

GEOMETRIC

winter '02-'03

MUSIC.
MOVIES.

Baseball Furies.
Ben Weasel
vs. Yes.
Scott
McCaughey.

Godzilla.
Spider-
Man.

Russ Forster.
MicroCineFest.
Jim Munroe.



GO METRIC!

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Ben Weasel versus Yes!

Since the dawn of time, or at least the late 60s, man has sought to unite the worlds of rock music and spiritualism. A goofy notion indeed, especially when it entails bands from the West trying to incorporate faiths from the East. How much progress has been in such endeavors? Let us find out by examining two entries, spanning nearly 30 years, from the genre of "Say, I'm not a dumb rock star, I read big books with big ideas, and I understand this stuff more than you do, dear listener, so let me explain it to you...via the rock!" rock: Ben Weasel's *Fidatevi* (2002) and Yes' *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (1973). We present the evidence, you hand down the verdict!

(For each category, there are five points to be awarded. All five points in a category may be given to one entrant, or the points may be split between both parties. Tally your point total, declare your winner, and send us the results!)

	Ben Weasel - Fidatevi	Yes - Tales from Topographic Oceans	Points tallied
Religious inspiration	Buddhism	Hinduism	
Explanation (read: excuse to fans)	Nothing that the album was meant as a series of 'Notes to Self,' influenced partly by his interest in Buddhism, Ben says, '...The lyrics are based on experiences or insights gained by practicing secular sitting meditation, as well as ideas I came across and personalized through the study of the works of authors as diverse as Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, Henry David Thoreau, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Pema Chodron, Ralph Waldo Emerson and others.' ...This album features the great tunes of one of punk's masters as well as lyrics which illustrate introspection and reflection."	"We were in Tokyo on tour, and I had a few minutes to myself in the hotel room before the evening's concert. Leafing through Paramhansa Yoganada's Autobiography of a Yogi I got caught up in the lengthy footnote on page 83. It described the four part Shastric scriptures which cover all aspects of religion and social life as well as fields like medicine and music, art, and architecture. For some time, I had been searching for a theme for a large scale composition, so positive in character were the Shastras that I could visualise there and then, four interlocking pieces of music being structured around them. That was in February, eight months later, the concept was realised in this recording."	
Most awkward lyric	Multi-way tie, if you've seen Dead Poet's Society, you've covered all of Fidatevi's themes	"Dawn of light lying between a silence and sold sources/Chased amid fusions of wonder in moments hardly seen forgotten/Coloured in pastures of chance dancing leaves cast spells of challenge/Amused but real in thought, we fled from the sea whole"	
Best song title	"The True Heart of Beauty"	"The Revealing Science of God"	
Average song length?	2:33 (14 songs)	20:28 (4 songs)	
Thoreau quote	"Simplify"	Hey, even Yes weren't so pretentious as to quote fucking Thoreau	
Kinks cover	"Strangers" (from the Lola versus Powerman and the Moneygoround LP)	none	
Promotional efforts	Press releases, promotional copies,	Spent \$40,000 renting air balloons to promote Topographic Oceans tour	



BEN WEASEL

Tribute bands? What the fk!**

aka, A GM! Interview with

Russ Forster

Filmmaker Russ Forster has a knack for examining easy-to-ridicule subjects. With *So Wrong They're Right*, he chronicled the world of 8-track enthusiasts (see GM! #12). With his latest documentary, *Tributary*, he tackles an equally vulnerable subject: tribute bands. And again he's created a fascinating movie using humor, intelligence, and curiosity to show that there's more than meets the eye when it comes to tribute bands. And even when there's less, *Tributary* still entertains.

(Listed below are the four categories Forster devised to organize the bands presented in *Tributary*, along with the introduction from the movie. The interview follows. Questions by Mike Faloon.)

1. Post-modern tribute bands

"I call the first type of tribute bands in this video post-modern, because this type is extremely self-reflective, sometimes to the point of becoming an elaborate in-joke."

2. Working tribute bands

"Working tribute bands have gotten popular enough so that gigs are lucrative and common. They love the bands they tribute, but they are in it for the money as well."

3. Social tribute bands

"Social tribute bands are similar to working tribute bands if you substitute hanging out with friends for money. Some do make decent cash, but the emphasis is on community."

4. True love tribute bands

"Finally, true love tributes are the one which best live up to the name tribute. They are driven by a burning passion for the music and band they emulate and elevate those bands to the level of mentor. It's hard not to get caught up in their energy and enthusiasm."

(From the introduction to *Tributary*) This is the weird, wild, and wonderful world of tribute bands, and welcome to it. Scoff if you will, but while shooting this video my opinion of the tribute band world completely changed. I used to think of tribute bands as degenerate off shoots of real music, a refuge for the unimaginative and untalented. Four years after embarking on this video adventure, I feel that tribute bands are a sincere if naive art form of their own. And, art form or not, they sure are a lot of fun, and nice people too, save for the Jim Morrisons and Eddie Van Halens I ran into. So brace yourself for an exhilarating ride with some backwards looking bands who are part of this culture's end of the century reassessing process.

Go Metric: What initiated the project?

Russ Forster: Well, it was an idea from a friend of mine, Jean Lotus. She actually was co-editor of a magazine called *The White Dot* that was encouraging people to turn off their televisions sets. She had been going to see some tribute bands in Chicago, and was completely floored by a few of them. I think there was a Motorhead tribute and a Ramones tribute that particularly excited her. I had already finished *So Wrong They're Right*, the 8-track film, and a lot of people were giving me ideas about what my next project could be, so that was her idea. And actually the first few times she brought it up, I wasn't all that enthusiastic because it seemed that tribute bands were a suburban phenomenon that just wouldn't appeal to me. In the summer of '96 some friends and I went to a tribute band show that happened to be near their house in Chicago, it was an outdoor festival. There was an AC/DC tribute and there was a band called War Pigs, a Black Sabbath tribute, and the show completely blew me away. It was one of the weirdest experiences I ever had. It was the strangest mixture of old time rock'n'roll type people, middle aged rockers who are well past their prime. There was definitely this sort of trailer park aspect to it, too. I saw this one mother/daughter tag team where they were both interested in the same guy, battling each other for his attention. It was way beyond anything I'd ever seen



TRIBUTARY

A Real Video about Surreal Rock Bands
By Russ Forster (70 min., No© 2001)



before, and the bands were just goofy. They didn't get it right exactly, but the audience didn't seem to care. It fascinated me. I thought, Wow, this really is a bit of Americana here, maybe not what most Americans would be proud of, but it was something quintessentially American. It sparked my interest in trying to do a project.

I was struck by how realistic a sense they have of what they're doing, and how they're perceived. One of the guys in one of the Rolling Stones bands was saying, My original songs were only okay, but these songs (by the Rolling Stones) are better. It's seldom that you hear musicians say anything less about their songs than, My stuff's amazing and the world just doesn't get it.

You're talking about the band Sticky Fingers, I think, in Los Angeles. They had a big effect on me too. They were an odd case, because they were in it for the money and they became pretty big. They still are playing around Los Angeles, and the last I heard they were commanding three or four thousand dollars a gig. They were on the cover of a bunch of musician magazines in the late 90s and became quite a big deal, became quite a symbol of what journalists started seeing as a trend. They had their sort of working ethic that was very appealing. They really wanted to make you feel that you were seeing the Rolling Stones circa 1972 in every way that they possibly could. And yet, they were clearly fans of the music. It wasn't just a put on; it wasn't just a day job. They were an amazing interview; they just went on for hours and hours. Actually, it was two members of the band Sticky Fingers that I ended up talking with the most. One was with his girlfriend and they were having sex in the bathroom so he was kind of preoccupied. Ironically enough, he's the Billy Wyman. It's one of these weird cases where the person kind of mimics the behavior of the person they're portraying. But the Keith Richards guy and the Mick Taylor guy, those two guys wanted to tell their story. They really wanted people to see them as something other than loser hacks. I think they did a really great job of portraying themselves as intelligent, dedicated musicians who are doing the Stones thing as sort of a job but, again, it's not out of desperation. They sort of fell into it and they really, honestly enjoyed what they were doing and wanted to do a really great job of it, and could make the house payments with the money they were making.

With *So Wrong They're Right*, you knew the people you were interviewing. With *Tributary*, you were getting to know the bands as you were interviewing them. Were there cases where you had to convince someone that you were sincerely documenting tribute bands and not making fun of them?

Surprisingly enough, the bands were extremely open to me for the most part. The only real trouble I had were the Jim Morrisons and the Eddie Van Halens I ran into. The Jim Morrisons seem to be completely out there; they thought they were Jim Morrison. They wanted contracts, they wanted to see raw footage, and they wanted the rights to re-edit, if necessary—all this crap. It was just unbelievable. I talked to one guy, I think he was with Soft Parade, in New York, I wish I had had the presence of mind to record that conversation because it was just

TRIBUTARY

A Documentary
about U.S. Tribute
Bands, shot during
a heyday in the
late 1990s

"Critic's Choice" — San Francisco
Bay Guardian

absolutely surreal and completely hilarious, although at the time I'm not sure I was catching the humor. I'd had such a good experience with all the bands I'd talked to up to that point. This Jim Morrison guy was absolutely impossible from the word go. It was just surreal that he could believe that he was channeling the spirit of Jim Morrison. One of the first things he said was he wasn't sure he wanted to be associated with the tribute band scene because he was getting ready to release a solo album that would be like the solo album Jim Morrison would have recorded had he lived long enough to do so. I was just like, Holy crap, this guy really is out there and not in a fun way. Then he got really demanding. He wanted to see all of the stuff I had already shot and he wanted all these stipulations about how he could change his segment in the film, and maybe other aspects of the film. At a certain point I was so in shock I just said, I don't think this is going to work out; there are other Jim Morrisons I could talk to.

That's such a funny phrase.

And the Van Halen thing, that I couldn't really get either. I don't know that much about Eddie Van Halen. I don't know if he is litigious himself, but the two Eddie Van Halens I talked to wanted contracts. The one, he wouldn't sign a release and he wanted a stipulation where I would use the footage only for my own personal use and I wouldn't use it in any other forum. So we ended up not being able to do any Van Halen. Those are the only bands that I got that from. Every other band was so willing to share everything and so willing to turn me on to other bands in the same city that I could talk to. There was no sense of competition, or very little that I came across.

That reminds me of the Kiss band who was saying that they didn't compare themselves to the other Kiss bands. They just want everyone to have a good time.

That was Dressed to Kill, I think. I wouldn't necessarily believe them 100% on that, they're a little more

competitive than they let on. But basically, if you're a Kiss band, you're in a pretty good situation because Kiss fans are insatiable. They'll go to see *Dressed to Kill* and then if Strutter is playing the next weekend, they'll go see Strutter, too. Most of the fans of the Kiss bands that I saw could list off five or six Kiss bands that they'd seen; they cannot get enough Kiss.

It sounds like there were a lot of surprises in making *Tributary*. Are there others that haven't come up yet in our conversation?

Well, I never thought I would run into one Guided By Voices tribute band and now there are four on the West coast. I do sort of understand where that's coming from. I came up with the idea of true love tributes as a motivation, where you're just such a great fan of the band that it's sort of your way of being a fan, to play their music live. That seems to be the motivation for that kind of expression because none of the bands are getting huge audiences or making lots of money. But there is a social thing though, not only do you get to pay homage to your heroes, but it's sort of a convention—whenever a Guided By Voices tribute plays—of Guided By Voices fans. So in some ways you could make an argument that they fit into both of those categories (true love and social). The categories are sort of arbitrary, any of the bands could theoretically fit into any one of those categories. We were talking about stuff that blew me away, that changed my mind about what the tribute scene was like. I guess you could say the fact that you could come up with different categories for reasons for doing a tribute band was something that I didn't expect in the very beginning. When I started cutting the bands together I realized I felt more comfortable letting the bands talk for themselves, letting them contradict themselves and each other, and letting there be a certain amount of ambiguity, rather than trying to force fit these bands into these slots. I didn't want to be pedantic about the categories. So I threw them out, not half-heartedly, but as ideas to think about when you're watching the bands. I sort of expect the audience to sort their feelings out about, Well, is this a reasonable category, are the bands speaking toward this or are they not?



I love how the movie offers glimpses of so many bands. I especially like the self-effacing bands, like the Judas Priest band that said, *We're #2, we're #2!* Or, the Motley Crue band that talked about how they got their bio-rhythms matched up to the bio-rhythms of the original Motley Crue at the time they made *Too Fast for Love*—bands like that don't require additional comments.

I agree with that, and that's perhaps why I'm a little less present in *Tributary* than in *So Wrong They're Right* in some ways. And actually the issue of whether the filmmaker should be present in the film was one of the things that split me and the people I'd been working with in Chicago apart.* They were really strong about, No, should be presented as an objective view, and the bands have to be completely speaking for themselves. And I felt like, No, we sort of become experts on the topic and why shouldn't we put our two cents in? I think I wanted it to be a little more issue oriented to deal with questions like what is the difference between a symphonic orchestra interpreting the works of Beethoven and a tribute band interpreting the works of Led Zeppelin? Is there a difference? I wanted to deal with issues like that and where do you separate art and interpretation? Are the tribute bands less artists because they're interpreters other people's work?

Something you've said brings to mind Voodoo Child, the guy who does the Jimi Hendrix tribute. To me, he stuck out because he was saying stuff that made me wonder. Like, he claims to have been doing this band since 1968, and he knew Jimi Hendrix, and he said that Jimi wasn't all that good live—never heard that before. What was your take on him?

He is definitely a case of someone who is sort of, hmm, he's sort of lost himself in his character. I don't think he's as bad as the Jim Morrisons I was talking about, but I think he's a very intriguing character because it's almost like a split personality where you're talking with him and he seems very reasonable and he seems to understand that he's just a performer, an entertainer, and this is his shtick and that's pretty much the end of it. But then he starts to go into this whole thing about, well, I'm the only authentic Jimi Hendrix tribute and authenticity is what it's all about and I play left handed, and I do this and I do that. Then he starts talking about the spirit of Hendrix and hanging out with Hendrix, the conspiracy theories involving Hendrix. I started to realize, well, there are two guys here. There's a guy I can deal with who's pretty much on the same level as most of these other tribute bands. Then there's this other guy who's kind of gone off the deep end, but he would always come back. He would always go to the cliff's edge and you'd be thinking, I can't believe he's saying this, and then somehow he'd come right back and then he'd talk about, well, he was playing guitar with Cleopatra and he had these other side gigs. He's like an actor who's completely into his character, to the point where you could probably go up to him and say, Oh, Mr. Hendrix can you sign this autograph, and he'd sign 'Jimi Hendrix.'

Reminds me of an actor, who doesn't write their own material, interpreting someone else's written work. What's the difference between that and five

*At the start of the project, Forster was part of a group working on the documentary. The group split during the making of the movie. The rest of the group went on to complete a documentary called *An Incredible Simulation*.

guys who want to play *Sticky Fingers* or *Get Yer Ya Ya's Out* all the time.

Yeah, right, or even more intriguing is a band that does Devo as sort of this, what would I call it, almost guerilla art performance trying to get people to quit their jobs, and drop out of society. It's amazing to find bands that would go to that length, where they're almost talking in religious terms about it, educating audiences or converting audiences.

Is that Mongoloid you're talking about?

Yeah, Monogoloid is the band I was referring to. I don't think it's a post-modern thing with them. Yeah, they're in on the joke, and they understand that Devo was an elaborate joke, in a sense. But at the same time, there is



something about the message of Devo that really captures the singer, to the point where he sees himself as sort of a missionary for the band.

I didn't pick up on the extent to which he was invested like that.

It may be more subtle in the way it's edited than the way it was in talking with him. But he does talk about getting people to quit their jobs, he's not being completely facetious about that. Maybe a better example is the Guided By Voices band where they actually talk about evangelizing Guided By Voices and turning people onto Guided By Voices, as part of what they want to accomplish with the band.

At one point, they said they felt they did some of the songs better than the originals, which I thought was funny.

Most of the bands were too humble to go that far. It's sort of like stabbing Caesar to say that for most of these bands. It's kind of ironic that the band that says they're evangelizing for the band they're emulating, also commits the ultimate sacrilege of saying they do it better.

That reminds me of another great quote from the movie: We play Black Sabbath the way Black Sabbath would if we were them. These bands seemed to have a great sense of humor.

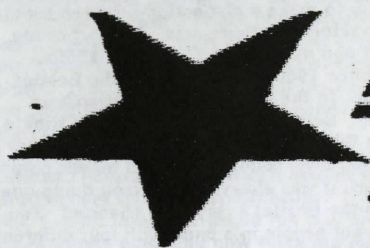
Yeah, that was very appealing, just the down to earthness, the sense of humor, that's what kept me going. I don't think I would have lasted through the project if those weren't major aspects of the scene.

I also noticed that with all the Elvis acts out there, there is only one presented in *Tributary*, the Brothers E. How did that work out?

I did consciously try to make a distinction between tribute bands and impersonators or tribute acts. It's sort of the difference between pop music circa 1940s and 1950s versus pop music circa 1960s, 1970s, where the Beatles changed everything. In the tribute world Beatlemania changed everything. Before Beatlemania you had tribute acts—you'd have a Billie Holiday sound alike and a Patsy Cline sound alike and Elvis sound alikes and maybe some Sinatra sound alikes; it was always one person doing one other person—with the Beatles everything changed. You now had four different people in a band with four different identities but playing together as a band. It wasn't just one specific person with a bunch of faceless musicians behind them anymore, and that's where I wanted to make the distinction, that tribute bands are doing the whole band, not just singers with anonymous musicians. So that's the distinction I wanted to make. I figured there are already films doing the Las Vegas impersonator thing and I wanted to narrow the topic, the scope. Technically, the Elvis band (the Brothers E) doesn't really fit according to my arbitrary rules. But I felt like, this is such a weird take on Elvis, and it really is sort of a band and it does deal with a lot of the issues of interpretation and putting your own personality into the act that I felt that it did fit. I don't think I would have wanted to put any other Elvis impersonators, though. It had to be something that was completely out there like the Brothers E.

(From the closing to *Tributary*) So we're left with the question of whether tribute bands are part of a musical devolution or evolution. My feeling is that they represent a brief look back to fuel a giant leap forward. But who's to say what the future will bring.)





Baseball Furies

Greater than ever? You bet yer ass.

By Brett Essler

Life is a series of choices, yes? Sometime in the next few months you will be presented with some absurd choice between a bunch NME-hyped garage rock bands with names you can't keep straight – Hives, Vines, Piles, etc. Do yourself a favor and choose Baseball Furies' *Greater Than Ever*. Two years in the making – ages in a genre where the least bit of studio polish will get you heckled – former Buffalonians Baseball Furies finally unleash their first full-length. While comparisons to Japanese garage rockers like Teengenerate and Guitar Wolf are still not entirely unwarranted, *Greater Than Ever* expands the band's palette to include dashes of Wire-like post-punk, shards of late-'70's downtown junkie punk, and a smattering of power pop melody. Jim Diamond's production is far from clean, but does let the band's considerable musicianship show through – the tightly wound guitar interplay of Odie and A-ron and the duck's-ass-tight rhythm section of Hollywood and Dapper (who, sadly, was unable to make the move to Chicago with the band last year) are just as vital recorded as they are in the band's punishing live shows.

Hollywood, Odie, and A-ron answered a few questions via email prior to their recent Buffalo "homecoming" show.

The material on Greater Than Ever was recorded two years ago. Why did it take so long to be released?

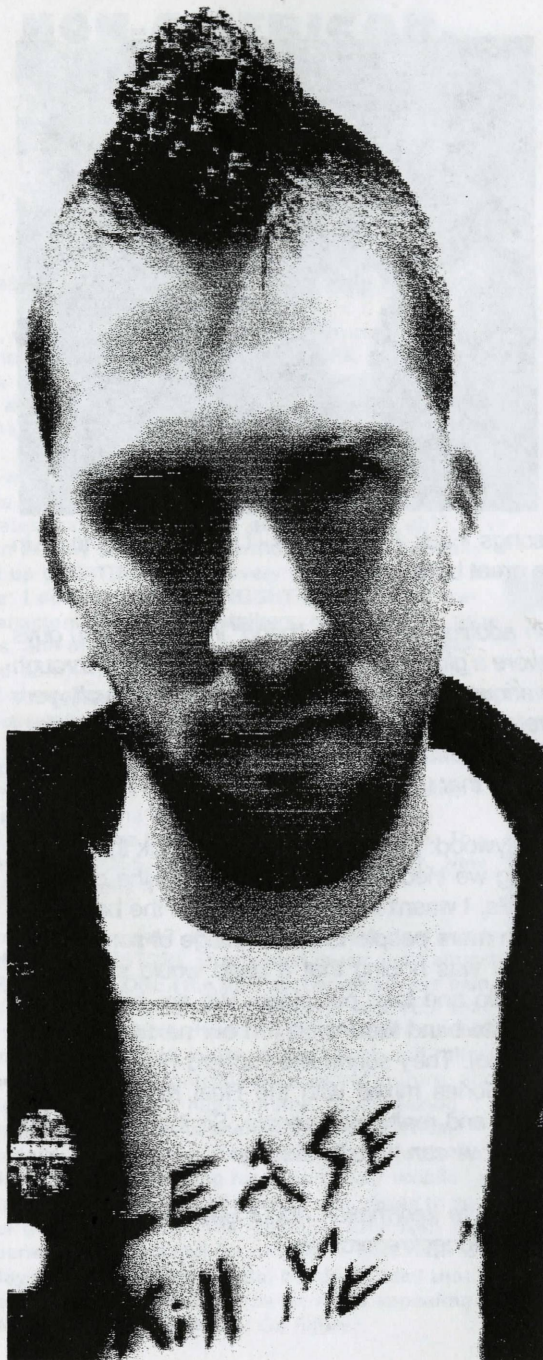
Odie: Half the stuff was done before we went on tour at the end of 1999; the rest was completed in mid 2000. What took so long was finding who was gonna put it out, also the fucking artwork.

When you first recorded the material that is on the new album, I remember you were somewhat embarrassed by what you perceived to be a certain pop influence. Does that still bother you when you hear the material?

Hollywood: I wasn't embarrassed by the pop element of the material. I am a big pop fan – Nerves, the Beat, Real Kids, Elvis Costello, Replacements. All the newer songs I have written for the Furies tend to have a pop feel and I try to incorporate a part of the song where a vocal hook could go (like "I Hate Your Secret Club"). After we play my "pop" songs as a band, they turn into punk rock songs. Oh well. I was a little embarrassed by the slickness of the production. I think that was my first reaction because all of our earlier material is so low-fi and nosier and on the new record you can actually hear every instrument – what a revolutionary concept!

Is there a certain pressure -- from your fans or the musical community -- to write and record music that stylistically fits into a certain box?

