I'm not simply going to rehash results like all those internet nostril-mining pudwhackers. There are life lessons to be learned from the doings surrounding the squared circle. Jesus supposedly told stories (parables) to get HIS message across. Likewise, very often when thee WHISKEY REBEL appears to be simply writing about wrestling, he is actually expressing a crucial message to all of you brown-baggers that are too slow to figure things out for yourself.



There are life lessons to be learned from the doings surrounding the squared circle.

First off, what the fuck is Vince McMahon thinking by lodging the goddamn World title permanently with HHH? From what I read on the net, WWF management believes that the fans are on the edge of their seats waiting for the ROCK to finally rescue us from Triple H's lackluster title reign. They are allegedly building tension for an eventual title change.

Well, sorry Vince. I actually got so fucking sick and tired (yawn) watching the same lame DX run-in week after week that I actually gave up on wrestling entirely for a few Mondays earlier this year. Now I know that the injury situation (Austin, Undertaker, Kane), the untimely deaths of Owen Hart and Brian Pillman, and the departure of Bret Hart and Vader over the past few years hasn't left the promotion with too many strong choices for champion. Kan doesn't "talk", and Mick Foley was determined to retire. I coul understand HHH holding the strap for a few weeks. But GOD DAMN, Helmsley isn't convincing enough to wear the belt for months at a time. On second thought, considering the fact tha probably half of the WWF's present audience got into wrestlin within the last couple years and have never seen what a TRU HEEL wrestler is like, I guess I shouldn't be too surprised that HH is satisfying the masses. HHH is to wrestling what watered-down "safe" MTV "punk" bands are to REAL punk rock.

IVAN KOLOFF was a heel. PLAYBOY BUDDY ROSE was a fuck ing heel. ABDULLAH the BUTCHER is a fucking monster. DR. "D DAVID SCHULTZ was too much of a heel both in and out of the rin to continue working in the wrestling biz. Note also that I respe Helmsley for his ring skills, and you should too. He's pretty youn and I admit that I may be eating my words one day if he continue to improve, which he should. He'd fucking kick my fat ass any da of the week, that's for sure.

That observation leads me to yet another wrestling gripe: th ECW World title reign of Justin Credible. Now look, I know DAM GOOD AND WELL that he's had years and years of training to g where he is, and I sure as hell respect him for that. I also kno DAMN GOOD AND WELL that he too would kick my ass if we ta gled. The problem is, if I didn't know who he was and if he lippe off to me in a bar or at one of our shows, I wouldn't hesitate a b to scrap with him. He looks so goddamn much like the 30 millio bald-headed baggy-britches "wiggers" walking the streets America that his physical appearance doesn't intimidate me on bit. When I see a guy with that look walking down the stre which is about 100 times a day, I don't feel any fear at all. To m they're simply suburban white Mama's boys trying to live out black urban "gangsta" lifestyle. Which, with any luck, they'll gro out of. On the other hand, if I saw a dude that looked like the gre BALLS MAHONEY, or so stocky Japanese dude with forehead crisscrossed wi 1/2 inch deep scars lik Kanemura, or a muscle bound gorilla like Ma Henry, or a big dude with crazy gleem in his eye lik Terry Gordy, then I'd wat my step. Are ECW fans suc pussies that a guy like Justi Credible looks scary to them?

Oh yeah, one more thing. WHY IN THE HELL does HHH do h big entrance in every match with a little bottle of water? What the hell is inherently dangerous or rebellious or cool-looking abou a guy spitting out a mouthful of water entrance after entrance week after week, year after year? In Japan wrestlers enter the rin area with chain saws and scythes. BRUISER BRODY would mak his entrance by chasing fans and throwing folding chairs at them Even Gorgeous George would do a routine with a can of air fres ener to rid the ring of the stench of the fans. All the reigning WW champ does is threateningly waggle an 8 oz. water bottle!

NOTE! I don't have anything bad to say about WCW becaus their promotion is so bad that it's BENEATH MY NOTICE. Every months or so I watch as much of one of their shows as I can stom ach. The latest from WCW is that they have awarded the same str

worn by a TRUE champion, Ric Flair, to a scrawny actor named David Arquette. Who the fuck is he? [Ed. note: Believe it or not, and I admit it's very hard, he's the brother of babe-a-licious Rosanna Arquette] Why in the hell would they want to cheapen their own championship belt by making a joke out of it?

Enough wrestling. It's time to pop open the can of Carling Black Label beer that I just found in the back of the refer. Uummm...uurrp. Even though the sun has risen and I can hear little birdies chirping out my window, I'll be damned if I'm going to hit the rack before venting my spleen on another hot topic that actually came up at Jello's spoken word show up in Allentown a few weeks ago. He got a HUGE pop out of his audience when he recommended that they patronize "Mom and Pop" businesses instead of humongous corporate retailers and restaurants. That was one of the most loudly-applauded statements he made all night, as far as my kid Elvis and I could tell. As I told Jello later, during our ride back to my place, maybe it's preferable or feasible to avoid corporate chain stores and fast food joints in favor of "Mom and Pop" businesses in San Francisco or Allentown — but NOT in Hostile City USA (that's Philly, for you first-time readers).

A few years ago a huge Wal Mart was built right down the street here in South Philly. There were protests and demonstrations and picket lines for a while to try to prevent it from being built. As for me, I couldn't fucking wait for a Wal Mart to close up some of the small family-owned businesses in our area!

I couldn't help but remember that when we first arrived here in Philly, we found the ideal house to rent but were openly discriminated against by a "Mom and Pop" landlord who admittedly wanted to rent to Italian Catholics. We eventually had to go to a big rental service and settle for a crappy apartment. Soon we began to discover that lots of corner "Mom and Pop" stores didn't post prices on products. Why? What was the angle? We soon learned that if you were a recognized neighbor, an "insider", you paid a reasonable price for a cheesesteak or a bag of potatoes. If you were an "outsider", look out! You'd end up paying way the fuck more.

By the time we had lived for a year or so in Philly I was at the END OF MY FUCKING ROPE trying to deal with "Mom and Pop". One of the first signs that family businesses were fucked up in Philly was that pizzas that I ordered delivered never showed up. We had to ALWAYS call them back at least once to remind them. It would take at least an hour and a half to get a goddamned pizza delivered. If I had an Italian last name or if I was "Vinnie" or "Paulie" from down the street I'm sure I'd get my pizza in 15 minutes.

A local Mom and Pop record store that had been ordering records from us for years seemed like the best place to buy records when we moved to Philly six years ago. This place is EXACTLY the kind of record store that Jello had in mind that we should all shop at, as opposed to an evil corporate store like Tower. Right? Everyone of you out there would rather spend your money at the tiny Mom and Pop store, right? I used to fall for that line of horseshit, too.

Then, I went to work for Tower Records on South Street in Philly for a couple of years. I was a supervisor for most of the time that I worked there, and was responsible for dealing with "returns" and customer complaints. Tower, along with many other huge retailers, would go out of their way to hire minorities rather than risk lawsuits. Of course, they probably had to be placed in a position where



they had to pay off a few big settlements before they decided to be so fair-minded. Nevertheless, when I worked for "M.T.S." (Tower's corporate parent), the store I was employed at bent over backwards to hire and promote gay, female, and minority employees. As for the "Mom and Pop" record store, all the guys that have ever worked there have been white males. Shouldn't that mean something to all you folks who are steadfastly against big corporate record stores?

Furthermore, if a customer of any racial stock were to complain to my boss that I had mistreated or insulted them, whether or not it actually happened or whether the individual was believable, they would likely be awarded a gift certificate to make them feel that the store "cared". On the other hand, according to at least a score of disgruntled customers that I have personally spoken to, the guys at the "Mom and Pop" store are well-known for poking fun of "how bad" a customer's selections may be at the cash register.

The "Mom and Pop" store runs an add in the yellow pages that promises "top dollar" on used records and CDs. In reality, of course, they have NO INTENTION of paying anything less than a few pennies on the dollar for anything a stranger carries through the door. They want junkies, thieves, or other people who are in desperate need of cash to drag boxes of records to THEM FIRST so that they can have the right of first refusal. Of course, in spite of the fact that half of the records on their shelves show obvious wear, they will chastise you if you should happen to try to sell them records that show wear. Anyway, indie record stores fully intend to SCREW people who aren't savvy enough to know the market value of the records they bring in to sell. Why are stores like this worthy of your support? Musicland would NEVER fuck you over like that! And if you should want to return a purchase from the Mom and Pop record store, unless you have a friend working there you can fucking FORGET IT! In my experience that's the way it is from coast to coast, as far as Mom and Pop record stores go. At the very best, you might be able to sell back records at a fraction of their value. At Tower or Sears or Radio Shack or any of the other horrid retail stores I have worked in over the past 25 years (it's all in my book *Jobjumper*, plug plug), all you have to do to receive a refund is to keep asking to talk to a higher-ranking manager every time you are refused. Eventually you will get your money back. Guaranteed.

As for the "Mom and Pop" record store, all the guys that have ever worked there have been white males.

This is a very important point: you have absolutely NO RECOURSE with a Mom and Pop business. If they want to assume a "fuck you" attitude, you are screwed. Not long ago, my wife and I were swindled by a local "Mom and Pop" air conditioning contractor. Once we realized we had been ripped off, we began trying to get in touch with the thief to demand satisfaction. Unfortunately, he simply quit answering our calls. He hid behind his answering service, and now we will have to sue the bastard if we want to recover the money he literally stole from us. JESUS! How I wish we had arranged for air conditioner servicing through those "evil" retailers like Home Depot, Sears, or K-Mart. We wouldn't have to go to court; we'd simply need to go back to the store and complain.

Likewise, if I order a "corporate death-pizza" from Pizza Hut or Domino's, if the pizza doesn't show up in a timely fashion all I have to do is complain to the shop manager and I'll at least receive my pizza (eventually) for free. If I walk into a "greedy" corporate 7-11 instead of a corner store to purchase soda or milk or goddamned chili-dogs, AT LEAST I'LL KNOW the price I'm going to pay ahead of time, and that the price I pay will be the same as the most regular customer there.

I'd be the FIRST to admit the superiority of the food that you can find at a good diner over the predictably mediocre chow they trowel out at McDonalds. But the key word here is "good". How do you find the "good" diner in an unfamiliar town? I've been served horrible, inedible slop at Mom and Pop diners. If you complain in an unfamiliar town, you have NO RECOURSE. They often KNOW that you are a stranger passing through, so they can merely say "FUCK YOU!" and tell you to shove off if they feel like it. As a result, even though I rarely darken the doorway of McDonalds in my hometown, I often find myself settling for the familiar mediocrity of a Quarter-Pounder or a Whopper when I'm on the road and in a hurry.

Let's examine the local independent record store in your town, the same one you support instead of the corporate outlet, in a different light. How many of you out there have ever found yourself in a band trying to sell your new record or CD to a local store? Unless your band is already pretty popular, or unless you have a friend working at the store, what you will undoubtedly be told when you carry a stack of CDs to the local "Mom and pop" store for them to stock is, "Well...we could maybe consign a few."

In other words, these stores want YOUR support, but they sure won't help YOUR BAND out when you could use a helping hand. Of course, they stock CDs and records by bands from all over the fucking world...they BUY those. But they will only CONSIGN your band's release. Of course, if your band was from a city far away with a trendy music scene — like New York or San Francisco — they'd stock it without question. I have a recommendation for all new bands with new recorded product to sell. When a local store that you have patronized insists on "consignment", tell them they can either buy a few or expect that your band and all your local fans and friends will start shopping elsewhere. The same goes for the local club that you've been paying cover and buying beer at for years — when it comes time to ask them to book your new band. Why in the fuck should they expect your support and patronage if they aren't willing to cut you a break in return? Tell the bastards that thee WHISKEY REBEL said that they'd better book you or fucking ELSE.

Jello told me that the residents successfully petitioned to prevent Home Depot from building a store within the city limits of San Francisco. All I can say is...REAL FUCKING SMART, San Francisco. I suppose if you only buy hardware or home improvement supplies every now and then, it might give you a warm feeling in your tummy to prevent a corrupt evil corporate retailer from baring its fangs in the Bay Area. But those of you who work at roofing, landscaping or construction jobs, i.e., people whose actual livelihood depends on keeping costs at a minimum, I can only tell you that my friends here in Hostile City who are in your line of work have come to appreciate the lower prices offered by Home Depot. Why would you want to pay a higher price for lumber or paint or hardware?

If you aren't in the retail business yourself, why are you worried that a few "Mom and Pop" businesses might go under if a huge corporate store is built in your area? They wouldn't hire YOU if you needed a job (unless you know somebody that works there)...if you are long-haired or spikey or female or black or gay, in many instances they'd probably never even consider hiring you. The government doesn't even EXPECT them to. So why the fuck should you automatically support them?

I say "FUCK MOM AND POP"! I hate K-Mart too, but why should I pay a local sporting goods store $49.99 for an item that the "evil" chain store will sell me for $24.99? (This is actually based on a true experience from last week here in Philly). If there are some great family-owned stores and restaurants in your bailiwick, I suggest you continue to patronize them. But before you get bogged down in bullshit "boycotts" that are probably going to cost you and all your friends more money, fucking THINK first!

I'm a goddamn dumbass when it comes to shopping for lots of things. I don't even think about coupons at the grocery store...I'm only concerned with getting the hell in and out of the store with as little contact as possible with human beings. Unfortunately, Mom and Pop store clerks tend to be nosey and overly inquisitive. The main reason that I hate shopping at Wal Mart is the slug-like pace of their fucking cashiers.

I actually haven't personally shopped at the Wal Mart that was built down the street since the time I threw a temper tantrum there a couple years ago. Elvis and I spent about 20 minutes looking at various kettles, since we both like to cook. (Our motto is: whatever we're cooking, at least one can of beer MUST BE POURED into it). After a great deal of deliberation, we went to the checkout area. Now, I've gotta point something out here. I've spent years of my life — SEVERAL FUCKING YEARS — ringing up purchases for various retailers. I'm not proud of that, of course. I'm simply saying that I'm especially aware of it when a clerk is a slowpoke shithead. That time we had picked out a kettle to buy, we spent 15 minutes in the shortest of the five lines available. Finally, after a long wait it turned out that the jackass in front of us wanted to buy a bedspread that was unmarked. The clerk asked him to stand aside while somebody looked up the price, and the bastard simply said "No, I'd rather not". I blew my fucking top. I SLAMMED the fucking metallic kettle down on the check stand. I brushed past the bedspread motherfucker and stormed over to where the Wal Mart "greeter" stood. The greeter was a pathetic minimum wage senior, a chubby old guy with a phony smile plastered on his puss. I told the old fart in no uncertain terms that I planned to go to K-Mart to shop since Wal Mart evidently didn't have sufficient manpower to take my money within a reasonable period of time. That's the last time I shopped there.

A couple weeks ago, I found myself wedged behind three unmoving lines at K-Mart. One line was plugged terminally by a clerk who was leaning over the counter thumbing through a K-Mart newspaper flyer with a customer. Another line hosted a customer with an overstuffed cart that included several rolls of carpet remnants, and I FUCKING KNEW from bitter experience that they'd be calling a time-consuming price check. So, as Elvis once again stood aside and chuckled, I slammed my purchases down on the counter and stormed over to the "greeter". I swore on my mother's grave (she's still alive of course) that I was heading straight for Wal Mart, where the lines are SHORT! I'm not the only one who throws temper tantrums at retail stores when confronted with chatty slowpoke clerks. Brother Jeff Clayton down in South Carolina can match me story for story dealing with variety of store clerks in an entirely different demographic location. He's totally flipped his goddamned wig a bunch of times, too. Of late, Elvis and I have been shopping every couple of weeks at midnight on Friday or Saturday at a huge Pathmart grocery store. We've learned that here in Hostile City very few people are out shopping at that hour and that therefore the lines are pretty damned short. We guzzle a bunch of beers in the parking lot and do a couple week's worth of shopping at a time.

Well...I've drained a huge number of beers at this point, and it's about 9:00 AM. I can hear one of the fat ugly twin sisters next door yelling at one of her daycare charges, so it's time to close the window and head for bed. My eyes are burning and anything I drink after this point will surely do me no damned good, so it's definitely time to go.

Remember, I love getting e-mails, and I eventually answer all letters.

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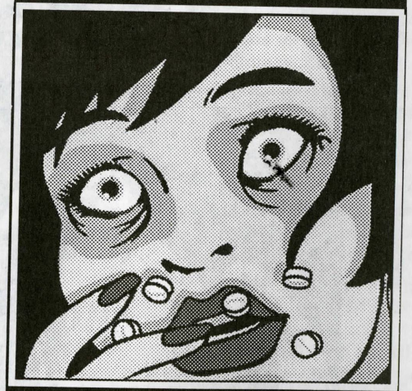

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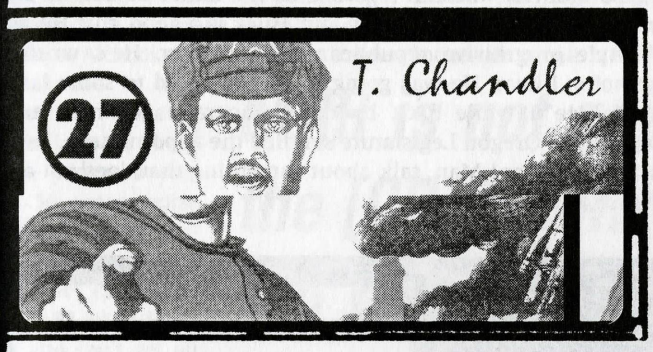
HIT SQUAD

The socialist movement is a religion for a lot of people. I'm voting with Jello though — "all religions suck/all religions wanna make me throw up." Yet I still need some of the aspects of religion. The DIY movement gives me something that I crave — a sense of dedicated people working together to further a common cause. Something like that. Churches and political social circles fill the same sort of need for others. Interesting.

I was raised as a Sunday-School going Methodist. We should talk about religion sometime. Not today.

I emptied my trash can today. You do not understand: I am a pig, I live in a sty called "the book room." The decor of



the walls is: books. The decor of the desk is: computer. I am a hardcore Mac guy...

Anyway, my book room is a thing of delight. I seriously have as many Russian history books as a small college library. It's a pretty cool collection, it took me a long time. I spent a few bucks. It was books or records, and books won. The decor of the floor is: overflowing waste-paper basket-slash-fanzine archive-slash-promo fanzine pile -slash-vinyl record dumping bin. It looks like a college radio station after a 5.7 earthquake. That's what I tell people.

Why not lay out [Hit List and MRR] from the same room, with no MRR editorial control of content?

MRR has a cooler bunch of book rooms, or at least they used to when they were in the old place that Tim Yohannan lived in. *MRR* basically rented a cool, big house in SF and stuffed it to the gills with computer gear. They may put newsprint on the cover (long may it reign!) but that is one hi-tech and well structured organization. *MRR* has a room full of people with free and easy access to Macs. They have volunteers bustling in and out and writing columns and reviews and working on the layout of the zine. That's very cool. That was Mr. Tim Yohannan's great achievement, *Maximum Rocknroll*.

It was sad to see *MRR* decline for a bit there, but I think the new crew have righted the ship. Jacqueline was made the scapegoat for too many sins perhaps, but she did fuck with my tribute ad to Tim Yohannan right after the man died and that pissed me off. And then they tossed The Chubbies from the reviews section and, by extension, the whole coverage of females in power pop. That fucking sucks. They still haven't fixed that, it's really quite insane.

Hit List needs to tap into some of that positive energy at *MRR*. It's a sister publication in the same geographic area and it's time to work together for the common cause. Why not lay out both publications from the same room, with no *MRR* editorial control of content? *MRR*, do you have the space?

Breathe deeply, Brett and Jeff. The war is over. Nobody lost and nobody won.

MRR's biggest problems are political. They have tended to use a hyper-democratic internal structure that tends to ultimately be run by a narrow elite. Their internal politics have always had a slightly Stalinist smell. Jeff Bale, Norb Rozek, Ben Foster — these guys were excommunicated from the club for their ideological crimes. That's really what killed the paper as the mouthpiece of American punk, that intolerance of dissent. The replies to the letters to the editor are always smart-ass and know-it-all, the voice of Correctness and Enlightenment. The "political" columns are unreadable, turgid slop — boring shit that's never going to turn people on to politics. Quite the opposite.

In high school My family moved to Oregon in 1977. I was a Junior in High School and I really resented that. After we moved here, I used to hang out with the engineers — even though I never wanted to be one for 1/15th of a millisecond. They were going to be Mechanical Engineers. I got a D in Physics. We were all friends.

TIMCHANDLER

In high school I liked English okay because my path had crossed a couple old school 30-year-veterans of the war on illiteracy and they had helped me learn how to write. Math? I was pretty good at that until I stopped seeing how it was applicable to real life. I crashed in "Applied Multivariate Analysis of Linear Regressions" or whatever the fuck it was called in college. And in Spanish. I played drums in the band, I marched. It was fun.

As in high school, I have always had a hard time learning languages. And I got slaughtered in Spanish in college and then beat up pretty bad in Russian in my first year of graduate school.

I was really good at learning the Russian that I could see would have been applicable to me: reading archival materials, generally on political themes. Learning how to speak to people and all that emphasis on inapplicable blah blah blah vocabulary didn't get along with me very well. The teachers were conservative Russian emigres with an attitude, too. They liked language students and didn't care jack shit about the history people. At least that's the way I felt.

I don't think they pay language teachers very much. There's a real class structure in academia that I dislike and I think language teachers are towards the bottom of the totem pole.

A little about myself: my cat is named Ratbag. My mother calls her "a little lady." I live down the street from my parents, but I rarely see them over dinner or anything. I guess there are unresolved conflicts from my childhood or something... Moving when you're in the middle of high school is hard. I spent 8 years of my young life going to school with the same people and then "bye bye." Sorry, kid, you've been traded to another city. Being a dependent sucks.

My parents returned here from California because Oregon has always been "home" to my mom. Her own father was in the state legislature. Her uncle is regarded as the father of Oregon's ultra-progressive land use planning law. Huck is a good guy. He was an old-style progressive republican dairy farmer. He's writing his memoirs, I hear. He was going to be appointed to some land use committee a while back by the Democratic governor and the Republican Oregon Legislature scuttled the appointment. Yet Huck is A Republican! Man, talk about something that does not exist in nature any more...



HIT SQUAD

The progressive republicans are gone now. I think most of them died. And the greasy young boys in suits don't have any time for that "progressive" shit... They're either in it for their politico-religious ideology or the money. Or both.

I sell shoes for a living. It's a pretty hard job, dealing with the public every day. It tends to make one into a misanthropic alcoholic. Drinking too much is an easy habit to get into. Watch yourself.

When I smoke pot I don't feel any urge to drink — let it be said there are some health benefits to marijuana. Pot is bad for your lungs. Really bad if you do it too much — inhaling smoke deeply is what causes emphysema. Alcohol can destroy your insides. Booze kills people in mass quantities and is thus much worse. Tobacco kills hundreds of thousands of addicts a year and is 50 times worse than booze. Face it: cigarette smokers are drug addicts. They can't stop. They pay $2.50 or $3.00 a pack and can't get off the drug. They use more and more. Then they die.

That is one sick fucking industry and we subsidize it with our taxes.

Have a nice day.

MRR is not going to review the [CD-R] format. I think it's too punk rock for them and they're being a bunch of conservative wankers.

The shoe store is in trouble, though, small retail stores everywhere are dying. We were strong for a long time, but we're not going the right direction now. People are buying their stuff elsewhere. It is more homogenous there, but cheaper. Big stores key on a few big-selling items and sell lots of that hot stuff really cheaply. Little stores rely on using those same hot items to subsidize their operations. The key is this: the little guys have to react faster and find the hot stuff one or two years ahead of the curve. The problem is that there are fewer and fewer hot items in the shoe industry.

The companies are getting bigger and dumber. The ones that still make shoes in America have to get $50 a pair to make their stuff, which is $100 at retail (retailers in my industry double the wholesale price and scramble like hell to sell enough stuff to survive. It's like playing space invaders, the bills get bigger and bigger and they pour in faster and faster and eventually the aliens win, the little store goes broke.)

I like making records. I have figured out how to release virtually unlimited quantities of releases with very little risk to the label. Ya gotta skip the conventional manufacturing and go with CD-R discs. *MRR* is not going to review the format. I think it's too punk rock for them and they're being a bunch of conservative wankers. But what do I know? I'm biased.

I really like being near great songwriters. There are a few, but no one knows their names. You may know a few like Bob Mould and Andy Partridge and Dr. Frank and Blake Schwarzenbach. But there is a lot more talent in the world than four towering icons.

Songwriters hit their prime around the age of 21. By their late '20s or early '30s, they are generally jaded and pretty well finished as creative forces. Songwriting is the language of love, if you ask me, part of some elaborate mating ritual. We're large and clever chimps in clothes, after all. We have the physical needs generated by the biological need of our species to perpetuate the gene pool. At a certain age, the people who make music are older monkeys with a different set of interests. Monkeys that want to hump all the time are much more interesting as pop songwriters. Pop music is about love. That's why pop is so rarely political, it's about love, not politics. It's sappy and goofy and nerdy and fallible and human. It's not hard and tough and aggressive and mean, like punk rock.

Pop punk thrives on a delicate balance between love song sap and the aggression of hard guitars. You may "get it" or not, but don't look down your nose at it. I don't "get" grind myself. So it goes...

Don't be lulled by the thought that "the population bomb" has gone away. Birth rates are spiraling in some parts of the world. Or rather: a younger average population is emerging and breeding younger. Yeah, that's a mathematical equation for fast population growth. Very large and growing populations that procreate more quickly and at a greater lifetime average rate than 2.

Delayed action blast: I found The Whiskey Rebel's tirade against the local weekly free music magazines in*HL6* to be very interesting. He is perfectly right that those mainstream music magazines suck, just like college radio sucks today. They're corporate careerist in orientation. Suck.

This column is really disjointed. It rambles. It starts nowhere and winds up the exact same place a couple pages later. Does that bother you?

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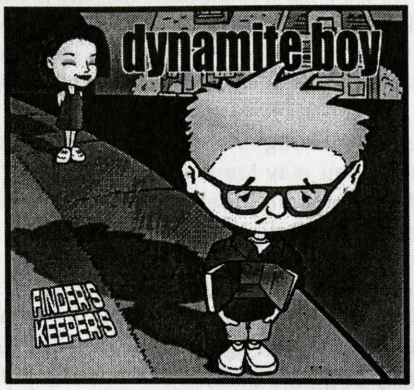

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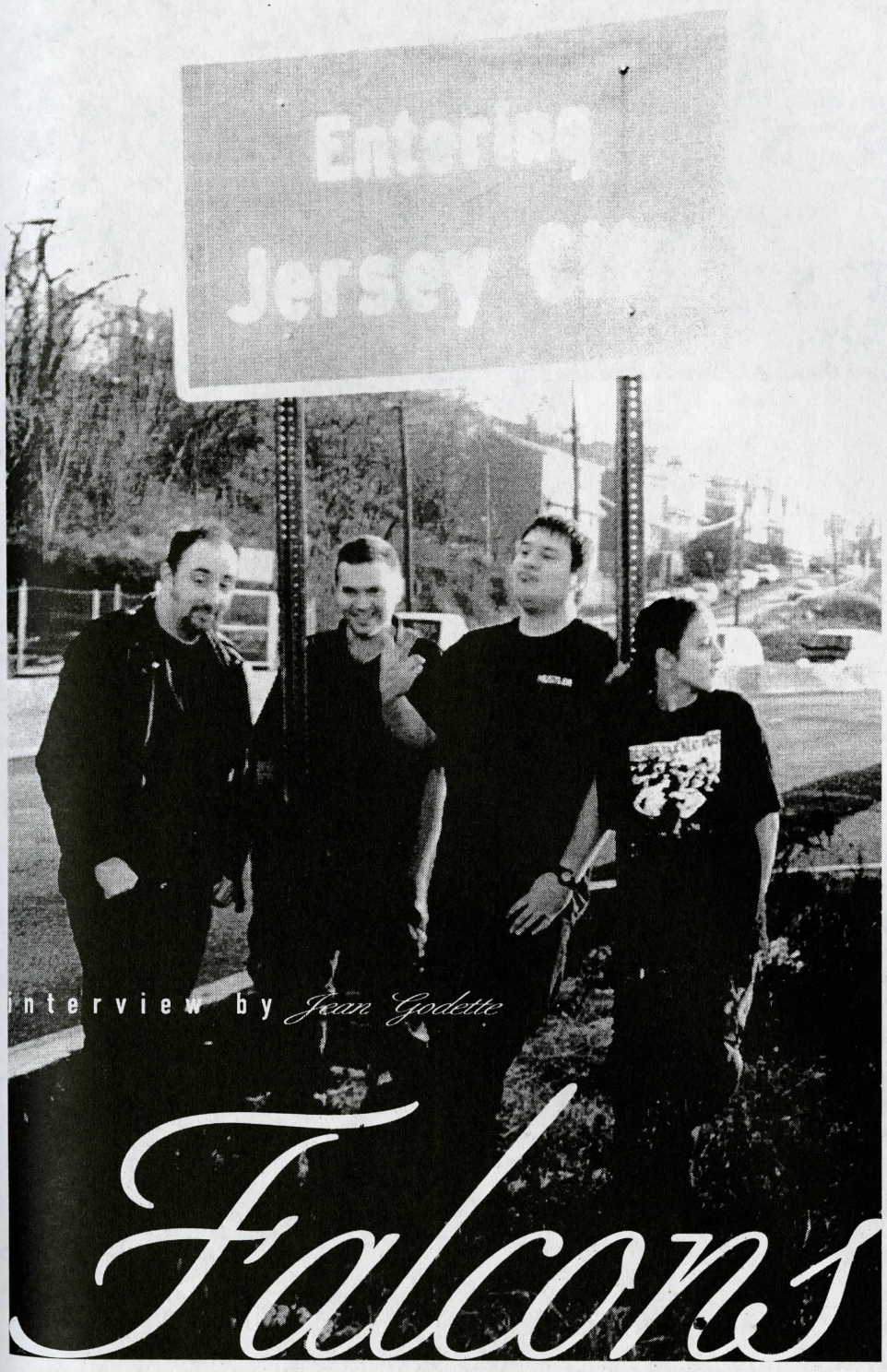


interview by *Joan Godette*

Falcons

Jean: How long has the band been together?

Mark Linskey (singer and guitarist): A year and a half. Uncle Chris joined the band in November '97, but we had a hard time finding a drummer. Alyson joined in '98. I had a couple of buddies helping out earlier, so there were some recordings before that.

Jean: How did everyone meet?

Chris Lynn (guitarist): I answered an ad Mark had placed for a bassist in '94 or '95, but it just didn't happen. I was playing in a band called the Vicious Beatniks. Mark got in touch with me a couple years later via AOL. I had "rhythm guitar or bassist available" on my profile, and advertised myself online like the whore that I am

Mark: Alyson was referred to us by a friend, Trailer Park Doug. We had been looking for a while, and we tried out a lot of people. Some guys were nice guys, but they weren't too good. Then there were some guys who were pretty good from a musical standpoint, but who had a huge attitude. Then there were people, like Gil, who both sucked *and* had a shitty attitude.

Mark: We met Sorensen when he was playing with Polyabuse and the Detrimentals.

Chris: We've also had some really great people helping us out, like EVS from Candypants and the Skels, and Chris Prince from West Virginia.

Jean: How long have you been out on tour?

Mark: This current tour has lasted five weeks.

Chris: Through the Midwest, across the South, and back up the East Coast.

Jean: What's your best tour story so far?

Chris: Up until yesterday it was me rubbing my ass on the gates of Graceland and the doors of Sun Studios. But last night, after getting blasted with Tommy & the Terrors, we got on stage at the end of the Dropkick Murphys' set to help protect the amps from being knocked over when Al Barr invited the crowd up. This one determined young lady weaseled her way under my arm trying to dance next to Rick. I was trying to stop her from bumping into him, but she kept wiggling, sticking her ass under my arm. So I felt it was my duty to spank her. And I did.



Mark: This cool chick, Monica, in Knoxville, Tennessee put a show on for us in her living room. There were a lot of people there. Blood, beer...

Chris: [interjects] And pussy.

Mark: [continues] Monica's two cats. We had a great time and we're sorry her bathroom got trashed.

Jean: What's it like to be touring with a band the magnitude of the Dropkick Murphys?

Mark: It's terrific. They're a great band and are also real cool guys.

Chris: Nicest bunch of fucks you've ever met.

Mark: There are a lot of bands out there that are nowhere near as popular as the Dropkick Murphys are, but they've got major fuckin' attitudes. It's so cool to see a band that has had as much success as they've had and still be down to earth and so real. They do whatever they can to help the scene and to help up-and-coming bands.

Jean: Who are some of the other bands you've played with on this tour?



Mark: Some of the bands we've taken on the road with us are the Brassknuckle Boys out of Lafayette, IN.

Chris: The Jacks from Toms River, NJ.

Mark: The GC5 out of Cleveland, OH. The Daycare Swindlers out of Washington, D.C. With the Dropkicks we've also been playing with a great hardcore band out of Australia, Toe to Toe, as well as a bunch of crazy motherfuckers out of Boston, Tommy & the Terrors. And there have been a lot of bands helping us out with shows. The Main Street Saints, the Staggers, the Lower Class Brats, the Traditionals, the Dead End Cruisers, Deals Gone Bad, Callaghan.

Chris: We've also met some great guys in bands such as the Doozers, Razorburn, and Gut Feeling.

Jean: What's on the agenda for the band when you get back home? Will you be doing more touring?

Mark: Sleep for two days. Then we're gonna start booking the next tour. We have a lot of shows coming up in the Northeast area — in Jersey and some weekend trips. Writing and recording.

Chris: We'll also be hooking up with Sorensen as full-time bass player.



Jean: Where will the next tour be taking you? How long are you gonna be out? And do you know what bands you'll be playing with?