Hollywood: I don't feel any pressure to write a cer-



tain way at all. I don't have any interest in "making it" as a band and that gives me freedom to do anything. All I want is to be able to practice a couple times a week with my friends. Anything after that is just extra. I think the positive reaction the band received early on, has given me confidence in my songwriting. I think I know what is good. And now, I could care less what anyone says about our songs, as long as I think its good. I don't write songs for anyone but myself. We have written some newer songs that are dark and moody. AND THEY ARE SLOW!!! I know people are going to hate them and I think that is great. I read a positive review of the "Secret Club" single and the reviewer wrote something like "did all the Furies find girlfriends?" referring to its pop leanings. When the brand new songs get reviewed it will say "did the furies quite their easy jobs, home away from their families and get dumped by their girlfriends?" Wait!!! That did happen!!!

I know you have some new material in the can that you recorded in New York last year. How did that come about and when will it see the light of day?

Odie: We had an album's worth of songs, and wanted to record at the funhouse (with Jerry Teel). He's done some great shit, and his rates are good - so we figured it would be fun. And yes, it will see the light of day - we mixed it in July.

I haven't heard that new stuff, but some people told me it was in the vein of Gun Club or even the Stones. Is that a direction you guys are going in?

Odie: The great thing for me about being in this band is that there is never really a conscious group direction. I think too many bands get caught up in a "sound" and that either pigeonholes them or their songs are bland. Also; Jim, A-ron, and myself all write the songs...so each of us adds an element of whatever shit we're into at a particular time.

With the move to Chicago, you lost drummer Dapper. How did you go about finding a new drum -

mer and how is he fitting in?

A-ron: Odie and I came out here first so we just kind of asked around and looked for people who might work out for us. Then, I was at a party and Matt from the Guilty Pleasures calls the house I was at and tells me that they just broken up and wanted to be our drummer. So, we tried him out and he only needed a little whipping into shape. Since we already knew him, we knew we'd get along. It was almost too easy.

I know on some levels, the band's move to Chicago was personal, but in a lot of ways, you must've thought it would be good for the band. How has that worked out?

Hollywood: I love Buffalo and I loved my life there. I was very comfortable but it was "groundhog day". We would play to the same 75 people every show. There is a better opportunity to play bigger shows here because there are a lot of big shows that the scene can support. So I guess "career wise", it is better for the band, but for me I enjoy having different experiences with the band...playing different clubs, meeting bands, and playing to a lot of people that aren't my friends.

Did the changes of scenery and drummer change the sound of the band or the way that you write?

Odie: When you add a different person to the mix there will be a change in sound no matter how subtle or great it may be. We have about 3 or 4 new songs that have been written with Matt, so I think it may be to soon to tell. The change of scenery has had a big impact on me, possibly A-ron and Jim also. We're very tight now, but I guess we've always been. You go through a lot of shit being in a band for 6 years, let alone moving away from your hometown. I was quite miserable in Chicago for a while, and the only thing I looked forward to was practicing or playing a show. I'm sure that has had an impact on what I write, but things have gotten better lately. Maybe I'll start writing happy-pop



songs. Fuck, I don't know - I just feel lucky to be in a great band.

In addition to being a "band" in Buffalo, you guys were a glue that held the scene together -- through various side projects, the Rust Belt Revolt, your relationships with bands from around the country. I know Buffalo misses that, but do you miss occupying that role?

Hollywood: I do. I miss that. I do think that everything we tried to do was ignored by the city as a whole. I wasn't looking for a pat on the back but I wish more people took advantage of some of the fun. I was hoping that a band would step up in Buffalo and take our place. We are bringing our favorite band the Ponys [on our next trip back to Buffalo]. They sound like Richard Hell singing for the Gories mixed with the Real Kids. They are great and really nice people. So it is cool to help when we can here in Chicago.

For more information about Baseball Furies, visit www.bigneckrecords.com.

THE TEN GREATEST NON-AMERICAN, NON-BRITISH ROCK BANDS OF ALL-TIME!!!

by Joshua Blake Rutledge,
pathetically hopeless 31-year-old rock-geek

Yes, dear reader, I'm afraid your nightmares have come true: I'm back with yet ANOTHER ridiculous rock-list. And this one REALLY has me sounding like the dorkiest music-nerd this side of the Atlantic. But if the shoe fits....

Anyway: I am one of those pitiable types who actually goes around debating the eternal "Who were the greatest bands of all-time?" question (Sick, eh?). I've even put my selections in writing. In fact, I usually end up UPDATING my list every year or so. (Yes, it's true: I obviously have NO RIGHT to mock Civil War re-enactors, *Today* show stalkers, obsessive *Dr. Who* fans, and other twisted personifiers of modern-day nerd-dom). To keep up with my evolving opinions and changing tastes, I'm always fiddling with my list, desperately trying to iron out all the imperfections in my flawed judgment. Still, there are a handful of staples that ALWAYS chart in my Top 20 or thereabouts: The Beatles (former #1), the Stones (current #1), The Who (former #1), The Kinks (former #1), The Ramones, The Replacements, The Beach Boys, KISS, Queen, Nirvana, Aerosmith, New York Dolls, Guns N' Roses...*

Sense a pattern yet? I'm ranking the greatest bands in the entire HISTORY of recorded music, and almost EVERY SINGLE ONE (the lone exception always being AC/DC) is either American or British! And YES, that says a lot about both the USA and Great Britain in terms of their overall rocking-ness. Rock and roll is America's greatest contribution to world culture, and it echoes the defiant, high-volume, thrill-seeking, anti-puritanical spirit of the adolescent-American populace. Cruising the streets at 3:00 AM with the radio cranked up, looking for action, your middle finger flying in the face of anyone who dares to spoil your good time...that's the rebellious American youth experience in a nutshell! (or at least it WAS until today's whiny, angry nu metal bands decided that American rock music would be far more appealing MINUS all its FUN elements! Go figure).

Rock is OUR thing---we invented it, and we gave it to the world. Perhaps the Brits perfected it. Both have more or less DOMINATED the rock scene ever since. Just listen to any oldies or classic rock station. What do you hear? Mostly Americans and Brits. Talk about a monopoly! It seems almost UNFAIR, doesn't it?

Of course, the problem isn't necessarily that non-Brits and non-Americans DON'T rock. Anyone who follows the underground punk scene in Italy, Germany, or Japan knows that the kids in those countries LOVE their rock n' roll with a passion. It's just that hardly anybody GIVES A DAMN whether those non-American, non-Brits rock or not. You could be the very best rock band in all of Holland, but you haven't "made it" until you've won over the Americans and Limeys. That's just the way it is.

The world is thus full of great bands that have never been recognized by anyone outside of their fervent, loyal "cult" following---often simply because no one in mainstream Britain or USA has ever had the chance to HEAR them. I have undertaken, then, the task of donning my music historian's cap and trying to pin down the ten very greatest of ALL non-American, non-Brit rock n' roll bands. On with the show, then!



(Note: When I say "British", I'm referring to ALL of Great Britain, not just England. That means that no Irish, Scottish, or Welsh acts are eligible. So U2, The Rezillos, Manic Street Preachers, Jesus and Mary Chain, Undertones, Tom Jones, and The Bay City Rollers are out of the picture, okay?)

1. AC/DC (Australia)

There has been no truer embodiment of full-on rock n' roll greatness in all of history than Bon Scott-era AC/DC---a band that married raw, raunchy, sexed-up sonic savagery with infectious songwriting chops of truly God-like proportions. Listen to the *Highway to Hell* or *Let There Be Rock* LP and be blown away by nothing less than sheer rock n' roll perfection. This band took Chuck Berry's sonic recipe, doused it in booze, and served it up with panache. The music remains a timeless affirmation of THE all-time-great human truth: SIN= FUN.

2. Hanoi Rocks (Finland)

These guys were: A. The Finnish New York Dolls, B. the missing link between 70's glam-rock and 80's glam-metal (two different beasts entirely!), C. simply put, one of the great rock bands of the 1980's, period. They had melody. They had glamour. They had swagger. They had style. They were poetic like Mott the Hoople, raunchy like the Stones, and pop-savvy like T. Rex. If you refuse to trust me on this one, check out their 1981 debut *Bangkok Shocks*, *Saigon Shakes*, *Hanoi Rocks* and THEN try to deny this band's place in history, chump!

3. The Yum Yums (Norway)

This is no exaggeration: The Yum Yums are THE GREATEST power pop band EVER!!!!!! No joke! They've taken the formula first offered up by The Raspberries, Nerves, Knack, Beat, Romantics, and 20/20---AND PERFECTED IT. Armed with crunchy, energetic, harmony-drenched, beautifully-melodic pop songs, they've raised the bar for contemporary power pop. If you buy only one power pop album in your entire life, 1997's *Sweet as Candy* is the one to get!

4. Radio Birdman (Australia)

"Detroit rock" muscle by way of Australia + surf-punk firepower= one of the most hellacious, butt-kicking rock bands of the 1970's (or any other decade). Influential beyond belief!

5. Turbonegro (Norway)

For many years, I failed to appreciate this band's greatness. I suck. These dudes were all about heavy-duty, bad-ass rock n' roll at full-power and full-volume---but there was far more to the Turbonegro experience than just sheer intensity and loudness. Sure, they had the riffs, ferocity, and pure muscle. But they also had hooks aplenty and an abundance of GREAT SONGS. In a day and age when dark, self-pitying "post-grunge" sounds were at the peak of their popularity, this band reveled in the good-time, melody-driven classic rock aesthetic---they were

over-the-top and wild-hearted, but there was perhaps no greater pure ROCK band to come out of the 1990's.

6. The Saints (Australia)

Their early stuff is still some of the most mind-blowing punk rock ever recorded---raw, frantic, super-charged rock n' roll that's still being shamelessly aped by countless imitators. Over the years they "evolved"--not quite sustaining the all-out brilliance of their first two LP's but nonetheless cementing their place in rock history.

7. The Registrators (Japan)

Teengenerate got more hype, but The Registrators were arguably better---and have continued to endure over the years. They began as the ultimate garage punk band---a raucous, noisy bunch of skinny-tied ruffians playing snotty, primitive, super-catchy, lo-fi rock n' roll. Since then they've taken their primal punk attack and twisted it into bizarre and unforeseeable directions, proving that the seemingly limitless chasm between art-damaged new wave and rowdy rock doesn't necessarily measure out to an infinite stretch.



8. The Go-Betweens (Australia)

It was the 1980's; college radio ruled, and underground pop was king. America had REM, and England had The Smiths. And Australia had The Go-Betweens, a relatively-obscure cult band who set a precedent for all of today's sensitive-guy, sad bastard indie-rock big-shots. Taking all the standard influences of the day (Velvet Underground, The Beatles, Bryan Ferry, new wave pop, etc.) and crafting their own unique take on "pretty guitar pop", songwriters Robert Forster and Grant McLennan managed to write some of the most unforgettable tunes of their day----or anyone else's day, for that matter.

9. The Bee Gees (Australia)

I know what you're thinking, tough guy. You'd like to lynch me. But stop for a second and count to ten. Consider your music history and remember that long-BEFORE their dreaded disco years, The Bee Gees were a top-tier acid-era pop band on a par with The Beatles, Beach Boys, Hollies, Zombies, and Byrds. Their late 60's output (especially *Bee Gees First* and 1969's *Odessa*) still holds up today as a shining example of the majestic power and enduring beauty of the best that psychedelic pop had to offer between '67 and '69. They had the harmonies, the hooks, the splendidly-crafted songs...the whole nine yards. Not even their unforgivable descent into shameless-sucking (My girlfriend's right when she says that the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack was the album that killed popular music) can obliterate such a legacy.

10. (tie)

Black Halos (Canada)

I can hear the booing and hissing in the peanut gallery. The Black Halos? Huh? If I really needed to fill my Canadian quota, couldn't I have picked Teenage Head or The Pointed Sticks instead? Well, hmmm...go listen to BOTH of the now-defunct Halos' great studio LP's and THEN report back to me, sucka! The B-Halos were something else---an INCREDIBLE punk/glam/rock n'roll band that shoulda been huge... They were like The Dead Boys, D Generation, and AC/DC all rolled into one!

ABBA (Sweden)

Okay, I cheated. I put TWO bands in the #10 slot so I could fit 11 groups into the list. Why not just do a Top 11? Hmmm...

Anyway, it just wouldn't be right to NOT give props to ABBA. For all their unbearable cheesiness and ultra-noxious schmaltz factor, they were STILL responsible for some of the most flat-out AMAZING pop songs ever written. Perhaps it's stretching it to include this band in a "rock" list (rock they DIDN'T!). But when it

comes to PURE POP, ABBA practically set the standard in the late 70's and early 80's. Melodies to die for...songs that'll stick in your head even if you don't WANT them to... musical creations that strike the senses like aural candy (low in nutrition, but so very yummy!).....Ahhhh! Do I jump around and have a swell time every time I hear "Dancing Queen"? YOU BET!!!

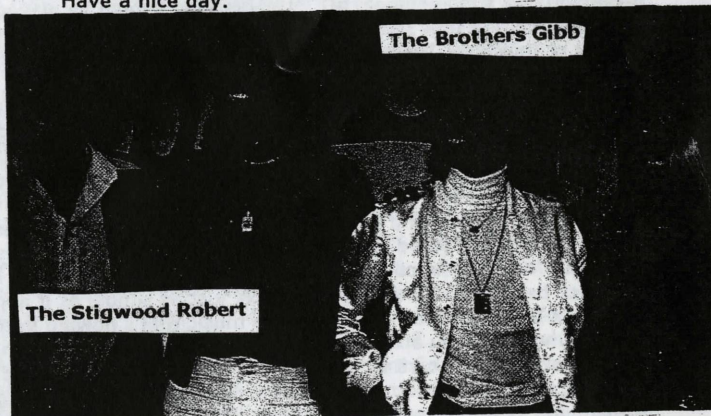
Honorable mentions go to The Hellacopters, The Hives, The Church, Teengenerate, The Kids, Split Enz, Crowded House, Teenage Head, The Pointed Sticks, The Backyard Babies, Smack, Rose Tattoo, The Hard-Ons, Shonen Knife, The Chills, Sloan, B Girls, Forgotten Rebels, Scorpions, and The Easybeats.

If you think I forgot anyone that I shouldn't have forgotten, feel free to bludgeon me with an aluminum ball bat the next time you see me.

Or better yet, make your OWN list. THEN bludgeon me with an aluminum ball bat.

Or at least send insulting e-mails to me at: newwavebaby@yahoo.com

Have a nice day.



*For those of you who are dying to know, my current overall Top Ten reads like this:

1. Rolling Stones
2. The Who
3. The Beatles
4. The Kinks
5. AC/DC
6. The Ramones
7. The Replacements
8. KISS
9. Cheap Trick
10. Aerosmith

NEXT TIME: THE TEN GREATEST DEBUT ALBUMS OF ALL-TIME!!!

WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN LISTENING TO THE NEW FIGGS' RECORD *SLOW CHARM*

Intro #1... This track sounds like a passing marching band—it's like *Tusk*. Lindsey Buckingham directing the USC marching band at Dodger Stadium, only this being the Figgs—and Pete Hayes being a Red Sox fan—maybe this is taking place at Fenway? Very strange way to start a record, all these images of Fleetwood Mac popping up...Stevie Nicks...cocaine suppositories... track 2...**"Back to Being"**...this is more like it. 1-2-3-4-1...a perfectly explosive way to kick start a song. It reminds me of the last time I saw them at the Knitting Factory, one of those songs they could put at the beginning of the set to get things up to speed fast. Boom, here we are to kick the shit out of the opening band. The band that came on before the Figgs at that last Knitting Factory show, the Witnesses, was terrible. They dressed like my dad did in the 70s—nightmarish images of brown leisure suits. I snickered at those styles when I was eight; they're even more ridiculous now. Why would you want to resemble an Allman Brothers roadie? The Witnesses didn't sound all that bad, and they didn't play all that bad. But everything was slathered in irony; every pose was affected, and not so accurate as to be forgiven. I won't get started on the singer's MCS/Grand Funk cracker fro...**"Sit and Shake"**...Talk about making the beginning of a song explode, BOOM. This song should be played at Wembley...During that same Knitting Factory show, they uncorked a great version of the Kinks' "Father Christmas." Not surprising given that they've released their own version of the song and this was their sort of annual holiday show *but* what elevated this rendition was Mike Gent's spot on Ray Davies—casually-castigating-the-audience-with-a-friendly-yet-judgemental-finger-wave...**"There Are Never Two Alike"**... "You have to choose/Which one will you choose/You have to choose/Which one will you choose...You won't lose as long as you decide to choose...It's all right/Sometimes you have to fight... Everything turns out all right/There is never too alike." (Shouldn't that be "there are"? Is, are? Singular, plural. It's "is" in the lyrics and "are" on the cd case.) Is there a point where lyrics are so simple that they become complex? It's probably just as simple as it appears, and if you can deal with that, and enjoy the music that's flowing in the background, then you are all set. I'm probably defeating the whole purpose of a Figgs record by sitting here, sipping a Schaefer and talking into a tape recorder when I should be, I don't know, air guitaring, or something. (I wonder what other people do when they listen to Figgs records? I know I can do dishes to the Figgs—hell, I can do dishes to Black Flag—but what function does a record like *Slow Charm* serve for other people?) It's as simple as it seems on the surface, and what I should do is leave it at that and enjoy it—but I'm not built for that. You just have to be in the moment. Like this book *The Understated Ichiro*, he talks about the importance of being there. "When did you know you were going to catch the ball? When I caught it." No anticipation, no expectation, just there in the moment...**"Soon"**...this is like listening to the second or third XTC records. The guitar fill during the verses is pure Andy Partridge, and then the jazzy, Herbie Hancock keyboards come in. These sound like disastrous moves for a pop band—huge, Everest-size mistakes—but they're not. This is one of my favorite songs on the record. Pete Hayes once mentioned that there were other songs in this vein that didn't make it onto the record. **Rejects 2?**...**"Public Transportation"**... "Lots of people coming from all directions/Coming in to get out of the rain"...I think I just sang that line on key! Pete Donnelly taking the bus to work or something, people watching. This is total Ray Davies stuff, taking a slice of life for what it is, no more, no less. Like "Waterloo Sunset." Nice, slow groove. (When he sings,

DOWNTOWN IS MORE THAN A ZIPCODE

by Mike Faloon

Serial #

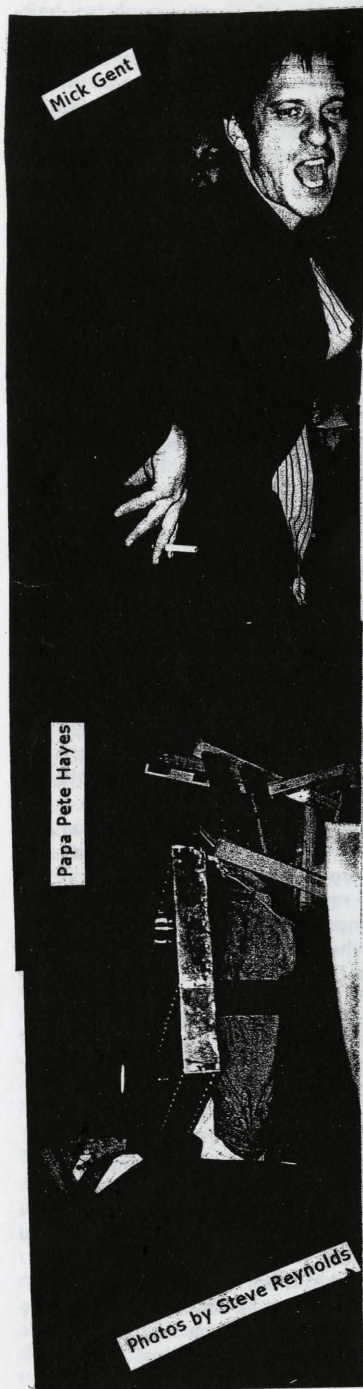
THE FIGGS

The Witnesses / Ben Arnold

NEW YORK - HOLLYWOOD

www.knittingfactory.com

(In the event that the above image is unclear, please read this note. Behind the pole are Mike and Pete D. See, that's a monitor there, and then to the right are Pete's sneakers.)



Mick Gent

Papa Pete Hayes

Photos by Steve Reynolds

"disappearing into the haze" I always expect it to be "disappearing with Peter Hayes"—and if I've failed to make it evident that I think too much, allow me to add that I just spent two minutes trying to figure out whether "Pete" or "Peter" works best. Oy.) Along with "Soon," this is the sort of song you would not expect from the Figgs, and you expect everything from the Figgs because they've never done a record where everything sounds the same. And if they had done like other bands do and broken up when major label number one dumped them, they never would have gotten here. Or if they had broken up when major label number two dumped them. Or if they had broken up when Guy Lyons left the band. And at the end of the day you can't argue with a song that ends with "do do do do doo"..."**Static**" ...what is power pop? This! There was a power pop issue of *Magnet* recently. It looked really cool; the cover was a take on an old issue of *Bomp*. It had articles on Big Star, the Posies, the dBs; it really seemed like they knew what was up with power pop. But at the same time I didn't find one mention of the Figgs in the whole issue. That's ludicrous. Yet they could take the time to do a one-page feature on the band that features the guy from *Rushmore*? I've never heard his band but have no reservations about dismissing them. Actors should not have bands. I like Johnny Depp, but I don't listen to his band. Gary Busey used to have a band but, you know, he turned to acting for a reason. Not one thing in those articles about the Figgs AND they failed to mention the Decibels, the Fevers, the Beltways, the Disappointments, the Shakes, the Dorks, the Media Whores, Big Hello, the Yum Yums—they missed all the great power pop bands of the age. Just because they're not the most popular bands doesn't mean they shouldn't be written about. You should write about them so that they *do* become popular...End of side one..."**Metal Detector**" - another awesome power pop song. I don't think it's a metaphor, I think it's about having a metal detector. Second verse...wait a minute, what are these lyrics... "I ran into Jim on Lincoln/Holding dollar (holy dollar? Holy lama?) in the last in line/Well his mother she proceeded to burn them/He didn't know it at the time"... ("Before we married Mommy served in the WACs in the Philippines")...third verse..."So if you need to find some loose change/Or if your children start to bang their heads/You can order this amazing offer for only 19 dollars and 99 cents"...Damn, a machine that can tell if your kids are into Venom or Krokus? Y&T? Between this song and "Cheap Cassettes" you get the impression that there's at least one recovering metal head in the ranks of the Figgs..."**Lose the Pain**"...like the first songs on the record, familiar in a good way, with a touch of Eddie Van Halen in the guitar break...Now that I think about it, the opening bands at Figgs shows don't always suck. At a recent Albany show, the 1-2-3-4's did a set of covers including Spinal Tap, the Sonics, and the Kinks. That's right fine..."**The Trench**" seems to be the same version that was on the *Badger* ep. I split from the rank and file Figgs Freaks on this song. I like "The Trench," but some people felt that it was the hit of the last record and is among the standouts on *Slow Charm*. I disagree, even though I think the chorus has some of the better Figgs lyrics - "Fell into the trench that I dug by hand/The way I act is not who I am"..."**Protocol**" = Neil Young. Very nice..."**Slow Charm**" = Stones, *Tattoo You*. The Figgs embody the old Who phrase "maximum r&b"—but they still sound more like the Stones here..."**Are You Still Mine?**"...what a wonderfully soothing way to close the record. The opening keyboards sound like they were lifted from ELO's *Out of the Blue* (don't worry, I won't go into why it's not an inherently bad thing to sound like ELO, not here anyway, but someday...). As I go on I realize that my comments are less and less necessary. I don't want to talk when I listen to *Slow Charm*, I don't want to think—I just want to enjoy.

Joe Strummer, Ritchie Rodriguez, and Rhonda

By Brian Cogan



When I was twelve I met Ritchie Rodriguez in the seventh grade. He was a chubby little Hispanic kid with a bad attitude who always used to get in trouble with the teachers at Intermediate School 27. I probably shouldn't have hung out with him because I was technically one of the "good" kids and my lot in life was usually to be mercilessly pummeled by larger examples of the cro-mags who ran the school. Ritchie must have taken pity on me, or perhaps because of his shortness was ostracized himself, I'm really not sure and years of punk rock excess (primarily beer and pizza goldfish, but if your punk rock excess was more decadent then I will admit in a signed affidavit that you are exponentially cooler than me, but I digress...) have led to memory becoming a little hazy. Either way, Ritchie and I became fast friends and soon he and I were hanging out. On the night of our junior high school graduation Ritchie somehow browbeat a reluctant deli manager into selling three little pasty faced thirteen-year-olds a six-pack of Schmidts beer and we proceeded to get spectacularly drunk in the way that only thirteen-year-old kids and Shane MacGowan

can possibly get drunk. Soon we were in the playground right outside the school, drinking Schmidts and listening to music from Ritchie's boombox. (This was before the tyranny of the walkman and during the tyranny of the boombox.) "What's this we're listening to?" I asked. Ritchie looked at me very solemnly for a moment before responding, "It's the Clash," he said very seriously, "the only band that matters." And in the background Topper Headon's drums fairly exploded like bullets as the old boombox went into "Tommy Gun."

Cut forward to 23 years later and I've gone through all of the usual punk rock fazes from skinny idealist in a leather jacket and spiked hair to ironic embracer of kitsch and tiki lounges to embittered old fart grouching about how Sum 41 completely rips off Blink 182, who shamelessly ripped off Green Day who shamelessly ripped off the Buzzcocks and the Ramones who shamelessly ripped off themselves. Well, I'm actually not that embittered and thanks to the world of zines I still find the occasional band to like, and technically 36 isn't really all that old, at least not compared to Charlie Harper from the UK Subs who must have been about sixty back in 1976, but you get the picture.

When the call came that Joe Strummer had died it was in the middle of a day that I was otherwise wasting watching some crappy dating shows on TV. Then my friend Rhonda called, Rhonda had seen the last Joe Strummer shows at St. Ann's warehouse the night before I did and afterwards I ran into her dancing around all drunk and bubbly on the subway. "What did he play?" I asked. Rhonda paused for a long moment before responding, as if she had to consider the gravity of my question before responding "Clash songs!" and danced away. Then her husband Tom and I discussed whether there would soon be a Clash reunion. Then a December morning and a call from Rhonda as to tell us that there would be no Clash reunion. Joe Strummer was dead. Joe Strummer was dead? Joe Strummer ran marathons with a mohawk! Joe Strummer was powerful, his voice alive in a shout about some obscure political concern that no one in his audience really cared about. Joe Strummer was up to the rigors and abuse inherent in touring with the Pogues when Shane was kicked out of the band. Wait a minute, let's consider that again for a moment, Shane MacGowan was still alive and Joe Strummer was dead?

Joe Strummer was different than Johnny Thunders, or Dee Dee or any other wanna-be rock and roll casualty. He looked fit as he led his backing band through the eclectic world pop of his brilliant new album *Global-A-Go-Go* and a few months later was dead of a heart attack? I had, just a week before he

died, sat down with *Go Metric!* editor Mike Faloon and had joked about writing an article defending the last "Clash" album, *Cut the Crap*. "It's really not as bad as you would imagine" I told Mike half-jokingly. Joe Strummer was dead.

It wasn't just the fact that one of my musical idols was gone. Joe Strummer was supposed to be a role model for us aging punks. A sort of avenging punk grandfather, a less self-conscious Iggy and a less Vegas-esque version of Nick Cave. He didn't just wallow on the nostalgia tours, or go home and raise cattle like so many punks his age, he was still active, still vital, still experimenting with unique sounds and compositions up until the day he died. Joe Strummer was unique. Like Joey Ramone he had a voice that made him sound like no one else in punk rock (except of course for Rancid, but let's not go there...). He was one of a kind. Here, try this. Pick up a Clash record, no, wait, don't just grab the first one or *London Calling*, grab *Sandanzista* or *Black Market Clash* or *Give 'Em Enough Rope* or maybe side two of *Combat Rock* and sit down and listen to it. Really listen to it. These are not the profound almost frightening statements of purpose of the Clash's best known records, these are the raw, abrasive Clash songs that would infuriate you and make you wonder at times if they had any idea of what they were doing. This was the Clash experimenting with different genres, particularly dub reggae and it still sounds like nothing else that's out there today. It's not the music of the future that the Clash were making, but the music of a future that could have been, a world where punk rock simultaneously meant blacks and whites dancing together in a small Jamaican club with nary of whiff of cultural imperialism, and was also the sound of thirteen-year-olds getting drunk in a playground outside an intermediate school to the only band that mattered.

Of course this is not about me at thirteen, I don't remember much of me at thirteen except for liking the Clash and spending that year and the next several years getting mocked for liking bands like the Clash and the Ramones when most of my friends listened to Rush. This is more about the idea of being thirteen. The idea of a thirteen-year-old listening to the Clash and realizing something was different not only about the music but about the world the music promised. And, again, I don't mean the specific politics of the records, at thirteen and at 36 I really don't give a crap about Nicaraguan revolutionaries. What mattered was the insane mix of genres, of not letting punk be the same three chords and song structures. The Clash changed all that and if it failed half the time that is really not all that bad a ratio. When I ran into Rhonda on the

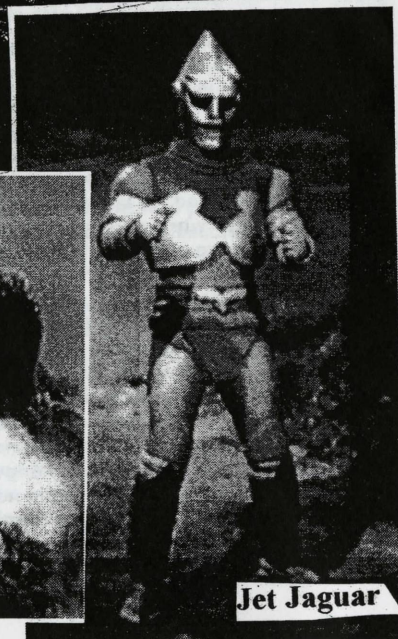
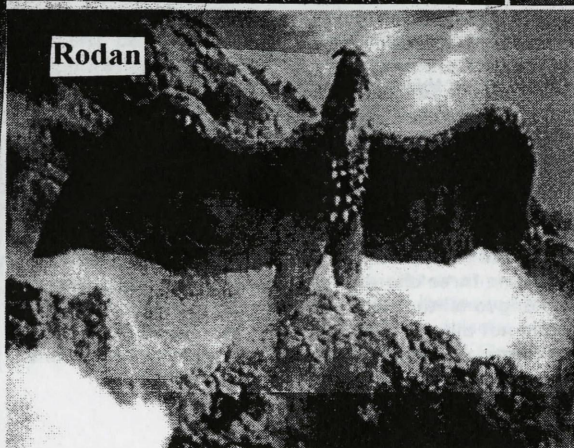
train and she told me that Joe had played "Clash songs!" during his show, I thought that meant that Joe was trotting out "London Calling" and "Clash City Rockers" and all the other chestnuts. What that really meant was that Joe had played mostly the Clash's reggae songs, from "Bankrobber" to "Police and Thieves" in a way that alienated all but the most ardent of Clash fans. Of course he had done all the big hits on a tour a few years ago and this time he was reaching deeper into the Clash catalogue, as if to say "See, listen to this stuff, this is how different we were, this is not a Slaughter and the Dogs reunion show!" Joe played world music and reggae not only because he loved it but because half the crowd didn't. Although mostly the casual fans milled around during the set, others perked up there ear and murmured to themselves, "this is really something, isn't it?" It really was. 23 years later it really was something and Joe Strummer, I salute you for trying, for failing (especially at being the only band that matters, clearly Subway Sect was the only band that mattered) but nonetheless after years of trying, long after Mick went bald and vanished and Paul was painting, Joe Strummer was still trying, and that's why in 2003 his music means as much to me as it did on a drunken night in 1980.

My wife and I were later watching the VH-1 *I Love the Eighties* specials and a particularly talentless model mentioned that "Anyone that says they weren't into Def Leppard back in 1983 is lying" and we almost threw a brick through the TV. Impudent model! Escaping the sheer awfulness of excrement like Def Leppard was why God and the Ramones created punk rock for in the first place. Other than realizing that VH-1's version of the eighties was not the one I lived through (They never even mentioned Black Flag's influential *My War* record, what kind of a history of the eighties omits *My War*????), not that I should have expected that from VH-1 in the first place. My memories of the Clash in the parking lot, opening for the Who in 1982 and seeing Joe Strummer were mine alone, probably shared by a small but adventurous minority who listened beyond "Rock the Casbah" or other radio hits. The Clash were a band that mattered because they saw a world of musical crap and reacted against it by rebelling and simultaneously making it much more inclusive, years before most record stores ever had a world music section. Of course the future the Clash predicted was an imaginary and impossible future, but that is a true measure of their legacy, of their success, and their ultimate failure. I'll never (Thank God) be thirteen again, but I'll still have the Clash, and you know, really, when you think about it even *Cut the Crap* wasn't all that bad. No, really.

For the Love of God...ZILLA!

Part One: 1954-1975

By Dr. David Cawley, D.G.M.
(Doctorate of Giant Monsterology)



GODZILLA. Or Gojira as our friends in Japan call him. I doubt that many other words provoke such a vast array of responses. Mention Godzilla to some people and their eyes glaze over as they begin to spout inane criticism of the dubbing and "shoddy" (i.e., not similar to Western films) special effects. Mention Godzilla to someone like myself (as we ARE legion) and see a fire of enthusiasm light up your listener's eyes as he prepares to have an in-depth discussion of the merits of each Godzilla film (if you're a fan) or attempts to convert you (if you're an UNBELIEVER!) to the cause. Love him or loathe him, after 25 movies it appears Godzilla is here to stay.

Godzilla first reared his ugly head in the 1954 Japanese movie *Gojira*. This film was later released in the U.S. in 1956--with additional scenes featuring Raymond Burr--under the title *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*. The first Godzilla movie is very grim with a doom-laden atmosphere in sharp contrast to the later movies in the series which are more like comic book or action films. *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, in all its black and white glory, has an almost documentary feel to it. This chronicle of Godzilla's origin is shot in a grainy, high contrast style which makes the scenes of the monster destroying Tokyo seem very real. I guess *GKOTM* was the first giant monster noir. The plot consists of atomic testing awakening Godzilla, a giant mutated dinosaur from our antediluvian past who then wades into Tokyo Bay and wreaks his ghastly vengeance on those who would dare disturb his eternal slumber. If you've never seen a Godzilla movie this is a great one to see first. It has a compelling story, great special effects and acting, and even great music by Akira Ifukube. Mr. Ifukube wrote his somber Godzilla theme and also some stirring military marches for this film. *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* is a winner on every level. If you don't like this movie than give up on Godzilla, because it doesn't get any better than this.

Another highlight of *GKOTM* was the Godzilla costume. It looks like a giant mutated dinosaur, and became the basic template for all the Godzilla variations which followed. Not only was it the first Godzilla suit, it was also one of the best, far superior to some of the costumes used in a number of the movies from the 60s and 70s.

Although Godzilla appeared to die a definitive death at the end of his motion picture debut, I guess the boffo box office convinced Toho Studios to resurrect him in the 1955 film *Gojira No Gyakushu*, or *Revenge of Godzilla* (which was stupidly retitled *Gigantis the Fire Monster* for its American release in 1959). I remember seeing this movie when I was a little shaver--about 1967 or so--and wondering why this movie--which clearly featured Godzilla--had everyone calling him Gigantis. There are a number of theories as to why Godzilla was renamed in the U.S. version of his second movie. It was probably because the American distributor felt that Godzilla wasn't very popular in America so they retitled the film in an attempt to make U.S. audiences think they were going to see a brand new monster. Their plan backfired since this

is probably the most obscure Godzilla movie released in the U.S. After I saw *Gigantis* as a child, the movie seemed to disappear--it was never on television again. Years later, when it was briefly released on video, I snagged a copy and the movie lived up to my fond memories. *Gigantis* was an important Godzilla movie because it introduced the idea of Godzilla battling another monster (in this case, a beast called Angilas). Again this movie is in black and white and it makes the monster scenes seem very real--like old newsreel footage from an alternate universe where giant reptilian monsters threaten our very existence. Godzilla's opponent is an armored quadruped reptile quite similar to an Ankylosaurus--sort of an armadillo-like lizard with spikes on its back. Angilas appears in a number of later Godzilla films, sometimes even as Godzilla's ally in fighting other monsters. *Gigantis* is a fun monster bash, which I highly recommend although it is a tough movie to find these days.

After an absence of seven years Godzilla came roaring back in the 1962 world heavyweight championship of a movie, *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. Finally, the two most famous giant monsters of all-time face off in one-on-one combat. The Godzilla suit design in this film is one of my favorites--truly reptilian looking with a very lizard-like head and baleful eyes. Regrettably, this suit was never used again--after this movie Godzilla's rounded, more mammalian look returned. If you really want to see a perfectly designed formidable looking Godzilla, then see *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. Unfortunately, King Kong does not fare so well! The King Kong suit is very poorly done--for some reason the Toho Studio technicians who usually excel at creating great monster costumes just couldn't pull off a convincing gorilla costume. If you can overlook the King Kong deficiencies, then by all means see *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. The story, actors, and effects are great. Meticulously detailed model cities are destroyed as the titular monsters attempt to pummel each other into submission in a true battle royale.

Godzilla addicts didn't have to wait too long for their next fix, the monster returned in 1964's *Godzilla vs. the Thing*. In this classic, Godzilla fought the giant insect Mothra in several forms, first in the form of a giant moth and later in the guise of two huge caterpillars. This movie marked the return of the more rounded, less reptilian Godzilla design but Godzilla still looks great--many feel the Godzilla design from this movie is one of the best and I'm inclined to agree. Godzilla and Mothra engage in exciting colorful combat in this thrill-packed, comic book of a movie. See the Godzilla suit catch on fire when the monster is attacked by Frontier missiles! Hear the haunting song of tiny twin fairies as they plead for Mothra to fly from its island and stop Godzilla's reign of terror in Japan! Yes, dear reader, if exciting spectacle is what you crave then you must see *Godzilla vs. the Thing*!

1964 was a banner year for Godzilla fans. Not only was *Godzilla vs. the Thing* released, but also a masterpiece of monster mayhem men call *Ghidrah the Three-Headed Monster*. Ghidrah became a fixture in Godzilla's pantheon

of foes; he is perhaps, along with Mothra, the most popular of Godzilla's monstrous co-stars. He is a huge, winged golden dragon with three heads. In his debut appearance, Ghidrah (who hails from outer space) threatens to destroy the earth but Godzilla, Mothra, and Rodan (a gigantic Pterodactyl) team up to thwart him. Ghidrah is a beautifully designed monster and the costume is very realistic-looking. His first appearance is truly awe-inspiring, as he materializes from a burst of energy from a meteorite, which has landed in Japan. One of the negative aspects of this film is that this marks the first appearance of a Godzilla costume specifically designed to appeal to younger children. Godzilla has a flatter, almost frog-like face with big eyes; he almost appears Muppet-like. However, I still recommend *Ghidrah the Three-Headed Monster*, a classic Godzilla movie, full of action and monsters.

You just can't keep a great monster down, so Ghidrah returned to menace the earth anew in *Monster Zero*. (The titular monster is Ghidrah. The denizens of Planet X refer to everything by numbers, so Ghidrah is Monster Zero.) *Monster Zero* was released in Japan in 1965, but took a full five years to be released in the U.S.. This is one of my favorite Godzilla films, there is just so much to recommend it. The featured monsters--Godzilla, Ghidrah, and Rodan--are only the tip of the iceberg. This movie also has cool aliens and great flying saucers. The American actor Nick Adams (star of the great H.P. Lovecraft movie adaptation *Die Monster Die*) cuts a dashing figure as astronaut Glenn, and his doomed romance with an alien female is the most poignant of love stories. *Monster Zero* was important thematically in that it was the first Godzilla film to use the idea of aliens gaining control of giant monsters and using them to threaten our world. Unfortunately, this idea was so good that it became a cliché and was overused in later films in the series (three of the 70s Godzilla films all use this tired plot device). A few years ago I had the good fortune to see *Monster Zero* at Baltimore's art house cinema, and it was truly thrilling to see Godzilla and his monstrous cohorts on the big screen as they were meant to be.

The 1966 release *Godzilla Versus the Sea Monster* marked a downturn in the Godzilla series. The action is confined to a South Seas island and there are no intriguing sci-fi elements. The movie is fun for Godzilla fans but lacks the titanic destruction prevalent in the best of the series. It seems more like a King Kong movie with Godzilla inserted in King Kong's role. Toho Studios tried something new with this film but it just didn't result in a true classic. Godzilla battles a giant shrimp (no, I'm not kidding) called Ebirah (a name that comes from the Japanese word for shrimp, i.e. "ebi"—I noticed this when ordering sushi.) Mothra makes an appearance in this movie as well.

The Godzilla series descended further into the doldrums with 1967's *Son of Godzilla*. Some of the monsters featured in the film (giant insects like a praying mantis and a spider—I know, it's really an arachnid) are very well executed, but the costumes for Godzilla and his son Minya

have to be the all-time worst. The Godzilla costume is unpardonably bad, it has a flat, frog-like face and huge, glassy eyes. Undoubtedly designed to appeal to younger kids, I doubt if the costume pleased anyone. The plot of *Son of Godzilla* is interesting but like its predecessor, the action is confined to a tropical island. I remember watching this movie in Pittsburgh at my grandmother's house as a child on a Saturday afternoon. This was back in the days before videotape recorders so when a Godzilla movie was shown on tv you either watched it then or waited for who knows how long until it was shown again. I was watching this movie attentively until my uncle entered the room, said, "Hey, my golf match is on," then walked over and changed the channel! I didn't say a word but inside I was seething. After all, I was just a kid and knew that in the adult world sporting events took precedence over monster movies. My uncle watched the golf match for three minutes or so and then, chuckling, turned Godzilla back on. He had a truly warped sense of humor!

As if to make up for the relative lameness of their previous two Godzilla offerings, Toho Studios really pulled out the stops and returned to form with 1969's *Destroy All Monsters*. Almost all Godzilla fans seem to remember this movie with great fondness. Beside Godzilla, this movie features all of Toho's stable of giant monsters: Minya, Rodan, Anguila, Mothra, Gorosaurus, Manda, Baragon, Varan, Kumonga, and the welcome return of Ghidrah. *Destroy All Monsters* is a crash course in Giant Monsterology. Evil aliens take control of the world's monsters and let them loose on our planet, which results in the viewer finally getting to witness the spectacle of Godzilla attacking New York. Again, a return to science fiction elements (a really cool spaceship used by the earthlings and some nifty flying saucers) and a big closing brawl with all of earth's behemoths teaming up to trounce Ghidrah creates a fine evening's entertainment. If you enjoy Japanese monster movies at all, you owe it to yourself to see *Destroy All Monsters*.

After the magnificence of *Destroy All Monsters*, Toho Studios stumbled badly with 1969's *Godzilla's Revenge*. Although the title hints at a return to past glories, it's the story of a young boy growing up and dealing with bullies and gangsters while occasionally having fantasies about Godzilla and other monsters. As an ABC Afterschool Special type of affair I guess *Godzilla's Revenge* would be successful, but it just doesn't fulfill even the minimal requirements of a Godzilla movie. There is some cool music during the opening credits, rockin' 1960s go-go dancer music that blares over a montage of monster scenes. Diehard fans will probably enjoy this movie because, after all, it has Godzilla, but it is an admittedly juvenile addition to the Godzilla canon. If you choose to view *Godzilla's Revenge*, do so at your own risk—you have been warned!

Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster, released in 1971, was the initial Godzilla offering of the 1970s. This pop art influenced misfire of a movie is really more of an anti-

pollution diatribe than a Godzilla film. There is a rockin' anti-pollution anthem called "Save the Earth" prominently featured on the soundtrack but little else of note in the movie. Predictably, in this film Godzilla battles the huge sludgy, pollution-based monster Hedorah (the "smog monster" of the title). Hedorah is one of Godzilla's least memorable opponents. Another nail in the coffin of this flick, testing the tolerance of even the most forgiving fan of Japanese monster movies, is the fact that Godzilla actually flies in a scene. He aims his nuclear breath at the ground and takes off like a rocket in a sequence probably influenced by the series of films featuring the giant flying turtle Gamera. *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster* is a tough movie to find on videotape, but it's no great loss.

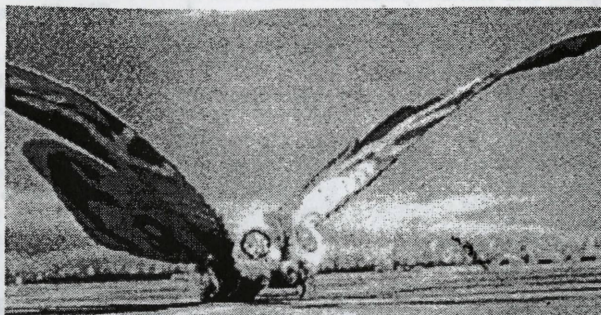
Next came *Godzilla vs. Gigan* in 1972. Many fans disparage this movie, but I like it. Again, aliens use giant monsters to attack the earth, in this case Ghidrah and a brand-new monster called Gigan. Godzilla and Angilas (Godzilla's first monster opponent ever, from the aforementioned *Gigantis the Fire Monster*) team up to defend our world from the space monsters. It's great to see Angilas (always one of my faves) back in action playing a big role. As a cost-cutting measure no new soundtrack was recorded for this film. Old music from the 60s Godzilla movies was used, and I think it helped give the movie more of the classic Godzilla feeling—a rare instance where a low budget actually improved a film. Although the budgetary restrictions are noticeable, I still recommend *Godzilla vs. Gigan*. It has a lot of monster action and a worthy new opponent for Godzilla in the form of Gigan. After the movie misstep *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster*, *Godzilla vs. Gigan* was a step back in the right direction.