Mark: I think it'll be about 31 states over a 9-week period. We're making our first trip to the West Coast. We'll also be hitting some cities and towns in Montana, Idaho, South Dakota, and Iowa that we haven't played before. As far as bands that'll be on the road with us, that is yet to be determined. We'd like to bring the Jacks, the Brassknuckle Boys, the Daycare Swindlers, GC5, Callaghan, and Tommy & the Terrors out with us for at least part of the tour.

Jean: How do you prepare for being on the road for 9 weeks?

Chris: We're gonna work our asses off to pay the bills we've accumulated while on tour. I'm also going to visit every strip bar in NJ with the Jacks. We may even drag Tommy & the Terrors down to partake in the decadence.

Jean: What about everyone's jobs?

Mark: As far as jobs go, we've put most of our life on hold so that we can do this rock 'n' roll thing. As Chris said, we'll try to work a lot during the time we are home so that we can at least stay afloat financially. We have taken actions from a "leave of absence" to just outright quitting our jobs.

Jean: How is the full-length doing? What kind of feedback are you getting?

Mark: It's doing pretty well. People seem to be digging it. What's interesting is that people who don't necessarily agree with our politics still really enjoy the music.

Jean: The CD cover sends a somewhat mixed message, with pictures ranging from Cuban guerrilla leader Che Guevara to Founding Father George Washington to Jesus Christ. Politically, where exactly are the Falcons coming from?

Mark: We're very pro-working class. We strongly believe in the tenets of freedom, liberty, and justice. We believe that people's rights, be it as individuals, workers, or a nation, are always paramount. We have a big problem whenever human rights or workers' rights are being suppressed. This also holds true when dealing with issues of national sovereignty, be it the Basques, the Irish, or any other nation of people around the world that is being denied basic rights. There are some people who have misinterpreted some of our songs, especially songs that deal with the Troubles in Ireland. In one song we have, "26 + 6 = 1", we rally for the British government to get the fuck out of Ireland. Some people, however, have misinterpreted this "get out" message as being applicable to British citizens as well. We have nothing at all against British citizens, nor do we hold any ill feeling towards those who are against the unification of Ireland. The problem we have is with the British government's occupation of Ireland. 300 years of mistreatment is enough. If anyone feels that the subjugation of an entire nation is justified, they should stick it up their ass. As far as the CD cover, those depicted are all revolutionaries who devoted their lives to the betterment of humanity — specifically the "lower" classes. In the current economic systems, this denotes the working class.

Jean: Why do you have such a strong affinity for the working class?

Mark: I believe very strongly in workers' rights. There's a major problem when people who do the work do not get fairly

We believe that people's rights, be it as individuals, workers, or a nation, are always paramount. – *Mark*



compensated for it. The workers do all the work and the bosses make all the money. When companies take jobs and send them down to Mexico or overseas, and people are forced to work two or three jobs to support their families, that is a travesty, especially when you factor in that they're paying slave wages to these foreign workers. NAFTA made it easier to send jobs down to Mexico, but did nothing to ensure decent working conditions for Mexican workers. Similarly, sweatshop labor in Central America, South America, and Asia accounts for a great deal of the goods sold in this country. Not only do Americans have to work several jobs just to make ends meet, but the bosses get a much greater profit margin by using this cheap labor. And the savings are never passed along to the consumers in America. They remain in the pockets of these scumbags.

Jean: What have you been listening to in the tour van?

Chris: Alyson has been listening to music on her headphones.

Alyson Cina (drummer): Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean, Patsy Cline, Rancid, Warzone, the Israelites, Toots & the Maytals, Social Distortion, the Pilfers.

Chris: Lou Prima, the Devil Dogs, the Weaklings, the Rolling Stones, Hound Dog Taylor, the Brassknuckle Boys, Bjork, Howlin' Wolf, lovespiralsdownwards, the Supersuckers, the New Bomb Turks

Mark: Springsteen, Tom Waits, Steve Earle, Little Steven, the Ducky Boys, the Wretched Ones, the Jacks, the Dropkick Murphys, GC5, Tragically Hip, Irish Republican songs, a little bit of everything.

Jean: What new releases have you been listening to?

Chris: The Anti -Heros, anything by the Jacks, Tommy & the Terrors, the Wretched Ones, David Portolano's "Prayers of a Punk", a kick ass CD of spoken word from the ex-Vicious Beatniks frontman.

Mark: New stuff by the GC5. It fuckin' kicks ass. The Brassknuckle Boys 7" on Fistful of Reality. Joe Strummer's new record. Little Steven's new CD.

Jean: Although the Hudson Falcons are considered a street punk band, many of your songs don't sound like



your run-of-the-mill Oi/streetpunk stuff. Nor does it sound completely like 3-chord trashy rock 'n' roll a la the Devil Dogs, the Humpers, the Weaklings, etc. Where do the band's influences come from?

Mark: As a songwriter, from Bruce Springsteen, Little Steven Van Zandt, Tom Waits, Steve Earle, the Clash. As a musician, from Chuck Berry, the Stones, SLF, a lot of Oi and street punk, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters.

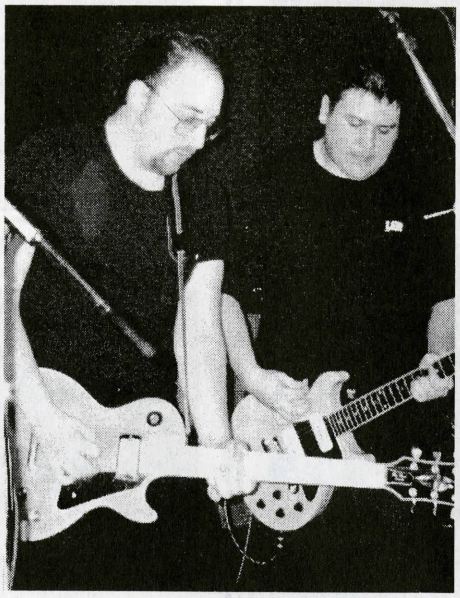
Chris: I'm not a songwriter, but music that inspires me as a guitarist ranges from Thunders to Zappa, with a dash of Mike Ness and a pinch of Neil Young for flavor.

Mark: We listen to a lot of different stuff and it all comes out in the music. The one thing that is constant is the fact that we listen to a lot of bands that aren't full of shit — and hopefully that comes across in our recordings and performance.

Jean: What does "punk 'n' roll" mean?

Chris: It means "fuck you."

Mark: It combines the aggressiveness and intensity of punk with the groove and feel of rock 'n' roll.



Jean: What is the essence of rock 'n' roll?
Mark: It's an escape for people who don't have anything else. If a guy's been breaking his ass working two full time jobs, a rock 'n' roll show on a Friday or Saturday night is a means of escaping from the daily shit he has to wade through. In the same vein, it's a way to release the frustration that is inherent in the working class world for kids. It doesn't make a difference how poor you are, if you have troubles with your family or if you're a social outcast, rock 'n' roll can be a salvation. It's something you can take that's yours, without any interference from those that are constantly breaking your balls.

Jean: Do you have any advice for upcoming bands?

Mark: Remember that you're working for the crowd. They don't owe you shit, but you owe them a kickass show. They pay their hard-earned money to see you play. Don't dick around. Remember that you're not fucking rock stars.

Chris: Bust your ass, practice like a motherfucker, write good songs, play every show you can. Don't wait for people to do stuff for you. Don't expect handouts. And once you start seeing some results, don't forget to thank the people who helped you or help those you can help. Bottom line? Rock and fucking roll. ⊕

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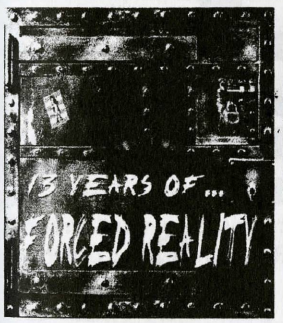

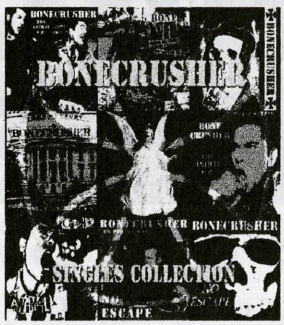

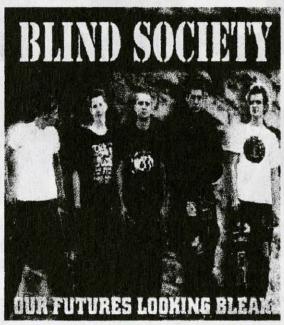



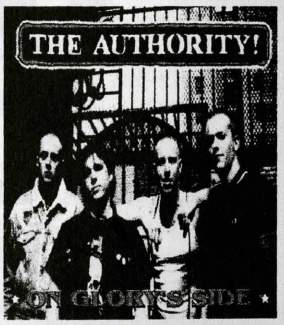

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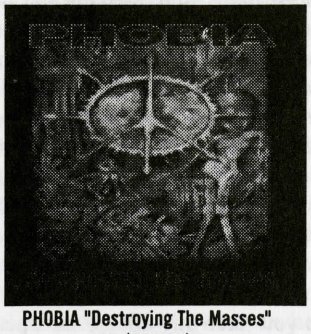

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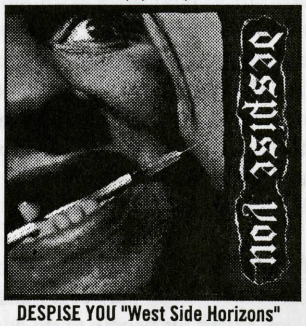

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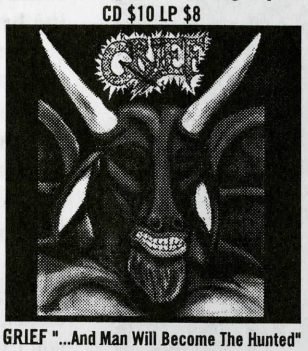

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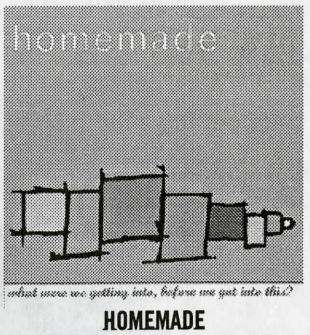
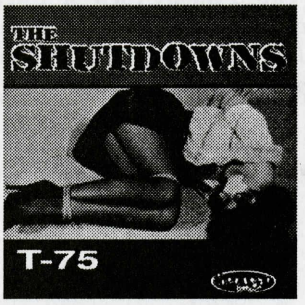
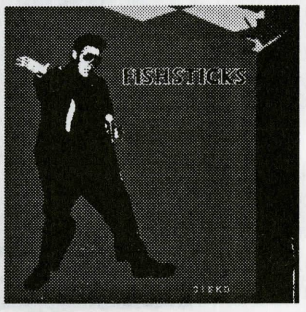


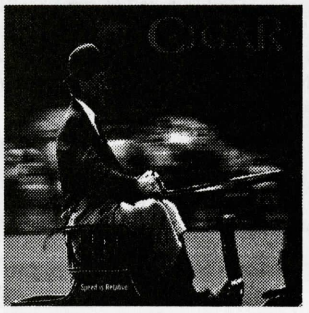
HOMEMADE
"What Were We Getting Into, Before We Got Into This?"



The SHUTDOWNS "T-75"



FISHSTICKS "Disko"



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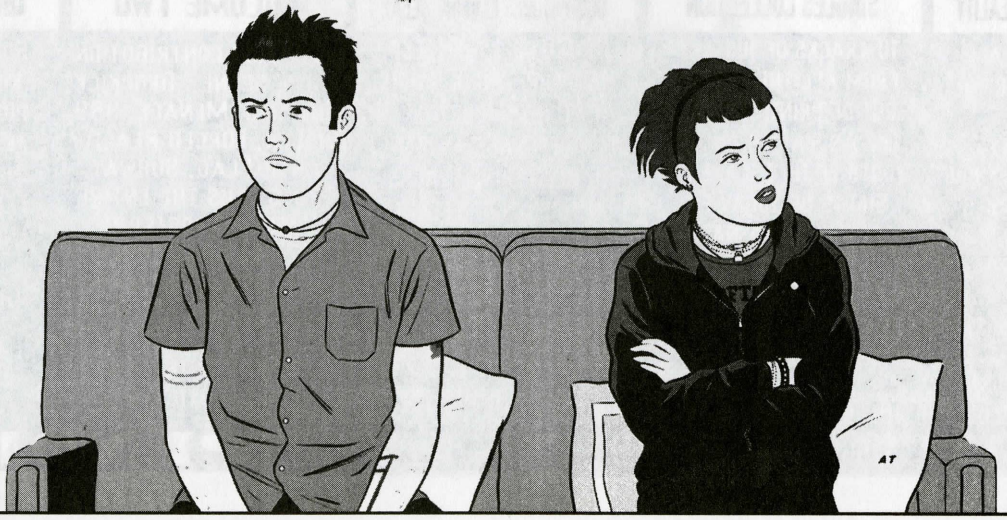

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RECORDED LIVE IN LOS ANGELES NOVEMBER 1999

The Illusion of St. Mark's Place

New York City has a reputation to live up to. A breeding ground for new, creative ideas, some believe it to be a haven for cultural advancements which other cities should model themselves after. But, most importantly I believe it to be the birthplace of punk rock. The Ramones first graced CBGB's littered stage back in 1974, and rock music was changed forever. A music scene consisting of poets, troublemakers, and frustrated people looking for a change crawled into CBGB's to witness some of the most prolific bands to ever grace a stage.

Today, New York City has a different feel. Citizens fear the wrath of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (who uses taxpayer money to go to court to strip innocent citizens of their rights), and, perhaps even more, the New York Police Department. (Thanx to them our streets are safe, but at what cost?!) I laugh when I see commercials for the Broadway show "Jesus Christ Superstar", which I believe the Religious Right funded with the high hopes of making religion appear "hip" to the upper class NYC snobs. These days the NYPD would carry out swift and brutal actions against any "suspicious looking" Jesus lookalikes. There could easily be more dead unarmed men lying in the streets of NYC, while politicians used their bodies as a political football. There goes all hope for salvation, ha ha ha. Amongst the chaos and confusion of The City—how egotistical is that nickname?—Saint Mark's Place seems to be the center of a punk rock scene, but how honest is that scene?

The three blocks of Saint Mark's Place appear to be kind of quaint at first sight. Kids congregate on the corners, while curious passersby stop to stare at the wide variety of different hair colors that they proudly sport. No words are exchanged and everyone goes on about their business. Suddenly you come upon a Starbucks. How out of place is this establishment? Sure, it goes against all the punk principles you claim to possess, but judging by the claustrophobic atmosphere within, where masses of impatient customers stand in line to plunk down their dough for overpriced coffee, it seems to fit in well enough. Every now and then I see some of the aforementioned kids sitting in the designated outdoor cafe space, happily sipping their coffees. OH MY GOD! I THOUGHT THAT IF YOU PARTRONIZED STARBUCKS, YOU WERE STRIPPED OF ANY PUNK POINTS YOU HAD, RIGHT? Wrong! Just because you take pleasure in a product doesn't necessarily mean you are corrupted by this company. But you certainly are A HYPOCRITE IF YOU PREACH ANTI-CORPORATE RHETORIC WHILE SITTING AT STARBUCKS AND SIPPING YOUR BEVERAGE!

St. Mark's Place has a profound street punk image. Kids with mohawks, bondage pants, and leather jackets are prevalent. I believe the street punk credo to be bullshit. Most of the time, those that preach it appear to be tough guys who have the nerve to call other people losers if they aren't behaving exactly like they are. On top of this, I find street punk to be a boring, unoriginal, and uninspiring genre. Every now and then, the loitering kids interrupt their conversations to see if their patches are on straight, and some then proceed to heckle others who have the "wrong" band patches safety-pinned on their jackets. Such behavior is an insult to those who once stood against this sort of shallow, fashion-conscious behavior.

The stores that make up St. Mark's Place are primarily record shops and T-shirt/accessory businesses. In general the merchandise is incredibly overpriced. Studded bracelets can run you twenty bucks, and studded belts costing as much as sixty dollars are displayed in windows to attract hungry buyers. The proverbial leather jacket can cost nearly two hundred dollars. In short, everything you need to look punk is right there on St. Mark's Place. To me, this reflects a profound degree of commercialization and consumerism. The street punks claim that clothes are lame, and that they don't care how they look, but apparently enough people are purchasing these overpriced, unnecessary items to keep all these trendy stores in business. Hypocrisy? Perhaps not, but don't claim that you're a "poor squatter" if you're wearing a jacket that costs more than what everybody else is wearing. This display is strikingly similar to the behavior of the mall "shop-a-holics" that punks always righteously condemn.

Coney Island High was once the premier venue in St. Mark's Place. This hole-in-the-wall club made it a point to always sell too many tickets, thereby dangerously crowding people in for the sake of profit. The Casualties played there often, and the show was



almost always a sellout. Dedicated fans insist that the Casualties are one of the only true punk bands around today. But I raise my voice in dissension against anyone who says the Casualties are "the real deal"! I believe the Casualties only receive so much attention because of their one-foot high mohawks. (How different is this from Jennifer Lopez receiving so much attention because of her hot body?) Their music is nothing special, and their lyrics are more or less interchangeable. The chant "Punks Unite!" can easily be swapped for "Chaos Punks!" A *Flipside* reviewer once said that the Casualties sing about "hippies" destroying their scene on their "Early Years" compilation CD. We all simplistically associate long hair with hippies nowadays, but HEY, DOESN'T ONE HAVE TO GROW LONG HAIR TO HAVE SUCH A TALL MOHAWK? Choke on the irony here, folks. I once saw one of the Casualties entertaining a small crowd of fans, and he was more than happy to allow girls to hang and fawn all over him in true "rockstar" fashion. To each their own, and I certainly don't condemn anyone for liking this band, but—although many *Hit List* staffers and readers may disagree—I believe they are nothing more than "fashion punks".

Coney Island High has since been sold, and I've heard that the space was going to be turned into a Burger King (or perhaps a Goth club, as Rev. Nørb suggested). Good riddance, I say! Coney Island High didn't seem to respect its own supporters much. The last time I attended a show, everyone was kept waiting outside for two hours! It turned out that the people who ran the club hadn't paid their rent, but they failed to tell the patient crowd, most of which spent a substantial amount of dough on train and subway money just to get there, only to find out that the show was cancelled. What did we get for a wasted evening? We were asked to spend even more money by returning the following day for a refund!

I left St. Mark's Place frustrated and tired. It was back to my boring, uneventful town. Maybe I could catch up with my friends and we could all do nothing together. On my way back I saw a squatter punk, begging for change with a Starbucks cup. While walking to the train station, I passed by another Starbucks. This one was in a rather upscale neighborhood, and the store was once again crowded to the gills with customers who were impatiently waiting in line to purchase overpriced coffee. Fuck, haven't I been here before?



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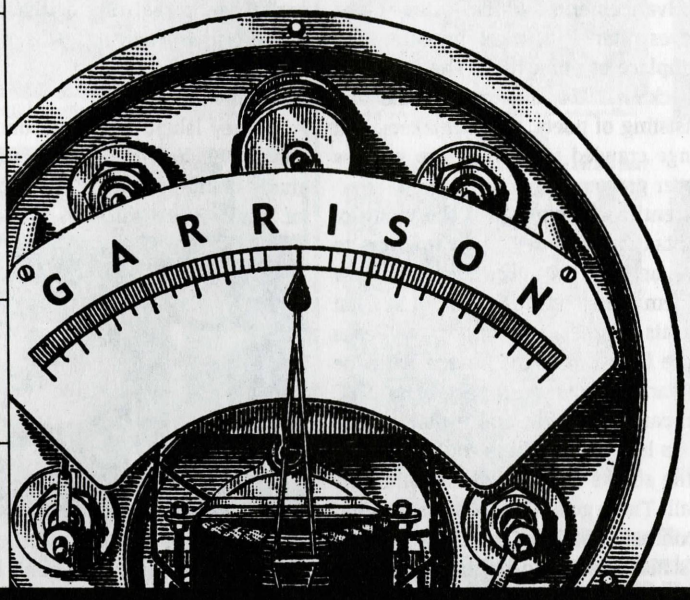

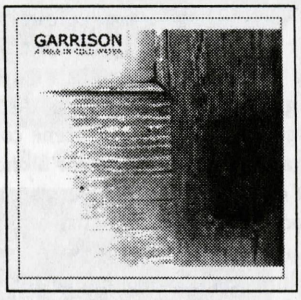

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THE ALMIGHTY TOP TENS

SHITLIST

Tina Lucchesi

THE JONESES CRIMINAL HISTORY - CD
THE EYELINERS - "Here Comes Trouble" CD
AC/DC - Stiff Upper Lip CD
NERVOUS EATERS - "Just Head/Get Stuffed" Reissue 7"
THE BRISTOLS - "Sound In Color" LP
THE DWARVES - "Come Clean" CD
ADVICE COMP - W/ FIRESTARTER on Mangrove
CANDYGIRL - 4 song EP on Lipstick
THE SHITFUCKERS - Live @ Peepin' John's
THE SWEETEEZ - Live @ Castro Valley Rec Center

Jeremy Cool

KID DYNAMITE - "Shorter, Faster, Louder" CD
SNUFF - "Numb Nuts" CD
GET UP KIDS - "Something To Write Home About" CD
THE GAMITS - "Endorsed By You" CD
DAVE EGGERS - "A Heartbreaking Work Of Staggering Genius" Book
THE ADICTS - "The Very Best Of The Adicts" CD
CLASSIC PUNK STATION ON WWW.SPINNER.COM
NOTHING COOL - "Taking Advantage Of Stupid People" CD
AMERICAN STEEL - Live In Sacramento

Jami Wolf

CHUMPS - "Good Times R.I.P" LP
TRUST FUND BABIES - (S/T)LP.
BODIES - "Firepower Is Our Business!" LP
IGNORANCE PARK - "Bad Luck...Or The Plan" LP
SUMBACHINE - Live: Mad Dog / Kimo's 4/00
REDUCERS SF - "No Control" 7"
RITCHIE WHITES - demo CD
TERMINUS CITY - "Justice Isn't Always Fair" CD
RANDUMBS - "Things Are Tough All Over" CD
BONECRUSHER - The Singles Collection CD

Athena Dread

THE BIRTH OF *SHORT, FAST, AND LOUD!* ZINE
SKIT SYSTEM "Grå Värld/Svarta Tankar" LP
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
KILL YOUR IDOLS/FULL SPEED AHEAD split 7"
SPRING BREAK
ARTIMUS PYLE "Civil Dead" LP
DAMAD "burningcold" CD
8. SLAP A HAM PUTTING OUT THE OFFICIAL CROSSED OUT DISCOGRAPHY
9. VISITING MY GRANDMA IN JAPAN THIS SUMMER
10. GOING TO PITTSBURGH, PA TO RECORD WITH MY FRIENDS

Jeff Bale

LEAVING TRAINS - live at Al's Bar
MASTER'S APPRENTICES - "1965-68" CD
PINKZ - live at The Garage
PAUL REVERE & RAIDERS - "Midnight Ride" CD
SMALL FACES - "BBC Sessions" CD
V/A - "Bored Teenagers" LP/CD
V/A - "Break the Rules #9" LP
V/A - "Howlin' for My Darlin'" LP/CD
V/A - "I'm Gonna Stay" LP/CD
WIDOWS - "Complete Widows" CD

Brett Mathews

PEEPSHOWS
ZODIAC KILLERS
DIVIT - "Tension" CD
HORACE PINKER - "Copper Regret" EP
AFI - "Black Sails in the Sunset" CD
AMERICAN HEARTBREAK - "Postcards From Hell" CD
ONE TIME ANGELS
THE CLASH - "The Singles" CD
KID DYNAMITE - "Shorter, Faster, Louder"
PEGBOY - "Strong Reaction"

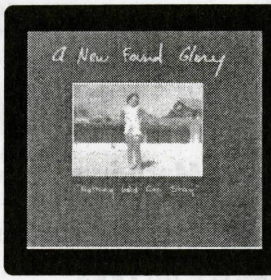
Dave Johnson

JAWBREAKER - "24 Hour Revenge Therapy" CD
AMERICAN STEEL - "Rogue's March"/Live in Sacto
PINHEAD GUNPOWDER/D4 - Split 7"
THE DISTILLERS - CD
THE EXPLOSION - CDEP
HORACE PINKER - "Copper Regret" CD
DIVIT - "Tension" CD
AFI - Live in Petaluma
SAVES THE DAY - "Live at Slim's"
BLACK CAT MUSIC - "This is the New Romance" CD

Your fearless leaders through the vast and daunting catacombs of rock 'n' roll recordings. Just so you know who to blame when you plunk down your hard earned cash on a slab of plastic, run home as fast as your little punk legs will carry you and spin it anxiously, only to find it completely, totally and indisputably sucks: Athena Dread (AD), Tina Lucchesi (TL), Jeremy Cool (JER), Brett Mathews (BAM), Dave Johnson (DGJ), Jimi Cheetah (JC), Sara Bellum (SB), Jeff Bale (JB), Dimitri Monroe (DJM) Jami Wolf (JAW), and Ramsey Kanaan (RK),

S H I T L I S T

A NEW FOUND GLORY
"Nothing Gold Can Stay" CD



Well, I guess following the (utterly deserved) success of BLINK 182, MCA is desparately casting around for the next copycat, er, I mean, next big thing. These guys definitely aren't it. BLINK actually had the odd catchy tune....remember them. There are lots of pictures of them jumping around at some big stadium show, if that's any consolation. At least UNWRITTEN LAW's major debut actually had a couple of good songs on it. That concept is still obviously beyond these dudes. (RK)

(MCA / VIA A FAKE-INDIE)

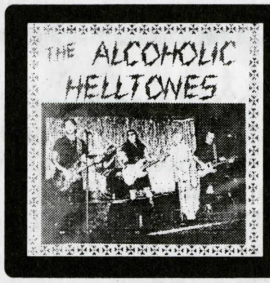
AGAINST ALL AUTHORITY
"24 Hour Roadside Resistance" CD



At last, another full-length from the punk-as-fuck ska masters. On this release, if anything, they are sounding even more angry, raging, and punk than ever before. As ever, the politics are in-your-face, and spot-on. This is the ska you don't want to fuck with. Get with the program. (RK)

(HOPELESS RECORDS / PO BOX 7495 / VAN NUYS, CA 91409)

ALCOHOLIC HELLTONES
"Helltone Stomp" 7" EP



The band sounds good, but the vocals are kinda weak. Shared boy / girl vocals. They do a version of "These Boots Are Made for Walking" which sounds a little like X. They'll probally be happy bout that. It's okay but not great. (TL)

(HELL TUNES / BORRACHO MGMT. 1006 E. POLK / VICTORIA TX 77907)

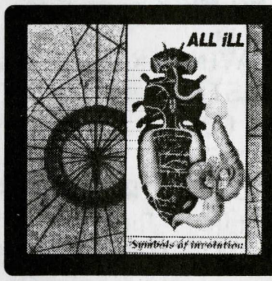
ALKALINE TRIO
"Maybe I'll Catch Fire" CD



I ranted in the last issue about receiving a promo of this with no artwork, lyrics etc. Well, I now have the finished article. Unfortunately, the missing artwork et al doesn't really add much to this. I guess at least I can sing along now. If I wanted to torture myself, that is. This band is huge with folks who wear backpacks and have shows in their mothers' living rooms when said parents are out of town. And who am I to argue with the kids? But if this is the best the new generation has to offer, no wonder they are all miserable, sitting alone in college dorm-rooms all depressed. Emo rock...I dunno, mebbe the backpack straps are just one too tight. (RK)

(ASIAN MAN RECORDS / PO BOX 35585 / MONTE SORENO, CA 05030)

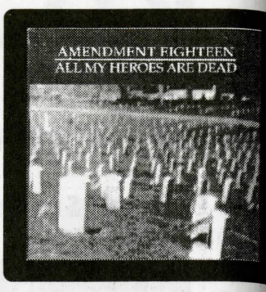
ALL ILL
"Symbols of Involution" EP



ALL ILL hail from Spain and play powerful and mad straight-edge thrash without any of the typical and boring "bro-punk" mosh parts. This little slab of vinyl has a total of ten songs including a PROJECT X cover. The band plays full throttle all the way through and sounds like they have a heavy INFEST influence. (AD)

(SOUND POLLUTION / P.O. BOX 17742 / COVINGTON, KY 41017)

AMENDMENT EIGHTEEN
"All My Heroes Are Dead" CD



Fairly formulaic, but spirited straight-edge hardcore of the old-school variety. Lots of personal / emotional songs, performed with gusto. Some nice thrash, with the obligatory breakdowns and mosh bits. Keeping unity alive for all us dead folks, I suspect. (RK)

(NEW AGE / PO BOX 5213 / HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA 92615)

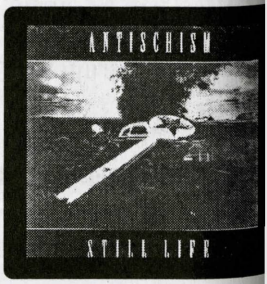
ANNIVERSARY
"Designing A Nervous Breakdown" CD



A glowing, shimmering burst of the cream of backpack music. Usually this stuff is turgid toad-droppings. These guys really shine through the shit. A gloriously crisp production brings out the best of their two-guitars / keyboards / multi vocal layers. And unlike most of their brethren that seem content to wallow in the depths of their misery, ANNIVERSARY sound veritably uplifting. Every song is a pop crystal and a gem. If only JETS TO BRAZIL sounded this good. (RK)

(VAGRANT RECORDS)

ANTISCHISM
"Still Life" CD



I haven't heard this in a long time. Originally released on Allied Recordings, Prank has reissued this classic crust album from ANTISCHISM, a seminal anarcho-punk band from the early 1990's that influenced many further generations of political punk bands. The trademark dual female / male vocals over volatile, driving guitars sound pissed off and

REVIEWS

tough with intelligent lyrical content that covers a vast spectrum of human disgrace and degradation. (AD)

(PRANK / P.O. BOX 410892 / SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94141-0892)

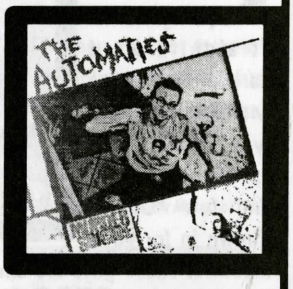
ARTIMUS PYLE
"Civil Dead" LP



Do you ever have one of those days when you are so angry or upset about something or someone fucking you over that you feel like all of your negative energy will cause your head to explode? If your head did indeed explode, it would sound like ARTIMUS PYLE. This is downtuned, heavy as fuck, weird, and ruptures with depravation into epileptic fits of hardcore thrash mayhem. I really dig this record. The recording quality is excellent and it has been mastered really loud. (AD)

(PRANK / P.O. BOX 410892 / SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94141-0892)

AUTOMATICS
"Murder / Suicide" CD

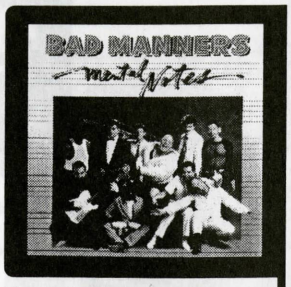


Hmmm...Murder vs. Suicide — that is so often the question. I'm not blown away with this, but I'm not bored either. Three chord power punk that just sort of IS...it's not bad, but it's pretty formulaic...all the fills are where they should be, guitar leads are on...vocals rhyme with unfailing predictability. Funky keyboard solos occur here and there. If you're looking for fast paced garage pop, though...with no strings attached, look no further. (S.B)

(JUST ADD WATER / PO BOX 420661 / SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142)

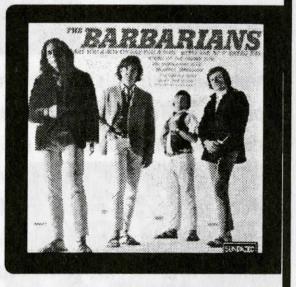
BAD MANNERS
"Mental Notes" CD

OHHHH. Buster Bloodvessel....I had a nightmare about him once...We were having sex...I awoke screaming. "Mental Notes" is a re-issue of the band's 1985 album that pretty much flopped at the time due to lack of label support on both shores. Regardless of their bad business luck, BAD MANNERS has since gone on to take their rightful place as one of the forerunners of the British Ska scene. A solid record by an important band. Hey...this review sounds so serious...what it is, is a seriously fun, skanking record, if you're a Ska fan, you need this. (S.B)



(CAPTAIN MOD / PO BOX 501 / HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS, HP10 80A)

BARBARIANS
"Are You a Girl or Are You a Boy?" CD

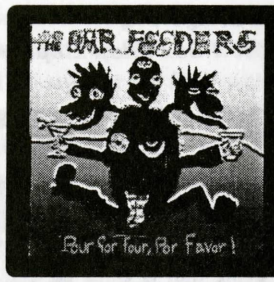


The title song was one of the catchiest punk pounders of the mid-'60s, and it perfectly captured and satirized the plight of all long-haired misfits at the time (including yours truly), who were continually harassed with this very same unimaginative taunt by dimwitted squares. That track alone would make this reissue worth buying, but it also contains some other boss originals (including "What the New Breed Say", "Take It or Leave It", and the plaintive pep talk "Moulty", wherein drummer Moulty talks about how losing his hand didn't prevent him from being successful and encourages others who feel down to persevere) and several remarkably primitive covers with cool off key singing (especially "Hey Little Bird", "You've Got to Understand", and "Bo Diddley"). (JB)

(SUNDAZED / PO BOX 85 / COXSACKIE, NY 12051)

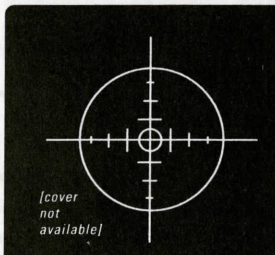
BARFEEDERS
"Pour For Four, Por Favor" CD

This comes across as much a drunken tour diary as a rockin' new record. Songs like "Freeway", "Missoula" (a town I know from personal experience that has belligerent fun lurking behind every corner.), "Cross Tops" (an obvious ode to the trucker's little helper) and "Funny Farm" (which documents their "Ozarks tumble"). Other favorites include the highly entertaining "I Am A Villain" and "32 Short Songs About Waking Up Naked". This is the strongest record to date for this band, who everyone should check out live. (JC)



(FAST MUSIC / 401 BROADWAY #201 / NY NY 10013)

STIV BATORS
"Last Race" CD .