Godzilla's adventures continued in the 1973 release *Godzilla vs. Megalon*. This movie will always have a special place in my heart since it was the first Godzilla movie I was privileged to view on the big screen. I saw *Godzilla vs. Megalon* at a drive-in theater in Pittsburgh when it was released in the U.S. in 1976. This movie is loathed even by some Godzilla fans, but there are a number of reasons I enjoy it. The plot revolves around a subterranean race called the Seatopians sending a monster called Megalon (a beetle-like creature with drill hands) up from the bowels of the earth to destroy Japan. Godzilla and a giant robot called Jet Jaguar team up to defend the Land of the Rising Sun from Megalon and his tardy partner, Gigan, who flies in from outer space. I guess one of the reasons I like this movie is that the giant robot Jet Jaguar reminds me of Ultraman. In 1976, I hadn't seen the Ultraman tv show for years so it was nice to be reminded of it. (Another great 1970s theatrical release, which reminded me of Ultraman, was the action-packed Hong Kong movie *Inframan*, but that's another story.) Although the movie takes a while to get going, once the four giants commence their epic struggle, all the set-up footage is forgiven. Another plus occurs at the end when the Jet Jaguar theme song (sung in Japanese, too!) plays over a scene of a little boy riding on the heroic

robot's shoulders. *Godzilla vs. Megalon* is a fun movie for children and the young at heart. This was the first movie I ever purchased on videotape and I still get a kick out of it.

One of Godzilla's greatest adversaries made his initial appearance in 1974's *Godzilla vs. the Cosmic Monster*. Like most of the 70s Godzilla films, this is a rather light-hearted affair aimed at the kiddies. Two brand-new monsters are introduced, Mechagodzilla (the "Cosmic Monster" of the title) and King Seesar, a huge, shaggy, lion-like monster who aids Godzilla in his battle against Mechagodzilla. Mechagodzilla is a mechanical doppelganger of Godzilla, a beautifully designed, silver robot dinosaur who along with Ghidrah, certainly represents one of Godzilla's more memorable opponents. Again, aliens threaten the world with a monster, in this case the Mechagodzilla robot they have created. Although the alien plot device had become quite a cliché by now, in this instance it works well. Especially fun is the scene where King Seesar is brought to life; a Japanese shaman-type woman sings a catchy pop song, which revives the hairy behemoth. (There is a great cd, which was released domestically, that compiles the best-loved tunes from the Godzilla series, including Jet Jaguar's and King Seesar's theme songs.) Mechagodzilla's exciting battles with Godzilla in this film injected some much-needed change into what had become a very predictable series of movies.

Godzilla and Mechagodzilla returned in the 1975 release *Terror of Mechagodzilla*. Again, aliens use Mechagodzilla and a great new monster called Titanosaurus to menace earth. Of course, Godzilla shows up to foil their plans. Titanosaurus is a huge, orange dinosaur who only appeared in one movie but has quite a following among Godzilla fans. *Terror of Mechagodzilla* is a return to a more serious, less kiddie-oriented Godzilla film. The great Akihiko Hirata, who played a scientist in the very first Godzilla movie in 1954, plays an understandably much older scientist of the mad variety. Although Godzilla still looks a bit round and muppet-like, the great designs for Mechagodzilla and Titanosaurus more than make up for it. Since Godzilla disappeared for nine years after this movie, it was nice that he went out on a high note.



NEXT ISSUE: GODZILLA FLICKS: 1985-TODAY
(Well, the 'today' to which we refer is really more of a 'tomorrow' given that it, the aforementioned 'today,' has yet to come. Maybe "Godzilla Flicks: Part 2" is easier.)

It's Just a Matter of Timing:

A(nother) GM! Interview

with Scott McCaughey

Scott McCaughey has a perfectly imperfect career. Or maybe that should be imperfectly perfect? Twenty years into his career, he fronts one legendary band (Young Fresh Fellows) and one that's on its way (The Minus 5), in addition to steady work with other projects (R.E.M. being the biggest piece of that pie). Combined, all of those bands give him the sort of creative freedom most people only dream of. Granted, neither his legendary band nor his soon-to-be legendary band currently has a record deal, but that's never stopped him, or them, before. On the heels of 2001's Young Fresh Fellows/Minus 5 dual cd release, McCaughey has fantastic new Minus 5 cd in the can. Down with Wilco, which features McCaughey backed by Wilco, sounds unlike any other Minus 5 record and exactly like a Minus 5 record should sound. Naturally, we had to investigate. (Interview by Mike Faloon)

KZ: So, have you ever heard that song by the Young Fresh Fellows?

AG: (sings) Amy, Amy Grant. I have a copy of that. I knew you were going to ask about that.

KZ: Taken as a compliment?

AG: I loved it. When the song first came out I was doing an interview. Every time they asked me a question, they'd sing, "Amy, Amy Grant" followed by the question. After the fourth time I asked him, "Look, is it just me or are you hearing music in your head that I don't know about." They died laughing because I hadn't heard it, so they sent me the tape. I loved it.

GM: So how did it come to pass that for the third year in a row there's going to be a new Minus 5 record?

SM: Is that right?

GM: Yeah, *Minus 5 in Rock* is 2000; *Let the War Against Music Begin* is 2001; and the new one will be 2002.

SM: That's true, shocking.

GM: Is there a fixed title yet?

SM: *Down with Wilco*. I'm planning on sticking with that. That's weird. I kind of forgot about *The Minus 5 in Rock* because we just did that for fun. It wasn't a release that anybody could buy really; you had to track it down. And people can still track down the 400 copies I have in my basement.

GM: Such a great record too.

SM: It is, I love it. My thing with Hollywood and Mammoth is kind of over with so now I don't have to hide that record anymore, to keep it from competing with the real record, you know.

GM: So who's going to release the upcoming record?

SM: I don't know but it's not going to be Mammoth. Hollywood has sort of pulled the plug on Mammoth. It's a total bummer because all the great people in New York now don't have jobs and they were great people to work with and they were super fired up and we had all of these great records coming out, like the Minus 5 and John Wesley Harding and Los Lobos.

GM: That's a shame.

SM: It is, it's a bummer, but they're being really cool about letting me get the record back so that I can find a home for it.

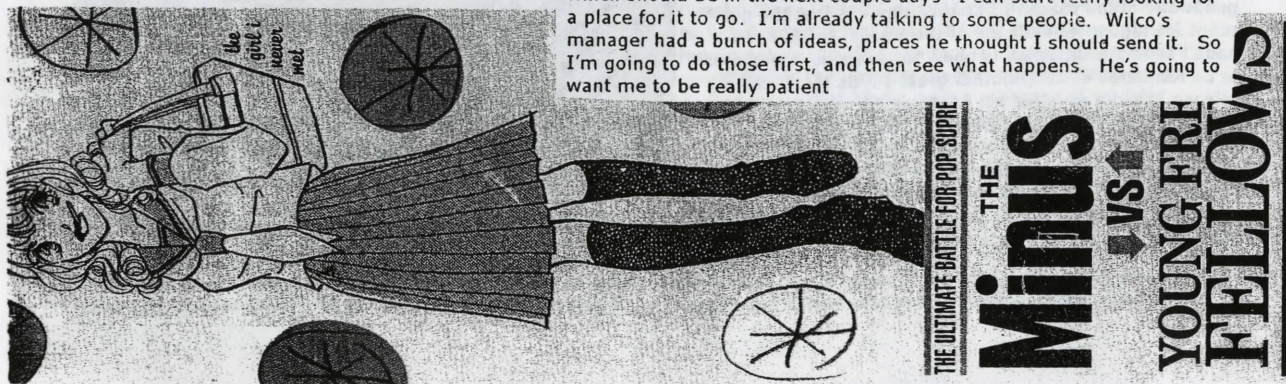
GM: Is that what you're working on now?

SM: Yep, legal crap and then as soon as the legal stuff gets done--which should be in the next couple days--I can start really looking for a place for it to go. I'm already talking to some people. Wilco's manager had a bunch of ideas, places he thought I should send it. So I'm going to do those first, and then see what happens. He's going to want me to be really patient

taken from Amy Grant interview, circa '91

on to this interview...

and bearing little consequence



and try all these things, but I'm going to be so impatient, probably the first one that gives me a decent offer I'll be like, Yeah, can you put it out *right now*? But, you know, originally it was supposed to come out months ago and I would be able to do some of these Wilco touring things that they're doing in the summer. They're doing some stuff in the fall, I'm holding out slight hope that I might be able to do a few things with them.

GM: I had read that a lot of the songs that are going to be on the cd were written for a show that you did with Wilco a couple years ago in Chicago. Is that right?

SM: Yeah, that was kind of the start of it. Jeff (Tweedy, of Wilco) and I had been talking about this forever and then when (Chicago's) Lounge Ax was closing I thought, Man, I have to go back there. Then the people that ran Lounge Ax wanted the (Young Fresh) Fellows to play on the last night but everybody couldn't pull it together to go back there but I said, Well, I'm going anyway. (Laughs) Jeff said, You should come out and we'll be your backup band. And so he was like, Just send us a tape of songs to learn. And I was like, Let's see, which songs should I pick for them to do? Then I went, Screw it, I'm going to write a whole bunch of songs, we'll just do all new songs that no one's ever heard before, with no rehearsal, pretty much.

Notes for the obsessive I
"In a Lonely Coffin," "Lies of the Living Dead," and "The Night Chicago Died Again" were written for the M5/Wilco show at Lounge Ax but were recorded by Minus 5/Seattle branch for The Minus 5 in Rock.

GM: The new songs are pretty laidback.

SM: I told Jeff right before I went out, I go, Yeah, I've been writing a bunch of songs but it ain't rock'n'roll though. And he's like, Cool, I don't care, that's fine.

GM: With the music being more laidback it pushes the lyrics to the forefront.

SM: Yeah.

GM: And not only are the lyrics often dark, they're all in the first person and they're all dark in the same way, a lot of heavy self-criticism.

SM: Yeah, it's like when we were doing that song, "A View from Above," Jeff looked at me and went, I don't know, the guy who wrote this song has some real problems. It's kind of a downer. I don't know what to say about that. Jeff was really adamant that the vocals be really up there. I tend to bury my voice a lot of times. He really puts his voice in the listener's ear. I think he kind of nudged me in that direction, which was good for me. Then when we started recording the second batch he was saying he was starting to feel that there was a kind of a story line to it, maybe because a lot of it's in the first person.

Then I started figuring out a story and how the songs all went together, and it was a pretty horrible story.

GM: I tried to figure out a pattern with the sequencing and it seems to go back and forth between light and dark through the first six, seven, eight songs. But then dark wins out, and by the end, "Dear Employer"--if everything else is kind of a process of decay--"Dear Employer" sounds like the ashes are crumbling.

SM: When we recorded that we went, That's got to be the last song on the record. Then Jeff said, Unless it's the first. It just seemed perfect that way, how it's kind of falling apart but it's also kind of pretty in a weird way too. That song's totally live, pretty much. I think the vocal might even be live. We did it all pretty much as a performance and left it that way.

Notes for the obsessive II
Down with Wilco was mostly recorded in Chicago during September and December 2001. Then overdubs were done in Seattle.

GM: In some ways it reminds me of the third Big Star record where it has a lot of catchy melodies but the lyrics are counter to that.

SM: That's one of my favorite records ever and that record, probably more than any, was kind of the one that made me want to do the Minus 5 originally. That was the kind of thing I wanted to do with the Minus 5 really.

GM: The production on Down with Wilco is deceptively dense. There are a lot of things happening but it's not cluttered.

SM: I had to make a conscious effort not to clutter because I tend to do that. Like, on *Let the War Against Music*, that stuff's pretty dense. There's a lot of stuff going on on every one of those songs. And this one we did rough mixes in Chicago after we worked on each song and recorded it, Jeff was really going, You know, you should keep most of these pretty much like they are. I had to keep myself from adding stuff at home in the ensuing months and tried to keep it fairly true to what we had done when we recorded the songs altogether in Chicago. With Ken (Stringfellow) adding some backing vocals here and there on the ones we didn't get a chance to do backing vocals on basically, and then Peter (Buck) adding his thing, which is always cool and which we left room for. I tried pretty hard to not go overboard, to keep it true and that's part of the reason I think the vocals come through a little more, it's a little more stark. Although, like you said, there's definitely parts where there's a lot of stuff going on.

GM: Earlier you'd mentioned that Jeff, and later you, came to hear a story that runs throughout the songs. How would you summarize that story?

SM: Not really, this is definitely more of collaboration. All the other Minus 5 records have pretty much been, I am the dictator. And a lot of them, when I start recording the songs it's just me, and I kind of build them from there. This (*Down with Wilco*) was pretty atypical; it was definitely more of a collaboration

because most of the time, most of the Minus 5 recordings, it hasn't been a bunch of guys together in a studio playing the song together.

GM: Is that even true of *Old Liquidator* (the Minus 5's second cd, from 1995)?

SM: Oh yeah, *Old Liquidator* every song started with either me singing and playing acoustic guitar, or me and Ken singing and playing acoustic guitar. And there's a couple songs, where I decided later, Well, that's not the best vocal I've ever heard. So I sang it again, but you can hear--because it's sung to the original with acoustic guitar--a little ghost of another vocal, the scratch vocal. Like, if you listen to "All the Time."

GM: That reminds me, on "The Days of Wine and Booze" I thought I heard someone laughing or giggling in the background.

SM: Yeah, it's Jeff's kids. They were running around in the studio the last night. I said, You should get your kids and your wife to come down, because we'd been working so much I hadn't really seen them even though I'd been staying at their house. They'd be gone in the morning when I got up, and then I'd be gone until three in the morning every day, so I said they should come down and have a pizza party. And they just went ape. There were marimbas there and all kinds of stuff they could bang on, so they were running around laughing and we turned on the tape and got that. It was just perfect, just fitting in that song it sounded really, really cool. I like that kind of stuff, weird sounds that don't make any sense.

GM: I didn't pick it up until I used headphones. At first I thought it was the neighbor's kids.

SM: There are birds on "That's Not the Way It's Done" that, when we were in London working on it, Charlie Francis and I heard outside his window. We opened the window and stuck the microphone outside and recorded them. We left them exactly where we recorded them on the track. We didn't move them at all.

GM: Sounds like Joe Meek kind of stuff.

SM: Then the other thing, this is another great story, the last thing I put any of the songs, I thought, some of these songs should have strings on them and so I thought, How am I going to do that? It's going to be expensive to get somebody to do arrangements and all that and then I happened to be talking on the phone to my friend Scott Ferril in Minneapolis. He made the video for "Emperor Of The Bathroom" (from *Old Liquidator*) and has also almost finished one for "All the Time," which Chris Mars appears in so that's pretty cool. Of course, no one will ever see it. Anyway, Scott says to me, hey if you ever need strings on anything I have this friend Jessy. She's sitting in my hot tub right now and she's really good at violin and cello and I was like, Oh, ok, cool, I'd like her to play on three songs if that's possible. And he's like, Yeah, sure. So I go, here's the deal, I'll tell you

what key the songs are in and what the title is but she can't hear the music, she has to record the strings without ever having heard the songs. And so he had her do it, I sent instructions for the songs, and that's why she would say the title of the song before she would start playing it, so I would know what song it was and that's why you hear her say at the beginning, The days of wine and booze. And I just thought when I heard her voice say that, This is so funny, I gotta put this on the record. I hope she doesn't get mad, 'cause I'm sure it wasn't intended for that. I took parts of the strings that I liked and I would randomly just throw them onto the track and I usually wouldn't even move them, I would just leave them however they sounded and it was so cool. I love that kind of cut and paste, accidents will happen kind of thing, that's what the Minus 5 is all about. So she's still never heard the songs. The really funny thing is that --I didn't even realize at the time--that this was Jessie Green and she plays on the Wilco record, on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and I had no idea when I was asking her to play on it. Such a trip.

GM: This record sounds like it has some great stories behind it.

SM: Yeah it does. It has some bad ones too, like September 11th, that was the second day of recording.

GM: Gezz.

SM: Yeah, that wasn't good, that made it pretty darn hard. We somehow kept going. We couldn't bring ourselves to do anything for most of that day and then we said, You know what, this is just horrible we need to get out of our houses and get away from our TVs and just try to make music, not matter how hard it's going to be, we have to try to do it. Then we played that show like four days later and nobody had been out and that was a really great thing too, people were actually ready to come out and just bust out and go drinking and just go crazy. That was hard, that was not a good time. Jeff was like, We should try to create something good, something positive while this is going on. And so we did.

GM: *Down with Wilco* doesn't sound like any of the other Minus 5 records but it still sounds like a Minus 5 record.

SM: That's good, they should all be different, to have that thing, whatever it is.

GM: Between the Minus 5 and the Fellows you're in pretty safe territory about not being accused of making the same record twice.

SM: Yeah, I tend to avoid that. I want to make a super ROCK record with the Fellows now, for some reason. I'm kind of ready for that, but I don't know when we'll get around to it now that we don't have a record deal anymore and all that. But that won't stop us, that's never stopped us before, it's just a matter of timing.

.....
This just in...*Down with Wilco* is scheduled to be released in February '03, on Yep Roc Records!

Enduring Freedom: A Guide

By Will Drist

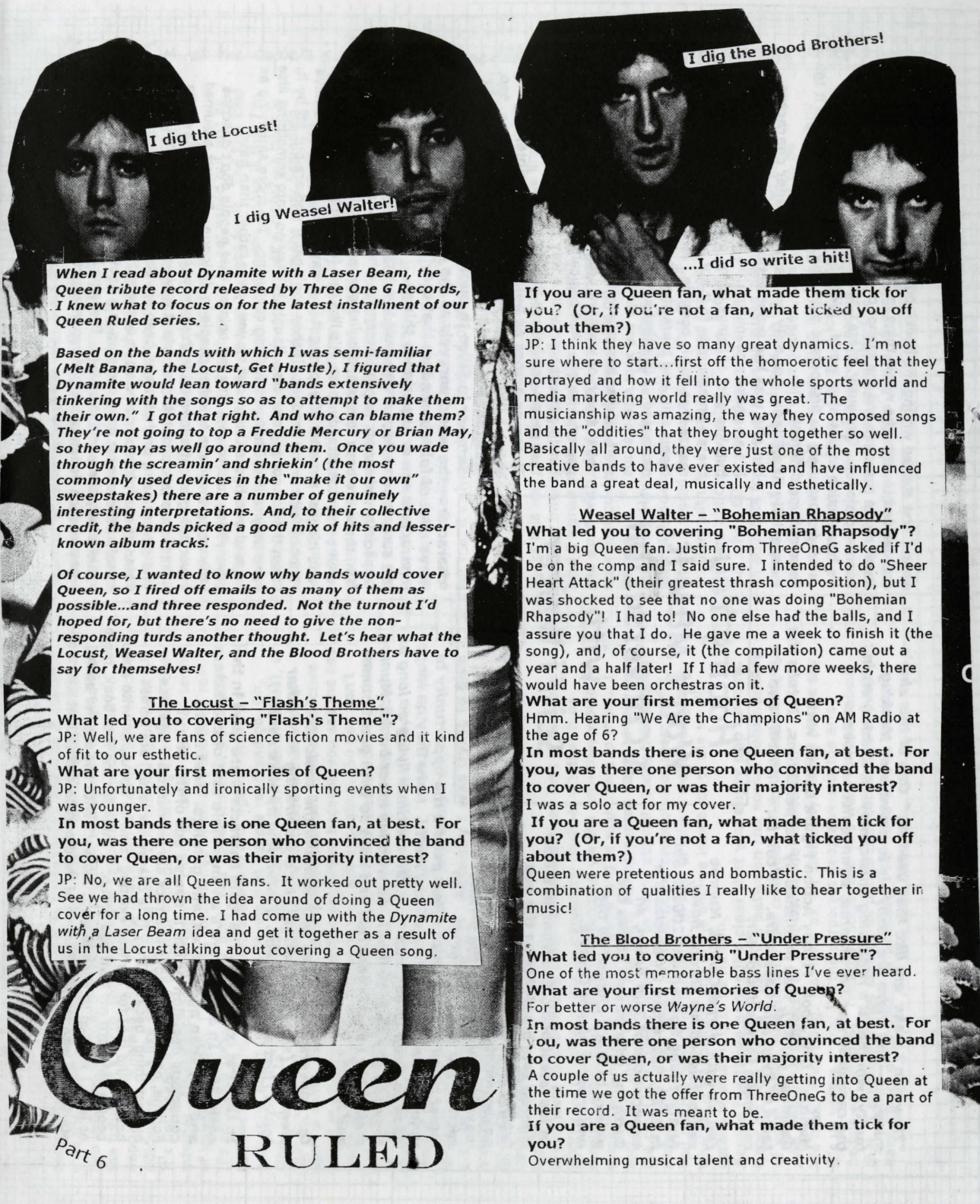
OK, all you wavos, hardcores, muscle-heads and waifomatics, it's time to rock and try for...

No, wait—that's something else.

Feeling a little neglected by your local law enforcement officials lately? Feeling like ole' Billy Bob just doesn't give a damn what you do unless you've got a tan, a towel and a box opener? We here at *Go Metric!* recognize your plight. What's a middle-class brat to do?

In an attempt to answer that question—a question, we admit, which has plagued American culture since the days of the Industrial Revolution—we have compiled a list of possibly offensive things to say, "post 9/11," as the saying goes, a few ditties guaranteed to light up Poindexter's subterranean command center.

- Everybody talkin' 'bout Taliban, al Qaeda, bin Laden, Dick Cheney/All we are saying is give war a chance.
- Giuliani still sucks.
- I'd rather be smashing windows in Davos, Switzerland.
- What's that smell?
- I'm writing a musical based on the World Trade Center attacks. CBS has expressed some interest.
- Well, the buildings were kinda ugly...
- I still hate the cops.
- Sister Act II: Back in the Habit is a highly underrated film.
- Bush still stole the election.
- She went down quicker than the second tower.
- Al Gore, meet al Qaeda...
- Dude, I was listening to my collection of Cat Stevens eight-tracks.
- Whaaaaaaaazup, Wahabi?
- Why does a Rumsfeld news conference remind me of amateur porn?
- Where's Richard Nixon when we really need him?
- I hear the Dead Kennedys are getting back together.
- Dude came walking out of the stall with a fucking pizza box, man. A fucking pizza box, goddamnit.
- What is that smell?
- The cops still shot Diallo 19 times. The cops still brutalized Louima. The cops still suck. I miss Clinton.
- John Ashcroft bought me this t-shirt to cover up my tits.
- Don't blame me—I didn't vote.
- History Repeats Itself: 1967, war raging in Vietnam: "Make love, not war!"; 2004, war rages ... somewhere: "Fuck Bush in 2004."
- Just wait till they get a load of democracy...
- Mein Führer, I still can't walk.
- This'll make a great episode of West Wing.
- "Laura, honey, has my penis gotten bigger since this whole war thing started?" "No, George, but your prostate has swollen to almost superhuman proportions."
- Don't forget to vote!
- What is that damn smell?!
- George, tell us 'bout the rabbits.
- My secret tribunal can lick your secret tribunal.
- Wait a second ... the cute one goes to college somewhere in Texas, right? But the ugly one goes to Yale?
- Percocet—preferred by members of the first family 5 to 1!
- Hey! Where'd my economy go?
- No, really, I believe he choked on a pretzel.
- I am Saddam's love child.
- If you can read this, you may already be in violation of 47 Homeland Security laws.
- Congratulations, America!!!
- Ralph? Ralph? Where are you?
- What's that fucking smell?
- Tony Blair uses vaginal deodorant.
- George E. Pataki ... Osama bin Laden – separated at birth?
- Terrorists 1, Imperialists 0.
- I stole Tom Ridge's neck.
- OK, everybody can go home now. The terrorists have won.
- So, how are you enduring freedom?
- I'm pro-Taliban, and I vote.
- Go Mets!