I hope this isn't all that's left...! (I'm still lookin' for some unreleased sessions featuring songs called, "V is for Vendetta", and "King of the Brats") but this disc does boast two bona-fide gems. The Dee Dee Ramone-penned, "Poison Heart", and a Tony James co-write called, "Magyk", that both absolutely shine right up there with his best stuff. An acoustic tune, "Yesterdays" is also beautiful, but seems half-finished, and "Two Hearts" is a sketch for a tune he hadn't worked out lyrics for, so he pillaged verses from his LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH tearjerker, "When the Blood Runs Cold. " God, I loved this guy more than you'd understand. Goddamn, Stiv, I miss ya — ain't many left like you. (DJM)

(BOND AGE)

BEATNIK TERMITES
"You're All Talk" 7"

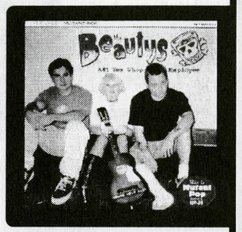


The BEATNIK TERMITES have yet to put out a bad record, and this EP has three more sugary sweet pop punk gems to add to the collection. Comes on cool gold vinyl with great cover art too. (JER)

(INSUBORDINATION / PO BOX 606121 / CLEVELAND, OH 44106)

SHITLIST

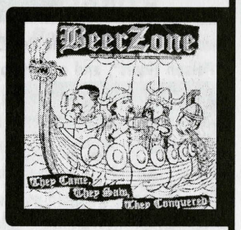
BEAUTY'S
"A-1 Sex Shop Employee" 7" EP



Plain and simple: The BEAUTY'S Rule! Just about the rockin'-ist woman in Punk Rock in The Being that is chica baby. Side one is a charming tale of the joys of working in a Porn store. B-side tracks are equally rockin' odes to the DTs (that's Liquor Detoxin, Kids) and cover bands. In my opinion, if you aren't hip to The Beauty's, your missing out on one of the best bands going right now. (JC)

(Mutant Pop /5010 NW Shasta Avenue /Covallis, OR 97330)

BEERZONE
"They Came, They Saw, They Conquered" CD



I really have no idea what all the fuss is about. This band has received so much hype over the last year, none of it warranted. Imagine, if you can, a pedestrian, plodding, and eminently pale copy of PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES, without the killer tunes, musicianship, production or (definitely not) humor. An astoundingly blah record from a ridiculously overrated band. If they have a great (or even mildly rocking) record inside them, they have to date, kept it remarkably well hidden. If this is the best of what streetpunk has to offer, we'd be better off heading for the hills and becoming hippies again. (RK)

(Flat Records /PO Box 697504 /Quincy, MA 02269)

JOHNNY BLACK TRIO
"Basic Black' CD



This description might turn some people off, but that's their loss. This sounds like some of the more rockin' TOM PETTY stuff. A definite swagger through some hook laden songs. Not too fast, not too aggressive, just smooth and rockin'. If you get a chance, sit back, relax, and check this CD out. I think you'd enjoy. (BAM)

(Route 9 /154 Nonantum St. /Boston, MA 02135)

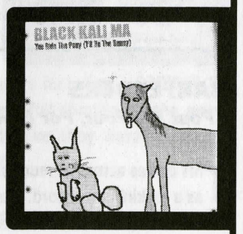
BLACK CAT MUSIC
"This Is The New Romance" CD-EP / 12" EP



Dark gloom rock from this East Bay quartet, comprised of ex- members of the CRIMINALS and the RECEIVERS. BCM definitely has an East Bay vibe to them, but their music is a bit more thoughtful and complex, while seemingly way more simple. A good portion of the songs drop down to bass and drums during the verses, with minimal guitar added mainly for mood and feel, while the choruses burst into heavy three chord anthem rock. At first, what seems to be repetitive turns out to be the beauty of the record, as you find yourself caught in the groove (but not like MADONNA!). Fans of ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT, MURDER CITY DEVILS, etc... should check this out. The 12" has a song that the CD doesn't have, while the 6 song CD has 3 songs that the 12" doesn't have. You do the math. (BAM)

(Cheetah's /PO Box 4442 /Berkeley, CA 94704)

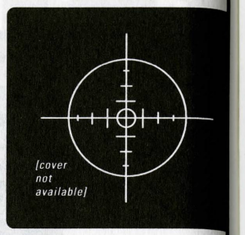
BLACK KALI MA
"You Ride The Pony (I'll Be The Bunny)"



Gary Floyd is back in rockin' form. The better songs on this record, like the Oedipal ode "Kali," or the Swaggering "Angel Face," capture the aggression & fury of the DICKS and mix with pop sensibilities of SISTER DOUBLE HAPPINESS. The lesser tunes get a bit mired down in slow grunge that tends to bring the album down a bit. Overall, a solid outing that showcases one of the more powerful punk / indie singers of the last 20 odd years. (JC)

(Alternative Tentacles /PO Box 419092 /SF, CA 94141)

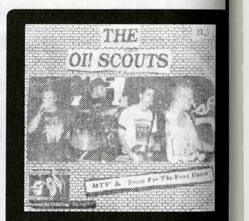
BLADDER, BLADDER, BLADDER
"On The Job" CD



I really wanted to like this CD, but even on the third or fourth listen, I can't really get into it. The first track, "Demand The Impossible" is fun and cool, although there isn't much that interesting past that. Overall, this is pretty mid-tempo, kinda generic punk rock / rock-n-roll . These guys pay their obvious allegiances to PISTOLS and THE CLASH, which is great, but who really cares? Anyhow, as stated, a fun CD, but not awesome. (JAW)

(Pelado Records /521 W. Wilson C103 /Costa Mesa CA 92627)

BLIND SOCIETY / THE OI! SCOUTS
"MTV" 7"EP

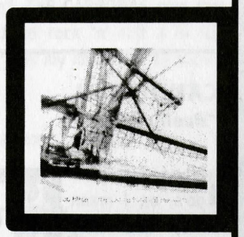


BLIND SOCIETY is pretty much a straightforward early eighties sounding hardcore-type band with "political" lyrics and few "Oi!" s thrown in for good measure. These guys are singin' about the war, shell shock, and Saddam.....This definitely would have the PC-types a bit up in the buggy. THE OI! SCOUTS are pretty much more of the same super-quick, very run-o-the mill punk rock band sans the war-type lyrics. Add in a few "Oi!"s, and there you have it. Not very exciting. (JAW)

(No Info)

BOB TILTON
"The leading hotels of the world" CD

OK...BOB TILTON is a THEY, not a HE, as in a group, not a guy. They cleverly chose to name themselves after an evangelist, not sure why. The music they make is, at the risk of pigeon-holing, hate that, but.... a sort of emo-indie, sad but thrashing rock. Initially, I was reminded of SLINT, but they rock a little harder, and the vocals are ranted, panted and shouted, as opposed to the spoken word storytelling of the former. This is music made for ripping up love letters after a good cry, driving home very late at night, just slightly buzzed, or for just being alive. (SB)



(Southern Records /PO Box 59 London /N22 1AR England)

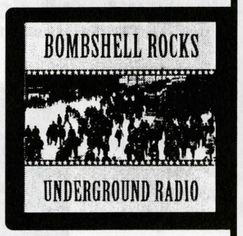
THE BODIES
"Fire-Power Is Our Business!" LP



Starting with possibly the BEST BODIES song, "Street Trooper", this record kicks my ass from beginning to end. Not that the LP didn't rule, but this is better than the TKO record. The songs are catchier and tougher to boot. Heheh. Another awesome song is the BIGGEST TEMPLARS rip of "War On The Streets", called "Drunk Tank". Overall, if you are familiar with THE BODIES, then you get more of what you already know, top notch punk rock, plus a bit more with Abe's more aggro vocal stylings, and the stellar cover art...HAMMER! (JAW)

(Vulture Rock Records /POB 40104 /Alburquereque, New Mexico 87196)

BOMBSHELL ROCKS
"Underground Radio" CD

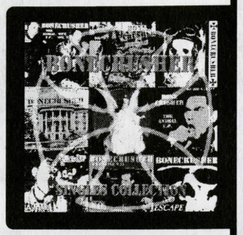


These dudes prove that not every band in Sweden apes DISCHARGE or BAD RELIGION. Yes indeed, street-punk is also alive and kicking in the streets of Vasteras. If your RANCID and SWINGIN' UTTERS records are played out, you could do worse than pick this up. (RK)

(GMM Records /PO Box 15234 /Atlanta, GA 30333)

REVIEWS

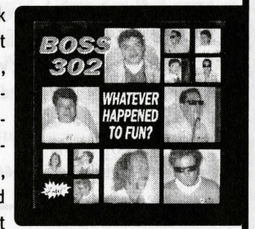
BONECRUSHER
"The Singles Collection" CD



This CD is a great collection of BONECRUSHER's early singles, including my personal favorite, "Hell, I've Already Been There". This song rules. This whole CD is chock full o' straight forward powerful, gravel-y voiced, aggro street rock-n-roll. Other good songs include "Rejected", "Animal", and "A Better Life". As far as this band is concerned, I would definitely stick with this CD over any other, as it truly is a collection of their best songs.(JAW)

(Outsider Records /POB 92708 /Long Beach, CA 90809)

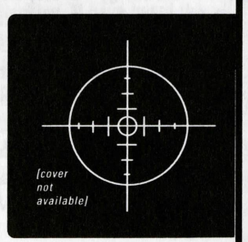
BOSS 302
"Whatever Happened To Fun?" CD



Cool, driving rock in the drunkest garage tradition, only more competent and less frantic. There's a psychobilly edge here, but just a little and I'm sure at least half of this band were punks in the 80's, and probably still are. Car Club, beer spittin' fun, it's just more memorable and less juvenile coming from this band. Not sure why. Kinda reminds me of a more grown up, smoother NEW BOMB TURKS. (SB)

(Label! /11151 Rodeo Circle /Parker, CO 80138)

BOYS
"Boys Only" CD



Phew, I forgot just how good this fourth BOYS LP was. After they began adding orchestration and keyboard overkill on "To Hell with...", my enthusiasm for this great pop-punk band dampened and I sorta tuned out, so much so that hearing this again was almost like hearing a brand new BOYS LP for the first time. Suffice it to say that it's filled with catchy, guitar-heavy pop numbers with an appealing mix of pathos and swagger. (JB)

(Captain Oi /PO Box 501 /High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 8OA /England)

BOYS
"Punk Rock Rarities" CD



Captain Oi does it again. A collection of unreleased demos, singles versions of famous LP songs, and alternate versions of other BOYS tracks, ranging from their early days onwards. The most pleasant surprises for me were the "No Leaders" and "Cool" demos, "Flies", "Jimmy Brown", "Lonely Cowboy", and "Walk My Dog", all of which are classic pop punk tracks. A must-have release. (JB)

(Captain Oi /PO Box 501 /High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 8OA /England)

BRACKET
"When All Else Fails" CD



For all of you who refuse to acknowledge the last few BRACKET releases because they weren't "pop" enough, or "FAT WRECK" enough, here's something to stick in your damn pipe and smoke. 13 tracks that abso-fucking-lutely rule! A little more straight-ahead, but not so much that it is characterless; it's still BRACKET after all. If nothing else, you little baggy pants wearin' skater dorks and jocks should buy this because Fat Mike wrote a song on it. Buy it for that, then find out how brilliant BRACKET really is. Most consistent record to date. GET THIS!! (BAM)

(Fat /PO Box 193690 /San Francisco, CA 94119-3690)

SHITLIST

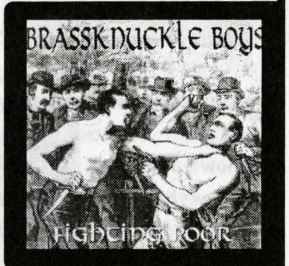
BRAID
"Movie Music Vols 1&2"



These are actually two separate posthumous discs of 7" and comp tracks, reviewed together for the sake of brevity. If you're a fan of these guys, you'll be into either disc. If you're a fan of dissonant, emo-esque stuff that isn't actually *completely* all over the board (but not quite as focused as a band like HOT WATER MUSIC or BURNING AIRLINES), you'll probably get off on these records. The packaging and liner notes are beautifully executed. Luckily, BRAID was one of those bands whose comp tracks and 7"'s weren't merely tossed-off fluff. If this is the genre of punk you're into, you could definitely do much worse. If you're a fan of Braid, you couldn't do much better. (DGJ)

(Polyvinyl /PO Box 1885 /Danville, IL 61834)

BRASSKNUCKLE BOYS
"Fighting Poor" EP



This is upbeat, low on the production end, not-so-stereotypical Oi!, considering the fact that they have such a boot name. Anyhow, this is pretty damn good, actually — really quick, and really energetic. These guys prolly rip it up live. (JAW)

(Fistful Of Reality Records /POB 351 /Portage, IN 46368)

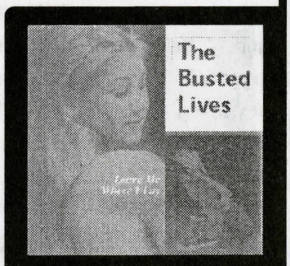
BUILT TO LAST
"...and knowing is half the battle" CD

San Diego's BUILT TO LAST sound a lot like GORILLA BISCUITS with heavy "mosh" sounding breakdowns. The lyrics are very introspective, with the lyricist taking a hard and honest look at himself through both his own eyes and the eyes of others. (AD)



(Resurrection A.D. Records /P.O. Box 743 /Red Bank, NJ 07701)

BUSTED LIVES
"Leave Me Where I Lay" CD



More raunchy, fucked-up rock from the beautiful port town of Oakland, CA Dirty garage music with a twisted singer. Sounds like you could barely peel them off of the bar to record this. Loving odes like "40 Fuck Me" and "Daddy Wants A Cold Beer" mixed with songs of basic anti-social behavior exhibited in "I Wanna Rip Your Heart Out", "I Wanna Be Dysfunctional" and "I Don't Like People". These guys would fit well on a label like Junk , they are definitely kindred spirits to the NEW WAVE HOOKERS. (JC)

(Blueball /6517 Farallon Way /Oakland, CA 94611)

CADILLAC TRAMPS
"Live" CD



Brilliant move for this band to make. I have been a fan of the TRAMPS for years and years, but I never thought that their recorded work ever came close to the raw power and energy that they displayed live. This is a crystal clear recording that catches most of the lightning in the bottle. Tight, crunchy guitars and the enigmatic psycho-vato with a heart of gold Gabby in full form. The only thing lacking in this is the presence of old guitarist, Johnny Two Bags, who I always loved to watch play. That aside, this is an excellent record by a band that has more than paid its dues and deserve a big hit out of this. (JC)

(BYO /P.O. Box 67A64 /L.A., CA 90067)

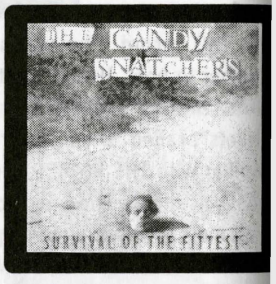
CANDY GIRL
"Beehive" 7" EP



If the 50's were the 90's, or, I mean 2000, and they went punking, just a little, then this would be right in there. A pretty catchy stylistic throwback, with decent production, vocals and sassy, "come 'ere little boy" cool. There's enough IPM's (Ideas per minute) here to keep it interesting, too. Kind of reminds me of HOLLY AND THE ITALIANS, with a little bit of sober NEW YORK DOLLS in the mix as well. (SB)

(Lipstick Records 5088 Camino Alta Mira, Castro Valley, CA 94546.)

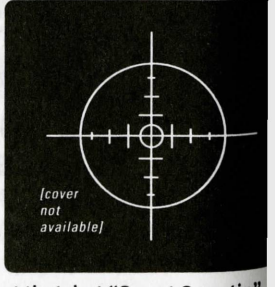
CANDY SNATCHERS
"Survival Of The Fittest / Suffragette City" 7" EP



Rockin' new release from this legendary Jersey punk band. Side 1 is an original that captures a raw, almost live sound. Frantic, powerful singing and inventively crisp guitar work have always set them apart from the pack. Side 2 is a BOWIE cover (duh) and is equally rockin'. (JC)

(Coldfront /Sin City /PO Box 8345 /Berkeley,CA 94707)

CANNONBALLS / CARBONAS
Split CD



Both bands are from Spain. The little leaflet in the CD describes the CANNONBALLS as sounding like the REAL KIDS, RAUNCH HANDS and THE SONICS. Hmmm...I dunno about that, but "Sweet Sweatin" is a pretty rockin' tune. They also do a cover of

"Jumpin' Jack Flash". THE CARBONAS play fast and fierce three-chord rock 'n' roll a la the RAMONES. "Suzy 13" is my fave song by them . (TL)

(Punch Records /Apdo 60167 28080 /Madrid Spain)

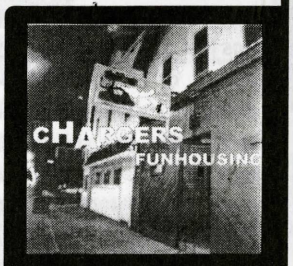
CASKET LOTTERY
"Moving Mountains" CD



First off, whoever the graphic designer that worked on this record is deserves a pat on the back. Oh...and I just noticed that my man in Chi-town, Sean Capone, took some of the fine photos. Okay, sorry, on to the music. Head-thwacking, intricate rhythms with a definite lilt to them, as is fashionable in modern-emo circles today, with vocals that sound better when they're on the screamy side. If you're into BRAID, JOSHUA, PIEBALD, the more rocking side of THE ANNIVERSARY, or the less pissed-off side of HOT WATER MUSIC, you'll probably get off on these guys. Well recorded, well packaged, well played. Good job, folks. (DGJ)

(Second Nature /PO Box 11543 /Kansas City, MO 64138)

CHARGERS
"Street Gang Fun Housing" 7"EP



THE CHARGERS are a cool band that puts a lot of cool junk in their records. They are from Cleveland and Cleveland punk bands tend to rock out extra hard. Three recommended tunes to jump around to. (JC)

(Donut Friends /Box 3192 /Kent, OH 44240)

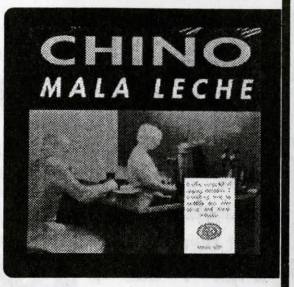
CHERRY THIRTEEN
"Lower Class Angels / Hey Mutha Fucka" 7" EP

One of the best records of the Sin City series. Steve Miller, throatman extraordanaire for ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN, has a side band that rocks just as hard as the aforementioned super-charged monsters. Two tracks of blistering punk rock with a New York street punk sensibility. Awesome. (JC)



(Coldfront /Sin City /PO Box 8345 /Berkeley,CA 94707)

CHINO
"Mala Leche" CD



Punky melodia meets good old pop music that twists into a pretty enjoyable record. The precious vocals dip, dive and harmonize, all in an effort to get their collective emotions across to us, the listeners. The musicianship is very competent — even a mandolin player now and then — and the lyrics are fairly meaningful. I dare say that some of these songs are epic in flavor and it feels like it would go perfect with a little teen, or early 20's angst. (SB)

(Magwheel PO Box 115 STN. R Montreal, QC H2S 3K6.)

CHUMPS
"Good Times R.I.P." LP



This goes down as one of the best records of 2000...no doubt about it. This was a record I could hardly fucking wait for, and for good reason. THE CHUMPS play straightforward three chord, retarded punk rock, complete with slurring vocals. Of course, you are probably thinking, "I have heard this all before'. Well, guess what? YOU HAVEN'T! I can't possibly name all the great songs on this record, because, quite simply, this could be the best record I have heard thusfar, this year. Anyhow, this is an honest record by possibly one of the best bands Austin has ever seen. THIS IS A NECESSITY . (JAW)

(Mortville Records /POB 4263 /Austin, TX 78765)

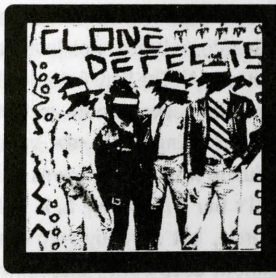
CITY CATS
"Trample Tracks 2000" CD EP



This CD is great. I laughed so hard that I could barely breathe. Quite possibly the most complete package of absolute cheese-metal I have ever heard. From the cartoon super sci-fi characters that the band members assign themselves (The Dream Warrior being my favorite for he gives us "strength and courage to fight for our dreams") to the amateurish cock-rock wannabe street tuff lyrics like in "Subway Rats," "Rats In Black / Don't Turn Your Back / Dare To Play His Game," or "Tonight's "Tonight, That's Right / Hear Our Screams / Tonight." Punctuated by Banshee screams and guitar noodles. If they're joking then this is brilliant, but unfortunately I think that they are painfully serious. (JC)

(Atomic Rock Pro /Box 13964 /Denver, Colorado 80201)

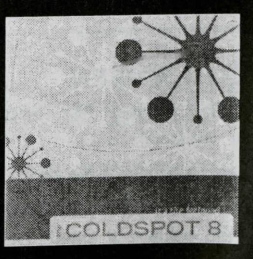
CLONE DEFECTS
"Bottled Women / Cheetah Eye's"



These sound like boom box recordings of unreleased DEAD BOYS songs. And the problem is? Another great release for Tom Perkins Records.

(Tom Perkins /Box 970936 /Ypsilanti, MI 48197)

COLDSPOT 8
"It's the Feelgood" CD



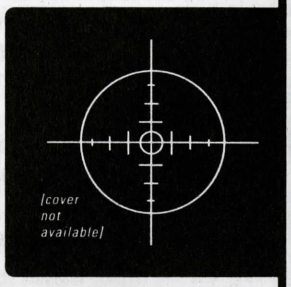
This is some very cool stuff. Well played reggae / ska stuff with a hint of jazz and a pinch of Latin flavor. If your idea of a ska band is GOLDFINGER or

SHITLIST

REEL BIG FISH, prepare to be annoyed. If you're into stuff like HEPCAT, the SLACKERS or DAVE HILLYARD, you'll probably groove on what the COLDSPOT has to offer. Personally, I prefer this kind of stuff to nth-generation ska-punk (I mean, don't get me wrong Jesse Michaels is a god and all...but *he* was actually doing something *interesting*). Great lazy-sunny-Sunday afternoon music for sure. Rad artwork, as well. (DGJ)

(Beatville / PO Box 42462 / Washington, DC 20013)

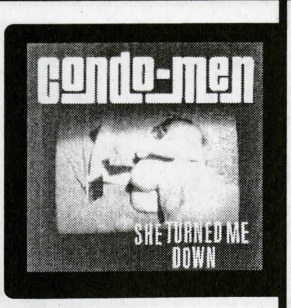
COMATONES
"Sexual Intellectual"



This is Burntout Reclu,se's Forgotten DrunknRoll Field Marshall, J. D. Monroe, here askin you readers to plz indulge me, dig, if you will the picture: imagine some crazy-fast, hard, Hairy-Metal drumming like uh, Steven Adler on crack (not a stretch, I realize...); some non-stop, huge, electric T. Rex-riffage like a teenage elephant gun...(are ya with me so far?); a drunken, melodramatic cock-rock vocalist, equal parts "Pass That Bottle"-era Claude from SMACK (Rest His Soul) and Jimbo Morrison in all his licorice-legged, Whisky-A-Go-Go Glory. Lyrics, not just Half-Retarded, but so Utterly All The Way Retarded that in the context of a spitfire two minute rocknroll song, they were just fucking pure, raw genius! Well, anyway, I dunno what these clowns did to piss off the L. A. Al's Bar / *Flipside* / R. A. F. R. scenemaker-inner circle, but anybody who ever heard 'em had to know, deep down, that horny kids from coast to coast were gonna cruise to these tunes so long as they got recorded half-right. This is a Call for the almighty COMATONES to quit their gas station jobs and reform immediately to clear up all this lingering confusion about what badass, sleazy punknroll is supposed to sound like. They were KINGS, I tell ya — KINGS! (DJM)

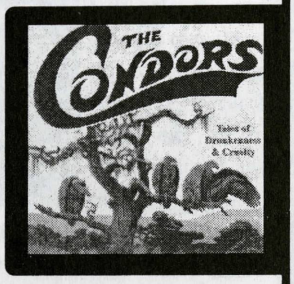
CONDOMEN
"She Turned Me Down" 7" EP

Garage rock from the Netherlands. This 4 song EP is pretty awesome .Though the vocals are a bit echoey, it seems to work. My fave song is "Jane". It reminds me sorta of 80's-era SCIENTISTS and a little of THE LIME SPIDERS. It totally rocks out with killer screaming vocals. Watch out RUSSELL QUAN! (TL)



(dB's Records PO Box 2550, 3550 En Utrecht, the Netherlands)

CONDORS
"Tales Of Drunkenness and Cruelty" CD



Do I like this? It's okay. "I'm Not Sorry" is reminiscent of JIM CARROLL's "People That Died" I dunno why... I like it though . This is like nice bar-rock or something. I can't really compare them to anything. It's pop / rock oriented. There's nothing wild or special about it. Okay, I'd say they remind me a smidge of the REPLACEMENTS. There you have it. (TL)

(Vital Gesture Records / PO Box 46100 / Los Angeles, CA 90046)

COOL KIDS NEVER DIE
"Tiger Baby" 7" EP



Sparse, minimalistic, and spirited punk rock from some crafty Swedish cool kids. This record has more extra crap in it than any other record I've reviewed this issue. That's cool. I love extra crap in my record. The music is fun, if not totally indecipherable. The record is a keeper, but more for aesthetics than multiple listenings. (JC)

(URU / Buskvagen 28 / S 611 45 Nykoping, Sweden)

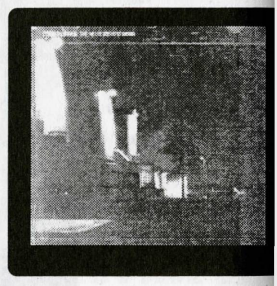
CORPORATION 187
"Subliminal Fear" CD



Okay, so yes, a fair stretch of my teenage life was spent listening to Metal, but y'know what? The only dose I really need any more a I get a couple times a month when I break out "Live After Death", "Reign In Blood", or "Ride The Lightning." These guys can't quite decide if they want to be PANTERA or SLAYER. On the first song, they straight up *cop* the drum break from SLAYER's "Angel of Death," though this guy is *no* Dave Lombardo. Sometimes it seems as if he's struggling to catch up to the rest of the band. As far as I'm concerned, this record is a pointless waste of time, as is practically all metal made after about '92. That said, they're not quite as bad as some of the other Nü Metal out there today. (DGJ)

(Wicked World / hailsatan@earache.com)

COUNTERVAIL
"The Most Abused Word" CD

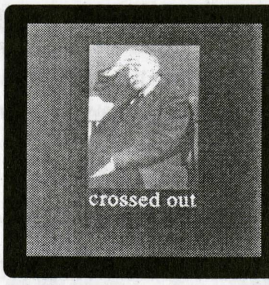


Shrieking, throat-bulging aggression meets predatory, ominous guitar and bass blasts from the deepest pits of hell....or perhaps just a real bad case of the teenage-no one-understands-blues. Whatever the scenario, this shit is powerful, furious, and more complex than your garden variety thrash screamers. It's like the main ingredients of punk, rock and metal, all chewed up and spit back out at you, in your face. So there. (SB)

(New Age Records / PO Box 5213 / Huntington Beach, CA 92615)

CROSSED OUT
CD

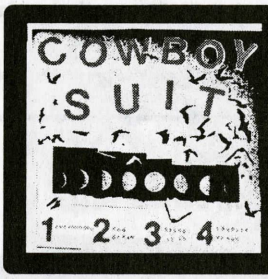
Ever wonder where the overused "power violence" term comes from? It comes from a small handful of bands, one of which was the late, great CROSSED OUT. Despite the fact that CROSSED OUT was only around for three years, only played sixteen shows, and released less



than a handful of records, they unknowingly shaped and influenced generations of clones. Like many bands of many genres, they were sorely unappreciated during their short life span, but are now on every collector geek's want list. This CD is a complete discography that also hosts a bunch of unreleased studio and live tracks. This documentation of our scene's history is a must-have for any hardcore fan. (AD)

(Slap A Ham / P.O. Box 420843 / San Francisco, CA 94142-0843)

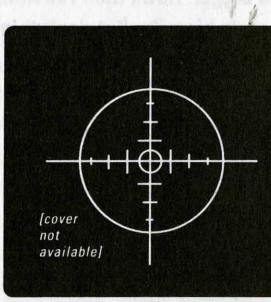
COWBOY SUIT
"1,2,3,4," 7" EP



Tough and noisy. Blissfully lo-fi. Kinda reminds me of old BUTTHOLE SURFERS (which is a good thing). Features ex-members of HINKLEY, if that means anything to you. I appreciated the guitarist's experimental side, which gave a nice Twangy Tweek to really put this record over the top and make it something special. Recommended it, if you can find one. (JC)

(Nightrain Vinyl / Box 6347 / Evanston, IL 60204)

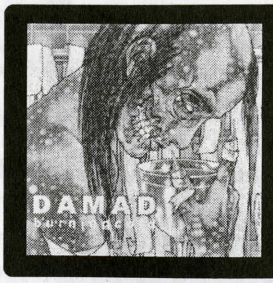
DAYCARE SWINDLERS
"Testoserosa" CD



This is the legacy that bands like SUBLIME and GOLDFINGER have left. These guys are obviously talented (they probably used to be a metal band), but they just don't know how not to suck. Whether they're playing crappy ska or PENNYWISE influenced radio-friendly hardcore, they just can't get it right. Oh boy. (JER)

(Vile Beat / PO Box 42462 / Washington, CD 20015)

DAMAD
"burningcold" CD



This is DAMAD's sophomore full-length offering. This release is complex and varied, at times sounding like straight up BLACK SABBATH at other times crustcore and then at other times, death metal. Singer Victoria's voice is amazing in its range. It's so evil and wicked sounding in its strength that I really can't adequately describe it, except to say there aren't a lot of people on this planet that can match it. This is what I would imagine the soundtrack to hell would sound like. This release is totally complete with a torrential outpouring from the band, an excellent recording engineered by Billy Anderson, and cover art by none other than the infamous Pushead. (AD)

(Prank / P.O. Box 410892 / San Francisco, CA 94141-0892)

DANZIG
"Satan's Child" CD

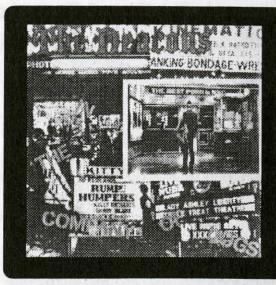


Glenn Danzig is one of life's little mysteries. How can somebody so cool, who put out so much great music, be this cheesy ,pumping out such utter crap? I loved the MISFITS, I loved SAMHAIN, and I even liked the first Danzig album a lot (a lot more than most of my friends at the time). This record is just about as unlistenable as modern metal such as WHITE ZOMBIE and KORN, but not even as catchy as either of those bands can be. I'm afraid we have lost Danzig for good this time. I can't imagine there is any coming back after the musical crimes committed here. (JC)

(Evil Live / No Address)

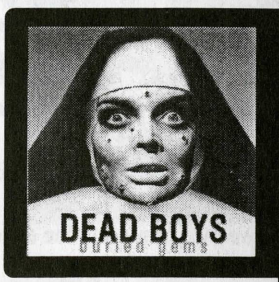
DEACONS
"In The Company Of Dogs" LP

I don't exactly get this record...musically, it's simply not my thing. Lyrically, it's a bit too pretentious for my tastes. Anyhow, this is pretty thin sounding, and kinda, well, just unexciting. There might be something here, that I am just missing, but somehow, I doubt it. The song sheet says: "If the . words don't move you....get some fucking life experience!"...ok, buddy, I'm there...show me the way. (JAW)



(Brooklyn Records / 1005 Foster Ave. / Brooklyn NY11230)

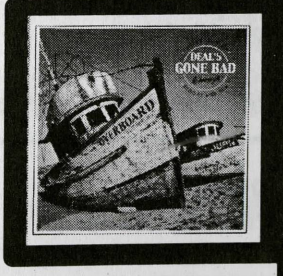
DEAD BOYS
"Buried Gems" 7"



Always great when some crusty, old punk legend (in this case, Jimmy Zero) unearths some long forgotten masters that were never released. Both tracks on this are awesome. Side A is from 1978, a rippin' take on the ADAM FAITH classic "It's All Right" , sans Cheetah Chrome (he was off somewhere else after a fight with the band). Side B is from 1980 and was pretty much one of the last songs that the DEAD BOYS ever recorded. Slated as a title track for a Susan Sarandon film. *War Zone*, Although written by Jimmy Zero, this song sounds very akin to the post-Dead Boys power pop that STIV BATORS would go on to do for Bomp. All in all a great slab. The first 500 are even on colored vinyl. (JC)

(Coldfront / PO Box 8345 / Berkeley,CA 94707)

DEAL'S GONE BAD
"Overboard" CD



Decent white-boy Ska that does pretty well at capturing the skanking, light-hearted vibe of Jamaican and British Ska of the mid sixties. The rhythm section is as tight as my ass, and the horns are soulful and not at all formulaic. It

SHITLIST

sounds like these fellows are into classic Ska and Reggae, and they wear their influences so well, they make the greater Chicago-land area seem balmy.(SB)

(Jump Up Records / P.O Box 13189 / Chicago, IL 60613)