I dig the Locust!

I dig Weasel Walter!

I dig the Blood Brothers!

...I did so write a hit!

When I read about Dynamite with a Laser Beam, the Queen tribute record released by Three One G Records, I knew what to focus on for the latest installment of our Queen Ruled series.

Based on the bands with which I was semi-familiar (Melt Banana, the Locust, Get Hustle), I figured that Dynamite would lean toward "bands extensively tinkering with the songs so as to attempt to make them their own." I got that right. And who can blame them? They're not going to top a Freddie Mercury or Brian May, so they may as well go around them. Once you wade through the screamin' and shriekin' (the most commonly used devices in the "make it our own" sweepstakes) there are a number of genuinely interesting interpretations. And, to their collective credit, the bands picked a good mix of hits and lesser-known album tracks:

Of course, I wanted to know why bands would cover Queen, so I fired off emails to as many of them as possible...and three responded. Not the turnout I'd hoped for, but there's no need to give the non-responding turds another thought. Let's hear what the Locust, Weasel Walter, and the Blood Brothers have to say for themselves!

The Locust – "Flash's Theme"

What led you to covering "Flash's Theme"?

JP: Well, we are fans of science fiction movies and it kind of fit to our esthetic.

What are your first memories of Queen?

JP: Unfortunately and ironically sporting events when I was younger.

In most bands there is one Queen fan, at best. For you, was there one person who convinced the band to cover Queen, or was their majority interest?

JP: No, we are all Queen fans. It worked out pretty well. See we had thrown the idea around of doing a Queen cover for a long time. I had come up with the *Dynamite with a Laser Beam* idea and get it together as a result of us in the Locust talking about covering a Queen song.

If you are a Queen fan, what made them tick for you? (Or, if you're not a fan, what ticked you off about them?)

JP: I think they have so many great dynamics. I'm not sure where to start...first off the homoerotic feel that they portrayed and how it fell into the whole sports world and media marketing world really was great. The musicianship was amazing, the way they composed songs and the "oddities" that they brought together so well. Basically all around, they were just one of the most creative bands to have ever existed and have influenced the band a great deal, musically and esthetically.

Weasel Walter – "Bohemian Rhapsody"

What led you to covering "Bohemian Rhapsody"?

I'm a big Queen fan. Justin from ThreeOneG asked if I'd be on the comp and I said sure. I intended to do "Sheer Heart Attack" (their greatest thrash composition), but I was shocked to see that no one was doing "Bohemian Rhapsody"! I had to! No one else had the balls, and I assure you that I do. He gave me a week to finish it (the song), and, of course, it (the compilation) came out a year and a half later! If I had a few more weeks, there would have been orchestras on it.

What are your first memories of Queen?

Hmm. Hearing "We Are the Champions" on AM Radio at the age of 6?

In most bands there is one Queen fan, at best. For you, was there one person who convinced the band to cover Queen, or was their majority interest?

I was a solo act for my cover.

If you are a Queen fan, what made them tick for you? (Or, if you're not a fan, what ticked you off about them?)

Queen were pretentious and bombastic. This is a combination of qualities I really like to hear together in music!

The Blood Brothers – "Under Pressure"

What led you to covering "Under Pressure"?

One of the most memorable bass lines I've ever heard.

What are your first memories of Queen?

For better or worse *Wayne's World*.

In most bands there is one Queen fan, at best. For you, was there one person who convinced the band to cover Queen, or was their majority interest?

A couple of us actually were really getting into Queen at the time we got the offer from ThreeOneG to be a part of their record. It was meant to be.

If you are a Queen fan, what made them tick for you?

Overwhelming musical talent and creativity.

Queen

RULED

Part 6

"They don't make 'em like they used to." One of this zine's missions—and there are many—is to prove such thinking faulty, whether it's regarding music, movies, comics, or, in the case of writer Jim Munroe, science fiction novels.

Munroe's first book, *Flyboy Action Figure Comes with Gasmask* (1999), was published by HarperCollins. It tells the tales of Ryan and Cassandra. He can turn into a fly and she can make things disappear.

Fed up with HarperCollins, Munroe self-published his second novel, *Angry Young Spaceman* (2001). Set in 2959, *Spaceman* chronicles the experiences of Sam Breen, an Earthling who travels across the galaxy to teach English on the underwater planet Octavia.

In his latest book, *Everyone in Silico*, Munroe sets his sights on the near future, 2036. Thirty years from now governments have fallen by the wayside, replaced by the private sector. But that's old news. The latest trend is *Self*, which offers people the opportunity to upload themselves into a virtual world. Here they no longer need to sleep or eat, and they can continue living as long as they can pay their *Self* bill. As with his other books, Munroe makes the unreal seem real and does so with great humor and insight.

Our conversation began with some of the basic story elements (story and setting) before spiraling onto other topics (just as I'd hoped). (Interview by Mike Faloon)

In the first two books, the main characters are guys in their early 20s. In *Silico* there's an ensemble cast of characters and they span ages, races, and genders. Was that a conscious decision or did it evolve out of the story?
For me, obviously gender and race are elements but age was the biggest thing, because they (the characters' ages) are across the board. And that for me was exciting to write about, to write about people not from my own age group. I think for the first book, more or less, I wanted to stick to what I knew. With the second book I started off with the perspective of third person omniscient narrator—

Hoping You Won't M&M It: A Conversation with Sci-Fi Writer Jim Munroe

when I first started writing the book—but I switched to first person and decided to write the whole thing in first person because so much of the response and the humor of the book comes from Sam's internal dialogue. Obviously, there's some physical stuff, but mostly it's his reaction to this alien world. (With *Silico*) I don't know if I decided, Absolutely no first person guys, but definitely I wanted it to be something different.

I especially like Eileen, not only was she an older character but she was the most action packed.

It's an unlikely coupling—the grandmother assassin—but, like a lot of things in my book, on the surface there's an absurdity to it but as you get into it you realize that this is possible. All she needed was the bionic suit, and there she was. She's strongly motivated. I like that kind of contradiction. I know some pretty kick ass old ladies, my grandma, and stuff. It was basically with them in mind, physically not as tough or whatever, but will wise, totally powerful people. And basically it's a question of building the character in a way that is realistic, so that people can believe the impossible.

It comes across as being very plausible. One thing I liked about *Angry Young Spaceman*, too, was that the world unfolds through the eyes of Sam—or in *Silico* through the cast of

characters—the world unravels as the characters see it. You have a lot of faith in readers that they'll pick up on it as characters see or experience things.

Oh sure, in some ways we all have this architecture in our minds, especially with *Angry Young Spaceman*, when you get the sense that Oh, these are boxy robots and bullet shaped rockets ships. The environment is already there, it's like this furniture in your brain, and it's just a matter of applying it in a way. And, of course, I have a lot of faith in my readers. If they don't get it and are put off by it, then they're not my readers. (laughs) They go onto something else and they're like, That was fucking confusing. It's more satisfying as a reader to figure things out on your own, rather than have everything told to you. It's my opinion that people don't describe the world they're in to other people in dialogue. It's just assumed. Everything about our world is this consensus reality. To have the characters talk about it in a blatant way—whether it be that there's no government, or that it's all been privatized, or whatever—that kind of stuff doesn't come up in conversation; it's already a done deal. Whenever it does come up in a book it seems really forced, this is why the world is as it is. It seems lame, to me. I think that's why science fiction has a bad rap in a certain way, because it's

corny often—it often does resort to those things, because it assumes that the readers will not figure it out. The difference between the two last books is that the most recent book is a sincere imagining of the future—it's 2036, this could have happened, this could have happened. Whereas *Angry Young Spaceman* is set in 2959, which is ridiculous. It's like someone in the year 1000 imagining us now. It's unthinkable to get a bunch of Vikings conceiving the idea of the internet. Or cappuccino, or whatever; there's just no way. In terms of imagining 2036, I felt more constrained by what I felt to be real. It's not like a classic dystopic book, like *1984*, where it's basically the boot crushing down on the face again and again. There's a seduction about it, there are things that people read and go, Oh, cool, I'd love to be able to make animals (as *Nicky does in Silico*), or that kind of thing. Or some people, their attitude is that kind of stuff is awful. But there's a lot of people that see what's seductive about the future, which I think is important because you see the bad parts but you also see the parts that are appealing. So you don't get the idea that the people in the future are these suckers or these moron zombies just shambling through their lives. There's good things in their lives as well, but in comparison to what they're losing, or what they've lost, it's not a fair deal. In a way. It's my hope that that's the feeling people will take away from it.

I hadn't thought of it like that. Recently I was trying to give a summary of the book to a friend their reaction was, That sounds pretty cool. And I was like, No, I didn't want it to come across like that, that's not what I got from reading the book.

If you were to describe to a Yippie/hippie activist that in the year 2000 a lot of activism will be happening on-line, whether it be through email broadcasts or organizing via the net—they would think it was horrible, it would some kind of nightmare to them. I sort of feel that a thing, like using bioengineered seeds to take over the city (as happens in *Silico*), to many activists today that sounds awful. But at the time (2036), it would probably not seem awful. You get the benefit of foresight, to look at where we're going and whether it's appealing and in the end we lose a lot of the small details of what it is to be human.

Across the three books it's clear that you enjoy pop culture. How do you strike a balance between the social commentary of your books, specifically the critiques of consumer culture, and enjoying aspects of that consumer culture?

We make everything. As much as, for simplicity's sake, people say, It's us versus them; it's the corporate people versus the arts people—or whatever reductive statement you want to make about that. Corporate things emerge as things that collections of people have made, or co-opted, or whatever. So there isn't as much a

clear-cut division between the two. Even though what I strive to present in my books and such is that, Wow, the world is a gradation of grays, rather than black and white, it's still possible to take a stand at some level. It doesn't have to be, They're evil, and we're good. It can be because I want there to be more diversity. I value diversity. I think that there's more room for everybody if there's this idea that it's possible to make valid choices that are not the norm, that are different from the status quo's choices in that respect. For me, it's a question of fighting for more diversity, fighting for the diversity that is there not to get wiped out just by default, because no one cared enough to fight for it. The first kind of weirdness in terms of what I talk about in the books is that I'm criticizing commodity culture with a commodity, right?—a book is sold in book stores. It's all paradoxical from the very beginning. I would be the first to admit that my ideas and philosophies are riddled with contradictions with my actual life. It's really easy to get ground down by the contradictions. Once people think, I'm never going to be pure, they just give up entirely.

If I can't do everything, then why bother doing anything.

A lot of people have this idea, I encounter it from time to time and it always surprises me, that if we work just a little bit longer on this everything will be perfect and then we won't have to work anymore. For me, it's always been, instead of this revolutionary idea that everything's going to be turned around, it's like this idea of semi-permanent rebellion. For me, I try to work it into my craft in a way that's self-sustainable. Just on a basic economic level, I can sell books this way, but it's also multi-faceted and creative enough to keep me intellectually stimulated.

And I agree with a lot of that. I wasn't trying to put you on the spot with, Say, what's up with these inconsistencies? I was just curious about your take on how you balance those things.

(Laughs) Having worked at *Adbusters* and there's lots of inconsistencies there as well.*** will go to McDonalds every so often. I would feel weird doing that myself but he doesn't have a problem with it. He has a car even though he's one of the more militant anticar advocates. To me, I look at that and like here's a guy who's 60, or something—he's over 60, I think—and he's been an advocate for a lot of these attitudes since the hippies were around. And unlike the hippies, he hasn't capitulated entirely. In the sense that, he hasn't just decided, Okay, in order to be consistent with this new suburban life, I'm going to disavow any political stance I have. For me, I look at him, yeah, he's inconsistent, I can definitely see people attacking that. But on the other hand, I think he's more effective as a social agitator than a bike ridin', granola eatin' smug 18-year-old activist who doesn't do

Egads! I'm at the copiers & just realized I neglected to clarify the "???"—use context!

anything, who withdraws from society rather than mixes it up. It's a hard thing. The more you involve yourself in society in a certain respect, the more knowledge and first hand experience you have to deconstruct it. And if you don't know why people go to McDonalds you can't really hope to discourage them, if you don't know what the seduction and the interest and the excitement of it is. To some extent you have to be involved in society, you have to participate in the things that society does. And this isn't a bad thing, to a certain extent. I have a problem with hypocrisy being the prime vice of our age. It's kind of got to the point where a guy can go into a schoolyard and shoot up a bunch of kids and people can say, He's a killer, but he doesn't pretend not to be a killer. Then there's some dude who's a vegetarian but wears a leather jacket, and everybody gets freaked out about that. Like, what a hypocrite. That's why a lot of people feel forced into this position of being assholes—Well, you think I'm an asshole, I'm going to be a completely consistent asshole. It's not this question of making yourself pure but striving toward purity with the understanding that you might never make it and to try to let go of some of the pride and righteousness that comes with attempting to divest yourself of the heinous elements of the power structure.

I remember at the reading I heard you mention that your wife is a biologist, is that right?

Yeah.

I'm wondering about the science in *Silico*. Did you tap her for that, is it from your own background...

Oh no, I have no background in science, absolutely none. Some people ask about the research, in general, whether I researched advertising trends and the answer is nothing. I looked up some things as I needed them for the realism. All that stuff came from being a person in this society and soaking it up. I go out of my way to avoid most of it, but I can't help but be struck by boy bands (*who are perfectly parodied in Silico with the band Pole Position*), that kind of stuff. I certainly don't go looking for it. In terms of in silico it's a term that's used much like in vitro. It's what geneticists use to refer to computer life or life that is simulated in a computer experiment. My wife was talking about an in silico experiment, and I was like, A what experiment? And at this time I was actually looking for a title for the book. I loved that name and I thought in so many ways the transference of, that people are uploading their brains to computer environment. It seemed perfect. That was a big thing.

You pull it off well.

I'm a good faker. I appreciate that. The creative challenge for me with science fiction is making that kind of impossible thing seem plausible. People want to imagine these things, and I enjoy creating

them. And I think that having something that is clearly impossible described in a plausible way kind of opens you up in a certain way. **And that goes back to the way the characters, being so well-rounded, make it all seem so believable.**

One of the challenges of someone like Doug (*the financially troubled, middle-aged cool hunter in Silico*) is what he does for a living is pretty heinous and awful. I also think that it's important to see that these people have concerns and they do feel anxious and they do feel worried. And in some ways they're just drifting through life, and you can do that easier if you aid the status quo. If you go with the flow, it's a lot easier to get through life. Doug is a smart guy, but he's not a deep thinker. He's more concerned with status, but not in a completely gross way. But those are his concerns. He doesn't want to fuck up his life. For me, to make him a straw man and just kick him to death didn't appeal to me. Sometimes people, because of the background I have with *Adbusters* and even with some of the other books, there's this idea that I have no sympathy. I do have sympathy. I like to think that I understand why these people act like the way they do. I just don't think it's good enough.

On his recent book tour, Munroe read past due notices related to Everyone in Silico. What past due notices, you say? Let's allow Jim to explain further. The following is taken from his website, nomediakings.net.

Everyone In Silico is set in a world even more corporatized than our own, and so I've mentioned a lot of brands. I felt silly about giving companies free advertising, so I invoiced ten of them for product placement. I got a few responses (though none with enclosed cheques) so once the invoices were past due, I wrote follow-up letters. You can read them, and see the original invoices, [here](http://nomediakings.net).

Hershey's
February 22, 2002

Dear Sir or Madam:

Received your inquiry re: January 10th invoice, asking who in the marketing department placed the order.

While I feel that answering "someone named Bob" might expedite the payment, I must be frank: no one ordered anything. I am pleased to see, however, that an invoice charging you ten dollars for product placement in a novel did not strike you as unthinkable.

Nor should it. Just last year Fay Weldon's *The Bulgari Connection* came out with HarperCollins and Grove press. Commissioned by the jewellery company for an undisclosed sum, the established Weldon was required to mention the brand twelve times. Unlike magazines with their almost infinite capacity for advertisements, the book has been ad-resistant for years. Why not take a page (so to speak) from equally ad-resistant movies?

And your company has a special place in history on this, doesn't it? Although the script of *E.T.* called for M&M's, M&M turned down the offer, and Reese's Pieces subsequent involvement shot sales through the roof. It wasn't the first product placement in a movie, but it certainly popularized the strategy.

But that's ancient history. What does the year 2036 hold for Hershey's? Let's look at page 126 of my futuristic novel, *Everyone In Silico*:

Andre glowered at him. Nicky looked from one to the other, remembered their secrecy in the train yard. "You guys, man," she sneered, "spy versus spy." She went into the kitchen, her stomach having ordered her into forage mode. She knew there was nothing in the fridge, so she looked through the cupboard and found a package of Reese's Oreos. She brought them back to the living room. Andre declined, but Simon dipped his dirty hand in, licking his lips.

Mmm... aren't you licking your lips now, Sir or Madam? Not only will there be a tantalizing merger between your company and Nabisco, but you've come out on top — it isn't Oreo's Pieces, after all.

But it might be in the American edition, if you fail to remit your cheque.

Hoping you won't M&M it,

Jim Munroe.

The Gap

February 22, 2002

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing because you have failed to pay for the services rendered as detailed in the January 10th invoice.

Maybe your accounting department is in the same country as many of your clothing factories, and this accounts for the delay. Regardless, I will take this opportunity to impress upon you the advantages you may have overlooked in having your brand appear in a novel.

While there's only three brand impressions in the novel, the title *Everyone In Silico* is an obvious nod to your Everyone In Leather/Vests/Denim ad series. (I've thrown that in for free, by the way.) It was unfortunate that so many artists and writers latched on to the fascist overtones of such a bold slogan, and made it seem like you were trying to turn us into consumer-clone-zombie-nazis. But think about that for a second — who are these people, anyway? Who are these people, that think of Hitler when they think of the Gap instead of the good, happy, models dancing across their TV screen? Who find something sinister in fresh-faced lovelies dancing to tasteful break beats?

They're book readers.

And ponder this: who are these people who are complaining about "sweatshops," who are so concerned that your employees overseas have running water and don't have to bring their sleeping bags to work? Who are these greasy faced, ugly losers fucking with your bottom line with their boycotts and investigative journalism?

They're book readers, too.

It's a small demographic, but can you afford to overlook it?

Yours truly,

Jim Munroe.

For more on the past due notices, Munroe's books, and more, check out www.nomediakings.net.

IS HE STRONG? LISTEN, BUD: POUNDS A RADIOACTIVE PUD!

BY REV. NORB. HELLA CONFUSED

I have tried. I honestly have tried. I have made every attempt possible to put together a coherent enough analysis of this film that I wouldn't be wasting everyone's time doing so. I have failed. I have attempted to embrace the film. I have failed. I have attempted to reject the film. I have failed. I have seen it in the theatre alone; seen it in the theatre with a small child; rented it on DVD. I still have almost nothing of value to say (the dearth of insight made all the more aggravating by the fact that, unlike with the X-Men movie, I can't disguise my critical bankruptcy by yelling "HALLIE BERRY'S TITS!!!!" every third line, as I was not at all impressed with Mary Jane's bosom whatsoever [though I'm sure the joke would work as many times in a row as I need it to]). This review was supposed to be done months ago. I clamored for more time. "I need to see it a second time." Editor M. Michael Mamieson complied. "I need to wait til it gets in the video stores, so I can rent it." MMM complied. "I need time to watch the movie versions of *Superman*, *Batman* (80's version), *Batman* (1966 version), *Blade The Vampire Slayer* and *Spawn*, for purposes of the compare contrast thing." MMM complied again. I rented and watched all those movies, then rented *X-Men* again and *Spider-Man* again for good measure. I still have no clue as to what I want to say. And, look -- it's not like I'm confused by Spider-Man himself. Not only do I own the first 102 issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, but I also own the ultra-rare *Amazing Fantasy* #15 featuring Spidey's first appearance -- a comic book that, were it in mint condition (which my copy certainly is not), would be worth, according to current Overstreet values, \$35,000 American money (yes, that is correct, thirty-five THOUSAND American dollars -- or almost 75% of what I paid for my HOUSE). I've been reading superhero comics since I was four, and I'm 37 now. As if that weren't bad enough, I'm also a Marvel Entertainment Group stockholder. I MEAN, TASTE THE FUCKING INSANITY HERE, JACK! I am so paralyzed with points of analysis that I have NO FUCKING IDEA whether or not I like the movie. I'll tell ya one thing I DON'T like: *What the fuck is this Danny Elfman bullshit!!!!* I mean,

who DIED and left him the only asswipe qualified to do movie scores! And what the fuck was so great about Oingo Boingo anyway? They had like, what, one good song, tops! If i had nine people in my band or whatever I'd probably be able to kick out one good song too! But really, what was the point of subjecting us to more Danny Fucking Elfman scores? QUICK! Sing the theme song to the old Spider-Man cartoon show! SPILL-DEE-MAN! SPILL-DEE-MAN!!! DOES WHATEEEEVER A SPIDER CAN!!! Okay, now the Batman TV show song! DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA DUDDA BAAAAATTTT MAAAAANNNNNNN!!! Okay, now hum the music from the Spider-Man and Batman MOVIES! ...don't worry i'll wait... ..no, seriously, i've got all day! ...really! HA YOU CAN'T NOBODY CAN! CAUSE IT'S ALWAYS THIS BULLSHIT DANNY ELFMAN "CHARIOTS OF FIRE" MALARKEY!!! FEH!!! BAH!!! ACH!!! P TUI!!! (although, if you sit through all the credits they do play the REAL Spider-Man song at the very tail end of the movie, which is where Danny "I Suck Totally" Elfman's mewling ditzo-classical bullshit should have been relegated to.) Next thing i don't like is this Tobey Maguire dude. I mean, he seems like a nice enough guy (since i have never seen him in these other movies he has allegedly been in, i was notable to hate him a priori like everyone else i knew), but he just looks dippy. i don't wanna be staring at the kisser of a guy who looks like a mildly retarded version of my cousin Tony for two hours, i mean, come ON! Next thing i don't like is Mary Jane. I thought she was boring and unattractive, especially when how the real MJ was such a knockout (for the uninitiated, in the comic books, Mary Jane Watson was originally the niece of the Parkers' neighbor, Anna Watson. Anna and Aunt May were always conspiring to set up Peter with dear, sweet Mary Jane, but Peter, fearing the worst, did everything in his power to avoid meeting her. For about a year, she was only shown off-panel, or completely covered up, until the fans ultimately demanded Peter and the mysterious MJ meet. The quite unexpected result has been reproduced in violation of all known copyright laws elsewhere on this page) (*Amazing Spider-Man* #2, 1966). The next thing