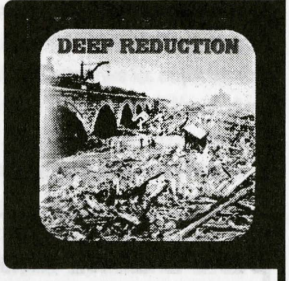
DEE RANGERS
"I Just Wanna Rock n Roll" 7" EP



These wops rock pretty hard. 4 song EP of loud, garage, crunchy rock 'n' roll in the vein of early HEAD-COATS and other CHILDISH stuff. My fave on this 7" is "I Just Wanna Rock 'n' Roll". The guitars are cranked way loud — fuzzy and buzzy the way they should be! Their version of JERRY LEE'S "TEENAGE LETTER" is called "DERANGED LETTER". You gotta love that. Leave it to the dagos to rock ya a little! (TL)

(Rockin Bones / c/o Gualitero Pagani, Via Cuneo 2 / 43100 Parma Italy)

DEEP REDUCTION
"Self Titled " CD



RADIO BIRDMAN'S Deniz Tek's band. Waymellow moody poppy rock 'n' roll. "Safety" is my fave on this cd, cuz it's got good guitar hooks and singsongy back up vocals. Their version of the VIBRATORS' "Whips and Furs" is pretty rockin' also. All in all, it's okay It doesn't blow me away, but it's tolerable. (TL)

(Get Hip Po Box 666 Canonsburg , PA 15317)

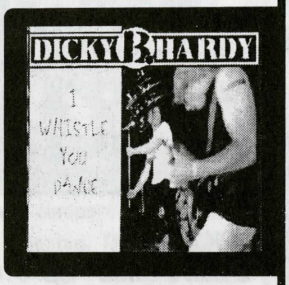
DIALTONES
"See Her Tonite" 7"

THE DIALTONES play great DEVIL DOGS-esque rock-n-roll. Very energetic, kinda sloppy action here. This is a refreshing change from most of the crap bands out there claiming to play rock-n-roll. Anyhow, haven't heard a full length yet, but I'm anxious to hear more. If you are into TEENGENERATE, and of course, one of the best bands that ever existed, THE DEVIL DOGS, then you will LOVE this. (JAW)



(Radio Blast Recordings / POB 160308 / 40566 Dusseldorf Germany)

DICKY B HARDY
"I Whistle You Dance" CD



I bet you're probably thinking, with such a stupid fuckin' moniker, followed by a stupid title, "Hey, these fuckers are stupid". Yeah. That's what I thought. At First. Then I realized, these guys are from Ljubljana, Slovenia. For those of you who suck at geography, that's part of the former Yugoslavia. It stands to reason, at this point, they know a little something-something about punk rock. You know what??...They do. This shit rocks, I hate to admit it, it's fairly sexist, it's not great lyrically...it would be better if they sang in their own language — it always is... but they can play, the way we all like it, too. (SB)

(Taang! / 706 Pismo Ct. / San Diego, CA 92109)

DIE NAKSE BANANEN
"Bummer 99" CD



Cute buncha lads from the Netherlands who don't sound as tough as they'd probably like to, but they went ahead and made a pretty good record anyway. It's like a more light-hearted old-school brand of mid-to-fast tempo punk that has enough ideas and changes to keep things interesting. This is genuine punk rock with a sense of humor, and that lovable youthful fury that hates cops, lives in squats and of course, drinks beer. This is a blast from the good old punk rock past and will be a lot of kids favorite record. (SB)

(Tocado Records (No legible address)

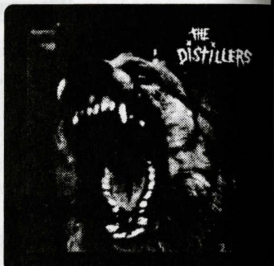
DIRTY POLITICIANS
"New Age" 7" EP



The cover sleeve is a xeroxed piece of shit that you can barely read-very nice. What's better, is that this record is actually quite good. The first side has two great catchy, mid-tempo rockers, which make this record worth picking up. Side B is alright, but not great. Still worth checking out. (JAW)

(Murder & Mayhem Records / 1500 Miriam St / Garner NC 27529)

DISTILLERS
"Oh Serena" CD



Oh yes, children. Fuck yes. One night, not long ago, I was at the Ruby Room when a song came on. A song good enough to go back and ask the DJ what it was. The song? The Distillers' "LA Girl". A few days later, I caught them live. And they *smoked*. While I was watching them, I was like, "Wow, the singer's got a bigger 'Hawk than Tim Armstrong's!" Turns out, she's his wife. But don't think that this record is merely a result of husbandly nepotism — it fucking *smokes*. Think early, pre-ska RANCID flogged by LOLI AND THE CHONES and you're on the right track. Trashy, hooky and tight, I can see these girls and a guy making a great name for themselves among fans of streetpunk, punk 'n' roll and fuck, just people who dig great punk rock in general. An auspicious debut. I recommend owning it. (DGJ)

(Hellcat)

REVIEWS

DISTRACTORS
"Shake It Up" 7"



I don't think that these guys are going to beat this week's champs on Star Search, but I bet they could kick the shit out of them. Their studio songs sound like live DEAD KENEDYS tracks with female vocals dubbed in. Trashy punk shit, fast and dirty. 6 songs. (BAM)

(Big Neck / PO Box 8144 / Reston, VA 20195)

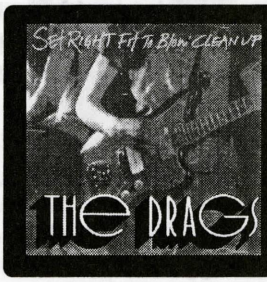
DONOVAN'S BRAIN
"Eclipse And Debris" CD



Dreamy psychedelica that sounds like something early PINK FLOYD could have done. Layers of guitars melodicize, hypothesize and harmonize making pretty colors swirl out of my boom box and into my saturated brain. Sorry, all the 60's crap I deal with working on Haight Street carries me away sometimes. This is awesome, heady prog rock that wants to be British, but I think is actually from Montana, not sure though. It's a little DONOVAN, a bit of BEVIS FROND, and probably, a lot of drugs. (SB)

(Get Hip / PO Box 666 / Canonsburg, Pa. 15317)

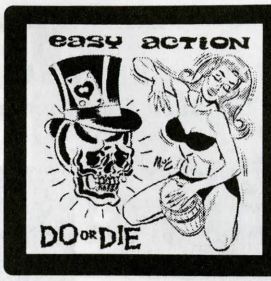
DRAGS
"Set Right To Blow Clean Up" CD



Man, the DRAGS have kinda a whole new thing goin' on! Wow! I didn't expect this. It's still got the awesome duo of C.J. and Lorca, but it's kinda experimental sounding in a PUSSY GALORE sorta way. "Kickfighter" is a pretty good original tune. I actually dug their version of ZEPPELIN's "Communication Breakdown " — just 'cuz that's the awesomest ZEPPELIN song ever. Interesting. Worth a whirl . (TL)

(Estrus Records / PO Box 2125 / Bellingham , WA 98227 USA)

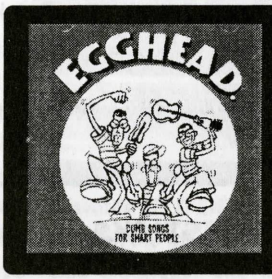
EASY ACTION
"Do Or Die / You And Me" 7"



Pretty fast 7"er, that gets in, makes its fucking point, and gets out. The point is, that this is a swirling maelstrom of hateful, rock n' fucking rage that wants to rip your fucking head off. Who cares what the songs are about? Fuck yeah. Fuck. (SB)

(Reptillian Records / 403 S. Broadway / Baltimore MD 21231)

EGGHEAD
"Dumb Songs For Smart People" CD

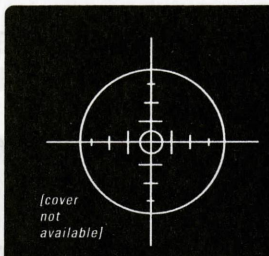


Another fine dorky pop-punk gem from Mutant Pop. Actually, this is a compilation of all EGGHEAD's '94 to '97 vinyl releases, plus four previously unreleased tracks. EGGHEAD was a good band that stood out with quirky, off the beaten path song content. Tracks like "Not Everything That Smells Good, Tastes Good" — which ends with the brilliant line, "Just be careful what you put in your mouth."- and "Breakaway Luge"- a song about tobboganing ,- keep your attention and are far more entertaining than a lot of their similarly-chorded contemporaries. (JC)

(Mutant Pop / 5010 NW Shasta Avenue / Covallis, OR 97330)

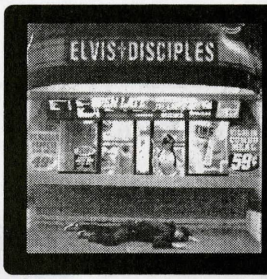
ELEMENT 101
"Future Plans Undecided" CD

This is a very cool record. Imagine Alison from DISCOUNT fronting a slightly less-manic ALL, and you begin to get the idea. Tight, downstroked guitars (with cool MAIDEN-style harmonies thrown in), a solid rhythm section, and budget Blasting-Room style production all add up to make this a tasty little morsel — and not just to those who stringently adhere to the ALL-O-GISTICS. Definitely one of the better pop-punk bands I've heard this year. (DGJ)



(Tooth and Nail/No Address)

ELVIS DISCIPLES
"Punk Rock Pills" CD



A fairly decent 5 tracks of uptempo sing-a-long pop-punk. Fairly decent is a far cry from fairly awesome, or even fairly good. I think I am being fair though. (RK)

(Suburbia Records / PO Box 1666 Rosemead / CA, 91770)

ENDGAME
"Here is Where Tomorrow Starts" CD



Thick and chunky, just like Pace Thick 'N' Chunky Salsa, only take out the tomato paste, onions and cilantro — in fact, remove every facet of salsa-hood except for the heat, thickness and chunkiness and add in cool vocals reminiscent of a less-quirky, teenage Tom Barnes (of ENGINE 88), toss in a solid rhythm section, and a guitarist who took some tone lessons from HELMET's Page Hamilton, chuck it in the emo-blender and hit "chop". There's a distinct punk-nouveau influence there, but these guys are quite a bit better than your run-of-the-mill neighborhood NOFX clone. I'm anxious to hear what they do next. (DGJ)

(SpectraSonicSound / PO BOX 80067 / Ottawa, ON, Canada K1S 5N6)

SHITLIST

ENDLESS STRUGGLE
"Leathers, Studs And Punks" 7" EP



Solid, snotty, spiky punk. Buzzsaw guitars and galloping drums. Fans of groups like the CASUALTIES and VIOLENT SOCIETY would probably appreciate this one. (JC)

(CHARGED / P.O. BOX 157 / HIGH BRIDGE, NJ 08829)

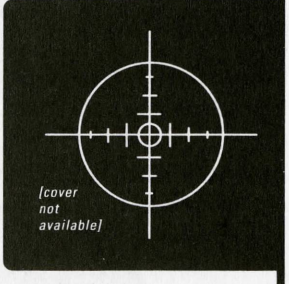
ESL / SHAMUS O' NEIL
Split CD



Two way-sloppy bands that sound really young and energetic. They both sound like any number of local bands playing in rural areas at this very minute, and they both sound very young. They also sound like maybe they recorded this record before they should've, but you can't really blame 'em for being enthusiastic. (JER)

(GEYKIDO COMET / PO BOX 3743 / LAGUNA HILLS, CA 92654)

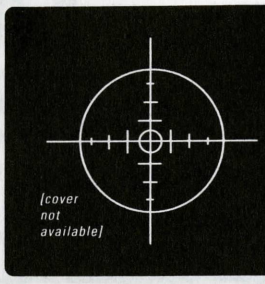
EXPLOSION
CDEP



First of all, all you kids who are into Jade Tree because of PEDRO THE LION, JETS TO BRAZIL and the PROMISE RING, stop reading right here. Actually, most of the people who worship those bands probably don't read this magazine anyway. Those of you who read this mag because you're fans of trashed-out, punked-out rock and fucking roll, keep reading. The EXPLOSION fucking rule. This Boston group straight up kick out the jams on this CDEP, which has been in heavy rotation on my stereo for the past month or so. Think CLASH. Think SLF. Think MISFITS. Think PISTOLS. Think everything you loved about early punk rock. Don't just think about buying this CD. Do yourself a favor and go out and get it. (DGJ)

(JADE TREE / 2310 KENNWYNN RD. / WILMINGTON, DE 19810)

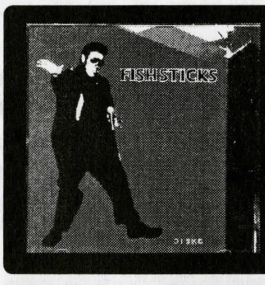
FABULOUS WAILERS
"Unissued 1958 Demos" 7" EP



Sometimes, with "unreleased demo" type stuff, you get great gems that exemplify the best work of an artist. Sometimes, you get sparse, unfinished work that wasn't released for good reason. I realize it's exciting to unearth stuff by such a classic group like the WAILERS, but only the last song, "High Wall", a super cool, spooky little instrumental, was worth the bother. I don't know if that merits a full 7". (JC)

(NORTON RECORDS / P.O. BOX 646 COOPER STATION / NEW YORK, NY 10276)

FISHSTICKS
"Disko" CD



31 short, sharp, fuzzed out blasts of thrash, taken from various compilations and split records recorded from 1995-99. These guys are doing their best to keep the angry short attention span of the ANGRY SAMOANS alive and kicking. Or perhaps a less gifted WHITE FLAG. (RK)

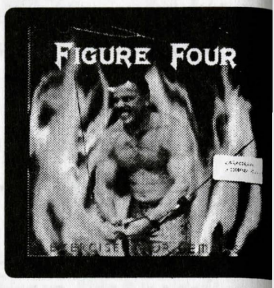
(THEOLOGIAN RECORDS / PO BOX 1070 / HERMOSA BEACH, CA 90254)

5¢ DEPOSIT
"Your Mother Likes Us When We're Drunk" CD

Muscular renditions of the pop-punk genre patented by the likes of SCREECHING WEASEL. All the essential ingredients are here — tunes, vocal harmonies, and solid production. But 24 tracks turns it into a bit of an ordeal by the end. Remember kids, SCREECHING WEASEL never recorded an album over 35 minutes long. (RK)

(VU DU RECORDS / PO BOX 158 / CENTEREACH, NY 11720)

FIGURE FOUR
"Exercise Your Demons" CD



I would guess this is a bunch of punk rockers reliving, and faithfully recreating, their teenage rock years. Some hilarious songs — 'Wings Of Steel", "Crotch Rocket" et al — with a classic 80s rock soundtrack. Think JUDAS PRIEST, DOKKEN, QUIET RIOT, spandex, SCORPIONS, power ballads, and as the sticker on the front unabashedly proclaims — "wikkid rawk!" (RK)

(WIKKIDRAWK@HOTMAIL.COM)

FLIM FLAM MAN
"Nic Fit" CD



Despite their unfortunate choice of name, these guys are snotty, raunchy motherfuckers, with rotten attitudes, so the record really works. Kinda reminds me of RICHARD HELL AND THE VOIDOIDS when they were just starting out. The music is frenzied, atonal and in your face, but not in the typical, mindless way. They don't pummel you with an onslaught of fast guitars, it's more of a artful sicko clown show that hates you to death. Too bad the CD is so short. (SB)

(PORNO JAZZ RECORDS / PO BOX 8735 / MPLS, MN 55408)

FLOGGING MOLLY
"Swagger" CD

I saw these guys a year ago or so, checking them out mainly because I heard that ex-skateboard god Matt Hensley was playing, of all things,

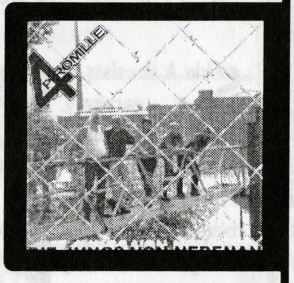
accordion for FM. I believe that it was their first Bay Area appearance, and nobody had ever heard of them, yet by the second song, the whole club was dancing. These guys pull off a brilliant version of early POGUES, complete with accordions, banjos, mandolin, fiddles, tin whistle, and authentic Irish accent. These guys rock in a way that nobody else is now, and deserve all the press and hype that they have been receiving. Buy this record, attend the shows, rock out! (BAM)



(Side 1 /6201 Sunset Blvd. Suite 211 /Hollywood, CA 90028)

4 PROMILLE
"Die Jungs Von Nebenan" 7"

Three anthemic Oi! classics to drink beer to, and an amazing version of the UNDERTONES "Teenage Kicks". Although the three originals are sung in German, the melodic leads in the guitar and vocals are enough to keep your attention. Besides, "Whooah-ooh-ooh" is universal, and it's spoken a lot on this 7". (BAM)



(Knock-Out /Postfach 100716 /46527 Dinslanke Germany)

4 PROMILLE
"Im Nachsten Leben" LP

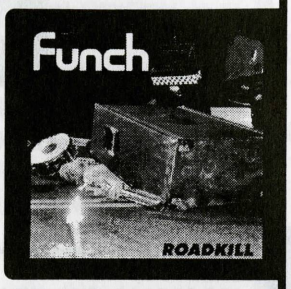
I REALLY like the first side of this record; really great, catchy, melodic street rock-n-roll. These guys, and gal, are from Germany, so, again most songs are in German, but some are in English. Overall, it seems that mostly what they are singing about, is non-political (self-admitted), and more about working class pride and unity . Some really great songs are the really anthemic ("Oiropa") and the nice REZILLOS-esque pop song, ("Let Your Heart Dance") . For the most part, this record is pretty much all over the place style-wise, however, 4 PROMILLE still seem to have their own thing happening. Very recommended . (JAW)



(Knockout Records /Postfach 100716 /46527 Dinslaken /Germany)

FUNCH
"Roadkill" CD

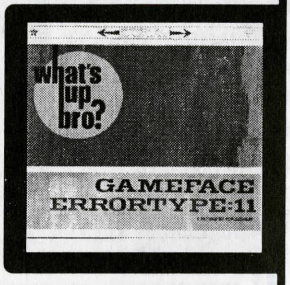
The music manages to rock every now and then, but this is just way too cock rock for my tastes. (JER)



(Rockatron /No Address)

GAMEFACE / ERRORTYPE:11
"What's Up Bro?" Split CD

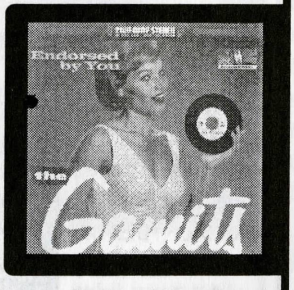
Three driving indie-rock tunes each, separated by about 10 minutes of nonsensical drunken bro talk. GAMEFACE cover my favorite TOM PETTY song and ERRORTYPE:11 cover my favorite SPLIT ENZ song. So that made me happy. I think the winning track overall was E.T.11's "Clan Macgregor and the Drunk Boys". (JC)



(Revelation /P.O. Box 5232 Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232)

GAMITS
"Endorsed By You" CD

12 tracks of eminently pleasant GREEN DAY-esque pop punk. Nothing spectacular, but it reaches all the right spots. More than happy to endorse this one, which says a lot in a very tired and overplayed genre. (RK)



(Suburban Home /PO Box 40757 /Denver, CO 80204)

GERIATRIX
"Switch Blade" 7"

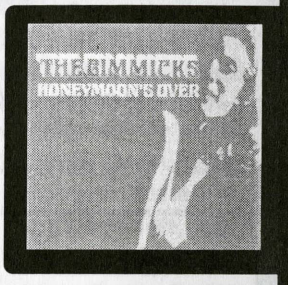
Snotty as hell, trashy as hell, and 100% great! Any fan of the RIP OFFS, LOLI AND THE CHONES, etc... would love this 7". 3 songs, each better than the last. Give me more! (BAM)



(Tom Perkins /Box 970936 /Ypsilanti, MI 48197)

GIMMICKS
"Honeymoon's Over" CD

A real Estrus band, staggering with the sickness of the STOOGES and groping through the druggy haze of the psychedelic sixties puts on their nut-busting hip huggers and rocks the fuck out. Greasy guitars slip through feedback slicks that could mire a woolly mammoth, while the singer growls and wails like he's just coming on, or can't stand the come down. The ultimate soundtrack for a sleazy all-nighter cruising the strip joints on the bad side of the city. (SB)



(Estrus /P.O. Box 2125 /Bellingham,WA 98227)

GOLDEN SHOWERS
Self titled CD

This band has a genius name. I actually met the singer for this band at the purple onion (RI.P.). He gave me a 7" and some other GOLDEN SHOWERS junk. So I'm hip to these dudes. If you like BILLY CHILDISH-style rock 'n' roll, JOHN SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION, and the CRAMPS then you'll dig this . You can tell



SHITLIST

the singer is a Lux Interior worshipper, what with his high heels and fetish wear. Yowza — looks like he has quite a package. Oh yeah — they're from Berlin. Leave it to the Krauts to do something wacko and weird. (TL)

(Reptilian Records /403 S. Broadway /Baltimore, MD 21231)

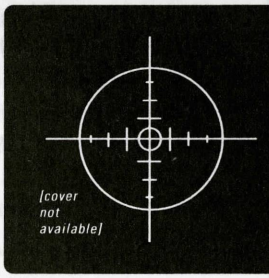
GRIEF
"...And Man Will Become The Hunted" CD



GRIEF's offering is that of deliberately unhurried, distressing, and agonizing music with two sets of dire sounding vocals howling lyrics that tell of pain, suffering, and doubt. The CD jacket contains excellent hand-drawn artwork by one of the band members. Fans of DYSTOPIA take note. (AD)

(Pessimiser /P.O. Box 1070 /Hermosa Beach, CA 90254)

GUYANA PUNCH LINE
"Maximum Smashism" LP



This band has ex-members of IN/Humanity and ANTISCHISM in it, but the amalgam sound is one all their own. Crazy schizophrenic guitar noise that goes from upbeat melodic sounds to a furious thrash attack and back again are the signature sound here overlaid with acerbic, nasty vocals. This was recorded at the one and only Jam Room in South Carolina, which makes for a fat, thick sound. This record comes with a lyric booklet that is quite amusing to read and look at. I love when bands take the time to create something a little extra to go in their packaging. The lyrics are dark and the person who wrote them seems even darker. I like this record a lot. Another goodie from Prank! (AD)

(Prank /P.O. Box 410892 /San Francisco, CA 94141-0892)

GUITAR WOLF
"Jet Generation" CD



Holy shit, this record is good! Possibly the best GUITAR WOLF has put out. Sonic garage rock that is pretty much unequaled in today's scene. Sure, there are plenty of great bands out there, but The Wolf is in a league of its own. Brilliant. (JC)

(Matador /625 Broadway /NY NY 10012)

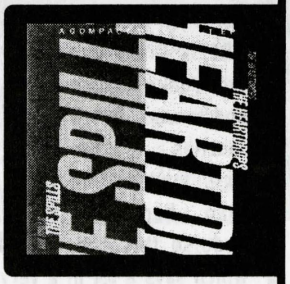
HAMMIL ON TRIAL
"Choochtown" CD



This fucking guy is so scary lookin', I'm glad I didn't hate this one. HAMILL is all Brooklyn, attitude, accent n' all. The songs are a combination of JIM CARROLL-type poetry and sickening clever-art punk ditties, circa the New York '79 scene. What a great writer, able to channel all his fury and feelings into a package that any artist would want to sign their name to. I suppose this one isn't all about the music...that, while cool, is obviously secondary to the lyrics. This record is funny, dirty, tough, arty, and, oh, yeah...totally brilliant. (SB)

(Such-a-punch /PO box 2452 /Middletown NY 10940)

HEARTDROPS / SPILLS
Split CDEP



THE HEARTDROPS had a great record awhile back on Melted, and this EP offers three more of their SOCIAL DISTORTION flavored pop punk hits. THE SPLILLS are along the same lines with a little more rock n' roll thrown in. Recommendable. (JER)

(Stiff Pole /PO Box 20721 /St. Petersburg, FL 33742)

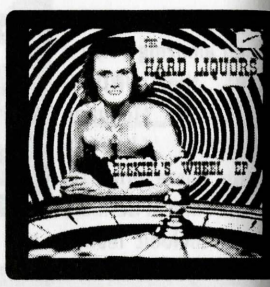
HANGNAIL
"Friendly Advice" CD



Bro, the word is out: "putting God on hold, leaves you cold." Not only do these Seattle pop-punkers have the almighty one behind them, but they are poets too. Unfortunately, all their creative talents seem to have been sucked up into the psalms, leaving us with dry, formulaic, decidedly uninspired melodic hardcore reruns. At least the old mass choirs of old actually had a bit of oomph, y'know, flung their praises to the skies with a bit of gusto etc etc. (RK)

(BEC Recordings /one to avoid, obviously)

HARD LIQUORS
"Ezekiel's Wheel" 7"EP



Side A consists of very garage-y, chaotic rock-n-roll a la 9 POUND HAMMER, except less rocked out, and more twangy and tinny sounding. This prolly woulda excited me a few years ago, but overall, this doesn't do shit for me anymore. However, the second side, first song, "Autoerotic" is pretty cool, very raw, chaotic, and riffy. "Superstar" is also pretty cool with its completely crazy female (?) sounding vocals. (JAW)

(Transparent Records /6759 Transparent Drive /Clarkston, MI 48346)

HIGH SCHOOL ROCKERS
"Danger" 7"



Vol 1 in a series called "Primitive Twin Twist Teen-Trash Series". That title pretty much does my review for me. Sped up, cranked SUPERCHARGER. 4 songs, great shit, fetch! (BAM)

(Alien Snatch (this is on a label called "Alien Snatch", it's got to be good!!) /Moerikeweg 1 /74199 Untergruppenbach Germany)

REVIEWS

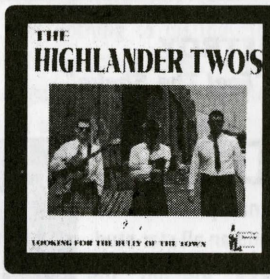
HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS
"Passing Notes" CD



Potentially this looked really promising to me, with a great band name like "THE HIGHSCHOOL SWEETHEARTS", I was hoping it would've been better. The band sounds really great with super-loud buzzy guitars a la RAMONES, but to me the frontwoman sounds like a lounge singer. Too bad, the songs are pretty good with good hooks and catchy lyrics. I can't get passed the" too good" singing lesson type vocals. I wish she was more raunchy and raw like JOAN JETT or something — then they would kick ass. You may dig this if you're into THE PRISSTEENS, THE DONNAS, and early BLONDIE. I dunno — check it out fer yerselves.(TL)

(Get Hip /PO Box 666 /Canonsburg , PA 15317)

HIGHLANDER TWO'S
"Lookin For the Bully of the Town" 7"EP

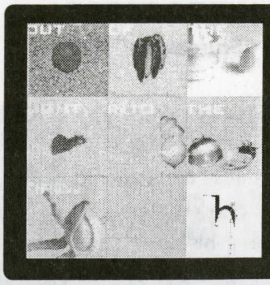


This is by far the best record I've heard this year so far.WOW! How can Mike Lucas be so amazing? HIGHLANDER TWO'S have been playing around the Bay Area for a few years now and they just keep blowing me away every time. This 4 song EP captures the sheer magic of their genius. "You Ain't Talkin To Me", "Dan Kelly's Courtin" , "Baltimore Fine" and "Bully Of The Town" are complete masterpieces. You gotta check 'em out — they kick major booty!!! An A++++++ (TL)

(Goodbye Boozy /Via Villa Pompetti, 147 64020 S. Nicolo /Teramo, Italy)

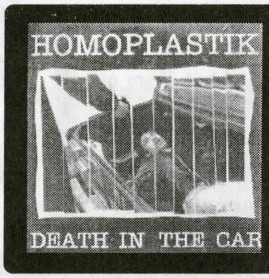
HITCH
"Out of the Light, Into the Fire..." CD

On the back of this disc it says "Hitch supports the Rock 'n' Roll lifestyle, silly dancing, and Patricia Arquette." I can back all three of those things, as well — especially seeing how the lovely Patricia is single again... Anyway, musically, these Belgians fall somewhere between REFUSED and TOOL, with rumbly and thumpy rhythms, jarring changes, sometimes tense-yet-mellow, sometimes yelpy vocals. In fact, I think "tense" would be the operative word for this entire record. If you're a fan of the more metal side of experimental hardcore, you could definitely do worse than this record. Bonus points for the rad package design. These guys sound like they'd be fun to hang out with. (DGJ)



(FBWL 23 Rue des Poilus F59150 /Watrelos, Belgium)

HOMOPLASTIK
"Death In The Car" 7" EP



Again...leave it to the Italianos! This 7" is pretty fuckin' awesome. Straightforward 70's-style punk rock 'n' roll, with killer snotty vocals. Great songs like "Hitler Jugend" and "I Wanna Die". Also a cover of "Hallo From Berlin" by the DEFNICS. Worth a listen. (TL)

(Hate Records /Circ.ne Gianicolense 112, 00152 /Roma Italy)

HORACE PINKER
"Copper Regret" CDEP



Okay — first things first, I'll admit that the cover of this CD went through my hard drive to add the barcode and Coldfront logo, but this EP deserves straight-up props. I mean, I've liked the stuff I've heard from this band before, but it never really grabbed me like this. Maybe it has to do with the addition of former JAWBREAKER thunderbroomer Chris Bauermeister on bass, maybe it's the intricate-yet-poppy, Mass-produced guitar interplay. Maybe it's the great lyrics. I don't know. All I know is, I definitely can't wait to hear what they do next. Soundwise, it sort of falls between SAVES THE DAY's first and second albums, though with a bit more of a mature edge. Fans of Bauermeister's old band most likely won't be let down. (DGJ)

(Coldfront /PO Box 8345 /Berkeley, CA 94707)

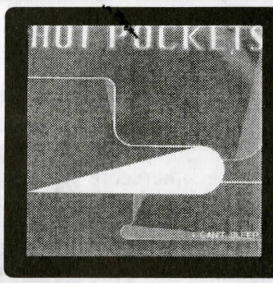
HORRIBLES
"You Should Hate Them" CD



We've got some serious MISFITS worship going on here...they pretty much ape the whole thing, music, look, graphics 'n' all. You can't really blame them , I guess, I mean the Misfits were great, it's just that, when I'm in the mood for that particular brand of horror-punk, I'll play "Walk Among Us" before I ever reach for this. At least they don't try to hide the fact that Danzig is their hero. The inner photos show band members wearing Misfits tees etc. It's just sad, kinda...I mean, It's been done...really well, once before. (S.B)

(29-300 River Ave. Winnipeg, Manitoba R3L-OB9, Canada)

HOT POCKETS
"I Can't Sleep" 7"

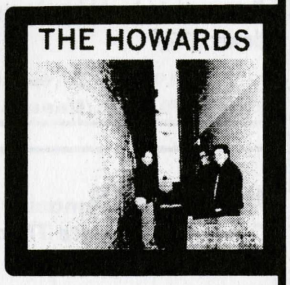


While this 7" has 3 songs on it, only the A side title track carries the punch that dirty distorted rock and roll like this should. I would like to hear more from this outfit, but a 7" with one keeper on it isn't the best answer. (BAM)

(Hate /Circ.ne Gianicolense 112 /00152 Roma Italy)

SHITLIST

HOWARDS
"Switchblade Rock N' Roll" CD



Cool, simplistic, energetic RAMONES-inspired pop punk with moxie (in case you're wondering, moxie is just like gumption, but without common sense). This looks like a demo, so I expect good things from these cats in the future. (JER)

(136 Woodland Dr / Hampden, MA 01036)

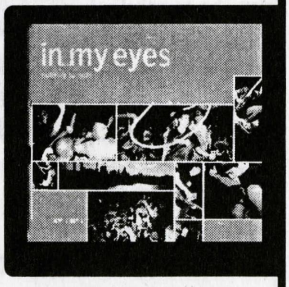
IGNORANCE PARK
"Bad Luck...Or The Plan" LP



This band is full on crash-n-burn rock-n-roll from — where else — Austin, Texas. IGNORANCE PARK writes really interesting songs-something hard to come by these days. Further, they have this sort of pop, yet really raw edge to 'em. Fucking great! These guys are awesome live, too! GET THIS! (JAW)

(Morteville Records / POB 4263 / Austin / TX 78765)

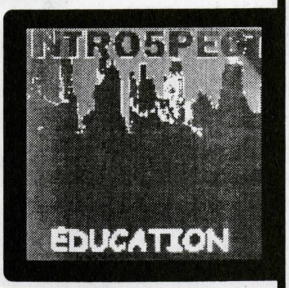
IN MY EYES
"Nothing To Hide" CD



Imagine a faster, more hardcore version of AVAIL, with a hint of metal thrown in for good measure. Sounds pretty cool, huh? If you're into HC that moves right along without all the quirkiness, and you don't mind a bunch of fists with X's on them being shoved in your face, then check this out. (BAM)

(Revelation / PO Box 5232 / Huntington Beach, CA 92615)

INTROSPECT
"Education" EP



I can't stand the singer's voice in this band. He holds notes way too long and his voice goes out and it sounds silly. I wish this came with a lyric sheet because I'm curious as to what he's whining about. The music is definitely different, too, with some parts reminiscent of 80's new wave and quirky drums. I'm trying to be nice, but this record just really bites. (AD)

(G.C. Records / P.O. Box 3743 / Laguna Hills, CA 92654)

JABBERWOCKY
"S / T" LP



The third album by this Dutch band has them out of the garage and into what sounds like a really plush studio. Not a lot of edge to this one, just sensible pop ditties with cute, yeah, downright darling backing vocals and melodic strains. What I can't figure out, is where their accents went...they sing in near perfect English. This would be a good listen on a road trip. Not bad. (SB)

(Ox Records PO Box 14 34 45 . D-45264 Essen Germany)

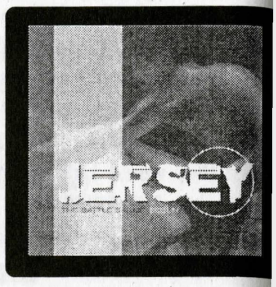
JAG OFFS / FOUR LETTER WORD
Split CD



I was wondering why I had grabbed this for review, as I tend to hate reviewing split CD's. I was quickly reminded about halfway through the first verse on the first JAG OFFS song. These guys fucking rule. Stuck somewhere between LOLI AND THE CHONES, the early QUEERS stuff, and early FYP, the JAG OFFS just rock the fuck out. Alternating male and female vocals over strait forward trash rock for the ages. FOUR LETTER WORD had some cool stuff here and there, but it was all too buried in samples, forced humor, and stupid lyrics. The JAG OFFS alone make this worth picking up, so get it and form your own opinion about FOUR LETTER WORD. (BAM)

(Recess / PO Box 1112 / Torrance, CA 90505)

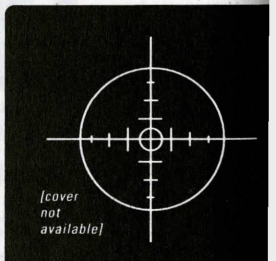
JERSEY
"The Battle's Just Begun" CD



This is cool. Reminds me of early RANCID, musically, vocally, and lyrically, but with a nice dose of KID DYNAMITE's breakdown aggression and feel. Lots of attack, with plenty of "woah-ooo-oohs". Great songs, with really cool female vocals popping up here and there. I would almost think that any fan of punk rock would enjoy this CD, which is a bold statement. You let me know if I'm wrong. (BAM)

(Fueled By Ramen / PO Box 12563 / G-Ville, FL 32604)

JETBOY
"Feel The Shake"



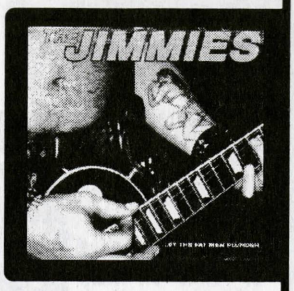
Despite their penchant for snazzy 80's threads and an all star-studded alumni, the best song on this record goes sumthin' like this: "Feel the Shake / Feel the Earth Shake. " 'Just thought it needed to be said...Nostalgia Kills. (DJM)

(MCA)

JIMMIES
"Win Some Lose Most" CD EP

You can say a lot of things about Ben Weasel, but one thing is for certain; he knows a good punk band when he hears one. The JIMMIES have been around for over a decade and have now (finally) found a label that should do real well for them. This is a self-made CDEP that is kind of a

prequel to the new record coming out on Panic Button later on this year. Six songs packed with big chunky hooks and fine melodies. I'm sure the full length will be great. This has tracks that are exclusive, so you probably want to pick this up also. (JC)



(JIMMIES / P.O. Box 68153 / PORTLAND, OR 97268)

JOHN BROWN BATTERY / HE WHO CORRUPTS

"Maps & Continents" CD

I confess to being totally confused by this. The music is actually pretty decent driving, throaty emo hardcore in the vein of HOT WATER MUSIC. The confusion lies in the packaging. As far as I can tell, there are two bands. JOHN BROWN and the CORRUPTING chaps. That is, as far as I can tell. There are two different addresses, but nothing to distinguish either band — either via the songs listed, or the music. Mebbe I'm just going senile. But I do like the noise they (singular or plural) make. (RK)

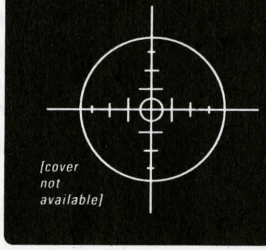


(HE WHO CORRUPTS / 196 FAIRFIELD / ELMHURST, IL 60126 — ONE OF MANY DIFFERENT ADDRESSES ON THIS...)

JOHN Q PUBLIC / THE FALSIES

"Split CD 2000" CD

JQP plays melodic hardcore with sloppy vocals, sort of like the LARRRY BRRRDS singing for PROPAGANDHI. They do a good job, and their four songs fly by leaving you ready for more. THE FALSIES are a little more emo, and a lot less enjoyable. (JER)



(MIDDLE MAN / PO Box 4606 / LAFAYETTE, IN / 47903)

KIDNAP

"'79-'85" CD

Major props to Upstart Productions for getting all these tracks together and putting it out on one CD. After a 7", an LP, and countless comp tracks, including Dr. Bale's "Welcome To 1984", KIDNAP can now be appreciated on one little 5" reflective disc. From '77 style pogo punk to alcohol influenced Oi!, KIDNAP show why they were a well-respected band from a very influential and imitated period. Pick this up. (BAM)

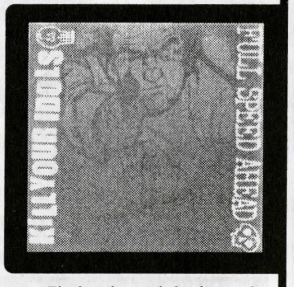


(UPSTART / 65 A MADISON AVE #254 / DUMONT, NJ 07628)

KILL YOUR IDOLS / FULL SPEED AHEAD

split EP

I really enjoyed seeing KILL YOUR IDOLS when they played out here a few months back. The first song on their side totally rocks! It's about hypocrisy in the scene and is chock full of powerful sing along parts. Their other original tune is just as awesome. Their music is tuneful, fast punk. FULL SPEED AHEAD has a guitar-driven sound that is fast and melodic, yet still pissed and in no way wimpy. Reminds me quite a bit of YOUTH OF TODAY. Their side of the record was over way too quick. Each band does two original songs and one cover with FULL SPEED AHEAD tackling a BIG BOYS song and KILL YOUR IDOLS covering SLAPSHOT. (AD)



(HELL BENT RECORDS / P.O. Box 1529 / PT. PLEASANT BEACH, NJ 08742)

KILLSWITCH

"Wreck" 7" EP

A good Bay Area band that broke up before they could really fulfill their potential. Rock solid punk with powerful female vocals. Featured ex-members of GOODFELLAS and WORKIN' STIFFS. (JC)

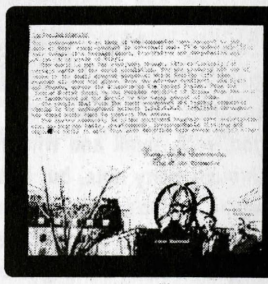


(FIRMAMENT / Box 420484 / SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94142)

KING OF THE COMMANDOS

"Instro Solidarity" 7" EP

I didn't know that one could surf in Sweden, but apparently, this sort of thing goes on. The band has certainly captured the vibe anyway. This is really competently played instrumental surf style stuff with politcalish voiceovers. Despite the rather silly credo that proclaims itself across the front cover of this 7"er, it's a pretty good single. It's on super thick vinyl, and I do like 'em thick. (SB)



(URU RECORDS / BORGAREGATAN 10, S-611 30 / NYKØPING, SWEDEN.)

KINGS VERSES

"Lights" LP

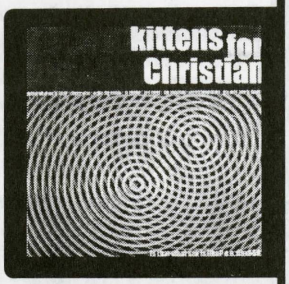
An entire LP from an eye-opening 60's group from Fresno, one whose existence was previously unknown to me. I'm not sure how I managed to overlook them, because this release is full of catchy garage songs featuring punky screams, sometimes fuzzy folk rock guitars, eerie organ frills, and occasional haunting background vocals. The liner note comparisons to LOVE are not inapt, although KINGS VERSES have a more countrified feel at times and don't sound at all stale or derivative. Whether churning out mid-tempo rockers (like "Lights", "Ballad of Lad Polo", "A Million Faces") or moody ballads (like "She Belonged to Me" and "When You Loved Her"), the band generally hits the mark. (JB)



(BEAT ROCKET / PO Box 85 / COXSACKIE, NY 12051)

SHITLIST

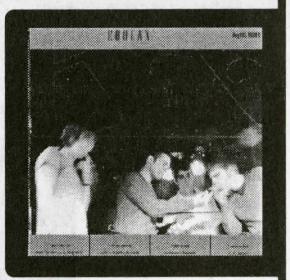
KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN
"Is That What Sex Is Like?" CD



Moody instrumentals build into sparse, strangulated vocals that rip open the atmosphere the music was hard at work creating. These guys suffer for their creativity...and it hurts, too. On the dark side of pop, rock, punk and what-not, sarcasm bleeds through every note, but I can hear the 80's live again. The 80's goth and some punk, mixed with Emo influences, make this triad pretty powerful. Slightly insane, working through issues, but isn't that what being in a band is all about? By the way, this is NOT easy listening. It's intense. (SB)

(Dirtbox P.O. Box 3092 Burbank , CA 91508)

KOUFAX
"A Soundwave Sound" CDEP



These guys are firmly in the straightforward emoesque-rock-with-Moogs category that the ANNIVERSARY (whose record is pretty good, but their live set is nothing short of wonderful) seem to be the kings (and queen) of at the moment. Not terrible, by any means, but not exactly exciting, either. I'm starting to wonder just how long it will take this movement to reach critical mass — it's gotta be any time now. And when it gets *really* bad, we'll have bands like KOUFAX to blame for it. I have seen the future, and it is boring and self-important. (DGJ)

(Doghouse /PO Box 8946 /Toledo, OH 43623)

LEAVES
"...are Happening" CD

This "best of" the LEAVES compilation contains the 60's SoCal folk punk group's first LP, as well as various other material. The band's hits are obviously featured, including their famous version of "Hey Joe" with the super-fuzz guitar riff (plus two cruder but less fuzzy versions of the same song) and "Too Many People" (both the LP and single versions).



But this CD also contains lots of other excellent songs, including rockers like "Dr. Stone", pop ear candy like "Just a Memory", "Be With You", and "Funny Little Time", and a hauntingly beautiful version of "Girl from the East". (JB)

(Sundazed /PO Box 85 /Coxsackie, NY 12051)

LES MACCHABEES
"Plus Rein Ne Me Retient" CD



Wee Wee !! Vaw Vaw!! French garage rock . Man what a lame-sounding recording. Sorta surfy sounding at times with way overpowering organ. Dude...this kinda blows. I'm totally not into this — it's got no balls man! Wow! What a pity this is so shitty! (TL)

(Music Que Cite /169 King Quest /Sheerbrooke , aue J1H 1P4)

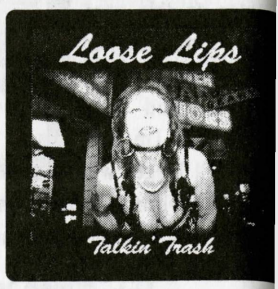
LOIKAEMIE
"Wir Sind Die Skins..." LP



Pretty tuff looking, (and sounding!) Oi! from Germany. By the sounds and looks of these guys, they ARE NOT fucking around ! Ha! Anyhow, again, this is all in German, so I have no clue as to what they are singing about, although, it does sound much meaner than that the OI-MELTZ, and not as aggro as the 4 PROMILLE. (JAW)

(Knockout Records /Postfach 100716 /46527 Dinslaken /Germany)

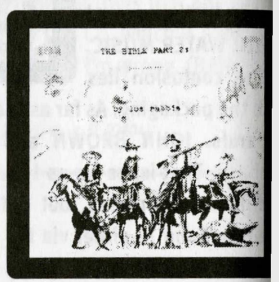
LOOSE LIPS
"Talkin' Trash" CD



Great trashy rock 'n' roll from one of San Francisco's premiere club bands. Heavy doses of "Exile On Main Street"-era STONES and a definite affinity for current labelmates The REAL KIDS. Their songwriting has really evolved from their first 7". The tunes on this are fresh and exciting, and get stuck in your brain like an ice pick. Extra points for having one of the grossest covers of the year. (JC)

(TKO /4104 24th Street #103 /San Francisco, CA 94114)

LOS RABBIS
"The Bible Part 2: Jesus Goes West" 12"



The first thing that really stands out about this record is all the crap stuffed in the jacket. Included was a hand-decorated paper airplane, several xeroxed pictorials, handwritten poems, little notes of encouragement on Kinko's Post-It notes, stickers, and a coloring book by "the scene's newest and best-up-and-coming artist", 8-year-old TJ Dinges. As for the actual music, this is a really fun record! It was recorded in a bedroom and the vocals finished up in a car, so it's a little muddy. If you only like slick, highly produced stuff, this isn't for you. It's obvious these guys had a great time recording this. The record ends a bit sloppily, finishing with a pretty terrible version of BELL BIV DEVOE's "Poison" (is there a good version of that song?). Side A is much stronger, with my favorites, "Hey Girl" and "Please Stop Circle Pitting Around My Prosthetic Leg." (MF)

(Spam /PO Box 21588 /El Sobrante, CA 94820)

LOS ROOKS
"Viva La Tocada" LP

This is hard, almost black metal punk that reminds me of GISM. That's right, the great Japanese punkers that were so punk they could

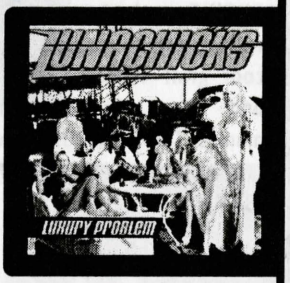
barely exist...only these guys are American....I think...They could be Mexican...I mean, it's tough enough to be from Mexico. Have you guys ever seen those super gross Mexican death mags?? With ghastly gnarled up bodies and the like? Well then, you know what I mean. Anyway, better grab this one if you see it. The cover art is all hand-made, so I don't reckon that there's too many of these floating around, and you toughies out there will beat yourselves up if you miss it. Look out, this record bites. (SB)



(Vendor Records / PO Box 15134 / San Diego, CA 92175)

LUNACHICKS
"Luxury Problem"

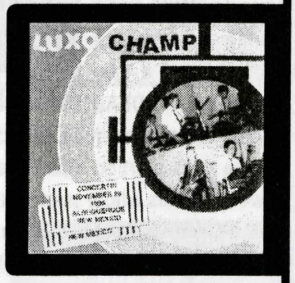
These venerable ladies have been doing it for a while. This, however, is my first encounter, and I wish it had happened ten years earlier. Tuneful, driving, punk with a punch. Early PLASMATICS, or the poise of the UK SUBS in their glory years. Don't make the mistake I made, and get with the program now. (RK)



(Go-Kart / PO Box 20, Princes Street Station / New York, NY 10012)

LUXO CHAMP
"A+B" CDEP

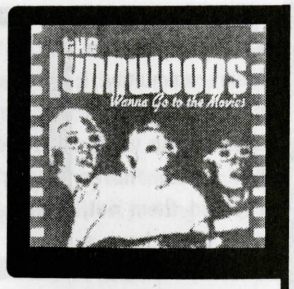
Charming coed geek pop, kind of a bastard hybrid of DEVO and BIS, but more garagey than either. They've all got secret code names, like "Jet Jaguar" and "Miss Information". The track "Science Bastard", with its classic line "I've got a backyard nuclear pile", never fails to bring a smile to my face. Looking for proof that catchy dorkdom exists on other worlds? Look no further. (DGJ)



(The Super 8 USA / PO Box 12125 / Berkeley, CA 94712)

LYNNWOODS
"Wanna Go To The Movies?" 7"

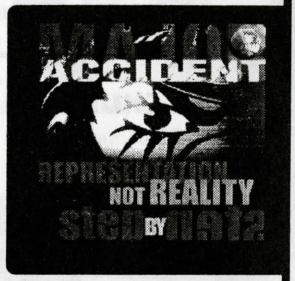
Why can't life be as simple as pop-punk songs? The three originals here are as smooth as a skip through the park, and almost as care free. Top notch. I could do without their rendition of "Great Balls Of Fire" though, mainly because their originals are way better songs. (BAM)



(Teenage Dollhouse / 400 Hopkins Ln. / Jeffersonville, IN 47130)

MAJOR ACCIDENT
"Representation Not Reality / Step By Step" 7"

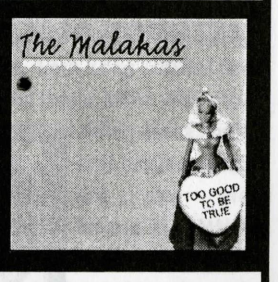
This 7" is limited to 300 copies. I'm not exactly sure how many people are in the world today, but that sucks for all but 299 other people. This thing rules. Moving smoothly around the classic sounds of the Canadian SUBHUMANS, ADDICTS, & BUZZCOCKS, this is a band that I could listen to for hours and not get bored. If you see this, pick it up. (BAM)



(Upstart / 65 A Madison Ave #254 / Dumont, NJ 07628)

MALAKAS
"Too Good To Be True"

D'ya remember the REPLACEMENTS' fake country songs with the really catchy melodies and the intimate lyrics that reminded you of you, and all your desperate, pathetic friends and made you wanna drink? Do you ever find yourself still knockin' one back for poor Bob Stinson? Do ya ever find yourself getting fucked up alone, reminiscing about the good old days that ain't never comin' back, obsessing about ex-girlfriends and former bandmates that went onto see success without you? IF SO, then you better steer clear of this record altogether, cuz MALAKAS mainman, Cranford Nix, has that special gift for writing the kindsa songs that bring out the worst in bleeding heart losers like you and me. Last thing you need's the neighbors callin' the cops or sendin' the landlord round again cuz tunes like, "All I Want For Christmas" and "Fuck You Lorraine" stirred up all that bad shit again, and there you are at the door-'snot runnin' down your red face, 'scars on your chest, 'your yellowed underwear, with one of those plastic bottle of diluted-grocery store vodka, hyperventilatin', tryin' to explain. . (DJM)



(No Info)

MARTINETS
"Love Hate" CD

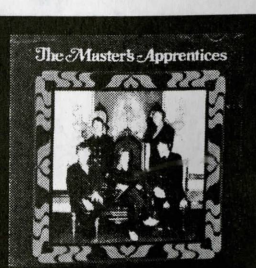
A definite departure for Scooch Pooch Records, a label known for bringing ZEKE to the world's ears. Expecting balls out MOTÖRHEAD inspired mayhem, we actually got a smooth power pop record. This easily brings to mind groups like The PLIMSOULS and the JAM on certain tracks, going straight '70s rock on others. Definitely an ear-catching debut. I'm happy to see Scooch Pooch is broadening its horizons. (JC)



(Scooch Pooch / 5850 West third street suite 209 / L.A., CA 90036)

MASTER'S APPRENTICES
"Complete Recordings, 1965-1968" CD

At last! It's finally possible to get all the primo early tracks from this Aussie outfit without suffering through their later dross. This CD not only contains all their underground "hits" from the mid-60's, including snotty punk rants like "Undecided" and "Buried and Dead" and psych punk classics like

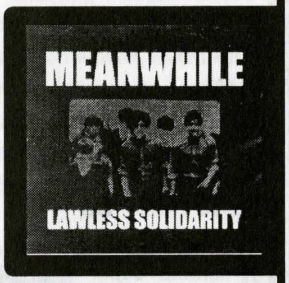


SHITLIST

"War or Hands of Time", but also several less famous tracks of equal stature. Amidst their crude CHUCK BERRY and BO DIDDLEY covers, it's thrilling to discover fabulous originals such as "But One Day", "Hot Gully Wind", and "Living in a Child's Dream". Not to be missed. (JB)

(Ascension / PO Box A2155 / Sydney South, NSW 2000 / AUSTRALIA)

MEANWHILE
"Same Shit New Millenium" CD
"Lawless Solidarity" CD EP



Brilliant hardcore punk played the way it's meant to be: fast, aggressive, and loud. Three out of four members of MEANWHILE were in another cool band, DISCHANGE, that is also well worth checking out. "Same Shit, New Millenium" is the new record and my favorite of the two. Raw and powerful with a whole lot of shit to say-"Morals Change With The Latest Fashion / Ideologies Out Dated / Church, Family, and State Replaced With Open Market / Same Shit, New Millennium"-lyrics like that just hit the nail right on the head and that's only the first song, plenty more where that came from. "Lawless Solidarity" is a re-issue of an out of print 10", also highly recommended. (JC)

(Sound Pollution / PO Box 11742 / Lovington, KY 41017)

MEGASUPERULTRA
"Power Pop Art" CD



Pretty decent-sounding English mod power-pop (even though they aren't British) a la the JAM, the CHORDS and THE PURPLE HEARTS, but slicker with a more modern sound. "Salt" is a catchy little ditty. Everything else on this CD is just okay, unfortunately. (TL)

(Jump Up Records / PO Box 13189 / Chicago, IL 60613)

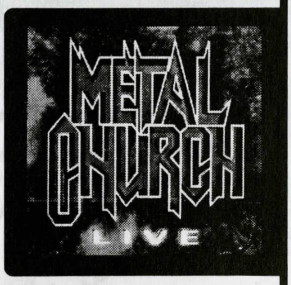
MEN'S RECOVERY PROJECT
"Bolides Over Basra" CD



A band with high regard in the indie community. I have seen their records for years, but had never checked them out, so I don't have a frame of reference as to whether this is a good record for them or not. What I do get from this is a bunch of artsy fartsy pseudo-experimental claptrap. Mind you, though I do like some artsy fartsy, pseudo-experimental claptrap now and then, this doesn't do much for me. It just comes across a bit lackluster and meaningless. I do want to check them out more, probably live too, because there is something of note going on here — I'm just not getting it from this CD. (JC)

(Load / P.O. Box 35 / Providence, RI 02901)

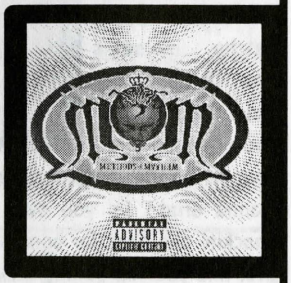
METAL CHURCH
"Live" CD



This is the new Metal Church CD. Metal Church play heavy metal music. This is a live CD that has (I think) the full, original line-up intact. Aggressive, powerful performance that seems to dwell more in the grittier terrain of metal than the cheesy. Features a DEEP PURPLE cover. (JC)

(Nuclear Blast / Box 43618 / Phila, PA 19106)

METHODS Of MAYHEM
S / T CD



I took a look at this one, realized that this was the TOMMY LEE project that I'd heard about, then tried to keep an open mind anyway. But let's face it guys, this is generic Hip Hop rock fusion CRAP that only frustrated frat boys and LIMP BIZKIT fans will enjoy. The same furious beats pound under each "side artists" similar version of mock anger and / or sexuality...and of course, there's an ode to Tommy's penis. The bright spots were the booklet's excellent illustrations, LI'L KIM, who's always kinda cool for being as openly sexual as her male hip-hop counterparts, and GEORGE CLINTON. The rest was boring aggro-shlock that's perfect for Creatine-snorting muscle idiots to listen to at the gym while they watch each other pump. (SB)

(MCA Records, INC / Universal City, CA 91608)

MICKEYS KIDS / SLOWPOKES
split 7"



3 songs from each outfit. MICKEYS KIDS sound a lot like some of the better CRIMPSHRINE singles with great songs, cool gruff vocals, and great harmonies. The SLOWPOKES, well, they play really fast uninspired pop punk. MICKEYS KIDS win!! (BAM)

(Outhouse Records / No address)

MIDNIGHT EVILS
"Powerhead" 7"ep



These guys are definitely on the more rocked-out punk side of things. They kinda have a bit of a MIKE NESS thing happening vocally, and a bastardized DEAD BOYS thing happening musically. Unfortunately, these guys start to typify the mediocrity that is sweeping this whole scene; I think they wish they were Swedish. Anyhow, if you are into punk rock-n-roll type stuff, then you might wanna check this band out. However, you have heard this a million fucking times before, and better. (JAW)

(Dart Records / POB 1843 / Fargo, ND 58107)

REVIEWS

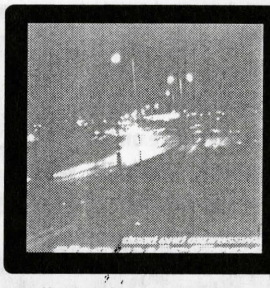
MILWAUKEES
"Missile Command" CD



Ack...I know I'm getting old when games from my youth are now acceptable fodder for kitschy album titles. These guys play modern indie rock in the fashionably-emo vein. After a few hours of listening to records like this, it's all beginning to sound the same. I mean, it's all very nice and heart-rending and everything, but it's also, for the most part, boring. It doesn't reach out and grab me at all. I think I've heard these particular songs with different lyrics and different chord changes and tempos at least sixty times today. Though I might just be getting old and senile. (DGJ)

(Childlike Records / 409 Washington St. PMB#461 / Hoboken, NJ 07030)

MISFIRES
"Dead End Expressway" LP



Well...I don't really have anything bad to say...this is fairly energetic pop with a punk flair, only, there's nothing really special about it. I like the sing along backing vocals n'all, the drummer's pretty good, and the band has that gonna-rebel-against-something kinda feel to it, but it just seems like there's nothing left for these Minnesotans to rebel against. (SB)

(Modern Radio Record Label / PO Box 8886 / MplsMN 55408)

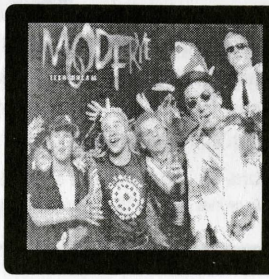
MONKEYWRENCH
"Electric Children" CD



The MONKEYWRENCH gang are back and they're up to no good. Thirteen new tracks of spitfire bluesy rock 'n' roll. This is a pretty hellacious side band for members of MUDHONEY (in my opinion one of the best bands to com e out of the Seattle grunge movement) and punk rock deity Tim Kerr of BIG BOYS, POISON 13, LORD HIGH FIXERS etc. fame. Definitely one of the best records that I have heard so far this year. I hope there is some touring and other releases planned to go with this. Considering the time between M.W. albums so far it would be a real shame if we all had to wait as long for more of this caliber. Great fucking CD. (JC)

(Estrus / P.O. Box 2125 / Bellingham, WA 98227)

MOODFRYE
"Teen Dream" CD



A 7-track effort. But don't be dissuaded by the brevity. Every track is a winner. They effortlessly manage to marry the champion big rock sound of CHEAP TRICK, with the stop-start aggressive harmonies of NOFX. Never heard of them, but I'd love to hear more. (RK)

(Fryin' Records / no address unfortunately)

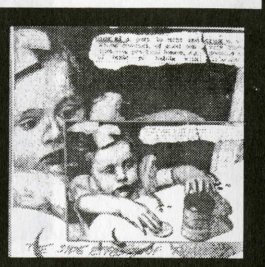
MOORAT FINGERS
"Schlitzed" LP



This is very sludg-i-ly produced, lo-fi garagey rock-n-roll slop. It's vaguely interesting, but I honestly don't know if I would ever listen to this again after this review. The vocals are pretty cool, kinda gravelly and painful to listen to. Each song sounds like one long riff, though, and that is kinda where the interest fades. Overall, great shitty production, which was the initial attraction to this band, but that 's about it. (JAW)

(Into The Vortex Records / Fehrheld 26 / 28203 Bremen Germnay)

MORAL CRUX
"The Side Effects Of Thinking" CD



Not sure if this a re-release of an old classic (it was recorded in 1989), or an excavation from the vaults. Either way, we should be thankful. The world can't get enough of MORAL CRUX. If you're still unfortunate enough to be ignorant, never fear, it's never too late to get with the program. If you're looking for anthemic blasts of rocking punk, a la STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, or glory days UK SUBS, MORAL CRUX have it for you. (RK)

(Panic Button / PO Box 148010 / Chicago, IL 60614)

MOTHER SUPERIOR
"Brothers and Sisters" 7"



BLACK HALOS meet the ROLLING STONES in a practice space that has an organ in it. These three songs smoke!!! (BAM)

(Bad Afro / Poste Restante / Fredersikberg alle 6 / 1820 Frederiksberg C Denmark)

MULLIGAN STU
"Dumb In Love" 7"

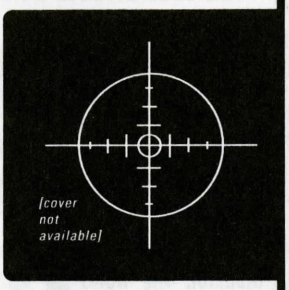


This is just wonderful. Not only is this bringing classic SCREECHING WEASEL to mind, but for some reason their "You Broke My Fucking Heart" EP to be exact. This is amazing mid-tempo, well thought-out pop-rock. I've been impressed by these guys before, but "A Mile Away" might actually be the highlight of their musical career to date. 4 songs, 4 winners. (BAM)

(608 Kisses / PO Box 3127 / La Crosse, WI 54602)

SHITLIST

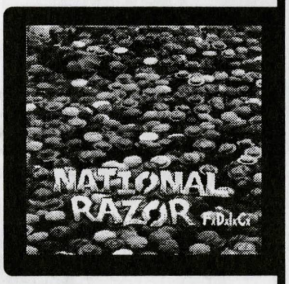
MY COMPLEX
"If We Keep Moving" CD



Crybaby emo stuff that sounds like nails on a chalkboard to me. I'm really not cut out to review this kind of thing. (JER)

(Cargo / 4901-906 Morena Blvd / San Diego, CA 92117)

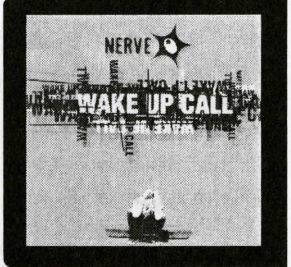
NATIONAL RAZOR
"F.D.I.C." CD



Wow, this is really good. It's a weird mixture of different sounds, but it works well. It almost has your basic power rock background, a la PEGBOY / NAKED RAYGUN, LEATHERFACE, etc..., but more punked out in the playing, with almost street punk styled male / female vocals thrown in over the top. This is cool shit. If any of what I just said makes sense to you, and seems appealing, check it out. It's good stuff. (BAM)

(Morphius / PO Box 13474 / Baltimore, MD 21203)

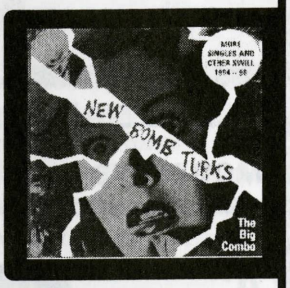
NERVE
"Wake Up Call" CD



A five-track effort. It's always risky for a band to offer up a fifth of their music in the form of a cover version. Especially one as catchy as BILLY JOEL's 'Uptown Girl'. It can make their own music, well, pale in comparison. Fortunately, they manage to give the cover some bollocks, and their originals are equally spunky punk offerings from the ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN school of cranked-up rock 'n' roll. Not as great as guitar-driven Gods like CELIBATE RIFLES, but heading along the right lines. (RK)

(Twenty Stone Blatt Records / PO Box 14911 / Grangemouth, FK8 3WA / Scotland)

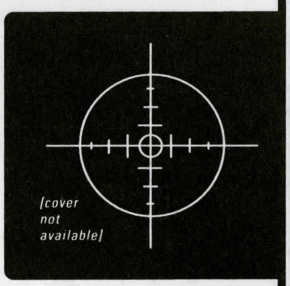
NEW BOMB TURKS
"The Big Combo" CD



Fuck yes! Most of the singles and comp tracks from '94-'98 appear here on one CD. This is just what the doc ordered, as I feel that most of TNBT's best material has always been scattered out there. This might be their best record to date. Mastered loud and in your face, as all rock should be. 16 tracks, 40+ min.'s, a must. (BAM)

(Drop Kick / PO Box 192 E. Melbourne / Victoria 3002 Australia)

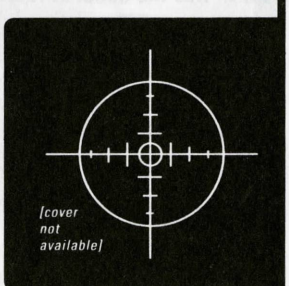
NIBLICK HENBANE
"And We Fall" CD



I guess Upstart doesn't feel like dealing with current bands as they seem to be lingering in the world of reissuing some classic punk. Maybe a wise choice. This is an east coast Oi! / drunk punk type band, that all in all reminds me a lot of the FOUR SKINS. 13 studio tracks taken from EP's and comps, 7 demo tracks, and 3 live tracks. Great songs with great energy. Check it out. (BAM)

(Upstart / 65 A Madison Ave #254 / Dumont, NJ 07628)

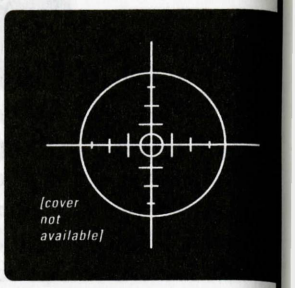
NIGHT IN GALES
"Nailwork" CD



Chunky, double-bass metal with vocals that alternate between scary growling man and angry screaming man. Seriously Brett, what the fuck were you thinking!? Did you actually think I'd like this, or was it punishment for slagging ANTHRAX? (JER)

(Nuclear Blast / PO Box 43618 / Philedelphia, PA 19106)

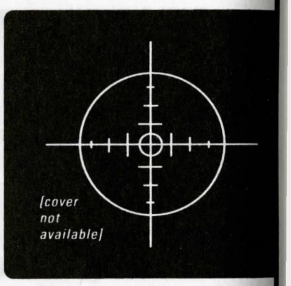
NUGGETS
"Powerpop Girl" 7"



The 7" starts with a guitar riff that is pure 77 power pop, guitars and all, and is immediately followed by an organ, all leading into what will surely be an instant classic. The formula doesn't change for four song, just the different sing along choruses that you get stuck in your head. A power pop fan's dream. (BAM)

(Sneakers / Almgrensu 9A / 1621 Gressuik, Norway)