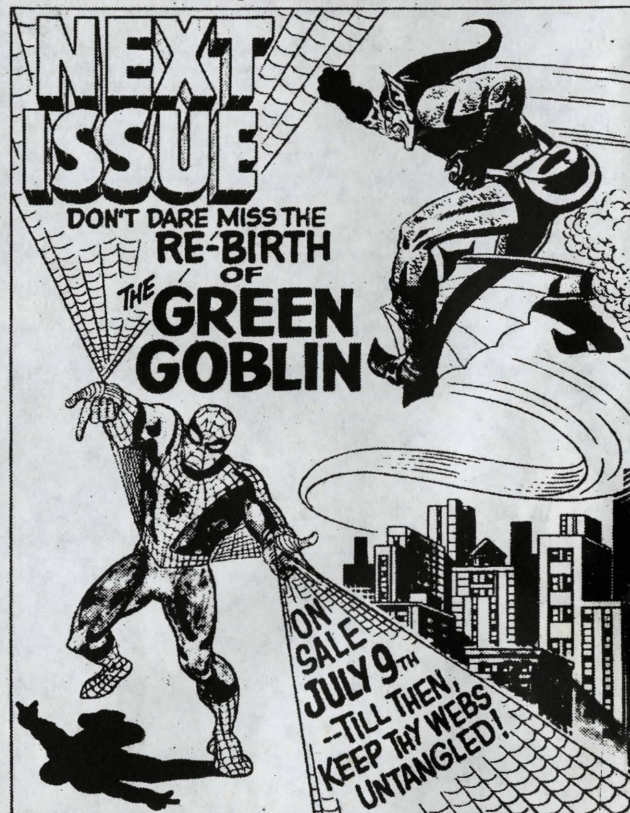
I don't like strikes me as something more significant than a mere matter of taste, or casting, or Danny "Only A Lad" Elfman's shitty movie scores. **DEAR LORD ABOVE, WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR ME TO NOT HAVE TO EXPERIENCE SPIDEY'S ORIGIN STORY EVER AGAIN IN THIS LIFETIME!!!** I mean, the story's been told in the comics. It's been told in the cartoons, both the old ones and the newer ones. It's been told in the lame made-for-TV movies that ABC used to run in the '70s (which always sucked, all with tier-L-A actors, barely any costumed action) - let's face it, as soon as they showed Midtown High, I felt like jumping up and screaming "GET BIT BY THAT FUCKING RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, STAND ASIDE IDLY, HAVE UNCLE BEN GET SHOT, AND LET'S GET FUCKING ON WITH THE MOVIE!!!!" And, ultimately, I think this is an unreconcilable problem. Obviously, movie-goers who are not comic-book-goers need to be exposed to the origin story (admittedly, a classic - sure, Batman had his parents shot dead before his eyes, but it was Spider-Man's *own* inaction that led directly to the death of his Uncle Ben, which, to me, cements a place for him eternally, or until someone forgets) in the all-time superhero holy trinity, which also includes Superman and Batman; however, comic-book-goers watching a movie where they essentially already know what's gonna happen is more or less pointless. By and large, anyone familiar with the character already knew what was gonna happen in the first half of the movie, meaning that the powers that be really only had half a movie to concoct the main story with, and, ultimately, *what is the point*. You can't really write a great story in the space of half a movie, and you can't really use the whole movie for the story because you gotta use half of it to tell the origin. You're screwed (one thing I'd like to bring up is that I think Spidey's entire origin story only took up like seven pages of *Amazing Fantasy*. I'm sorry, I'm not at home and my AF 15 doesn't make road trips). Batman's origin story took TWO pages back in the day. Superman's barely that. Like it or not, I'm thinkin' the origin stories have gotta get blitzed thru mo' quickly in these movies, but yet, that's sort of the critical part of the character. I dunno. **ME SO CON-**

FUSED!!) I more or less have given up on single-hero superhero movies, and look forward (likely in futility) to the day when there's a *Justice League* or *Avengers* or *Legion Of Super-Heroes* movie, and the sheer amount of personnel involved precludes any long stretches of setting up the characters, therefore virtually the **ENTIRE STORY** can be utilized for an action-oriented (but well-thought-out) plot (if you'd like me to tell you how the first half of next year's *Daredevil* movie will go, I'd be glad to do so). That's also one reason why I think *Blade* is one of the best-- or perhaps more correctly, "most enjoyable"-- comic book movies ever made, even though Blade was only an essentially inconsequential supporting character in the old *Tomb Of Dracula* comic books of the horror-crazed early-to-mid-70's (plus Wesley Snipes kinda sucks as an actor). The movie was **PLOT and ACTION** almost from the get-go; his origin told in brief snippets and flashbacks as the story went along (two amusing things: Marvel Comics was thought to be the Imprint Of Death at the time that movie was made, so they kept Marvel's name completely off anything to do with it; I only even thought about renting that movie when I saw parts of it on TV at a bar I was at and realized that it was better than more or less any movie featuring comic book characters I'd ever seen) (obviously, too much bloody violence and f-words for a Spidey type character; wholesome Spider-Man must not tread in the realms of the R-rating!). **HOWEVER!** The greatest horror of all came in the form of **THE GREEN GOBLIN'S COSTUME!!!** Now, having viewed a goodly number of superhero flicks in recent weeks, I have come to the conclusion that the leading men are cast **NOT** for their ability to play the lead super-character, but, alas, **FOR THEIR ABILITY TO PORTRAY THE STOOP-IT ALTER-EGO**. This is why Michael Keaton sucks at Batman: He was hired to play Bruce Wayne (in my opinion, however, rectifying how the Bruce Wayne character is portrayed with how the Batman character acts [in the comics] would be fucking impossible, though, except for the stories where Wayne is old and bitter and half-crippled), not Batman. This is where Superman enjoys a

continued, it appears



huge advantage over most every other costumed hero: For all intents and purposes, Superman IS the real character; it's Clark Kent who's the put-on (and think about THAT: A man who can kick everybody's ass forty-billion times over spends his life masquerading as a milksop and absorbing abuse from the ones he loves. Who here besides me finds this somewhat questionable behavior??), ergo, Christopher Reeve was the only superhero flick actor likely chosen because he could portray the MAIN CHARACTER, not the main character's boring alter ego (and here's an interesting [to me] digression: Do non-comic-book-people think the alter ego is the main character, and the superhero merely the affectation? 'Cause i can assure you, all the comic book guys think the guy in the costume is the REAL GUY, and the guy underneath the costume is just, i dunno, what Jung might have called the "shadow self," which, now that i think about it, might be a completely turvy view of the world.eh, whatever). However, Appleton, Wisconsin's own Billy Dafoe (according to sources enlisted in the Appleton Public Secondary School System the same time as Mr. Dafoe, he was known as "Billy DAFF-o" at the time of his enrollment. Hollywood brought a secondary mutation to "WILL-um DUH-FOE," ergo he will be referred to as "Billy DAFF-o" for the duration merely because it amuses me) was, in fact, poised to shatter all known models of superhero flick casting theory by being A. A fucking SWEET Norman Osborn ("SWEET NORMAN OSBORN! You kids get outside right now!!"), and B. Someone who was obviously born and bred to BE the Green Goblin, just like Frank Gorshin was born to be the Riddler, Capt. Picard to be Prof. X, etc....AND THEN SOMEONE GOES AND FUCKS IT ALL UP BY PUTTING BILLY DAFF-O IN A FUCKING IMMOBILE PLASTIC FACEMASK!!! Words cannot EXPRESS how god damn mother fucking LAME i think that Green Goblin costume is!!! I mean, you've already got ONE character wearing a full-face-covering mask, now you've got the antagonist, who, in the comics, wears a wacky green latex mask (and a magenta stocking hat), which, admittedly, would be a difficult look to pull off IF YOU WERE A CIVILIAN. If you were in, oh, fuck, i don't know, say, HOLLYWOOD, and WORKING ON A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE, one suspects that A GREEN LATEX GOBLIN MASK would not be ALL THAT GOD DAMN MOTHER FUCKING SON OF A BITCHING OUT OF THE QUESTION TO ACQUIRE!!! I mean, WHO WAS THINKING WHAT??? And what were they paid to think this what??? The Goblin's mask is, by far, the low point of the movie -- and, as he's essentially the only supervillain, the meat of the movie -- by comic book fan definition, the superhero vs. supervillain scenes -- are RUINED merely by his presence!!! I mean... i mean...??? I am completely at a loss as to how somebody in a position of power thought the Goblin's mask/helmet looked "good." IT LOOKS FUCKING RIDICULOUS, YOU MORONS!!! HE LOOKS LIKE JET JAGUAR FROM GODZILLA vs. MEGALON (confession: i do, in fact, have a soft spot in my heart for "Godzilla vs. Megalon" because it was one of only two Godzilla movies i actually saw in the theatre [sixth grade]...but STILL)!!! Who in the WORLD would think that an actor who was BORN to play the Green Goblin should be stuck inside a plastic helmet when doing his villainizing??? I mean, SURE, it worked for DARTH VADER, but the guy who played Darth Vader and the guy who was his voice were TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE!!! And HERE you have the PERFECT, natcher' i born GREEN GOBLIN and you FUCK IT UP TOTALLY!!! WHY, drill sergeant, WHY??? ...bah. To me, the immobile Green Goblin mask ruins the movie. Occasionally, the eye-shields will roll back, or Billy Dafoe-o's mouth will be visible inside the mask/helmet, but, ultimately, Spidey vs. Goblin is just one guy moving his jaw to indicate speech, and the other guy just wiggling his big plastic green head around. Lame. Totally lame. NEEDLESSLY lame. I have no idea whatsoever how such a thing could come to pass. It just frustrates me beyond belief that i've waited over a quarter of a century for a "real" Spider-Man movie, and when it finally happened, horrible gaffes and/or aesthetic choices that any nitwit could see were bad decisions somehow made it to the finished product. I weep for my generation. However, by the same token (actually, a completely different token), i loved the scenes where Spidey was web-slingin' all over NYC. I even felt queasy in the pit of my stomach once or twice, and, given my notoriously cast iron gut, that's sayin' somethin'. I will also say that the Spidey/MJ kiss-upside-down-in-the-rain was the best movie kiss since...i dunno...Lady and the Tramp and the spaghetti (although if Spidey woulda just let out about three more feet of web that woulda been the greatest sex act ever!). And, Jeezus, J. Jonah Jameson was BRILLIANT! I thought the best scene in the movie was where Parker wrestled "Bonesaw" (Randy Savage) in the cage (FYI: the name of the wrestler in the comics was "Crusher Hogan," which is kinda ironic if you follow wrestling, maybe); that was a great fleshing out of a scene from the original origin story that grabbed you -- well, at least ME -- drew me in, and made me forget that i was analyzing the movie, and shoved me into mere "ENJOYMENT" mode, which is what i kind of demand. I also kind of...uh...almost teared up during the scene where Spidey is holding on to the cablecar of youngsters (now, okay: i really need to dig up my old copies of MARVEL UNIVERSE from the 80's, because that comic book would say how much any given hero could lift, etc., and i'm SURE Spider-Man can NOT lift an entire cablecar full of kids, but, you know, no harm, no foul), and it looks like Gobby is gonna do him in, and all of a sudden Spider-Man gets a reprieve because the New Yorkers start pelting the Goblin with rocks and garbage, calling him a bum and telling him that if he messes with Spider-Man, he's messing with New York. Watching this, i was just like FUCK YEAH!!!! THEY LIKE SPIDER-MAN!!!! THEY REALLY DO!!! ...which is really quite inane, but...i dunno. To me, that's just Stan Lee's masterstroke of placing his heroes in real cities like NYC in lieu of Metropolis or Gotham or wherever coming to fruition...i actually still kind of mist up thinking about that scene...partially because it was completely unexpected, partially because i'm just happy for Spider-Man that people like him (? roll that one over in your heads, non-comic-book people), and partly for real-world reasons unclear. Anyway, the movie is obviously being set up so that Harry becomes the Hobgoblin in Spider-Man 2. I'd much rather see a movie where Spidey faces the Sinister Six, but, ultimately, i must admit that i will see you in line for Spidey #2, yellow plastic Hobgoblin helmets be damned. Um, Halle Berry's tits.



BUT WAIT! WAIT! I'M NOT DONE NOT HAVING ANYTHING TO SAY YET!!!

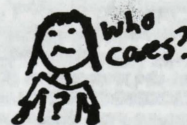
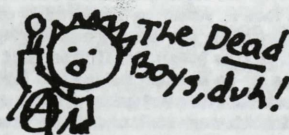
Rev. Norb's suggestions DEMANDS for the second Spider-Man movie

1.) Kill Danny Elfman Right Now, bring back real theme song. 2.) Rectify Idiotic Decision #417 by dumping existing Mary Jane and replacing her with Donna from "That 70's Show." I mean, let's face it: America has already clasped her to our metaphorical bosom as far as Way-Hot-Long-Haired-Red-Headed-Girls-Next-Door goes; utilizing the dumpy existing MJ when The Mother Of All Possible MJ Candidates toils away on Fox pretending to be from Wisconsin is tres tres loopy. 3.) Utilize part of the storyline from Spider-Man #59 where a Spider-brawl breaks out at the club where MJ works as a go-go dancer; having the Kung-Fu Monkeys as the house band is mandatory. 4.) Three words: **GWEN FUCKING STACY!!!!** Let the no-necks at the pool table prattle on with their Ginger-MaryAnn debates and leave the Betty vs. Veronica tussles to the emo dorks, a REAL MAN turns his undivided attention towards the debating (and, occasionally, the masturdebating) of the Gwen Stacy vs. Mary Jane Watson conundrum. And, for my two cents, from a mere deliciousness standpoint, it's Gwen Stacy all the way. Now, sure, Mary Jane was a lot cooler than Gwen, was a hottie in her own right and probably put out to beat all-get-out, but there is/was/has never been a character in illustrated fiction (hell, toss the creepy-ass Mona Lisa and the double-amputee Venus de Milo in there as well) who radiated almost paranormal beauty like Gwen Stacy (at least when John Romita was drawing her. One theory I have regarding why they killed her off in the comics [other than the fact that she really didn't have much of a personality] was that the artists who succeeded Romita on Spidey couldn't quite match the perfection that jazzy Johnny visually imbued to the character). George Tabb claims that it was Gwen Stacy who had the honor of being the mental erotic image he focused on at the time of his first-ever orgasm, and, while George has been known to embellish a story or two, there is little reason to doubt his word: Gwen Stacy is so f-ing hot she probably can't be replicated in real life. **BUT IT WOULDN'T HURT TO TRY!** I mean, let's face it: If you're a guy and you never mused mentally over whether Gwen goes landing strip, bald eagle, or old-growth forest, you might as well have grown up reading Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* or some god damn thing (I can't try that with MJ - I just get a vision of her crotch covered with that peculiar red-and-black triangular delta of hair that seems to be hereditary in the Osborn family, eeez!) 5.) Scrap entire storyline. Fuck the Hobgoblin. Base entire script for sequel on my all-time favorite issue of *Amazing Spider-Man*, number 21, Feb. 1965. Plot goes like this: Johnny Storm (The Human Torch) is walking with his girlfriend, Doris Evans, when he hears a radio bulletin alerting the populace that his enemy, The Beetle - a guy with metal wings, sucker-fingers, and a purple metal wastebasket on his head - has been released from prison. Johnny bursts into flames immediately, and soars off to find the Beetle, much to Dorrie's chagrin. Pissed, Dorrie walks home, but, in all the bedlam and tumult, she drops her wallet, which is found on the street by Peter Parker. Being a stand-up kinda guy, Parker decides to walk the wallet over to Dorrie's house, and, to show her appreciation she...pause for effect...invites him in for a glass of Coke. Dorrie is taken by Pete's well-mannered, soft-spoken nature, and, after Parker exits and the Torch comes back to apologize for zooming off in the middle of their date, she tells him that he should strive to be more like that gentlemanly Peter Parker. This, of course, enrages the Torch to the point where, the next day, he drops by Midtown High to tell Parker to stay the fuck away from his chick. Overhearing the Torch's spiel is Pete's then-girlfriend, Betty Brant (who does not need to be brought back), who runs off sobbing after hearing the Torch's accusations. Needless to say, Pete/Spidey pops his cork, and essentially tells the Torch he's gonna kick his fucking ass, which he quickly realizes he can't do while in his civilian identity. Parker goes off and smashes some brick walls in frustration, while the Torch flies back to Dorrie's house to bitch at her some more. **HOWEVER!** The Torch is then spotted by the Beetle, who follows him all the way to Dorrie's and realizes that he can fuck with the Torch by fucking with his girlfriend. The Torch, well and truly in the doghouse, is told by Dorrie that she will have him back if he promises not to flame on for 24 hours, so he complies (I forget how he gets home). In the meantime, Pete decides that, since Betty is pissed at him, and he's pissed at the Torch, he should try to beat the Torch's time with Dorrie by making a play for her as Spider-Man, so he goes over to Dorrie's house as Spidey, just in time to catch the evil Beetle skulking in the bushes. Spidey and the Beetle wind up brawling throughout the Evans household, making a shambles of everything, and, in a panic, Dorrie - NATCH! - calls up Johnny and tells him that Spider-Man and the Beetle are fighting in the living room, so he's gotta flame on and fly over there right away. Johnny, of course, figures that this is a trick by Dorrie to get him to flame on within the 24-hour no-flame period, so he hangs up on her and watches TV instead. Back at the Evans home, the Beetle grabs Dorrie as a hostage, and takes off for parts unknown w/Spidey in hot pursuit. Meanwhile, Johnny decides to drive over to Dorrie's just to make sure Parker's not over there courting an ass-kicking, and, when he finds the place wrecked and traces of webbing at the scene, concludes that Spider-Man is in league with the Beetle, and they've both abducted Dorrie. In a flaming fury, he finds Spidey - therefore, the Torch is furiously chasing Spider-Man as Spider-Man chases the Beetle. Eventually, the whole madcap chase winds up with the Beetle being subdued and Dorrie being rescued, but Dorrie is still pissed Spider-Man wrecked her house and the Torch still half-thinks Spidey was in cahoots with the Beetle, so Spidey swings off and the story concludes with him sitting on top of a skyscraper, moping over how many people he managed to piss off that day. I mean, come ON, that rules. 6) Gwen & MJ gym class shower scene 7.) Gwen & MJ gym class rope climbing "let me show you how Spider-Man and I kissed" scene 8.) Gwen & MJ gym class "landing strip vs. bald eagle vs. old-growth forest" discussion in shower scene 9.) Beetle sneaks onto campus and gives Gwen & MJ Ecstasy during gym class right before the shower scene 10) Gwen & MJ Home Ec whipped cream scene



11) Beetle shoves Gwen & MJ pleasures of nuclear-finger attachments 12) Gwen shoves MJ and Beetle pleasure of nuclear-finger attachments 13) The Sheeher shoves up an

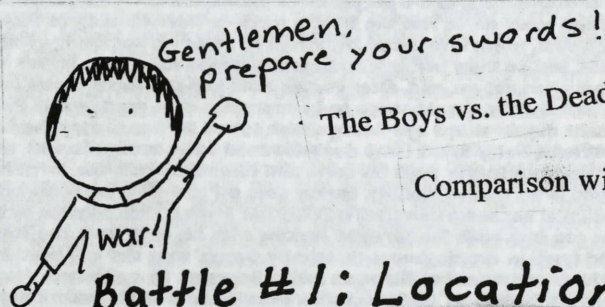
The Boys Vs. The Dead Boys!



by: Maddy Tight Pants!

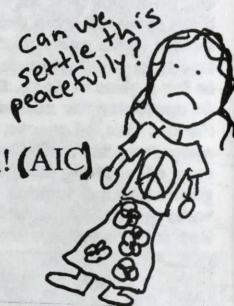
Attention Go Metric readers! Battles are being fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kashmir! And now, it is only fitting that the battles strike the punk scene. Yes, that's right. War has struck the land of mohawks, tight pants, and striped tees. A war over terrorism? Oil? Democracy? Yeah, right. This war is serious!

I present to you a war of great magnitude and importance to every single punker and punkette. Who will emerge victorious in the battle of....the Boys versus the Dead Boys? Britain's bouncy poppy punk darlings? Or America's dark and dirty punk band? Only time (and this article) will tell!



The Boys vs. the Dead Boys: A Battle-by-Battle

Comparison with an All-Important Conclusion! (AIC)



Battle #1: Location! Location!

Which band is from a cooler location?

The Dead Boys are from Cleveland, Ohio. The Boys are from London, England. Now, without ruffling too many feathers and spikes, I'd like to make the following, non-controversial claim: The Midwest is **THE BEST FUCKING PLACE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD!** (I would also allow my readers to claim Appalachia as #1, depending, but definitely nowhere else!) What other American region combines a total disinterest in high culture (fashion, djs, and non-sweatpant-based clothes) with cheap rent, a great punk scene (Dillinger Four, Screeching Weasel, Naked Raygun, to name just a few), and lots and lots of cheese? Nowhere, that's where! I'd like to follow that with non-controversial claim number two: England is **THE SECOND MOST ANNOYING COUNTRY IN THE ENTIRE WORLD.** (Much as I'd like to claim England as #1 for the purposes of this scientific study, that honor most definitely belongs to France, home to hundreds of years of snobby culture and Nazi collaborators.) Land of bad dental work, the Queen, and Brit Pop, these enforcers of the Stamp Act rate amongst the most irritating human specimens. (I will grant the occasional exception of course—the Pogues, the Clash, et.al).

So, in terms of origin, it's: **Dead Boys One, Boys Zero!**

Note to Reader: All point values weighted by importance.

Note to self: If zines are good for nothing else, it's to print articles as ridiculous as this.

Battle #2: Punk Names! Punk Names!

Which band has better punk names? Let's present all the data first for purposes of examination:

The Boys feature the following line-up: Jack Black (drums), Honest John Plain (guitar), Kid Reid (bass and vocals), Matt Dangerfield (guitar and vocals), and Casino Steel (piano and vocals).

The Dead Boys have: Stiv Bators (lead vocals), Cheetah Chrome (lead guitar), Jimmy Zero (rhythm guitar), Jeff Magnum (bass), and Johnny Blitz (drums).

Please allow me to make one brief statement: Casino Steel is a stupid, stupid punk name! And I don't mean stupid like calling my friend Dan, Dan Kielbasa. That's stupid, but it's also dumb (which is good). Casino Steel is just, well, stupid. Jack Black is the name of the famous thief and hobo (read his autobiography asap!) but I doubt that's where they got the name. Matt Dangerfield and Kid Reid are standard in the business. I'll give the Boys a few points for Honest John Plain, which is ridiculous, and dumb, and therefore good. Moving on to the Dead Boys, we quickly realize that there is no contest.



First of all, Stiv Bators is one of the best punk names of all time. What does it mean? Who cares! It just sounds SO cool! And Cheetah Chrome? Same thing! How do they do it? Maybe it's just 'cause it was still early and most of the good punk names weren't taken yet (actually maybe *that's* why Dan ended up with the nom de plume, Kielbasa). Then they round things out with three solid choices: Jimmy Zero, Johnny Blitz, and Jeff Magnum. I would like to point out that the first two of these in particular are great punk names, but yet do not over-do the creativity, lest the Dead Boys descend into art (something every good punk should be afraid of). Am I making sense? No!

In short, the Dead Boys have the better names, and gain valuable points in this all-important contest. But the Boys get points for Honest John Plain.

Dead Boys Five, Boys Two!


Yeah! I ♥
Stiv Bators!

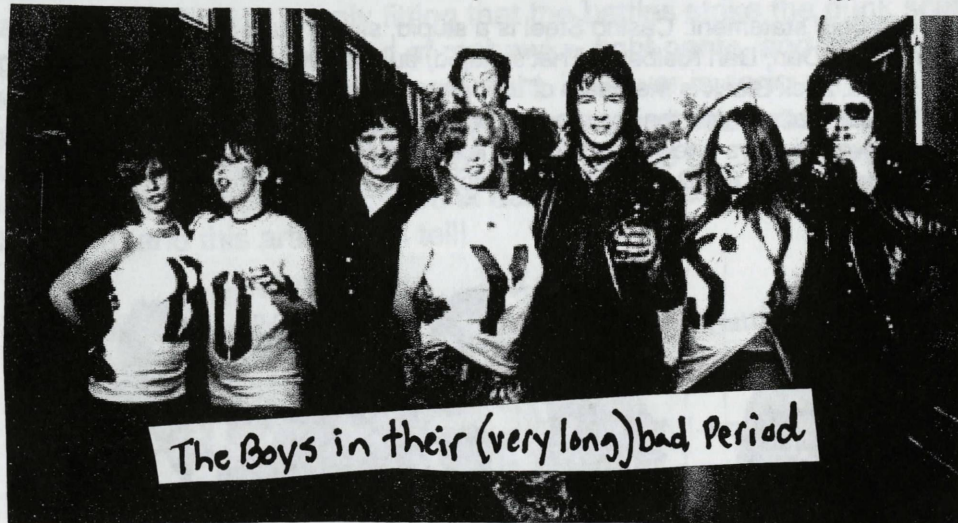
Battle #3: Pop Culture! Pop Culture!

Which band has the most annoying pop culture baggage?

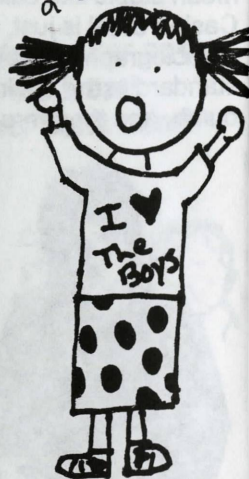
Definitely the Dead Boys. I know, I know, its not their fault that Dead Boys shirts are sold in the mall and that I see approximately three tanned, gross make-up wearing lame girls wearing Dead Boys apparel every day in NYC, but still! You've gotta wonder if there's something in the Dead Boys water that makes them so malleable to mall culture. The Boys, on the other hand, will never be well-known or hip enough to grace the chest of a 15 year-old J Lo fan. Score one for the Boys!

Dead Boys Zero, Boys One!

oh no! 



Come on! Make a comeback!



Battle #4: Silliness! Silliness! Silliness!

Which band is sillier?

Although most rock critics HATE silliness and love it when bands take themselves ultra-seriously, and ask musicians questions like, "Do you think Picasso's work had any influence on your chord progressions?", I hate all such lines of inquiry! Here again, the Boys win major points. Whereas Stiv Bators later formed the relatively (note: insult) arty Lords of the New Church, the Boys recorded not one but TWO Christmas albums (and several seven-inches) under the name The Yobs. Alright! What could be sillier than a song called "Oy Santa?" The Boys win this battle, too!

Dead Boys Zero, Boys One!

Battle #5: Death! Death! Death! Death!

Which band had the most ridiculous death of a member?

The Dead Boys, hands down, based on Stiv's death alone. Sir Bators got hit by a car in Paris in 1990 and didn't appear to be that injured, even though he was hit super hard. He declined to go to a hospital and instead went back to his apartment and fell asleep. He died several hours later of massive internal injuries. I have one word for you: Drugs.

Battle #6: Music! Music! Music!

Which band has the best single album?

I know, I know! I hate to get bogged down in questions of actual music quality! Yawn! But let's briefly examine the issue. The only seriously good Boys albums are the first two: "s/t" and "Alternative

Chartbusters." And "Alternative Chartbusters" features a few songs that automatically disqualify it from further judgment. ("Sway (Quien Sera)" being the first example that comes to mind). The Dead Boys have three albums, sort of. "Young, Loud, and Snotty, 3rd Generation Nation (never officially released, but we're gonna count it!), and a live album (which we are not going to count on the grounds that I almost never listen to live albums). Both of the first two Dead Boys albums blow the marshmallows out of the Boy's bowl of Lucky Charms! (Wow! I am both stupid AND dumb!) I love the Boys' s/t lp as much as the next man, woman, or pet dino, but come on! You cannot mess with those two Dead Boys lps! I still get chills listening to "I Won't Look Back"! And few things rock as hard as "Sonic Reducer," and nothing's as creepy as Jimmy Zero's "Son of Sam"! So, on the question of music, I must find in favor of the Dead Boys—by a lot.

Dead Boys Five, Boys Two!

So, what's the total? Who emerges victorious? Let's do the math! The grand total is:

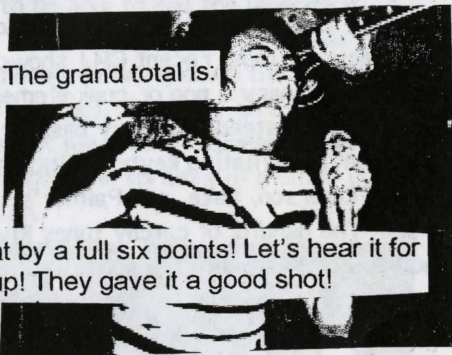
DEAD BOYS : 12
BOYS : 6

Hooray!



Wow! The numbers don't lie! The Dead Boys have the Boys beat by a full six points! Let's hear it for Stiv Bators and company! And let's also hear it for our runners-up! They gave it a good shot!

What's next? The Beach Boys vs. Spitboy? Perhaps!



Tight Pants!
a zine!

candy!
stupid
stories!
silliness!
Punk rock!
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9



art. Everyone (especially all musicians and artists) should come to my sho...

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FRANKENHEATHER

tour JAPON

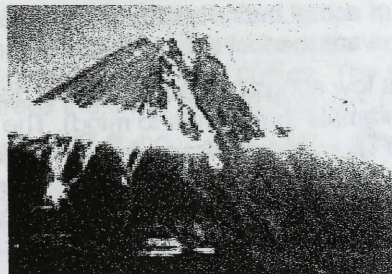
by: Frank Leone

POP PUNK IS DEAD

Well in America it is. Not so much from a lack of good bands, but the lack of an enthusiastic listening audience has scared off most labels from the genre. Look at the grandfather of poppunk, Lookout Records, most recent CMJ showcase. Five bands with nary a pop or punk element between them. Instead of bouncy bass-driven songs we have oscillating keyboard intros left over from Emerson, Lake, and Palmer's stale bag o' tricks. The handful of catchy tunes Rivers Cuomo has contributed to the collective pop consciousness can't make up for the mountain of lame imitators he's spawned. It's just the opposite of everything that got me into punk music to begin with. Most pop punk fans I know have moved on to the Nu-metal, emo, electro clash (whatever that is), or alt country land.

One of the few places where audiences are still craving crazy pop tunes with a kick that makes your knees quiver is Japan. Recently I was fortunate enough to be able to transport myself into this Disneyland for punks. Driving music, not music that drives you to an early grave is the order of the day in the land of the rising sun.

In Japan even the mainstream corporate music machine has produced some hook laden music that's downright hard to dislike. Take Puffy for



example. They are two young women brought together through a talent search and launched to megastardom. One part Hello Kitty and one part Beatles, their fame isn't based solely on PR. In the U.S. I would never find myself able to tolerate the lifeless, non-melodic music produced by similar talent search shows like American Idol. But Puffy has the catchy tunes, infectious cuteness, and a down to earth sincerity that is irresistible.

Well enough complaining and on to the trip. We were invited to join the two of the last keepers of the eternal Lookout Records flame, the Mr. T Experience and the Queers, on a five city tour. It was quite a life affirming experience to

see the heros of my youth, the Mr T Experience, and the Queers get the accolades they deserve. No folded arms and blank stares. Every single night the dancing didn't stop. The crowds were possessed by the bouncy beats. Rather than everyone trampling each other to get out of the jam-packed clubs as is commonplace in the States there were autograph sessions that extended well after the show. Later the same night previously sardine-packed nightclubs were transformed before our eyes into after-hours private party spaces to honor the bands. Food and drink were drinks were ushered upon the party-goers to commemorate the



Dr. Frank of the MTX



fist pumping fun with the Queers

fun times we all had just shared.

The Queers and MTX were in rare form, given new life by the ebullient crowds. With a touring lineup that included Dan Vapid of Screeching Weasel and Matt Drastic of the Teen Idols the Queers were the rawest I've seen them in ages. Joe Queer was full of vim and venom sounding more like Johnny Thunders and less like Brian Wilson on this tour. Joe also happens to be the lightest packer I've ever seen. With a witty and versatile wardrobe that included three shirts whose humor I'm sure was lost on the audiences: "fuck yourself", "Betty Ford Clinic", and the something to the effect of "Down with Hos, and up with Bros."

The Mr. T Experience were performing with a new found zeal as well. They were touring with only 3/4 of their new line-up due to budgetary constraints but their sound was fuller than ever. Their new bassist Bobby injected a Godzilla sized portion of enthusiasm into the void left by Joel Reader. They even unveiled a zippy new number called "Shine" that had more pep than some of their more recent material. It's shocking how this band just keeps getting better and more exciting with age where other bands attempts at growth have equated to slowing every song down to a crawl without any improvement in songwriting.

The Japanese bands managed to steal every show though. They all skewed towards a larger than life, cartoon level of energy that brought to mind some of my favorite bands like the Dickies, Revillos, and Groovie Ghoulies. It's that unknown element, an ingredient X that takes Japanese bands over the top with enthusiasm not seen in twenty

five years since punk first broke. It's like happy days all over again. As a matter a fact much of the superficial, service oriented portion of Japan felt like the 1950's with pastel-colored uniformed servers wearing cute hair protection and a level of civility that feels right out of Smallville, USA.



Bobby, bassist of the MTX

In Tokyo we were lucky to be able to see the legendary Supersnazz, formerly of Sub Pop records (another label that's been venturing down the wrong path for quite some time). Their all girl sonic attack on the audience left me totally stunned. They have perfected the poppunk formula of melody combined with aggression.



Fastcars

In Sendai we were blown away by Fastcars, a band named after a Buzzcocks song. The long lost Japanese sonic cousins of the Fastbacks (they do a great rendition of "everything that I don't need"). The desperate, passionate delivery of their lyrics really makes for some captivating listening. Throughout their set they exude giddiness. The smile of the drummer could be seen from even the darkest recesses of the club. The highlight of the show was when she sat in for Jym of the MTX for an incredible off-the-cuff version of Sack

Cloth and Ashes. She was able to channel the nervousness of playing with her idols into the most energized version of the song I've ever heard.

We were running quite late to the show in Yokohama after Japanrailing it back to Tokyo for an amazing Yakitori meal. At the Yakitori house all kinds of poultry parts, including hearts, were grilled until just done and consumed at a bar filled with ebullient salarymen that took a liking to us, well mostly Heather.

Despite the culinary delight we unfortunately missed the Spandecks. Everyone at the show was so enthusiastic about the over the top performance they put on. We heard stories of behind-the-neck guitar antics and amazingly hook-driven power tunes. We were really disappointed until we bought their CD. Then feelings of disappointment changed to thoughts of seppuku. It was quite the kick in the pants. Pure energy exploding from all outlets. The kinetic pace of the Powerpuff girls distilled into a tidy twenty minute long cd. Spastic blasts of low-fi melodic genius reminiscent of the Grumpies at their best. They are half your size and rock ten times as hard as you'll ever dream of. If you must fly to Japan just for this one CD it's worth the price of air fare once you've heard them play "Three Chords".

Just about every band we saw put on a really high energy set worthy of headlining any lame show in the good ole U S of eH. From the Disgusteens snot-



Tomoko, drummer of Fastcars, filling in for Jym of the MTX.

ty but toetapping fun to the Wimpy's Ramones worshiping harmonies the average band quality was just immeasurably higher. Labels to look out for include Popball, K.O.G.A., Sister/Benten, and 1+2. All of them have consistently good rosters.

Some other great music we purchased on our trip

Popper's MCD 2001, V/A

A selection of Japanese power pop and punk bands. Very retro sounding stuff. Brownie Circus may be the most pure-of-heart, fun band I've ever heard. The Piggies come in a close second. The Lottie Collins share that vintage RnR ala Smugglers sound. Treeberry's are the essence of what little is good about the 60's.

Water closet- *Water Closet Music*

Anthem alternating male and female vocals with in each song. They are totally polished and catchy but rough in all the right places. Key Song Title: "There is my fuckin' great place"

Gimmies- *Auto Shutoff...any questions?*

Heavily Devil Dogs influenced rock. Tough as nails but easy on the ears.



Gimmies

Dizzy Joghurt- *Inside Out Upside Down*

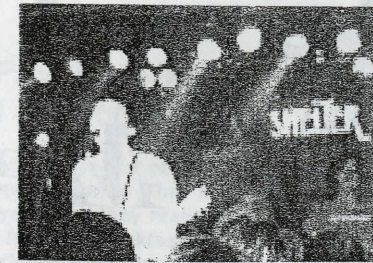
Totally retro and instantly familiar pop but not stale or outdated in any way. Like finding your favorite old sweater that you thought you'd lost.

Automatics- *Automatic Eraser*

One of the most common band names in the world (I own cds from the Automatics from the Northwest, UK, and now Japan) but as uncommon good as a Keebler elf. This is pure sticky sweet bubblegum that you won't be able to scrape out of your hair.

Disgusteens- *Songs for Swingin Losers*

With song titles like "Fuckin' Job Tonight", "Can you go to hell with me?" and "Fuckin' Love" you know these guys mean business. They've got the catchy riffs and plenty of 'who oh' backups to really hook you in.



the Disgusteens

Link - *Revolution Rock*

Slightly off kilter modern punk sound, but much catchier than most bands that fit that description. Bouncing bass, harmonies, and a bit of the (far) east bay sound.

Frankenheather's Travel Tips

Right about now you're probably already logged onto travelocity.com and looking for the cheapest airfare to Tokyo departing tomorrow. Before you go remember a few seemingly obvious things about Japan that we had taken for granted.

1.) No one speaks English

It seems obvious enough but still it's surprisingly shocking when you're trying to find an address to a club or restaurant. At a show in Yokohama Joe Queer shouted to the audience "this next tune is by the Angry Samoans, have any of you fuckers heard of them" After several seconds of dead silence and puzzled looks on the part of the crowd I replied loudly "I have!". To which Joe replied "well this song goes out to Frank!" and pointed at me. The crowd, totally confused by Joe's decree turned and stared at me before pouncing. They began to paw at me and attempt to raise me overhead despite my desperate schoolgirlish cries regarding my bad back.

Despite the lack of a common language everyone

we encountered went above and beyond the call of duty to help us find our way. Perfect strangers lead us great distances out of their way, calling up addresses on their web-linked cell phones and walking us to wherever we needed to go.

2.) No one accepts credit cards.

An attempt to buy every punk CD ever released in the history of Japan was foiled by a complete refusal to accept credit cards by every shopkeeper in Shinjuku aside from major chainstores. (By the way in Shinjuku there is a great strip of amazing record stores that includes Barn Homes, the storefront of 1+2 records which is the Japanese equivalent of Lookout Records circa 1996).

3.) Your ATM card won't work there.

It seems ridiculous given you're in the most technologically advanced country in the world but it's true. Only credit cards and ATM cards issued in Japan will work. We ripped through our Yen in three days and learned this lesson the hard way. We thought we'd have to beg our way home until we discovered a little advertised fact that Postal ATMs are international and will accept any card. Only in Japan could you be so relieved to be in a post office.

I hope your trip to Japan is as much fun as ours was. We're already booking our next trip as soon as possible.



everyone on tour in Tokyo

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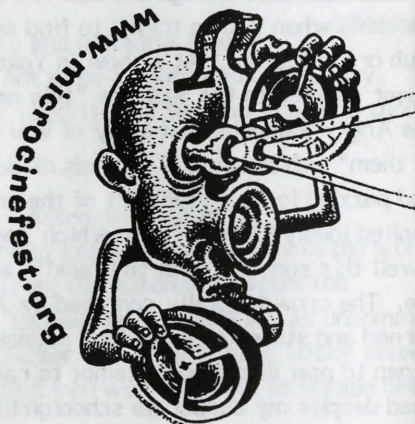
Q: What is MICROCINEFEST?

A: It's an annual film and video festival dedicated to showcasing ambitious, low-budget, psychotronic, substream, off-beat, creative, daring, original, do-it-yourself, underground films and videos from all over the world. It's not for everyone.

This fall I was invited to serve as a jury member at the sixth annual MicroCineFest in Baltimore. I love movies yet seldom leave the theater without grumbling about the lack of good ideas or the good ideas that were wasted or the poorly conceived endings. Not so at MicroCineFest; this was movie going as it should be. I saw dozens of shorts and features and was stunned by the high percentage of movies I liked or loved. Humor, creativity, intelligence, and buckets of fake blood—it was all there. As with my favorite music, I wanted to know more so I contacted the creators of my favorite flicks from MicroCineFest 2002. (By Mike Faloon)

(Special thanks to festival directors Skizz Cyzyk and Jen Talbert, my fellow jury members (Mike White, Jay Edwards, and Nick Kujawa, in particular), and Big Dave Cawley.)

Go Metric! Goes to the Movies



Satan's Psycho Ghoul Connell Pendergast

Homicidal ghouls are just like the rest of us. They put their fuzzy slippers on one at a time. They iron their clothes. They get annoyed when they realize they don't have enough milk for their breakfast cereal. And they have to clean their murder weapons when the work day's done. But prior to *Satan's Psycho-Ghoul* no one has ever depicted this part of a ghoul's life.

Satan's Psycho-Ghoul is a short, dialogue-less movie made by film student Connall Pendergast and a group of his friends. It's hysterically funny and a perfect example of what a short comedy should be: set up, punch line, end. Or, to be more precise in this case: set up, gratuitous murder scene, punch line/end.

Go Metric: My favorite image from all of the movies was at the end when the Psycho Ghoul was putting his nice, clean knife in the dish drainer.

Connell Pendergast: Yeah, it's funny because we thought that up at the spur of the moment. That was done as a class project, it was four person group project, and you only had a limited amount of film that you were allowed to shoot. And I think that what happened was that we started running out of film so we had to come up with a quicker ending. Our original was more elaborate, it involved the Psycho Ghoul taking out the garbage with a bloody hand sticking out, or something like that. We made up the knife washing thing right at the end, he goes back to his domestic life.

That was a great decision. You'd mentioned that it was a four-person project, how did the idea come about?

I had a bunch of masks for a movie I was going to shoot that summer, *Kill Them and Eat Them*. So the mask was made for that and I thought it would be funny to have this bizarre mask and really mundane, domestic circumstances.

There's a great quote from Orson Wells: the absence of boundaries is the enemy of art. Those things that may have seemed like a pain in the ass at the time helped make a great movie.

I totally agree, that's a great quote. I hadn't heard that quote before. The ending now—where he's washing the knife—is much better than our original ending. It's all thanks to the fact that we were restricted like that, we were forced to come up with something real quickly and a lot of times it's better than what your original idea was.

I like the bit in the beginning when he realizes he's run out of milk for his cereal.

Satan's Psycho-Ghoul
Connell Pendergast, 4:00,
Super8 (shown on video)
No one knows from
whence it came, this
sanity-searing psychopath
bursting with mind-
melting, flesh-fricassee-
ing, fear-flaunting fright
the monster known as... **Satan's Psycho-Ghoul!!!**



Yeah, that was me in the monster costume. There were four of us in the group and two of us were about the same height, and one guy was taller and one guy was shorter. All of the positions were supposed to be collaborative because it was a group project and we were all learning how to use everything and all that, so we figured we should start off with me as the monster because I could switch with Hugh, who was the other guy who was the same height as me. As it turned out, I played the monster through the whole thing because he didn't want to wear the monster mask.

Who played the victim?

That was another one of the guys in the group, Chike. I think the main reason he ended up being the victim is because at the meeting we decided there was going to be a victim, he wasn't there so everybody decided he was going to be the victim and get covered in blood. And actually, after we shot that he had to go to a class. I remembered he showered off and stuff and was in kind of a hurry and apparently he still had some of the blood in his ear, and he said a number of people in class noticed. Which struck me as funny that they noticed but mentioned it later. You'd think that because his ear was bleeding they'd want to point it out.

One of my favorite bits is when the victim has so much fake blood being pumped on him that he starts laughing.

Yeah, and the blood just comes from nowhere, too. When we were cutting we decided to leave that in, we all decided it was funnier when it's a ridiculous amount and he's saying, Stop spraying the blood on me!

It's even funnier knowing that he was thinking, I have to go to class after this scene. With so many movies, a good idea is stretched way past the breaking point. Psycho Ghoul is over and out in four minutes—all of the great ideas are there and it's easy to watch it again.

That's one thing about short films, they can be very accessible. They don't demand a lot of the audience, especially when nobody knows who you are or what your film is. But if you have a short and you have a good idea and it can be quick and kind of have one point it's geared toward and get the audience right away. It reminds me of what Edgar Allen Poe said

about the short story where a short story should be geared toward a single effect and that's it. I sometimes think short films should be like that, too; it gets to the point and then that's it.

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The Adventures of Fratman and Pledgeboy **Mark Colegrove**

I think the introduction to *Fratman and Pledgeboy* will give you a better sense of the movie than anything I come up. Suffice it to say that if you like the 60s Batman tv show and have an aversion to Dave Matthews, you'll love *Fratman and Pledgeboy*.