OI-MELZ
"Verfluchte Oimelz" LP



Along with the snappy silver cover, OI-MELTZ show themselves to be a bit more on the upbeat, melodic, rock-n-roll side o' the fence as opposed to the straightforward, super-aggro Oi! one might expect upon first seeing a name like OI-MELZ in what looks to be the Old English font. Anyhow, these guys are from Germany, and of course, they sing mostly in German — except for two songs, one of which is the ROLLING STONES' "Last Time". Overall, pretty damn alright songs here; The vocals are still pretty gruff-n-tuff, while the overall musical stylings are a bit more tame and structured. A really great example of this is "Wenn Du Einsam Bist". Not bad at all. (JAW)

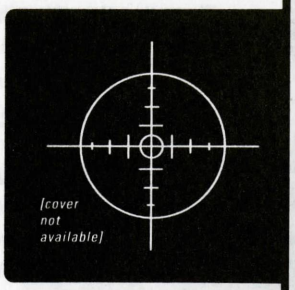
(Knockout Records / Postfach 100716 / 46527 Dinslaken / Germany)

OTOPHOBIA
"Source of Confusion" EP

Atlanta's OTOPHOBIA seem to have a bit of a Swedish influence in their hardcore. Angry lyrics lash out at everything from the public

REVIEWS

school system to honky Christian values. This is a good release; it's not earth-shattering, but it's good. Eleven songs total including one VOID cover. (AD)



(Burrito Records / P.O. Box 3204 / Brandon, FL 33509-3204)

PAST MISTAKES
"Try To Blink" CD EP

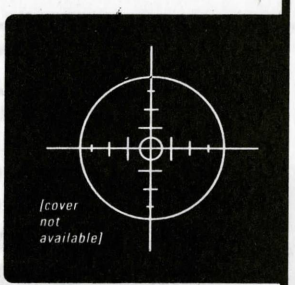
High-energy melodic hardcore that borders on emo / power posi. Exemplified with lyrics like, "Extend your arms, unclench your fists. Raise them up, reach for the sky." Kinda cheezy, but kinda cool, too. This band would fit in well an Jade Tree. Compare to GOOD RIDDANCE meets The PROMISE RING. (JC)



(Seasonal Affect / PO Box 68 / Stuyvesant Falls, NY 12174)

PAUL K.
"Achilles Heel" CD

This record will make you cry. Ok, Yeah, it's true — I'm a soft-touch these days, it don't take much, but every single song resonates with something pure and true and real and universal, alrite? Don't Worry, bootboys, This ain't yer public-radio yuppie-ass Lilith Fair folk — this is acoustic-based, white-punk-SOUL music. Like HANK WILLIAMS SR. -Soul music. KRIS KRISTOFFERSON-Soul Music. JOHNNY CASH. PATTI SMITH, BROTHER WAYNE KRAMER, right? ...Even my 12 year old son, who's into the OFFSPRING and SMASH MOUTH, quotes these songs to his girlfriend. You can't be an authentic badass unless it's from the heart. Buy ANYTHING by this fucker, it don't all have to be fast and hard to still rock l. a. m. f. Oh yeah, you can't kill a man with a soul. (DJM)



(No Info)

PAUL K.
"Love is a Gas"

Gentleman Outlaw, Junkie Troubadour, I'm sure some of you are familiar with his shady reputation as some bohemian cartoon, but PAUL K. is one of the finest songwriter / storyteller / guitar great / genuine article geniuses you're ever gonna hear about in the pages of this magazine. This LP's produced by Mo Tucker from the VELVET UNDERGROUND. It's a highly polished affair, like if BOWIE still made good records. It's got elements of JIM CARROLL BAND / HEARTBREAKERS-style NYC punk, country, gospel, real Detroit R & B, TELEVISION-style art school punk, folk, and MOTT THE HOOPLE glam; but ultimately, it's songs some of us are still searchin' for — and soul. Paul K.'s got both in spades. (DJM)



(No Info)

PEACOCKS
"Come With Us" CD

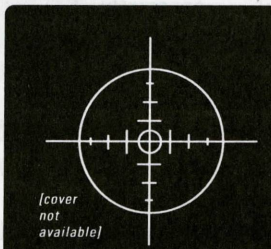
I already reviewed an LP by these guys. Man, these dudes have a lot of songs — 22 friggin' tracks here! As before, same ska / rockabilly power pop mish-mosh. This shit bores me to tears. Sorry, but it ain't doin' nothin' fer me. (TL)



(Tomato Head Records / PO Box 61298 / Sunnyvale, CA 94088 USA)

PEACOCKS
"In Without Knockin" LP

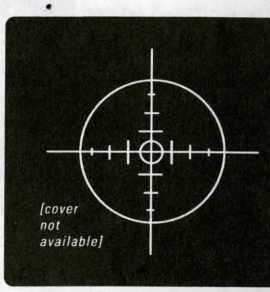
O.K. Rockabilly, ska and power pop. Hmmm... This band does nothing for me. They mix up all the above styles in their brand of rock 'n' roll. YAWN! Nothing here stands out on this record; it's very mediocre to me. They do a version of "Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked In". Thanks to the REZILLOS, but actually originally done by VINCE VANCE AND THE VALIANTS. Also by FLEETWOOD MAC. Man!! they should've covered "Second Hand News" or "Rhiannon". NYUK NYUK !!!(TL)



(Jump Up Records / Po Box 13189 / Chicago, IL 60613)

PEDRO THE LION
"Winners Never Quit"

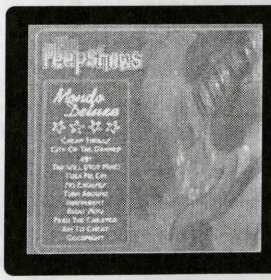
This is one of those bands that people freak out over and I can't quite figure out why. I decided to give 'em another chance since Jade Tree picked 'em up, as I generally respect what Tim and Darren put out, even if it's not my cup of tea. Much of the music strikes me as a slightly-more-awake J. MASCIS fronting early REM, dynamics courtesy of U2 filtered through modern emo. It's all a bit too earnest — I think. Either that or it's an amazing study in subtle irony. Sometimes it just sounds like the COUNTING CROWS in the midst of a punk-rock bandwagon jump. If these guys wanna be winners in my book, they can't quit here. (DGJ)



(Jade Tree / 2310 Kennwynn Rd. / Wilmington, DE 19810)

PEEPSHOWS
"Mondo Deluxe" CD

Don't let the lame outer packaging throw you on this one, as this might be the best rock record I have heard in years. If you told me that this was the follow up record to TURBONEGRO's "Apocalypse Dudes", I wouldn't question it. Not surprising that there's actually liner notes from Happy Tom (TURBONEGRO [RIP]). Quote: "I have seen the future of rock and roll, and its name is THE PEEPSHOWS". Huge stadium rock with hooks galore to take care of your Norwegian rock fix. Find this today, and then buy 2 copies of it, you'll



SHITLIST

thank me later. As Happy Tom said; "Obey and worship them in the shining darkness light, or go suck elephant dick!" (BAM)

(Burning Heart /Box 441. 701 48 /Orebro Sweden)

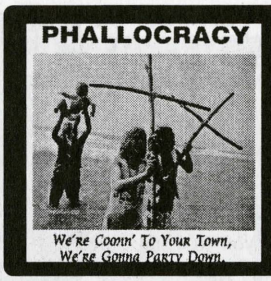
PENIS FLY TRAP / KERMITS FINGER
Split CD



Not sure what the point is here. This record seems like a silly, meaningless forum for the bands to say "penis", make fun of chicks that "dissed" them, and pretend they're rock stars. For some reason, any minutia that occurs in the lives of these guys, they felt the need to write a song about, and that would work, if they had super interesting lives, but as it is, we get to be bored right along with them. Banal rhymes. generic chords, or chord, I should say. Why they printed their lyrics for us, I'll never understand. Hmmm, this is music for pubescent boys who aren't getting laid yet, so, maybe I just don't understand. Oh, and boys, "hemmerhoids", is spelled hemorrhoids. (SB)

(Fan Attic Records P.O. Box 391494 Cambridge, MA 02139-001)

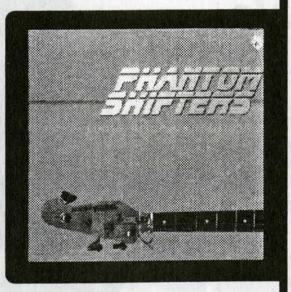
PHALLOCRACY
"We're Coming To Your Town, We're Gonna Party Down" 7" EP



These guys are just going too darn fast for their own good. They're gonna hurt themselves. Think SPAZZ meets SCHLONG. Fun record, cool packaging, hand numbered edition of 300, so good luck finding one. Possible song title of the month with "Be Young, Have Fun, Bend Over." (JC)

(Phallocracy /20 Pinewood Ave. Apt. 1 /Toronto, ONT. Canada M6C 2V1)

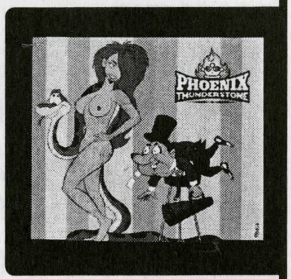
PHANTOM SHIFTERS
"Given Half A Chance We'll Wreck It For Everybody" CD



Throat-splitting, beer-spitting rage foams into a toxic lather as these troubled Canadian lads spew all over my speakers. Fast, tight RAWK, in a kinda BIG BLACK meets-and-kicks-the shit-outta-MOTLEY CRUE sorta way. These fellas may be as pissed off as Steve Albini, but they're not as smart. Bordering on testosterone, dick in hand "dude" rage, It rocks on several levels, but they refer to the phrase "Rock 'N' Roll", without enough sarcasm, just a little too often. Great for flying into a house-wreckin' rage, though. (SB)

(Gas Records /P.O Box 77062 /Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5N2)

PHOENIX THUNDERSTONE
"Hairy Carrie" 7"



Noisy noise from these girls and boys, or girly-boy as far as their eccentric singer is concerned. A band that's a blast live, and pretty raw and outta sight on vinyl as well. (JC)

(Reptilian /403 S, Broadway /Baltimore, MD 21231)

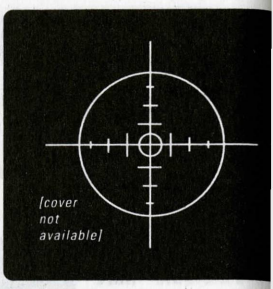
PHOTON TORPEDOES
"It Came From Outer Space" CD



B-movie-sound-track-type-A Psychobilly mayhem, that comes to us, apparently, from outer space. Indeed. Well, uhmmm. It's just that I don't have too much to say. It's definitely something-o-billy, be that Rock or Psycho, or a hybrid thereof. It's just that it's not super-original. It's certainly competently played. I mean all the musicians are pretty good, the singer's fine, they pretty much rock. That's that then. I bet they're good live. (SB)

(Raucous Records /8 Oxford street /Leicester LE1 5xz England)

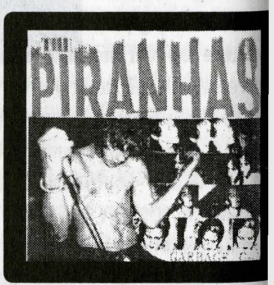
PINHEAD GUNPOWDER / DILLINGER FOUR
"At Your Funeral" 7"



I've been waiting for this record for almost a year — since D4 recorded their side on their last Californian tour. Starting things off are the PINHEAD rager, "At Your Funeral", a classic Aaron Cometbus speed-pop number with Billie at his snotty finest on vox and Bill Schneider pulling his best Mike Dirnt impression. The second track, "Porch Song", is reminiscent of the CRIMPSHRINE-meets-hardcore moments that CLEVELAND BOUND DEATH SENTENCE did so well. The third, "Second Street", is a Jason White special — probably the most REPLACEMENTS-ey he's gotten with PG. Fans of this track (or the 'MATS) should check out his cool new band, the INFLUENCE. D4's tracks are roughly what you'd expect — rad chord changes, killer vocal trade-offs, cool lyrics, and great titles — "Are You that Motherfucker With the Banana?" and "Thanks For Nothing Part II: The Revenge." These bands are two of the greatest treasures pop-punk has ever had. Having them together just adds to the riches. (DGJ)

(Adeline /5337 College Ave #318 /Oakland, CA 94618)

PIRANHAS
"Garbage Can" 7" EP



I don't know anything about The Piranhas except for the fact that they totally rock. Trashed out punk in a noisy, old school IGGY-meets-DEAD BOYS style. This pretty much smokes 9 out of 10 records that we get for review here. Records like this are the reason I do this. Get this at any cost. (JC)

(Tom Perkins /Box 970936 /Ypsilanti, MI 48197)

REVIEWS

PIRANHAS
"Piranhas Attack" 12" EP



Good to see a band take the musical nod from popular contemporaries. Ones like the MURDER CITY DEVILS and FRIGGA-GOGO, and dig even deeper with it. Trashy keyboard chic could fit in easily with original '60s garage or '80s vox revivalists. A solid 12" EP. Look forward to more in the future. (JC)

(Tom Perkins Records / PO Box 970936 / Ypsilanti, MI 48197)

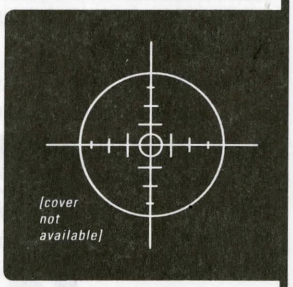
PITCHSHIFTER
"Un-UK" CD EP



A welcome domestic release of four more blasts of righteous metallic-techno-punk anger from these metal / noise gods. Included is a mighty cover of BIG BLACK's anthem 'Kerosene', which is as good a point of reference as any, for the uninitiated. Check this out. (RK)

(Alternative Tentacles / PO Box 419092 / San Francisco, CA 94141)

PLASTIC
"Spiritual Kung-Fu" CD



Well, I dunno about the martial arts shit. This is more of an annoying, bombastic flea buzzing around your head, than a double round-house kick to the bollocks. I have no idea why this shit is even up for review. Sounds like a dreadful throwback to the really bad '80's new-wave we all hated. Even me. (RK)

(Crustacean Records / PO Box 370156 / Milwaukee, WI 53237)

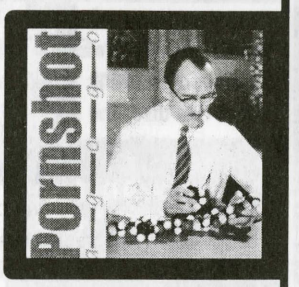
POCKET CHANGE
"Golden" CD



PC (?) do a very decent rendition of the melodic, angst-ridden KNAPSACK / GAMEFACE arena of hardcore. Or is that modern rock? Whatever, these guys do a fine job. Lots of soaring guitars, and vocal melodies aplenty. All on a bit of a downer, of course. (RK)

(Resurrection AD / PO Box 763 / Red Bank, NJ 07701)

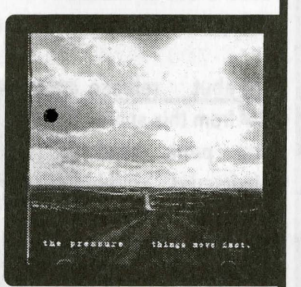
PORNSHOT
"Agogo" CD



The Norwegian scene was a lot harder back in the 80's. And what's with that black metal stuff these days? This is VERY melodic pop-punk with guy / girl vocals that sound more American than Norwegian, largely on account of the fact that they sing in English, without much trace of accents. It's not bad though, sing-along backing harmonies keep things from being too samey, the music punks and rocks OK, and the spirit is there. (SB)

(G.C. Records / PO Box 3743 / Laguna Hills, CA 92654)

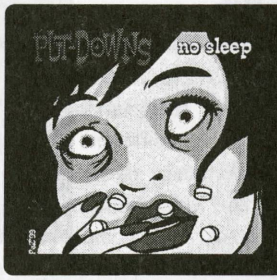
PRESSURE
"Things Move Fast" CD



For one thing, the CD artwork is lame — how boring can you get? As for the music, it's just as boring. That blah-blah college rock sound. Nothing special; I've heard all of this before. I'm afraid rock 'n' roll is really dead. (TL)

(Elastic, PO Box 17598 Anaheim , Ca 92817)

PUT DOWNS
"No Sleep" 7"



Cool rock n' roll from Texas produced by Tim Kerr. My favorite track is "Haunted Man", the second song on the A-side, but they do a decent job at covering a George Straight song too. Cool packaging & purple vinyl make this an attractive package. (JER)

(Little Deputy / PO Box 7066 / Austin, TX 78713-7066)

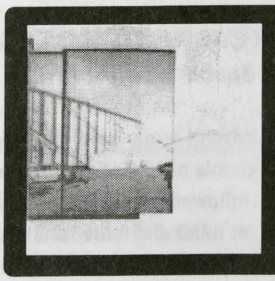
REDUCERS SF
"No Control" 7"



Another great single from San Francisco's pride and joy, REDUCERS SF. These boys continue to pump out the excellent, infectiously catchy rock-n-roll, with those signature lead melodies. There are no bones made here about the straight Ian Stuart-esque vocals (NOT LYRICS!) on "No Control". "Never Find Me" is much quicker than the standard REDUCERS fare. Overall, two excellent new ones from the band that had the priveleged main support slot for COCK SPARRER a few months back. (JAW)

(TKO Records / 4104 24th St #103 / San Francisco, CA 94114)

REFLECTOR
"Where Has All The Melody Gone" CD



FUGAZI-wannabe emo complete with blurry pictures of industrial scenery. The title; tragic irony? I think so. (JER)

(Status / PO Box 1500 / Thousand Oaks, CA 91358)

SHITLIST

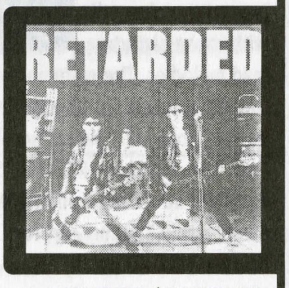
WILLIAM REID
"Tired Of Fucking"



We were just having this conversation about the varying behaviors of roommates with different addictions, right? Like your Alkie comes home blacked out and tries to cook macaroni and cheese but passes out in the bathtub while the stove catches the wallpaper on fire; whereas, your Needle-Enthusiast holes up with his sleepy skank girlfriend in their rat's-nest bedroom with six hundred candles burning, and nods off listening to MAZZY STAR or SPACEMEN 3...or this. "Darklands" is my fave JESUS & MARY CHAIN record, but for fuck's sake, I think POTHEADS would like this... (DJM)

(No Info)

RETARDED
"Punk Rock In Your Face" CD



If you can't get enough of the RAMONES carbon copy stuff, then check this out. It's good stuff, with good songs, yet absolutely nothing new. Vocals are a bit gruffer than the average QUEERS / RAMONES carbon bands. This powers through 14 tracks of three chord power rock with choruses you can sing your leather jacket off to. (BAM)

(Hang Over /Viale GD Annunzio 9 /20123 Milano Italy)

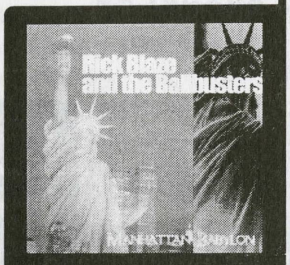
REVEREND HORTON HEAT
"Spend A Night In The Box" CD

I haven't really paid much attention to the last couple of REVEREND releases. So I haven't really followed any progression he has made. This is a lot fuller and more well rounded than I remember. He has lost a little bit of his psychobilly, madman edge. It seems like this is a more mature album, tackling more domestic issues in the title cut and on tracks like "The Bedroom Again" and "King." Mind you, he can still break out the can of whoop-ass and handily does on barnstormers like "Sue Jack Daniel's" and "The Millionaire". (JC)



(Time Bomb /6 West 57th St. /Ny, NY 10019)

RICK BLAZE AND THE BALL-BUSTERS
"Manhattan Babylon" CD



Well, there's a written attestment by someone I've never heard of, telling me what I'm supposed to think about this disc. The problem is, I like to make up my own mind. What I hear is a two-bit Johnny Thunders rip-off, who's apparently been doing this shtick for 20 years. This guy must be so totally entrenched in an era that CAN'T EVER HAPPEN AGAIN. IT'S OVER. JOHNNY'S DEAD. Having said that, the record itself is fine, the playing is pretty good, I guess, it's just that, there's really no reason to buy this, because when this mood hits you, you're going to pull out your old DOLLS records and L.A.M.F, and get on with it. Probably a great show live, though. (SB)

(Viscious Kitten Records /GPO BOX 20 /Canberra ACT 2601 Australia.)

RIPPING TEETH
"September 9th" 7"



Debut release from this snotty pop punk band, obviously influenced quite heavily by, yep, you guessed it, SCREECHING WEASEL. 4 songs; 2 memorable, 2 annoying. We'll see what the future holds for these lads. (BAM)

(Crackle! /PO Box 7 Otley /LS2114B England)

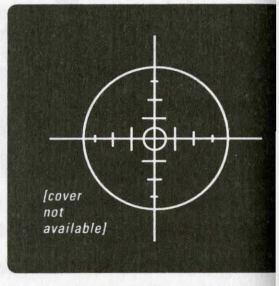
RIVIERAS
"The Best Of... California Sun"



Thanks to good 'ol Norton Records for compiling this killer CD of all the best of the RIVIERAS — the kings of frat-rockin' surf tunes with rippin' farfisa. It's got all the great hits like "California Sun", "Little Donna", "Let's Have A Party", "HB Goosestep", etc. All the stuff is compiled from their two LP's "Let's Have A Party" and "Campus Party". If it wasn't for the RIVIERAS and the TRASHMEN there would never be an UNTAMED YOUTH.(TL)

(Norton Records /PO Box 646 /Cooper Station , NY, NY 10276)

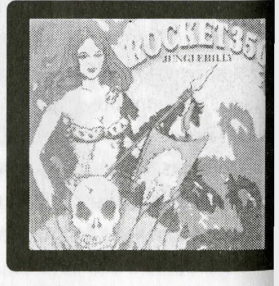
ROBOTS
"The Day Of The Robots" CD



Pretty much what you'd expect from Man's Ruin. High caliber rock n' roll, somewhere between NEW BOMB TURKS and the HELLACOPTERS, but not as good as either of those bands. This end of the rock n' roll spectrum has had quite a bit of competition as of late, and these guys fit in well, but do little to distinguish themselves. (JER)

(Man's Ruin /610 22nd St #302 /SF, CA 94107)

ROCKET 350
"Junglebilly" CD

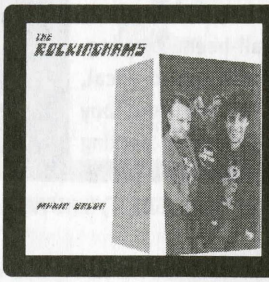


Mostly forgettable psychobilly in the REVERAND HORTON HEAT meets MISFITS vein. The chops are cool and they have the sound down, but there isn't much memorable about what they are doing. (JC)

(Beatville /P.O. Box 42462 /Washington DC 20015)

REVIEWS

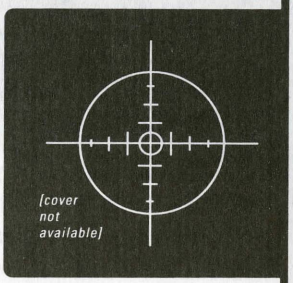
ROCKINGHAMS
"Makin' Bacon" CD



An 80's rock feel to this that reminds me of early SOUL ASYLUM or the PLIMSOULS. Songs that are pretty rocking, but lacking much originality or spunk. Probably a pretty fun bar band, nothing I could really recommend, though. (JC)

(Not Lame / PO Box 2266 / Ft. Collins, CO 85022-2266)

ROTTEN BOILS
"Pogo Beer And Spikey Hair" LP



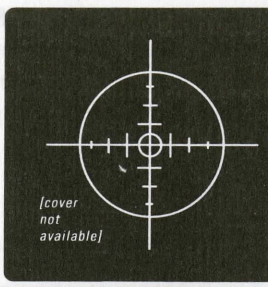
First off, you have on the B side spindle, some clockwork Oi! hooligans, (complete with cod pieces, btw), having a bit of the old ultra violence on some poor sap. Charged to the hilt, these guys play at breakneck speed and say "Oi!" more times than you can shake at stick at. Pretty goddamn over the top. Anyhow, again, besides the creative spindles, and a great, English-translated lyric sheet, this record pretty much falls into the ever-expanding category of mediocre punk rock bands. However, this might also be a case of "it's just not my thing", so, in all fairness, one woman's trash is another's treasure; if you are into early 80's super-quick hardcore punk, you just might get a boner over this, but I just think this shit is boresville. (JAW)

(Hated Youth Records / Via Brione.9 / 38083 Condino (TN))

DOUG SAHM
"San Antonio Rock" CD



Doug Sahm's main claim to fame was as the leader of the SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET whose "She's About a Mover" was a great mid-60s rave-up hit. Lesser known, but not less cool, was his previous decade or so making solid rock 'n' roll and 45s for various San Antonio western swing labels (playing with the likes of HANK THOMPSON and FARON YOUNG). Starting out as a child prodigy and evolving into a first rate rockin' and rollin' entertainer. This CD is right in the Norton niche, compiling 18 tunes from various long out of print and highly collectible 45s plus a handful of never before released songs that stand strong ground next to the bona-fide releases. Extensive liner notes and cool packaging tops this off to make it another A-1 Norton record. (JC)



(Norton / P.O. Box 646 Cooper station / New York, NY 10276)

SATANIC SURFERS
"Going Nowhere Fast" CD



Fortunately, this release doesn't exhibit any signs of church-burning, or DICK DALE. Rather, I suspect they are one of the legions of bands stock with an embarrassing moniker they would really love to change, but can't — cos, however ridiculous, it has some name recognition, and a record or two attached to it. In reality, these are yet another in the venerable tradition of proving that SoCal hardcore melody is alive and well in Sweden. PENNYWISE, or BAD RELIGION would be a considerably more apt descriptive name for the band. And they do it well. (RK)

(Burning Heart / under exclusive license to Epitaph, so it shouldn't be hard to find)

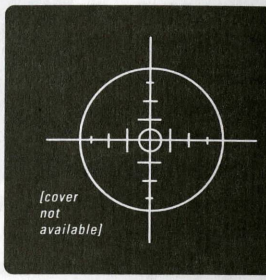
SCATTERGUN REFLEX
"Laughing At A Dead Man" CD



Not sure what the problem is down there in Texas, but these boys are agitated. This is mechanical sounding, annoying metal-drill type stuff, yet the only instruments here are the old guitar, bass and drums. No, we don't even get any vocals...and yet, I somehow know what these guys are feeling...they obviously want to GET THE FUCK OUT OF TEXAS, and get happy...cause as it is, they've got a lot of angst. So, if you wanna feel totally on edge, even maniacally infuriated, put this baby on at a party, and watch the bottles break. (SB)

(Laser Trax Records / 3200 S. Cooper, Suite 105 / Arlington TX 6015)

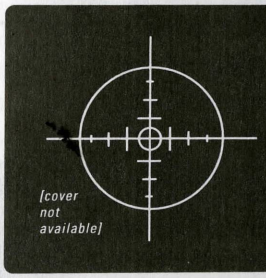
78 REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE
"Figure It Out" 7"



Upbeat ska-ish stuff from ex-SKANKIN' PICKLE members. Cool packaging, and a great live act too, if you ever get the chance. (JER)

(Cheetah's / PO Box 4442 / Berkeley, CA 94704)

SECLUDES
"Blue" 7" / CD-EP



There's a great new label on the rise, and ironically it's called Rise Records. While they only have a few releases to date, their tastes are great and consistent. "Blue" is no exception. Great post-hardcore, melody driven punk. All three songs show a little different angle on the band, and all are great. Looking forward to more from both the band and the label. (BAM)

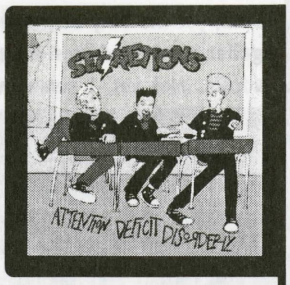
(Rise Records / 2347 Oak Hill Rd. / Roseburg, OR 97470)

SECRETIONS
"Attention Deficit Disorderly" CD

Basic, slash and bash 1-2-1-2 pop punk. The whole thing went by without making me

SHITLIST

wanna jump up and turn it off, but it failed to make a lasting impression. (JER)



(Slap Happy / PO Box 249 / Byron, CA 94514)

SEXUAL ABOMINATIONS
"Rock N Roll Meat Hook" 7" EP

The cover's got a drawing of a dick with a nail hammered through it. WELL ALLLL-RIGHT! "Rock 'n' Roll Meathook" is an awesome name for a song, but this slab-o-wax is not my cup of tea, unfortunately. Noisy, primitive, something or other. I like real songs that go somewhere and end somewhere. This entire single sounds like one song though it's actually four. I think maybe fans of CAROLINER and RANCID HELL SPAWN may dig this. I dunno...maybe I'm in left field. (TL)



(Wrench Records / Bcm Box 4049 London / WCIN 3xx)

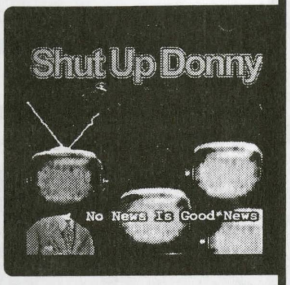
SHIFTERS
"Shattered" CD

This is the posthumous release of one of the better Bay Area bands, THE SHIFTERS. There are tons of bands that spawned off of this break up, namely the TRUST FUND BABIES (new full length on Radio as well), and a re-grouping of THE TRENDS. Anyhow, THE SHIFTERS play really catchy, up-beat, punk rock. What you get here are actual songs — with a singer that actually sings — sometimes a bit too sing-song-y actually, but besides that, this shit rocks! This record has some of the best lyrics I have heard in a while — really heartfelt, really soulful, really tangible, — just check out "Bar Chords and Bar Stools" and "King Of SF". Other great moments include CT's "You Ain't Got it", and Karen's singing on "Fuel Up On Glue". Be forewarned this is VERY melodic punk rock — but don't let that scare you. This is a GREAT CD! (JAW)



(Radio Records / POB 1452 / Sonoma, CA 95476)

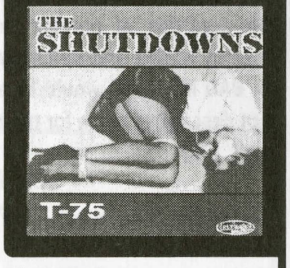
SHUT UP DONNY
"No News Is Good News" CD



These kids got moxie. I recognize them from a demo they sent me. I liked them then, and I like them now. Good, catchy, up-tempo pop-punk East Bay style. Music like this is overrun with crappy, unoriginal bands. SHUT UP DONNY aren't breaking any new ground here, but they *are* head and shoulders above most of the younger bands that play this style. The songs are tight and energetic with hooks and catchy choruses that are fresh and exciting. Way to break apart from the pack, hope this does well for them. (JC)

(Lets Go / P.O. Box 156 / Campbell, CA 95009-0156)

SHUTDOWNS
"T-75" CD



Roaring out of the garage, the SHUTDOWNS are firing on all cylinders. This ain't no lo-fi fuzz. Excellently executed, dirty rock 'n' roll as it should be. Sharp, snotty and snarling. (RK)

(Theologian Records / PO Box 1070 / Hermosa Beach, CA 90254)

SISTER KISSERS
"Sister Kissers" CD

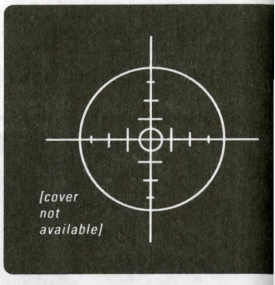
When we put this on, me and my pal David both went "Fuck Yeah"...so, you know, that means something. This is the perfect distillation of influences; growing up listening to scratched up KISS records, then graduating to punk rock and then not giving a fuck at all. We've got the guitar solos, the punk rock fuck-all-been gargling-with-Drano-vocal, and the boot boy sing-along backing vocals. It's a beautiful thing. (SB)



(No address, cos' they don't want you comin' over.)

69 CHARGER
"I've Got A Feelin'" 7"ep

I fucking am so over the whole fucking car sample thing. Anyhow, this is a Dutch trio playing a garagier version of ZEKE-ish type punk rock. You have heard this a million times over... (JAW)



(Roulette Records / Lijsterstraat 32 / 5735 ET Aarle-Rixtel Holland)

SKIT SYSTEM
"Grå Värld / Svarta Tankar" LP

Another great hardcore release from the country of Sweden! Swedish hardcore has long had a reputation for being some of the best and this crusty little CD is no exception. Fourteen songs of political angst along the lines of DETESTATION. This comes in a beautiful gatefold sleeve. It's fast and thrashy. The drums and bass sound thundering on this recording. You gotta get it! (AD)

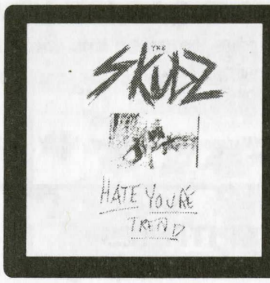


(Distortion Records / P.O. Box 129 / 401 22 Gothenburg, Sweden)

SKUDZ
"Hate Your Trend" LP

The cover artwork is way budge!! White sleeve with a xeroxed piece of paper glued to it. No frills. I like it. Anyways THE SKUDZ play pretty

REVIEWS



straight forward fast punk 'n' roll. "Guard Rail Girls", "Fax Me" "What The Fuck" and a cover of the DEFONICS "51%" being my faves. Not bad! Maybe I won't trade this at Amoeba. NYUK NYUK!!! (TL)

(Non Fiction Records /Ronnie Mills , PO Box 1941 /Knoxville, TN 37901-1941)

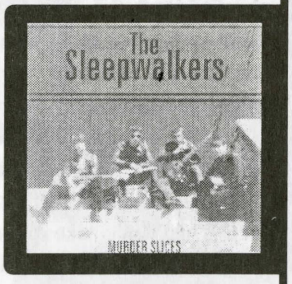
SLACKERS
"Live At Ernesto's!" CD



Everything you would expect from a good live record, culled from all three of their previous studio full-lengths. Loose and, and er, well, slack, while remaining tight in all the right places. Fans of quality laid-back ska will dig this, I would suspect. Excellent recording and execution. Of course, if you don't dig ska, then you'll probably want to avoid.... (RK)

(Hellcat /2798 Sunset Blvd /Los Angeles, CA 90026)

SLEEPWALKERS
Murder Slices 7" EP



Wow! More Italian rock 'n' roll. The Sleepwalkers play real raunchy garage-punk. Way fuzzed-out guitars turned to eleven with snotty raunchy vocals. Reminds me of early MAKERS and the GRAVEDIGGER FIVE. "A Murder" is the only original. It rocks hard. The flip is two covers: "Cry" by the MALIBUS and "Boss Hoss" by none other than the "SONICS". A-OK. (TL)

(Paolo Bonino /Via Giudice Marino 91, 09131 /Cagliari Italy)

SMACK
"On You" CD



If you like the new wave of glam / punk — (BLACK HALOS, BACKYARD BABIES, AMERICAN HEARTBREAK, etc. ,) or just like sleazy rocknroll in general, there's simply no excuse for not owning this essential album, by Finnish punk-metal legends, SMACK, re-released recently on Amsterdamned Records. Lead Caterwauler Claude, had a real special set of pipes, and has very regrettably since passed-on, but not before authoring such poignant and tender love songs as, "Good Morning Headache", "Some Fun", and "Little Cunt" — touching ballads for all of time. These guys were contemporaries of HANOI ROCKS and clearly influenced one of my fave bands of the past decade, the also-missed, COMA-TONES. (DJM)

(Triple X Records /Amsterdamned)

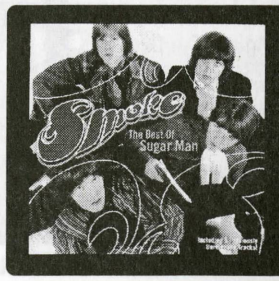
PATTI SMITH
"GUNG HO"



Her best record, by far, since her 70's stride. "Peace & Noise" was fucking excruciating. Seemingly everyone near and dear to Patti was dropping like flies; she'd just been through the emotional gauntlet, so understandably, her music reflected that. The purging of demons and convening with good ghosts and dirge after dirge was just too much for my frail psyche, but "Gung Ho" — this is a Return to Splendor. Patti delivers everything you came for, resurrected passion and naked poetry and new wave music like "Easter" was yesterday. I think she is sex, itself. All her songs are about Revolution and Spirit and "Glitter In Their Eyes" or "One Voice" or "New Party" will grace every compilation tape I make this year. If you already own "Easter", get this, you'll probably be a better person for it. If all you own is tough-guy punk rock, then, go buy "Easter", you need it. (DJM)

(No Info)

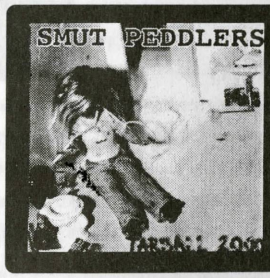
SMOKE
"The Best of Sugar Man" CD



A really fine collection of material from SMOKE, a late 60's Yorkshire outfit whose best songs sounded an awful lot like those of classic-era T-REX — really loud quasi-psych guitars, snappy drumming, loopy bass lines, irresistably catchy choruses, and sugary pop melodies as addictive as candy. If you don't believe me, just have a listen to "Sugar Man", "Shagalagalu", "We Can Take It", "High in a Room", "That's What I Want", and of course the notorious "My Friend Jack", which was banned in Britain as a result of its not-so-subtle reference to dropping acid: "My friend Jack eats sugar lumps". In addition to these undeniable would-be hits, this CD contains over 20 additional tracks of generally inspired "paisley pop". (JB)

(Repertoire /no address listed)

SMUT PEDDLERS
"Tarball 2000" CD

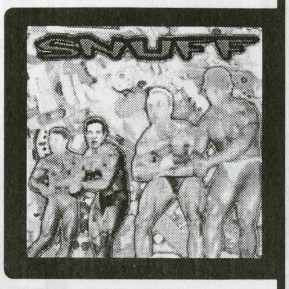


I don't know what to think about this disc. Live, they really impressed me. They've got that old school, Orange County look going on. All tattoos & sun glasses. But listening to their CD I'm wondering, is there anything to do in Southern California besides drugs? Seriously, just about every single song is about dope. All the bases are covered; speed, heroin, coke, crack. The songs are good, dirty rock n' roll, not unlike US BOMBS, but I just can't relate. (JER)

(Ransom /1525 Aviation Blvd. #289 /Redondo Beach, CA 90278)

SHITLIST

SNUFF
"Numb Nuts" CD



Brand new full-length. I was told that this was rubbish. Which of course, is far from the case. Certainly a tad more subdued then their previous releases. But the usual driving power and melody that SNUFF fans know and love is there in abundance. Lots of keyboards and trombone, and soaring harmonies aplenty. Not as immediately catchy, for sure, as previous releases, but a quality piece of merchandise that will continue to entertain and edify for years to come. (RK)

(Fat / PO Box 193690 / San Francisco, CA 94119)

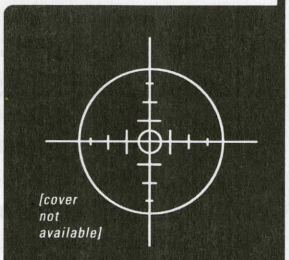
SONIC DOLLS
"Bionik" LP



Frenzied German garage punk rockers that make me wanna rip my clothes off and go mate or something. These guys can really play, they do great harmony, sing-along backing vocals, the singer actually sings instead of screaming, and they'd probably all make great husbands. It also doesn't sound like it was recorded in some pimply faced kids bedroom. Tight and clean, and still dirty enough to make me hot, Jen and I dig it. (SB)

(Star Star Records / c/o Eric Nordmeyer-Kesselstr. 68- 44147 / Dortmund Germany)

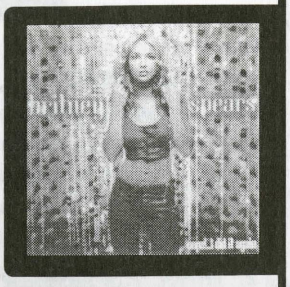
SPAMABILLY
"Tales From Zungurugungunz"



Wacky, fucked up Italian rockabilly. Main inspirations seem to be LOONY LUNES, PORNOGRAPHY, and the METEORS. Cool, authentic sound with packaging that really has to be seen to be believed. Limited edition to 700 copies, so all you Rockabalognas better rush out and get yours. (JC)

(Hang Over Records / Via G. D'Annunzio 9 / 20123 Milano, Italy)

BRITNEY SPEARS
"Oops....I Did It Again" CD



Amuch more solid effort than her debut album. While still a computer generated ProTools nightmare, the songs seem to be a little more upbeat, and a little more in your face with the hooks. Believe it or not, it's actually one of the ballads on here that might take the cake, "Don't Let Me Be The Last To Know", which was actually written by SHANIA TWAIN and her husband, whom also writes a lot of Shania's songs. Highlights include all photos of BRITNEY, especially the one where she's decked out in the tight pink leather pants, a "rock forever" tank top, and leaning up against a classic Corvette Stingray trying to convey to the world that she's a little slut trying to break out of her shell, and key lines and phrases scattered throughout the record like "I'm not that innocent", taken from the title track, which would lead one to believe that Britney's not opposed to experimentation with anal sex. If you have a spare $20 laying around, and are a fan of processed pop, you should pick this up. (BAM)

(Jive)

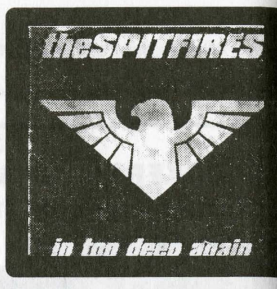
JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION
"Xtra Acme USA" CD



More of the same from this wily rock 'n' roll veteran. Not as catchy as some of his previous outings, but nonetheless, a big chunk of funky blues tunes (19 in all) that should be readily gobbled up by his devout fan base. This CD is at it's best when it strips down its pretenses and boogies in an old STONESy fashion, like on the song "Magical Colors (31 Flavors)". Spin will probably do a full page review on this. Me, I'd rather just listen to "Sticky Fingers", or some LORD HIGH FIXERS. (JC)

(Matador / 625 Broadway / NY NY 10012)

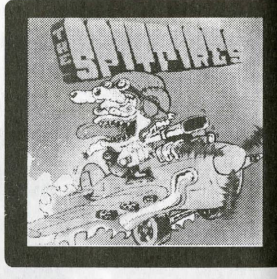
SPITFIRES
"In Too Deep Again"



Well, these boys aren't breaking any new ground here, but this is a solid, fast rock record, with crunchy, metallic hooks. The singer is throaty, somewhat sexy in that he's not afraid to display a little sensitivity while rockin' his ass off. It's really obvious, in a good way, that the SPITFIRES spent their youth listening to all the right records. Equal parts SWEET and 70's glam, punk and AC / DC, it all distills into a pretty good listen. Hey, sometimes it's enough just to rock. (SB)

(Junk Records / 7071 Warner Ave. F-736 / Huntington Beach, CA 92647)

SPITFIRES
"Social Club" CD



Sleazy rock 'n' rollers that cuss a lot and aren't afraid to play a guitar solo or two. Solid outing, but in the future I would hope that they have a few more tunes that stick with you more. I liked this record and I think that they are a pretty cool band, the songs on this just don't make you remember them once you're done with the CD. Still, all in all, a band worth checking out and one that looks promising in the future. (JC)

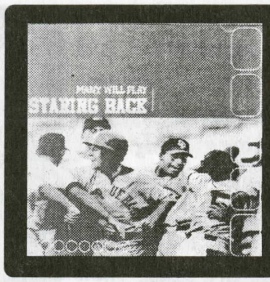
(TSB / P.O. Box 14911 / Grangemouth / FK3 8WA / Canada)

STARING BACK
"Many Will Play" CD

Better than the fast-paced pop punk that's making money at the moment. Probably because these fellows seem like they A) Actually

REVIEWS

have heard a REAL punk record, from before 1990, and B) Because they have something to truly be pissed off about. The singer reminds me, at times of a young BOB MOULD / HÜSKER DÜ, as do some of the vocal harmonies that go on here. Tight and fast and a little bit EMO, they're better than BLINK 182. (SB)



(Lobster Records / PO Box 1473 / Santa Barbara, CA 93102)

STILETTO BOYS
"Rockets And Bombs" CD

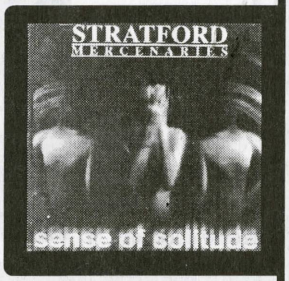
These guys are good. I hear a bit of AGENT ORANGE, I hear a bit more of the DICKIES (they cover "Gigantor"), but their influences don't overpower their music. The production is pretty good as well; double tracked vocals, full guitars, and you can tell they're a talented bunch of guys. They also kind of remind me of what the GAMITS are doing, but with more of a rock n' roll influence. What I'm trying to say, is check these guys out, they rock. (JER)



(Twenty Stone Blatt / PO Box 14911 / Grangemouth?FK3 8WA)

STRATFORD MERCENARIES
"Sense Of Solitude" CD

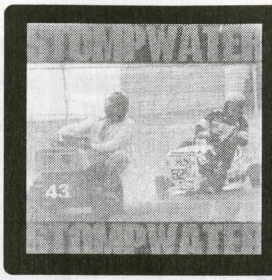
Typically, when a band 'progresses,' their music goes from the vital, triumphant, kick-ass punk which propels them to prominence, to some weak, embarrassing rendition of some mainstream (typically rock, or metal) garbage. A few, very few, actually mature. Even improve. HÜSKER DÜ springs to mind, or the 3rd or 4th DAMNED records. The STRATFORD MERCENARIES, while sounding nothing like such illustrious precedents, have managed a similar feat. No longer a plodding, pedestrian punk band, the addition of keyboards has enabled them to take the punk anger, aggression and punch, and wed it to some lush soundscapes. A gift for a nifty melody helps too. Forget CRASS or DIRT as references. Think the BUZZCOCKS at their most complicated, or SMALL FACES, or even STEVE HARLEY. (RK)



(Southern / PO Box 577375 / Chicago, IL 60657)

STOMPWATER
"Kentucky Moonshine" 7"

MOTÖRHEAD, ZEKE, NASHVILLE PUSSY-influenced whisky rock, complete with rednecks riding souped up lawn mowers on the cover. Nice. (BAM)



(Black Lung / PO Box 3692 / Morgantown, WY 26503)

STRATOVARIUS
"Infinite" CD

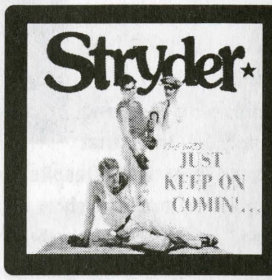
The one drawback of having "Black Metal" on the cover of our first issue is that we have received way more than our fair share of metal over the last year or so. Sometimes we ignore it, but sometimes its so bad that we just put in people's review piles to break up the monotony of all the bad punk shit they get, and put a brief smile on their faces. This last month we had a package with 10 (ten!) bad metal CD's in it, so I just decided to give one to almost everybody, including myself. Although this review surely wont help me toward my goal of eliminating all the metal labels from sending us shit, I must tell the truth. STRATOVARIUS might be my new favorite band. These guys rock so hard. This is actually better than "Painkiller" by the PRIEST, whom have similar guitar riffs and vocals. One things for sure, STRATOVARIUS's "Hunting High And Low" will be on every mix tape I ever make from now on. Do with this info what you wish. (BAM)



(Nuclear Blast / PO Box 43618 / Philadelphia, PA 19106)

STRYDER
"The Hits Just Keep On Comin" 7" EP

Driving indie rock with flashes of DRIVE LIKE JEHU or The FASTBACKS (one tune has some definite Kurt Blochy crisp, guitar pickins). The vocals are the main thing that point to the D.L.J. reference. Beauty of a packaging job that even comes with a full colored sticker. (JC)



(Elkion / 5385 Kingsfield / West Bloomfield, MI 48322)

SUGAR SHACK
"Get Out Of My World" CD

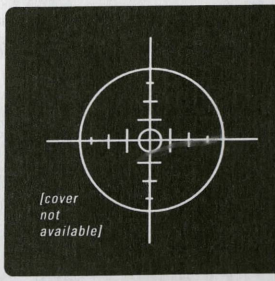
Super greasy, garage sludge, that works every time. Ahhh, Estrus, a label you can trust... They don't necessarily break new earth for us, but they do supply us with the our recommended daily allowance of amphetamine-fueled garago-punk that we ALL need in our musical diets. SUGAR SHACK deliver the goddamned goods too, complete with psycho-junkie vocals, and a groovy girl drummer. First you rock, then you roll. (SB)



(Estrus / P.O. Box 2125 / Bellingham,WA 98227)

SUPLECS
"Wrestlin' With My Lady Friend" CD

Ass-kicking heaviness that literally forces your hands into that little devil position thing, and makes you bang your damn head, hard. Even dot-commer yuppies that hear this will be forced to rock. Self proclaimed "Southern Stoner Rawk", I say, oh yeah.



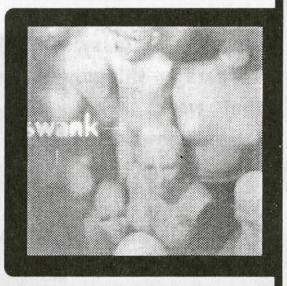
SHITLIST



KYUSS, FU MANCHU etc. Apparently some of the nice lads from EYEHATEGOD are now SUPLECS, and this shit is more menacing — and sexy — than that band ever was. Despite having a song about mopeds, it all somehow manages to sound cool and dangerous, with the appropriately muffled vocals and sludgy guitars. Delightfully hateful and greasy, these men are hairy psychos, and I'd probably date every one of 'em. (SB)

(Man's Ruin Records 610 22nd St. #302 SF CA 94107)

SWANK
"The Think For Yourself Movement"



Imagine a less-wacky NATION OF ULYSSES if they were better musicians but less inventive. The singer sounds like Ian Svenonius if Dr. Evil had gone back in time and stolen his mojo. Other times the music borders tediously on rap-rock. I think they're reaching for something here, and there are a lot of cool parts, but unfortunately, the coolness of the parts don't exactly add up to a cool whole. Better luck next time. (DGJ)

(Swank / PO Box 1263 / Harrisonburg, PA 22801

SWIG
"Furia" CD



For only being a duo, these guys make a lot of noise. The power pop / punk trios of the 80's come to mind right away, although SWIG's music isn't particularly derivative of anything. This is really well done, high energy guitar-pop that would sit right with the Indie rock coolies, as well as the 90's sweet-punk crowd. Betcha they have a hard time playing live though, as one guys sings and the other guy plays guitar, bass AND drums. HMMM...I'd buy a ticket to that. (SB)

(Cabbage Head Records / 3851 West Point / Dearborn, MI 48124-3250)

SWINGIN' NECKBREAKERS
"Santa Claus Ain't Coming This Year" 7"



This is like the fifth Christmas record I've reviewed for *HIT LIST* so far, but I've yet to get one anywhere near Christmas time. Come on guys, can somebody send me one of these in October or November? Nonetheless, some good rocking going on, with Chunky CHUCK BERRY riffs and tongue-in-cheek lyrics. Perfect for your Easter basket or maybe a party favor at your 4th of July picnic. (JC)

(Norton Records / P.O. Box 646 Cooper station / New York, NY 10276)

TANTRUMS
"Motels" CD EP



As a woman, I hate to draw the obvious "chick' comparisons, but, I'm gonna go ahead and do it anyway; There is a little bit of the Gwen Stefani thing going on here....The cute female vocalist, Devil Doll, resembles her vocally, and even a little physically. Having said that, the Tantrums are anything but radio ready ska-rock. They are a swaggering, sultry, roots-rockabilly band that knows their way around cheap motels and all-nite diners. Able to mix a little punk in with their tonic, the energy throbs, even when Devil Doll has the blues. They're great live, too. (SB)

(Cheetah's Records P.O. Box 4442 Berkeley, CA 94704)

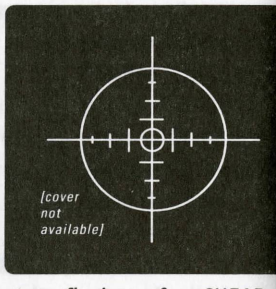
TAXI
"Eat Me / My Fingers" 7"

Dead basic, yet kinda rockin' punkish, er, stuff, a la RAMONES, without the humor. These Italian fellows have apparently just learned some new English phrases, those being "Eat Me" and "My Fingers" and I guess they want to share that new found knowledge with the world, because that's pretty much the extent of the lyrics. TAXI really can't play yet, but I bet they're fun at a party. (SB)



(Hate Records / Circ.ne Gianicolense / 112 00152 Roma- Italy)

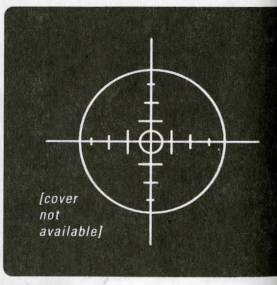
TEENAGE FRAMES
"!% Faster" 12" LP



Slick take on the THUNDERS / JAGGER. Swagger de Jour. This is kinda cool, but jumps around too much stylistically and is way to polished to pay much attention to. Momentary flashes of a CHEAP TRICK influence probably helped lure the big gun production job of Steve Albini. Inconsistent songwriting results with this band being promising, but not really pulling it off with this record. (JC)

(Jump Up Records / PO Box 13189 / Chicago, IL 60613)

TEN BUCK FUCK
Big Share Of Nothing 10" LP

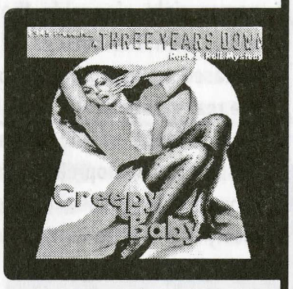


LOUD, LOUD, LOUD, dirty rock 'n' roll from Germany. Man, they remind me of San Francisco's DEMONICS a bit. I think it's the vocals. Pretty decent slick rock 'n' roll. Think ZEKE and TURBONEGRO. Great guitar hooks with catchy lyrics. Hopefully, they're all longhairs. My fave songs are "All Nite Long" and "You Can't Get Me Down". (TL)

(Radio Blast Recordings / PO Box 160,308, 40566 / Dusseldorf, Germany)

REVIEWS

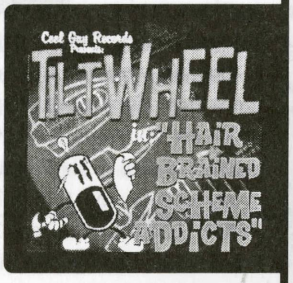
THREE YEARS DOWN
"Creepy Baby" CD



Finally, the rock has come back to Oakland! A lot of fools have been posing the rock lately, but these fellas have been providing the real stuff for years with little acknowledgement. I'm predicting that all will change this year with this fine release, a 7" for Fat and rumors of a 7" with ELECTRIC FRANKENSTIEN. Great rootsy stuff akin to E.F. and ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT. This CD features some of the best tracks that I have heard from them. Standout tracks: "Call In Sick", "Baddest Kid In Town" , "Fight Song" and their magnum opus, "Skulls". (JC)

(11345 / P.O. Box 4948 / Berkeley, CA 94704)

TILTWHEEL
"Hair Brained Scheme Addicts" CD



Another band whose name I've heard for a couple of years, but whose music I had yet to check out. What I get out of this release is speedy, JAWBREAKEResque indie rock. The songs are solid, and the record has a good flow to it. The band flexes some real instrumental muscle with thrashy breakdowns and tricky rhythms that don't get TOO out of hand. (JC)

(Cool Guy / Box 2361 / Sante Fe Springs, CA 90670)

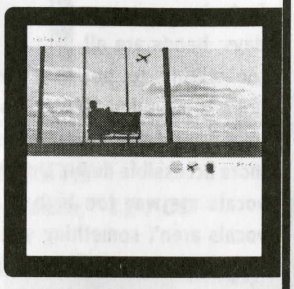
TOBOGGON / METRORAGE WAREHOUSE
Two-Album CD



Well, this one is kinda complicated to figure out...gotta make sure I'm listening to the right band here...OK...yeah..TOBOGGON... Fucking funny first song, "Ass Man". Pretty good overall, these guys. Fast, shrieking vocals, blasting good rock. The other band...let's see...not bad...a little more juvenile, but still, fast, a little more punk, but maybe not as good. It's hard to say, both bands satisfy on a beer drinkin', butt stinkin' punk rock level, which is the funnest level to be at sometimes. Cool enough. (SB)

(Fan Attic Records PO Box 391494 Cambridge MA 02139)

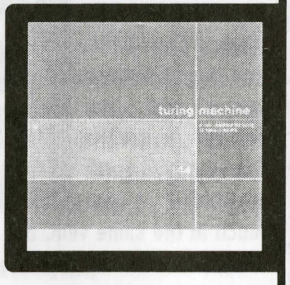
TORINO 74
"Driver" 7"



Another JAWBREAKER, LEATHERFACE, CRIMPSHRINE-influenced 7" from Crackle! Records. A decent 7", yet lacking the vocal fluctuation and chorus hook that I've come to expect from this great label. I've been told that this has 3 ex-members of CHOPPER — if that means anything to you. 3 songs. (BAM)

(Crackle! / PO Box 7 Otley / LS2114B England)

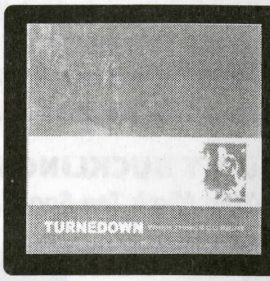
TURING MACHINE
"A New Machine For Living" CD



Have you ever sort of liked going to raves because you could get fucked on E and GHB, feel up members of the opposite sex, dance all night and the only reason you felt guilty the next morning because you were rocking out to music that had very little basis in actual physical instrumentation? Then try the TURING MACHINE on for size. Think trance-inducing instrumental stuff with one leg in Krautrock and the other in present-day dance music if Dischord were to have put it out, and you begin to get the idea. Good stuff for intense sexual liasons or tense bits in spy movies. And as is always the case with Jade Tree, wonderfully designed packaging. (DGJ)

(Jade Tree / 2310 Kennwynn Rd. / Wilmington, DE 19810)

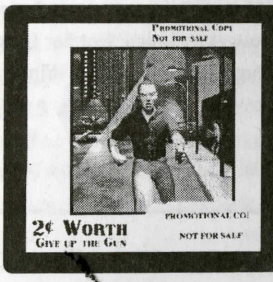
TURNEDOWN
"When Things Go Right" CD



"Four On The Floor"-era DAG NASTY-influenced pop rock, which will unfortunately get labeled "hardcore" because of their appearance, label, etc..., which is really too bad, as this makes a great melodic post-hard core record, yet it makes a terrible "hardcore" record. Fans of the aforementioned DAG NASTY, SWIZ, or other great post-"HC" bands should check this out. Also, keep your eyes on these guys for the future, as veteran frontman Joe Clements (FURY 66) has now become the new lead singer. While this is damn good, that should be flat-out amazing. (BAM)

(Sessions / 15 Janis Way / Scotts Valley, CA 95066)

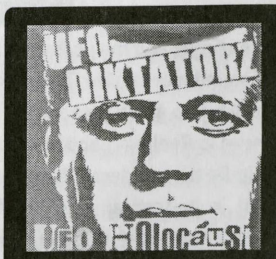
2 CENTS WORTH
"Give Up The Gun" CD



Skate rock with a heavy PENNYWISE influence. Features Bomb from the FACTION, a band that pretty much helped invent skate punk. Nice melodic tunes and tight, agile playing. Not incredibly memorable, but not bad at all. Check them out and see for yourself. (JC)

(AVD / 8370 W. Cheyenne / PMB 109-22 / Las Vegas, NV 89129)

UFO DIKTATORZ
"UFO Holocaust" 7" EP



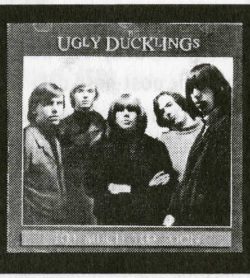
What you have here is an Italian band which is definitely going for a '77 KBD kinda thing. They do two originals, which are all right but not

SHITLIST

They also do two decent covers of two awesome songs, THE DEFNECTS "51%", and UNNATURAL AXE' S "They Saved Hitler's Brain". Soooooo, overall, this is okay, but it isn't necessarily anything to write home about. (JAW)

(Hate Records / Circ.ne Gianicolense112 / 00152 / Roma / Italy)

UGLY DUCKLINGS
"Too Much Too Soon" CD



The UGLY DUCKLINGS were Mick Jagger's favorite 60's Canadian band, and after listening to this reissue of their earlier material you'll get an inkling why. Don't get the wrong idea from the first song, "Gaslight", which was allegedly recorded on "The Tonight Show" with Mitch Miller's orchestra — the prime DUCKLINGS can be heard on the snarling 60's punkers "Nothin'" and "She Ain't No Use to Me", which blow me away. The rest of the CD is a mixed bag, and ranges from killer punk cuts like "Just In Case You Wonder" to slower bluesy thangs ("10:30 Train") to moody, bittersweet ballads ("Not For Long") to brisk STONES-type instrumentals ("Windy City") to so-so R&B covers. (JB)

(Pacemaker / Box 85065 / Nepean, Ontario K2G 5Y3 / CANADA)

ULTIMATE SPINACH
"Ego Trip" CD



A reissue of the debut album from late 60's Bosstown psych band ULTIMATE SPINACH. Even in 1967 it exuded a hippy-dippy vibe that at times made me cringe, and the passage of time has only made it sound more dated. There are a few really catchy psych-pop gems (especially "Ego Trip" and "Your Head is Reeling") and moody jams (such as "The Hip Death Goddess") here, but most of the material is pedestrian and the lyrics are uniformly corny and cliché-ridden (as, e.g., in "Funny Freak Parade" and "Dove in Hawk's Clothing"). (JB)

(Big Beat / 45-50 Steele Road / London NW10 7AS / ENGLAND)

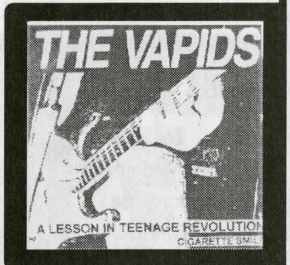
VACANTS
"Spider Girl" CD



Part of the short run CDR series that MP is doing now. The idea is a good one. With the price of CD manufacturing nowadays, bands are all too willing to put out a self-funded CD way too soon, foregoing the important demo phase. These CDs are basically more accessible demo. On the VACANTS' disc, the vocals are way too high in the mix (and those vocals aren't something you want up front), but they play likeable, gritty pop punk, sorta like a less refined CONNIE DUNGS (Brandon Dung produced). Decent. (JER)

(Mutant Pop / 5010 NW Shasta / Corvallis, OR 97330)

VAPIDS / HANDICAP 5
Split 7"



THE VAPIDS are a bunch of RAMONES worshipping Canadians, and there's nothing wrong with that (except the Canadian part). HANDICAP 5 are much in the same vein, but with weaker vocals. They turn in three tunes that kept my attention. Good split. (JER)

(Lost Cause / 44-2 Willard St / Ottawa, Ont K1S 1T8 / Canada)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"The Best Of Twist-A-Rama" CD



Twist-A-Rama was a teen dance show that apparently rivaled ole Dick Clark's American Bandstand in the mid sixties. The show was broadcast out of Utica in upstate New York, and the host, Hank Brown, was a lot cooler than Dick. He aired the heavyweights and the big names right alongside the undergrounders. In 1965, with the ratings at their peak, Brown released a compilation of local bands, capturing the real garage scene in all its lo-fi fury. The disc is a re-issue of the original 1965 vinyl, and despite the audiophile warning, the remastering process cleaned the old pops and hisses up quite nicely. It's a little crude, but real rockers like it dirty. (SB)

(Norton Records Inc / Box 646 Cooper Station / NY NY 10276)

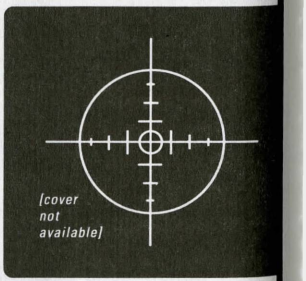
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Bored Teenagers" LP / CD



Every time you begin to think that the flow of top-notch '77-era punk reissues has finally begun to dry up, some enterprising soul comes up with another winner. "Bored Teenagers" is one of the best of the lot, as it contains a truckload of terrific British p-rock tunes from the fecund 1977-1982 era, most of which are fairly obscure. Given the high overall quality it's hard to single out the best tracks, but in my opinion the COMMITTED's "Fast Lane", HENRY ESSENCE's "14 Year Old Lover", the ANAL FLEAS' "Landlord", and the CRIME's "Johnny Come Home" stand above the pack. Grab this limited edition while you still can. (JB)

(Bin Liner / PO Box 18 / Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9YU / ENGLAND)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Capital City Cook Out" LP



A delicious Gas Records comp that makes me want to spit fire, wake the neighbors and tear my clothes off. Again. That's right, the psychotic, garage, hot rod racin', pill popper that lives in us all will jolt to life, eat meat and rock hard. Manic, out of bounds, and spookin' the horses, this is the shit that happens after punk. Lots of hotties here,

DEAD CITY REBELS, DETRIMENTALS, etc. Quite possibly the most disgusting back cover photo, I believe I've ever had the horror to look upon. Good job. (SB)

(Gas Records PO Box 77062, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5N2)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Epitaph For A Legend" DBL LP



As many of you know, Get Back is a damn cool label, re-issuing absolutely essential stuff from the 70's and early 80's. This is an eclectic compilation resurrecting the releases of the Texas label "International Artist" that had, among others, the 13th Floor elevators. The tracks are cleaned up, and include interesting interview excerpts with ROKY ERIKSON and LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS. Some of the stuff that's one here is priceless, like the track from the Electric Rubayyat, and a smattering of stuff from the Red Crayola. This is the punk-psych era at it's grooviest, and if you don't know this stuff, you ought to check it out. A must. (SB)

(Get Back / Abraxas Piazza Maltoni 16 50065 Pontassieve (Firenze) Italy)

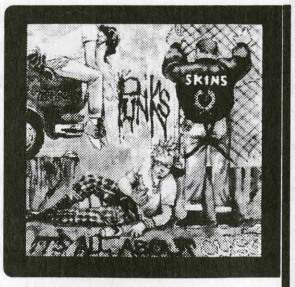
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Go-Kart Vs. The Corporate Giant 2" CD



The second (duh) Go-Kart low price sampler. Contains the obligatory unreleased tracks by PLAN A PROJECT, CANDY SNATCHERS, DOC HOPPER, LUNACHICKS, DOWN BY LAW, and ANTI-FLAG; as well as selections from these and other fine bands on their roster — PARASITES, BUZZCOCKS, PINKERTON THUGS, BORIS THE SPRINKER et al. Quality stuff. (RK)

(Go-Kart Records / PO Box 20, Prince Street Station / New York, NY 10012)

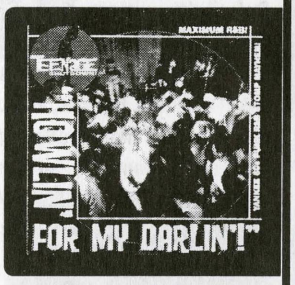
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Greasers, Punks And Skins" CD



A Squigtone Records sampler. The low-end of the street-punk hierarchy. If SQUIGGY, BOILS, WRETCHED ONES or the Oi SCOUTS mean anything to you, you may wish to investigate further. Otherwise, there's nothing new, original, or dynamic here to add to a rapidly tiring genre. (RK)

(Squigtone Records / 166 Spring Street / Newton, NJ 07860)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Howlin' for My Darlin'" LP / CD



This be cool, maaan. A recent installment in the "Teenage Shutdown" 60's garage series that's devoted to punk R&B stomp, it blasts off with one of the greatest songs I've ever heard, "Baby" by the TASMANIANS. Nothing else on here quite matches that track's irresistable combo of hooks and punky crunch, except maybe the amazingly belligerent "You Better Move" by the TROPICS (song #13; label sequence is wrong), but there are lots of other fetching tracks, especially those by LIMEY & THE YANKS, the SPIRITS, KEITH KESSLER, the UNDERWORLD (song #14), and the "howlin'" GREEK FOUNTAINS. (JB)

(Crypt / PO Box 1076 / Inverness, CA 94937)

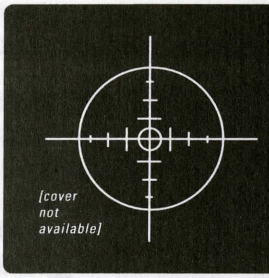
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"I'm Gonna Stay" LP / CD



The fuzz box was definitely one of the coolest devices ever invented, and if you don't believe me just give a listen to this new entry in the "Teenage Shutdown" series. If used properly, fuzztones can singlehandedly turn mediocre songs into good songs, and good songs into great songs, and this LP is full of appealing fuzz-drenched obscurities. My personal faves are those by the MONDELS (both), the WANDERER'S REST, GREG BARR & THE BARR ASSOCIATION, OSCAR & THE MAJESTICS, the IDES, the GRAINS OF TIME, and the mind-boggling MODDS' rant, "Leave My House", but most of the others are also pretty darn good. (JB)

(Crypt / PO Box 1076 / Inverness, CA 94937)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Jesus Loves My Heroin"



Some of my best friends are Thunders clones... — Wait! Who am I kidding? ALL my friends are Thunders clones, but even the most loyal, fanatical, disciples, like all the D. T. K. rockers represented here, gotta be getting tired of wave after wave of pointlessly derivative tribute acts. This compilation, however, brings together all the absolute geniuses of the genre. Roll Call...NIKKI SUDDEN, FREDDY LYNXX, HIROSHI THE GOLDEN ARM, JEFF DAHL, KEVIN K. -All present and accounted for. If the JOHNNY THUNDERS Cyber-Lounge was a church, this bunch would be the sinister ministers and if you've got an "L. A. M. F." tattoo somewhere on your body, you probably can't live without it, but for the love o' David Jo, if you're just starting out, gettin' your first little badboy / junkie / live fast / die young Dolls-influenced band together, Please, just try to put your own ribbon on it, willya? And dead young people are only pretty in the movies. (DJM)

(Hurtin' Records / 1-10-16 / Shirasagi, Nakano-Ku / Tokyo / 165-0035 / Japan)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Long Beach Blvd" CD

An excellent comp carrying on a bona fide punk tradition. The first Long Beach Blvd. comp came out in the early 80's (82?) and they've been showcasing the cream of Southern California punk ever since. This edition doesn't betray the original ideals, if anything, the bands are smarter and more versatile, while maintaining the same

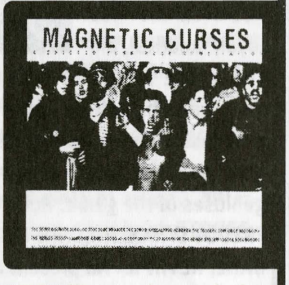
SHITLIST



The featured bands are SECRET HATE, CORN DOGGY DOG, DAS KLOWN, JUICE BROS., and PIVOT FOOTS. They all contribute respectable, at times important tracks. Secret Hate are a multi-faceted band, with a ton of influences up their collective punk sleeves, and the ability to change styles without betraying the essence of what they're about. They really stand out here....Get this on vinyl, if you can, to go with the series. (SB)

(Skunk /6285 E. Spring St. #234 /Long Beach, CA 90808)

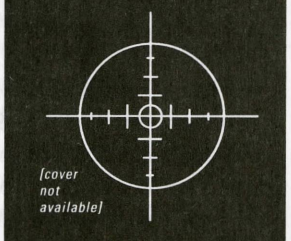
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Magnetic Curses: A Chicago Punk Rock Compilation" CD



Fuck me. Punk is alive and enormously healthy in Chicago, if this is anything to go by. Nary a duff track on the whole 26 band effort. Incredibly quality. A variety of styles from the POGUES-like tunings of the TOSSERS, to the garage fuzz of TRAITORS. And all the heavyweights are here, turning in remarkably good songs. No filler. ALKALINE TRIO, LYNYRD'S INNARDS, GAZA STRIPPERS, the STRIKE, MEKONS, the NERVES, OBLIVION, APOCALYPSE HOBOKEN, PEGBOY, MARY TYLER MORPHINE, BLUE MEANIES and more. Superb. Get this now. (RK)

(Thick Records /409 North Wolcott Avenue /Chicago, IL 60622)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Mondo Beatman" 7" EP



This is a fuckin' cool, tight n' slimy little comp. On the Italian "Rockin' Bones" label, that some of you may remember as "Kill Yourself Punkarecords", this is what sicko voodoo trash n' wrestling is all about. Low down and grimy, you'll need a shower after a few spins of this one. Bands include LIGHTNING BEATMAN, The SKELETON SURFERS, The NEVER HEARD OF 'EMS, The MONSTERS, The IN-SEKT (great name) and The CORONETS. (SB)

(Rockin' Bones /c/o Gualtiero Pagani Piazzale Della Macinia, 3 - 43100 /Parma- Italy.)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"New Wave Explosion" CD



A pretty accurate title. A bunch of contemporary bands who wouldn't have sounded out of place 20 years ago. Definitely more CARS than CHAOS UK. If you like keyboards and a dash of fuzz, you'll love this. Eclectic, and certainly not the typical punk and hardcore fare. Bands I at least recognized the names of, includes the CAUSEY WAY, the WEIRD LOVEMAKERS, SCARED OF CHAKA and the RONDELLES. (RK)

(Super-8 Underground /PO Box 12125 /Berkeley, CA 94712)

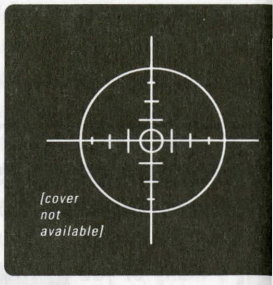
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Playing 4 Square" CD



Four labels strut their finest stuff. — Suburban Home, Negative Progression, My Records and Drive Thru. Between them, they manage to muster up a fair few names you'll recognise — NOBODYS, FAIRLANES, OBLIVION, APOCALYPSE HOBOKEN, GOB, BRACKET, LAGWAGON, NERF HERDER (worth investing in this comp for them alone), ATARIS, ALLISTER and lots more. There are a few unreleased tracks here, and its one of them cheap efforts — well worth picking up from the bargain bins....(RK)

(AVAILABLE FROM ALL THEM LABELS METHINKS)

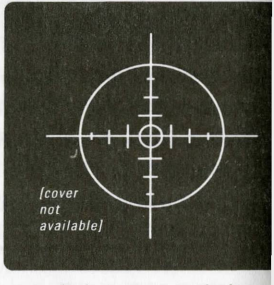
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Punk Rock Strike" CD



24 studio tracks, mainly revolving around the melodic punk genre, appealing to FACE TO FACE, NOFX, BLINK 182 fans. It has some great tracks on it, and I think you can order it for a buck or two (there's actually an ad in this issue that gives ordering info). Anyway, for that price, it's worth checking out if for nothing else than to look for great new bands to look into. By the way, there's bonus live tracks from 22 JACKS, NO USE FOR A NAME, & DOWN BY LAW. (BAM)

(Springman /PO Box 2043 /Cupertino, CA 95015)

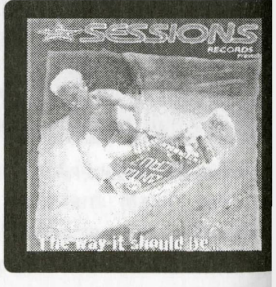
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Really Fast vol 1, 2, 3" CD



Finally. A deluxe double CD set of the first three compilations which put the raging Swedish hardcore of the mid-80s firmly on the map. This is the kind of speed and intensity that led to a whole new vocabulary being coined to describe it — "shreds to dust", "insane thrash" etc etc. All the heroes — ANTICIMEX, BRISTLES, AVSKUM, DISARM, RAPED TEENAGERS, MOB 47 etc — are here. And the rest of the crazy gang. If you want to be blown away all over again, or need a quick antidote to all that sickly sugary pop-punk, snap this up. (RK)

(Sound Idea Distribution /PO Box 3204 /Brandon, FL 33509-3204)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"The Way It Should Be" CD



Unreleased tracks from FURY 66, NERVE AGENTS, DEATH BY STEREO, and more, plus previously only on 7" tracks by FU MANCHU, AFI, SUPERSUCKERS,

ODD NUMBERS, NO USE FOR A NAME, GWAR, and others make up this quite enjoyable punk rock compilation. A few originals, a few covers, a lot of rock. (BAM)

(Sessions / 15 Janis Way / Scotts Valley, CA 95066)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Trash On Demand Vol 3"



Well, at the top of this CD it says "Jeff Dahl and Amsterdamned Records present 20 of the finest, trashiest, punkest bands from around the world". By now, you should know, respect, and love Jeff Dahl's opinion, and if he has the whole world to pull from to get 20 tracks, imagine how good this is! Having only heard of about half these bands prior to this was a major bonus, as you know that there's nothing like hearing a great new band. This mostly mid-tempo CD features a good combo of traditional type R&R along with lots of good ol' beer influenced trash rock. Check it out. (BAM)

(Amsterdamned / PO Box 862558 / Los Angeles, CA 90086)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
"We're Not Generation X" CD



An interesting, eclectic compilation that really is all over the place. From spoken word and experimental noise assaults, to ripping punk and pretentious ego rock, the gamut is run. This is an international comp, but most of the bands are from the U.S., a few from Belgium, Sweden etc. The quality varies, as the liner warn, and you'd best heed that admonition if it matters to you, cause they're not kidding. The faster punk stuff is decent, but...I just think this comp, while the spirit is truly punk rock, could have been thought out a little better. Great cover art by the wonderful Winston Smith makes this almost a must have though. (SB)

(G.C Records / PO Box 3743 / Laguna Hills, CA 92654.)

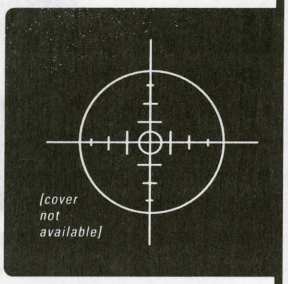
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Zombie Shake" DBL LP



This is a self-confessed "Fake Killed By Death comp", put out by the lovable Gualtiero Pagani of the Italian trash n' punk label "Rockin' Bones / Kill Yourself". It's another winner too, got the sleazy, rippin' surf-garage-punk sound that we've come to expect from this label, and as usual, all Italian bands are featured. Some tracks rock harder than others, but a general decadence slithers throughout all four sides of this comp. Better pick it up now, this will probably be a collector's item by next year. (SB)

(Rockin' Bones / c/o Gualtiero Pagani Piazzale della Macina, 3-43100 / Parma, Italy)

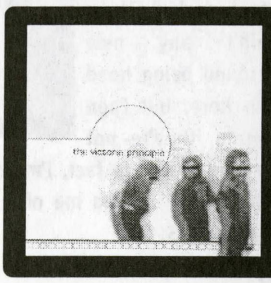
VEINS
"The Glorious Sounds of..."



Immediately, the Veins reminded me of Uncle Sam, who I later discovered listed among their thank-yous. This is just a terrific fucking rocknroll record. While corporate-ruled mainstream media sources keep trying to sell us BLINK 182 and Frat-boy-Rap-Metal as a "return to rock", and bloated baby boomers inducted JAMES TAYLOR and BILLY JOEL into the "Rocknroll Hall of Fame", let me just say when I say rocknroll, I mean defiant, loud, dirty, raw, revved-up, guitar-based jubilation. (ex: THE JONESES, DEVIL DOGS, REAL KIDS, WALDOS, HANOI ROCKS, HEARTBREAKERS.) The VEINS authoritatively demonstrate how to simultaneously be sleazy without recycling worn-out KISS riffs, and also, smart-with lyrics on par with the LOVELESS, BEAT ANGELS, OR HELLO DISASTER. I dunno how this band managed to slip by me this long. REAL ROCKNROLL. By all means — GET THIS. Special Thanx to Sunset Stripper, Amy Young, for turning me onto this! (DJM)

(Veins / P. O. B. 18917 / Rochester, NY / 14618-0917)

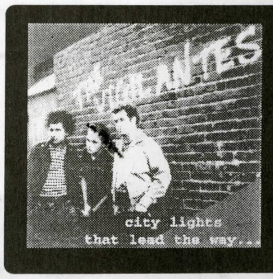
VICTORIA PRINCIPLE
CD



Ick. There are no songs here, really. Just noise. The vocals are irritating. The most interesting parts are the breakdowns, which seem to be more like break-ups. Songs, guys! Songs! Maybe I'm being harsh, but it seems to me that putting out a record for this sort of band is pointless. It's fine and well and good if you wanna make that kind of music — it actually sounds like it would be fun to play. But who really needs the "because we can" musicianship antics? Ultimately, I'd rather hear shitty musicians playing great songs than great musicians playing no songs. And that's what we have here. I don't know...if you're a fan of dissonant, jerky white noise to block out your neighbors' arguments, I suppose you could do worse than this. (DGJ)

(Ruido Union / PO Box 7141 / Richmond, VA 23221)

VIGILANTES
"City Lights That Lead The Way"



At first you hear this and you think "Wow, the music is cool, but what's up with that singers voice?" Like Joey Vindictive or the guy from the LILLINGTONS, his is a voice that is weird and annoying at first, but the more you listen to it the more you dig it and realize that he is totally cool. Anthemic street punk that would pair up well with the BODIES or the ANTI-HEROS. (JC)

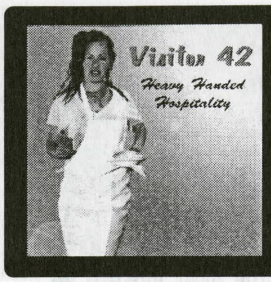
(GMM Records / PO Box 15234 / Atlanta, GA 30333)

VISITOR 42
"Heavy Handed Hospitality" CD

Well, this is SF-based happyish pop-punk that sticks to the same mid / fast pace and gets

SHITLIST

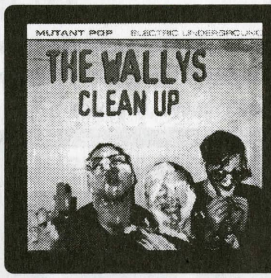
in short, but powerful blasts. These folks are tight, lyrically astute and fairly rockin'. There ain't any new ground being hoed up here, but then again, they're not boring either. In fact, I'm not sure why, but at times they remind me of a less sinister DEAD KENNEDYS. (SB)



(Butt Flower Records / PO Box 5134 / Alameda, CA 94501-8434)

WALLYS
"Come Clean" CD

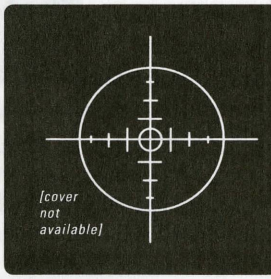
Much better production than the last short run CD I got, thanks in no small part to mastering by Mass Giorgini. This stuff sounds great, good hooks, decent (if a bit off key) vocals. It's just that with such a limited scope (all the songs are about chicks), a band has to really smoke to keep my attention. Also, what's with the long-winded liner notes? (JER)



(Mutant Pop / 5010 NW Shasta / Corvallis, OR 97330)

WANNADIES
"Might Be Stars"

Man — I read reviews comparing this band to pop greats, the GO-BETWEENS and the ONLY ONES, but not even close. Disgustingly sweet, goopey, green-icing flavored toothache pop, a la SUPERGRASS, POOH STICKS, REDD KROSS, TEENAGE FANCLUB, STEREOPHONICS. (Read: You tuff guys won't like it.) I like it a lot, but they ain't no MATERIAL ISSUE. (DJM)



(No Info)

WHIPPERSNAPPER
"The Long Walk" CD

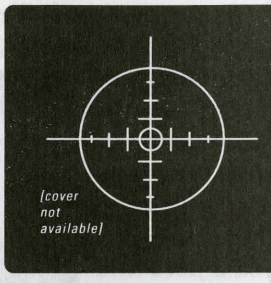
With their latest full-length, WHIPPERSNAPPER have managed to successfully branch out of the SoCal melodic hardcore straightjacket they used to inhabit. Much the same way that UNWRITTEN LAW managed to expand the scope of their songwriting (though in a less commercial direction), this album is really coming into its own. Melodic hardcore with an edge. Mid-period FARSIDE would be another reference. Two guitars with a difference. (RK)



(Lobster Records / PO Box 1473 / Santa Barbara, CA 93102)

WIDOWS
"Complete Widows" CD

The WIDOWS, from Finland, were among the very best of the late 70's wave of continental European pop punk bands, and Poko has performed a real service by reissuing all of their recorded material on one compilation. Herein one can find all three of their rare 7" EPs and their mini-LP, plus an entire set recorded live. This means that you'll once again be able to hear a whole bunch of classic hard-edged punk tracks with great melodies and choruses, including "Shit Tragedy", "Wall of Berlin", "For the Freedom", "We're Coming", "Famous Five", and my personal fave, "Wanna Be Your Friend", which is as good as pop punk gets. (JB)



(Poko / c/o Voitto Vasko / P. Tuotanto / PO Box 69 / 40101 Jyvaskyla / FINLAND)

WORLD INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY
"East Coast Super Sound Punk Of Today" CD

Kids, don't let the title fool you. These are the strange men your parents warned you about. This is manic, maniacal, disjointed, circus-like, jazz- and art-influenced brilliant music from people that are way too smart, talented and creative for their peers. I always give points for sick, slithering humour too, as well as songs about Jeffrey Lee Pierce. Why don't more bands do GUN CLUB tributes? This is super interesting, fairly zany, and could be annoying if not in the right mood. (SB)



(Gern Blandsten PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661)

Y
"Pseudo Youth...Human Cesspool"

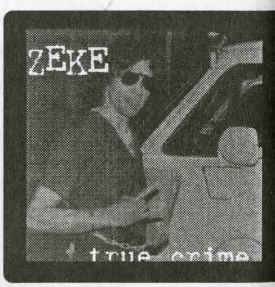
40 tracks in 40 minutes! That should give you a good idea of what this sounds like. Y has tons of crazy tempo changes that range from frenetic high speed pummeling to slower dirge sounding parts. This CD is a collection of Y's LP, their split EP with DISCRIPT, and their own EP. All of the songs have been remastered along with a couple of previously unreleased songs. Most of the songs are in their native German, but before each song, the band provided a quickie one-line explanation of the lyrics. Lyrics are all about assholes: assholes in the scene, assholes in your family, asshole fascists, assholes on cell phones, and assholes "who spend all of their time thinking about the old days and are incapable of doing anything innovative anymore." You gotta love it. (AD)



(Sound Pollution / P.O. Box 17742 / Covington, KY 41017)

ZEKE
"True Crime" CD

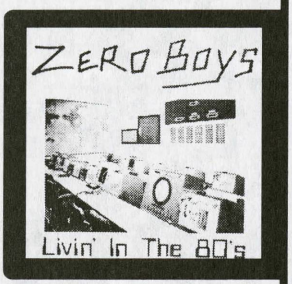
8 tracks of random studio shit from a long time ago, and 8 tracks of live shit. Aren't you idiots out there over these guys yet? MOTÖRHEAD kicks ZEKE's ass, as do most bands going nowadays. Haven't you guys



seen a band play too fast before? Haven't you seen a band purposely do stupid things to get a rep as "bad boys"? Go buy a NASHVILLE PUSSY album, at least they deserve their press. (BAM)

(Drop Kick /PO Box 192 E. Melbourne /Victoria 3002 Australia)

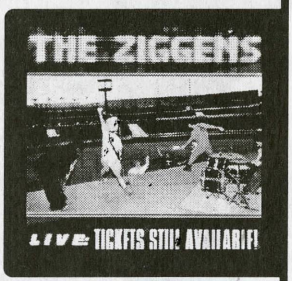
ZERO BOYS
Living In The 80's" 7" EP



Fabulous reissue of the classic ZERO BOYS 7". I heard they had gotten back together for a New Year's eve reunion show (I'm sure that was amazing). This looks like part of the same reunion work, reissuing and getting publishing + copywriting for it finally, smart move. The tunes on this are a bit slower than their latter hits, but don't let that scare you off. This is the shit. Four out five of these were represented on "Killed By Death" #4. (JC)

(Zero Boys /4022 N. Central /Indianapolis, IN 46205)

ZIGGENS
"Live: Tickets Still Available" CD

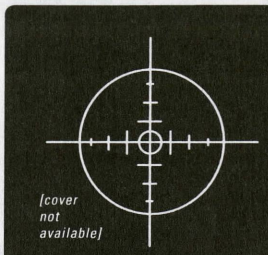


Energetic and entertaining live band caught in all their goofy glory. A band that jumps styles from song to song from country, surf, punk, whipping out the metal on a cover of JUDAS PRIEST's, "Breaking The Law," a fun band that reminds me of the DEAD MILKMEN or YOUNG FRESH FELLOWS (an obvious influence that they even mention in one of the songs). Real clean recording job, lot's of silly banter, jokes, and crowd interaction. (JC)

(Skunk /c/o cornerstone R.A.S. 16572 Burke Lane /Huntington Beach, CA 92647)

ZILLIONARES
"Everything's Coming Up Bruises" LP

I said before that the ZILLIONAIRES are the Punkest band in America and I still think they are at least one of the Punkest. Pelado is a great grass-roots punk label that has already churned out a ton of quality rock 'n' roll, so this is a good mix. More of the same of their sonic attack of CRIME and meets THE PAGANS. Beautiful pink vinyl, poster, etc. make this aesthetically pleasing. The good punk music keeps it spinning on my player. (JC)



(Pelado /521 W. Wilson #C103 /Costa Mesa, CA 92627)

ZUNGA
"Zunga" CD



If there was more to do in Kansas, then maybe these fellows wouldn't have made such a busy record. It's certainly jazz-influenced, with more than a touch of the CHILI PEPPERS thrown in for funk appeal, it's just that there's too much going on in each song. The lyrics are too damn clever to fit within the rhythms of the songs, so the singer ends up slurring to fit each big idea in place. These guys are great musicians, pretty funny, and they're no dummies. If jazzy-funk-rock is yo' thang, then you'll lap this one up. (SB)

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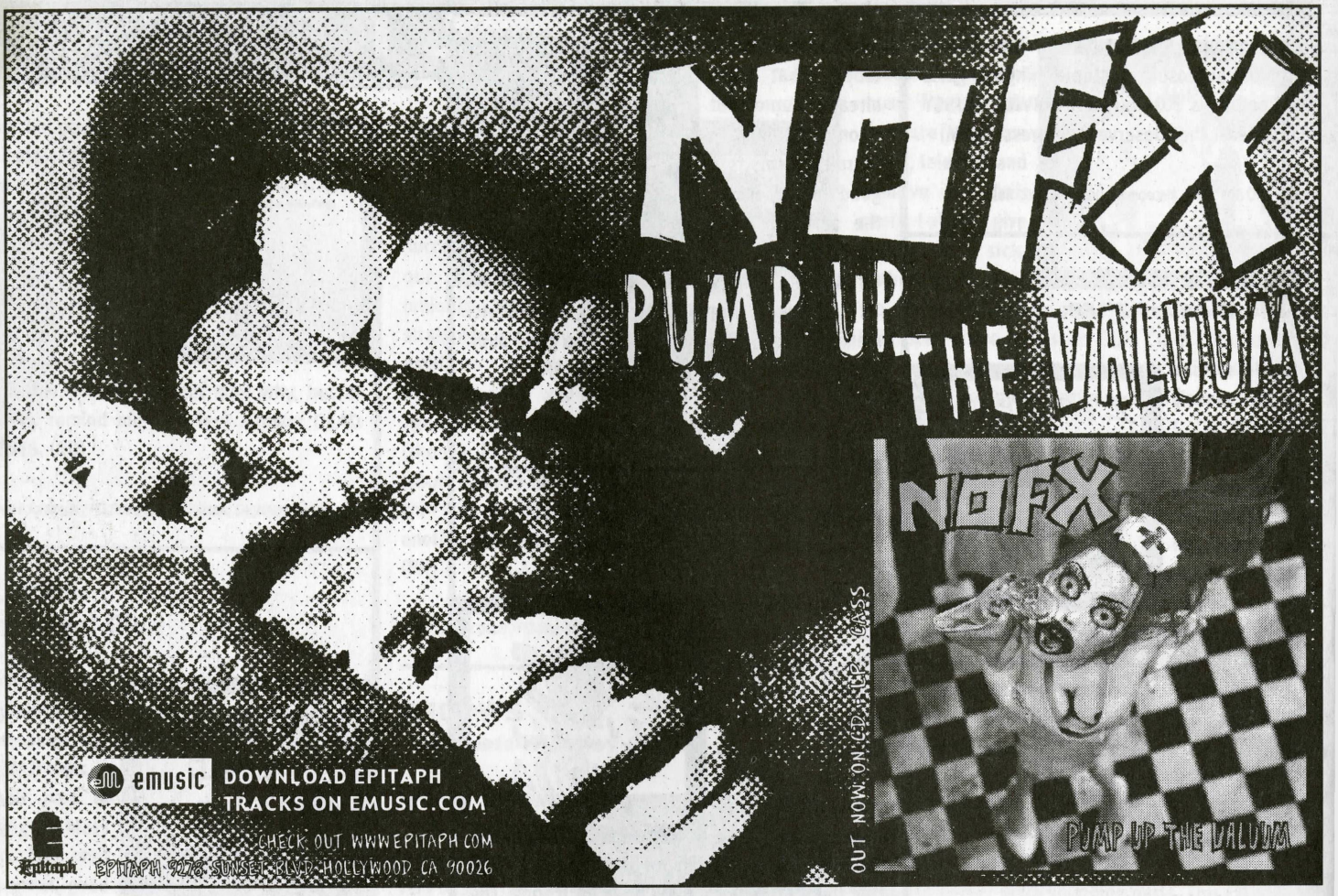
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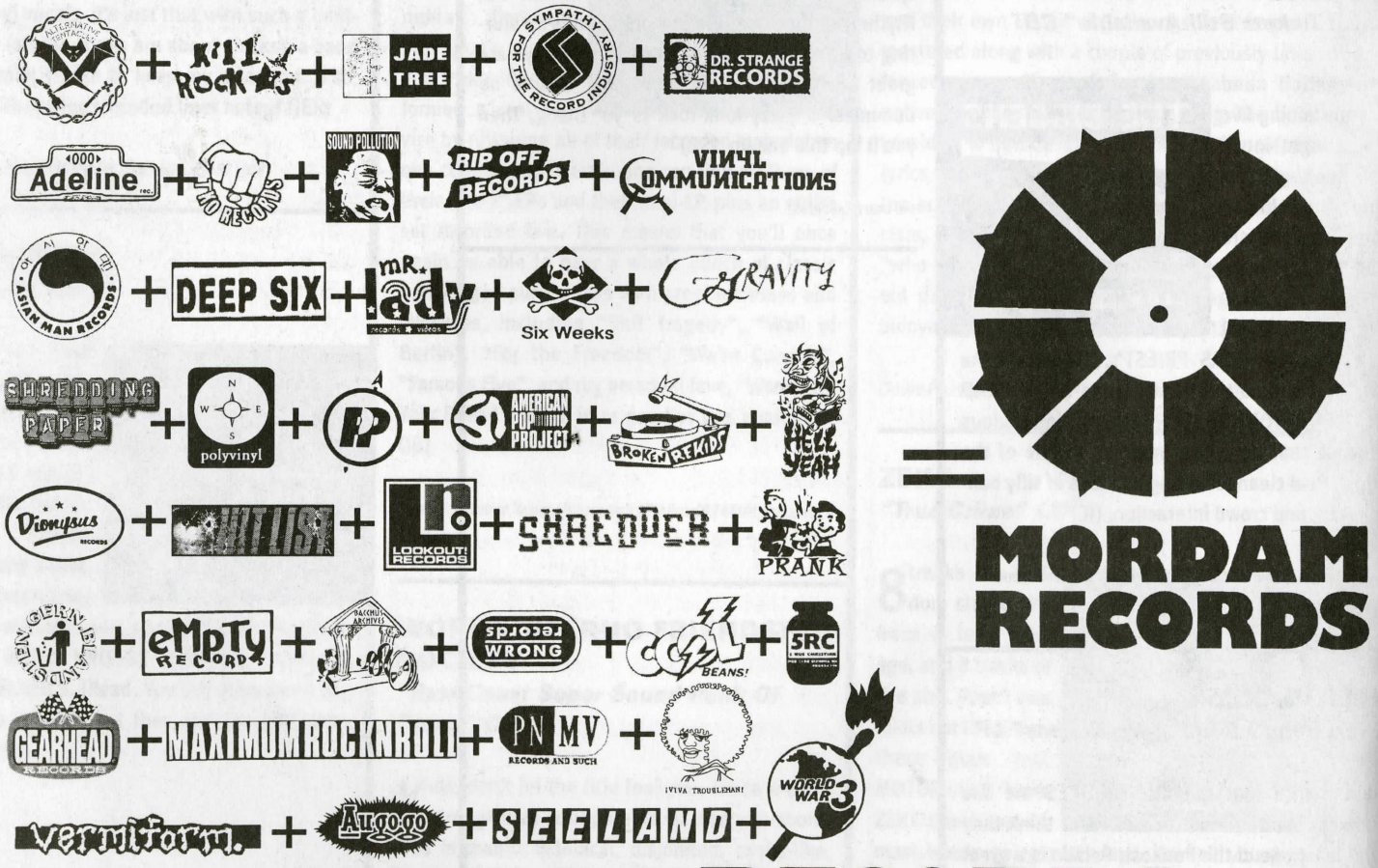

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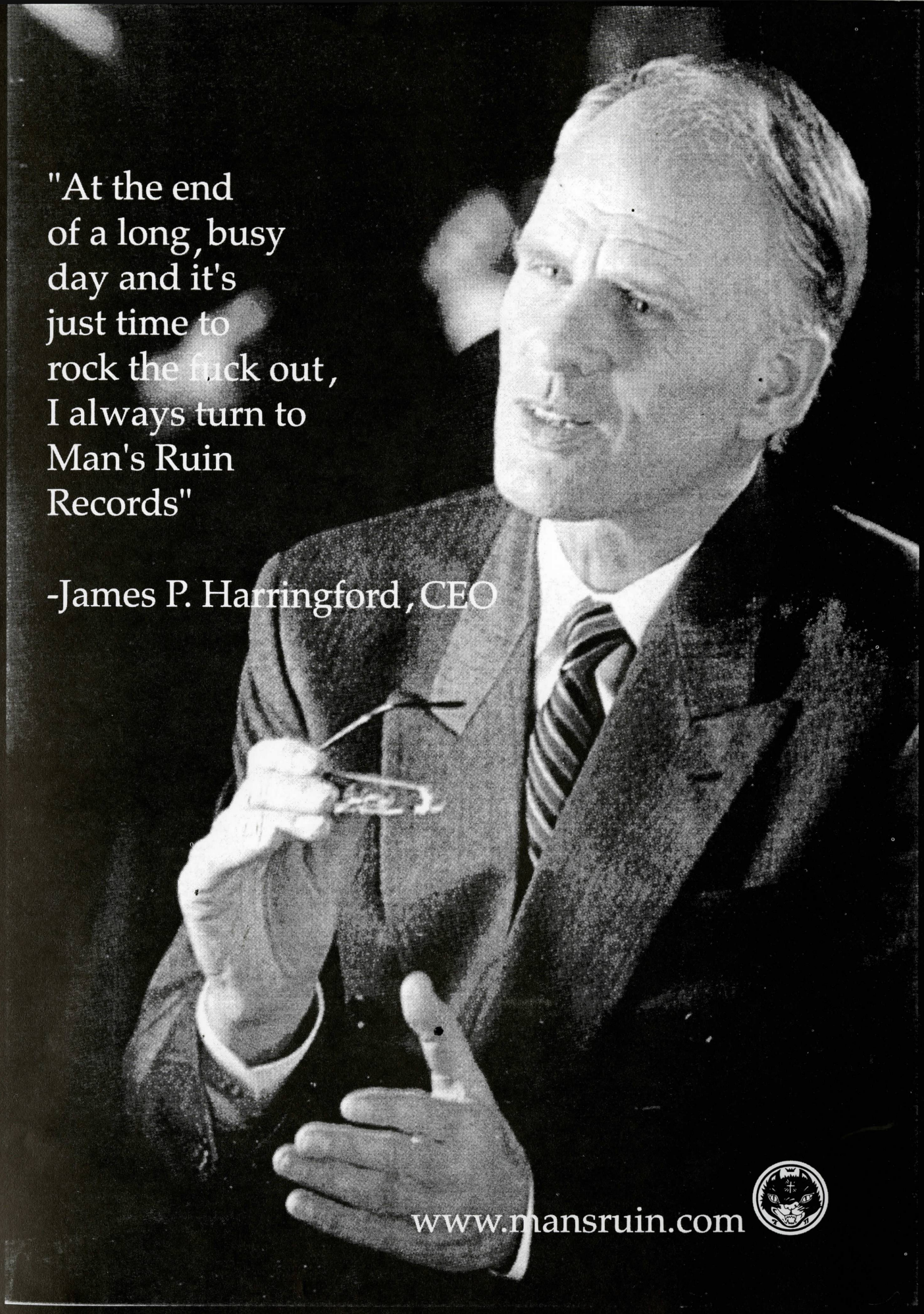
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