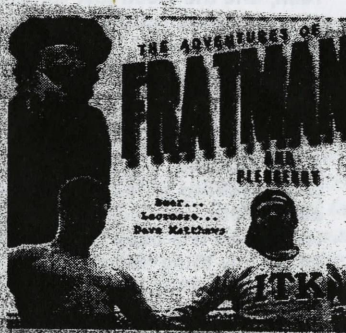
By day Darren Whitebread is a 7th year senior at Anywhere University. He is a member of the ever popular I Tappa Keg fraternity, and well respected by his peers. But when left wing liberal ideals and divergent thinking rear their ugly heads, he transforms into Fratman: the defender of pluralistic conformity. Along with his trusty sidekick, Pledgeboy, Fratman works to uphold the great Greek traditions of binge drinking, violating women while they sleep, and group masturbation.

You chose easy targets—fraternities and Dave Matthews, etc.—but there's more than enough clever ideas to make insure it never becomes predictable.

The original idea was to make it a Batman spoof from the 60s. We made that when we were in film school, it was the first thing I was ever a part of. You see a lot of frat people at Towson University. The material was already there.

And with Creative Man you poke fun at the other side, too.

**The Adventures of
Fratman and
Pledgeboy**
Steve Massoni, 7:30,
16mm (shown on video)
Fratman and his trusty
sidekick, Pledgeboy, take
on their arch-nemesis,
Creativeman, in an attempt
to thwart his plans for a 3-
day arts and music
festival.



Exactly. We poked fun at ourselves. We were all film folk, and we took that caricature to the extreme.

Yeah, having the voices not synch up and the comic sound effects—that all worked well.

The reason the voices never sunk up was because it was our Film 1 project, and the camera we got we didn't have the capability to shoot synch sound. And because we couldn't do synch sound we decided it would be funny to dub everything over.

How did you convince Pledgeboy to romp around campus in adult diapers?

That was tough. We shot it at two different campuses, UMBC and Towson. Towson was a little easier because we all went to school there. UMBC we had to be a little more covert. As soon as the scene had to be filmed off would come his pants and film it as quick as possible. Never got in too much trouble.

Did he have any reservations about doing that part?

No. He actually suggested to go bareassed.

You guys must have been sick of listening to Dave Matthews.

Definitely. I tried to kill myself a few times while I was editing some of that.

I like the climatic battle, Creative Man sculpts and Fratman retaliates with a poster from a Dave Matthews tribute concert.

We actually found that on campus, we didn't make that for the movie. Someone was actually throwing an acoustic tribute to Dave Matthews.

I saw from your website that Fratman was on the Warped Tour this summer?

Yeah, I've been working with Troma a little, freelancing and stuff. The Warped Tour was really fun. We had the Troma on Tour school bus and we lived on that and had our own side stage and movie tent where we'd show the Troma Dance movies. We had *Robot Bastard* there (which was also at MicroCineFest). Lots of funny stuff.

The Warped Tour is a mix of genuine punk rock culture and the more fraternity version of punk, so I was wondering...

Yeah, I've never been to any of the other Warped Tours but I think, from what I heard, that this year was the most watered down of them all. So yeah, a lot of corporate punk culture, I guess. The punk rockers had all grown up and were more into making the money, the guys that run the Warped Tour. Bad Religion was there, they were good. I liked a few of the bands, so it wasn't all bad.

Did some of the bands watch the movies, too?

Yeah, we got a lot of help from the bands, mostly with our stage show. All the guys on the tour bus devised games for our side show. We had a game show called *How Punk Are You?* So we'd make all these kids who were at the Warped Tour that day come up and take off their boots and we'd have people smell their boots and rate 'em, see how punk rock it was. We had a

lick the stage competition, it was pretty nasty. The finale of *How Punk Are You?* was Spam Shoe. Spam was one of the sponsors and this guy Curly, who was a roadie for Handsome Devil, had been wearing these Converse sneakers all tour without socks and they were starting to get pretty funky. It was their last day of the tour and Curly had been co-hosting *How Punk Are You?*, he decided he wanted to do something with them so we filled them up with Spam and Yoo Hoo and we had two kids racing to eat the Spam out of the shoes with their bare hands.

And they did it?

They did it.

I think there's an unwritten Spam theme here. I interviewed the guy who did *Satan's Psycho-Ghoul*, and the monster in that movie wore a Spam t-shirt.

I loved *Satan's Psycho-Ghoul*, that was one of my favorites. It got right to the point. That one and *Timmy's Wish*.

Do you think there might be further episodes of *Fratman* and *Pledgeboy*?

I don't know. If we did another one we'd have to bring in Sorority Girl, who'd be like Batgirl. I think Banana Republic would figure in there somewhere, a good frat headquarters.

What was the budget for *Fratman*?

Umm, I can't even remember exactly, definitely under \$500.

Are there other anecdotes about *Fratman* that come to mind?

The opening stuff, during the theme song, that was at my old house. One thing that always bothers me is that you can see how careful some of the people are trying to be when they slam the beers, because they were worried about getting it on my carpet. And I was like, No, go for it, slam the beers, I don't care how much you get on my carpet. One of the guys, Doug, you can see he has his hand catching the few drops that are falling. There's a lot of rough stuff in there, but it's all fun and games.

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Armor of God

Jim Haverkamp & Brett Ingram

You've never seen a documentary like *Armor of God*. That's because there is no one like its subject, Scotty Irving and his one-man band, Clang Quartet. During his act, Irving kneels on the floor manically firing off drum rolls, assaults an array of cymbals with a hammer, wields some sort of wired up jackhammer, and then dons an executioner's mask ("the shake face") and lets loose a torrent of tortured sounds.

And it's all in honor of Jesus Christ. Yep, the Clang Quartet is Scotty Irving's version of Christian music.

The perfectly crafted *Armor of God* explores the world of Scotty Irving, and makes sense of the seemingly senseless.

Go Metric: *Armor of God* was my favorite documentary screened at MicroCineFest.

Jim Haverkamp: Thank you very much.

There are a number of questions that come to mind, but the first is: where did you come across Scotty Irving?

Brett (Ingram, Jim's cohort in the making of *Armor of God*) had directed a music video for a band that Scotty used to be in in the mid-90s called Geezer Lake. Brett used to do stop motion animation; he and a woman that he went to grad school with did an almost completely animated music video for them. They've kind of stayed in touch over the years. Then when Geezer Lake broke up and Scotty started doing the Clang Quartet. He was performing at Chapel Hill and Brett was like, Hey, we should go see it. And you can imagine, if you see him in person, you're just, like, What? Your eyes melt. It was so intriguing and so visually and orally amazing, that's it's just a natural to do a film about it.

One of my favorite quotes from the movies is, I have an energy level that bothers some people. What is he like when he's not doing the act?

I think you get a pretty good sense of it in the interview, he can be sort of manic. He really talks that way. What I thought was really funny was when we went to his job, there are a couple shots there where he's wearing the tie and suspenders. He's a receptionist at a modeling agency. That's why, I don't know if you noticed, but in the background of that first shot where he's on the phone, there's a picture of a woman in lingerie behind him.

When I was talking to people after the movie we were wondering if the job scene was a put on because the picture seemed so incongruous with the rest of the setting.

And he doesn't normally dress that fancy at that job (tie, suspenders), but he's such a ham that he knew that we were coming that day. Something else that I think would have been really interesting is, Brett and I talk about how we wish we had more money because we'd like to do a longer piece on him because there's a lot there that we didn't get into, but when you go to his room at his house, he lives with his parents, his room is full of, it looks like a 13 year-old's room. He's really into Godzilla, he's got all these Godzilla action figures. He had done these paintings of Godzilla when he was in junior high. He's got a bunch of super hero action figures; he's got all these junior high and high school band trophies. It's pretty funny. I don't know



Armor of God
Jim Haverkamp & Brett
Ingram, 12:45, 16mm
(shown on video)

Can ear-splitting improvisational noise be considered "Christian music"? North Carolina musician Scotty Irving certainly thinks so. He builds instruments out of crutches and hockey masks, bangs the ground with hammers, and generally cranks it up for the Lord.

if you ever see it in the film but on his crutch instrument, he's got a little Godzilla figure on there. Every time I watch it, I try to pick up something new on those instruments he's made, trying to figure out which parts are there for function and which are there for decoration.

There's a bunch of stuff, I don't think we actually used it, but there's a yellow skateboard on the crutch, near the bottom, and he's got some contact mics rigged up on that, too, so he can spin the wheels. That whole mountain of guitar effects that everything plugs into, I have no idea how he can control anything. You get the sense that that's kind of the point. He goes nuts, he doesn't really control it.

I noticed, too, that his narration is so rational and what you're seeing and hearing, his performances, is so irrational.

Exactly. That's something that is interesting in the film and we were sort of hoping would help him market himself, if you just see his performance, you really don't know any of that religious stuff. You see the t-shirt and the bumper stickers, but a lot of people see his act and say, Oh, that stuff's just a joke. And that's one of the things that, again, Brett and I thought was really cool about him, is he's not an evangelist. He's not about converting anybody, it's pure expression for him. If you are interested in the religious aspect of it, that's fine, but if you don't, that's totally fine, too. I guess he kind of says there, People can come up to talk to me, if they're not afraid of me. I certainly, in my limited experience with religion, I haven't really run across, particularly a Christian, expression that's purely expression in that way, that wasn't also tied to getting you to come to their church, or change your mind or get you into this debate. It turned out in many ways that doing the

Clang Quartet got him more notice. This is hilarious, he sent a copy of the movie to *Modern Drummer*, which, I guess, is the Bible for rock drummers, or whatever, they printed a little review in there and ran the picture. And just like, I've been trying for years to get into *Modern Drummer*. It was totally a dream come true for him.

That reminds that at the start of the movie, he's playing pretty conventionally, but as things go along it gets weirder and weirder. But only after he's established that he's genuinely talented, and he's it harder to see that later, like, when he's putting on the shake face.

Right, exactly. Part of that was intentional on our part, but, also, we just followed the structure of his act. Scotty had figured that out, too; that's what he does. To Scotty, he loves that whole element of taking something familiar and presenting it in a new way. So the structure of the act is very deliberate on his part. Okay, you're used to seeing people play drums in a certain way, so I'll start that way. And then, yeah, I'll just start twisting it and wrapping it around, doing things that you would never expect. Doing things like playing broken cymbals and banging them around on the floor and hitting them with hammers. I really like how that almost seems like his religious fervor getting pumped up, almost speaking in tongues, getting so swept away by whatever spirit moves him.

Maybe this is a byproduct of the budget limitations you'd mentioned earlier, but in the whole movie there are no other people who comment on Scotty Irving—everything comes from him. Was that budget and time limitations or was that a creative decision?

That's interesting, it's a little bit of both, but I think more of the latter. Something Brett and I find more interesting, he's more done more documentaries, by far, than I have. That's actually my first one. I usually just make little, weird short narrative films; a seven minute film is the longest thing I'd done before this. Something that is a theme through both of our work is we're both really interested in "kooks." Not from a standpoint of sociologically, or trying to make fun of them, but more people that are really outside of—that whole line between normal and madness. We're both really intrigued by the fact that most people who are insane, if you really can understand their language and personal symbology, and get inside their heads, things that might seem crazy make complete sense within that cosmology. I think that was our goal with Scotty, it's like an onion, you start peeling back the layers and it all makes complete sense. It turned out to be an even richer story than we thought it was going to be.

And from that came the decision to have everything come from him, rather than have others comment on him?

Yeah. We did want to show some crowd reaction or talk to some people that were seeing him for the first time but, yeah, it sort of just came together in that shape so well that we thought, Well, if we're going to do that we need to make it a half an hour. And we thought, Scotty's telling these stories so well that why even bother. I doubt that anything anyone would say would be more interesting than what he says. **He really is doing exactly what he wants to do, and there's more thought that goes into it than meets the eye.**

Oh, yeah. He's a smart dude. He was so self-aware of what he's doing, in a good way. He build a plank going out over the ocean, he built it well and walks out and then whatever happens, happens. Pretty amazing.

I like the way you did it—we watch his play drums while we listen to his responses from the interview. Otherwise you'd have 10 minutes of him talking and then 10 minutes of him playing, a total of 20 minutes. This way you get both in 10 minutes. He's so engaging to watch. There's that part where he's playing his drum kit in the garage, you can't hear the drums but can only imagine how intense it must sound based on his facial expressions. Another favorite bit is that he has his initials S.I. on the kick drum head in the Buddy Rich style.

Exactly. Very good, no one's ever picked up on that before. I sort of like how it's the Spanish "si" also—yes. He's a big Buddy Rich fan. It's kind of weird but also, I don't know if we ever got into it, but he's a total metal head.

I was wondering...

You did expect that, yeah? He's so into AC/DC. AC/DC performed twice in North Carolina on their last tour and, of course, he went to both. There's a bar in Raleigh and every few months local bands will do a 20-minute set as their favorite band. He was in a band that did Iron Maiden and, holy shit, amazing. I don't know anything about Iron Maiden, but everybody who did know their Iron Maiden songs was like, Dude, he's got it lick for lick.

All that practicing in his teen years has paid off well.

Yeah, but that's what's so interesting, this whole thing about Christians and Christian music. He thinks all that stuff about heavy metal and Satanism is just dumb. It also makes him mad when "Christian" musicians will just use the same genres and conventions of whatever rock. His whole point is they'll change the lyrics and that's the only thing that makes it Christian music. Take the lyrics away and there's nothing uniquely Christian about it. He's trying to invent a new genre.

There's another great quote that's something to the effect of, If I have to do it alone, then I'm more than willing to do so.

Yeah, he's so awesome.

Did you get a sense of how his family feels about what he does?

It's funny, when we screened it for him for the first time, we went to his house and his parents were in the room, too. His dad was a North Carolina state trooper, they're totally regular people. They were like, That's Scotty, he was always unique. Another thing we would have loved to put in the film is that he's real active in his church and he teaches Sunday school. People in his church have seen him perform. **I never thought of that. I just assumed that if he's on the fringe of the music world, then he's on the fringe of the church world, too.**

He's a United Methodist. He's down with his church, goes all the time, teaches the kids. Artistically, too, what's amazing about him is that with the Clang Quartet, a lot of times, he'll have trouble getting shows in rock clubs because of the noise and also, What's with all the Jesus? And then he has troubles with shows for church groups. He's not making it easy for anybody.

Including himself.

It's so inspiring for anyone who's trying to do anything at all artistic.

He's fearless.

In the best possible way. He's got a new cd coming out in January. It's called the *Separation of Church and Hate*.

There was a write up in *Roctober*. It mentions *Armor of God*. It made it sound like his records are different than his live performances.

He did have a cd out a couple years ago called *Jihad*. That's originally what the title of the film was. There's a section where he talks about, all before 9/11, Jihad is the Muslim term for Holy War, and I feel like what I'm doing is sort of a war on stereotypes. Ironically enough, we had just finished editing and I had just made three copies that I was sending to some friends as, Okay, here it is, what do you think? And that was on 9/11. Then Brett called me and was like, Uh, I think somebody else is on a Jihad. And I was like, What are you talking about? Uh, you better turn on the tv. That all happened and we were like, I think we've got to change the title. At least for the film's sake, I'm glad that we did. I think that *Armor of God* is much more descriptive and apt title than *Jihad*.

Another great quote is, "If I'm really, really, really serious about something I will stick with it to the point of almost crushing it to death." I think there's a little bit of that in me, too.

(in funny *ABC Afterschool Special* voice) There's a little Scotty Irving in all of us.

Right, let your Scotty Irving come out.

Don't be afraid.

www.silbermedia.com/clangquartet

www.brighteyepictures.com

No Food or Drink, Please

By Will Drist

For the purposes of what follows, I shall assume that you are a human adult. I shall further assume that, regardless of whether or not you are American, you live and work in a post-industrial America. As such, I shall further assume that there is no need to remind you that work sucks.

Sometimes, we all tell ourselves little white lies about how our jobs really aren't that bad. These are functional lies, and they help us get through the day. Regardless, the fact remains, and we all know it, that work sucks. Sucking is, in fact, work's facticity.

Now that we have some semblance of consensus on this—either you're with us or you're against us—I shall proceed.

Work sucks. And it sucks for all the common, agreed-upon reasons. But there's another reason why work sucks, a reason that nobody's talking about: the bathroom.

Eight hours a day at a place and you're going to have to avail yourself of the facilities a time or two. And, when you do, all you want to do is to do what you've got to do, what you went in there to do.

Invariably, however, the sociality and the sociology of the workplace is carried over into the bathroom. Invariably, some fool's asking you what you have planned for the weekend, and you're just trying to take a piss. Invariably, some old guy—just weeks away from retirement—is standing at a urinal, bracing himself, groaning out a piss and a stone. Invariably, your boss is in the adjacent stall and ... man, you just don't want to know how your boss takes a shit. Invariably, somebody walks in and says, in an all-too-cheery voice, "Hey, man, how's it goin'?" Invariably, you want to respond—though you don't: "Dude, my dick's in my hand; I don't want to talk to you."

Yes, it is hideous.

And now, the particulars.

He's a big dude—about 6'4" and a good 250, maybe 270. And he's a high-minded socialist, and he wants everybody to know. The fool never shuts up. And, man, I hate fat socialists. You're going to sit there telling me about the plight of the working class while you're picking your teeth with a Snickers bar?

But I digress.

The fool always—and I do mean always—takes the stall intended for handicapped use. And he spends real time in there. What the ... ? Am I the only person left who can appreciate irony? Any time of day, if I go into that place, I can be fairly well assured that that idiot's going to be in there. Fool, are you livin' on a diet of green apples and red wine?

Wait. Slow down.

I go in the bathroom the other day to wash my hands before going to lunch. It's a happy, peaceful moment with warm, happy suds enveloping my hands. And the idiot is in his stall.

Whatever. I'm just washing my hands, trying not to think about it.

And this fool ... This fool, man, he comes walking out of the stall with a fucking pizza box in his hand. A fucking pizza box, goddamnit.

LOOK

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We get a lot of flack at Go Metric! "Too much pop"; "Too much punk"; "Too obsessive"; "Too sloppy." We can dodge such criticisms 'till the cows come home but when we hear "insufficient coverage of present-day fiction novelists," that stings. And do we not bleed when we hear cries of "of what public good is your rag?" NO! We attack the two birds that are such barbs with the mighty pebble that is this article! Welcome to...

The Incredibly Fun World of Dav Pilkey

Not many of our readers have kids but we've discovered that a growing segment of the *GM!* readership does have a young niece or nephew. Inevitably you find yourself needing to purchase a gift for that niece or nephew. A dilemma arises because you want to give them something they'll love--be the cool aunt or uncle--yet you don't want to stoop to buying any of the typical crap that's foisted upon kids.

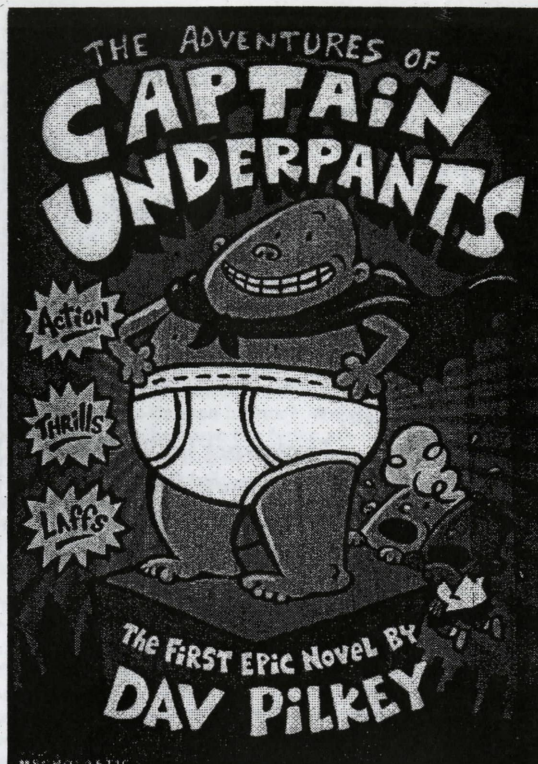
Enter Dav Pilkey, author of *Ricky Ricotta and his Giant Robot* and *The Dumb Bunnies Go to the Zoo*, among others. You can give a Dav Pilkey book in good conscience. Hell, you'll likely enjoy his books yourself.

Like all of the greats, Pilkey is motivated by the desire to prove somebody wrong. In this case the grade school teacher who told him "You'd better straighten up, young man, because you can't spend the rest of your life making silly books."

Of course, his books pass the classic litmus test for children's pop culture: they appeal to smart kids and immature adults. Among his characters are teachers and lunchroom attendants named Miss Creant, Mr. Meaner, and Mr. Fyde. (Read 'em again if they didn't at least provoke a groan.) There's a flip-o-rama introduction that refers to *Moby Dick*. There's also the pure joy of Pilkey thumbing his nose at proper writing conventions. For example, chapter 18 of *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*: They got away. You can almost hear a former teacher telling Pilkey that a chapter can't be one sentence long.

Captain Underpants, Pilkey's best known series, is a topic that deserves elaboration. Main characters George and Harold are fourth graders. Whenever possible they work on their fictional comic book, *Captain Underpants*. One day, in the first book, they accidentally hypnotize their principal and turn him into a real life Captain Underpants. In the subsequent books Principal Krupp, assisted by George and Harold, deals with the *Attack of the Talking Toilets*, battles the *Wicked Wedgie Woman*, and fends off the *Invasion of the Incredibly Naughty Cafeteria Ladies From Outer Space* (and the *Subsequent Assault of the Equally Evil Lunchroom Zombie Nerds*). You can't go wrong with any of the entries in this series.

Now, if your niece or nephew's parents give you any grief about your choice of gifts remind them that a) you're stimulating their child's interest in reading, b) research (legitimate research, not *Go Metric's*) has shown that children's senses of humor are greatly undervalued in the modern elementary classroom and many educators overlook such humor as a possible means to draw kids into reading (you, on the other hand, brave soul, are pushing education's envelope!), c) Pilkey's books are wonderful tools for helping children become more fluent readers, and d) the books are funny and better than most contemporary fiction!



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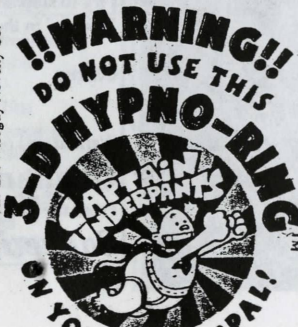
3-D

Hypno-Ring™

Instruction Manual

WARNING: Improper use of this ring may result in irreversible mental disturbances and severe psychological trauma. Keep out of reach of mad scientists and evil geniuses.

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GM! Top 20

(in order nonparticular)

1. **Soft Boys** - *Nextdoorland* lp (Matador)
2. **The Model Rockets** - *Tell the Kids the Cops Are Here* cd (Not Lame)
3. **F. M. Knives** - *Useless and Modern* cd (Moo La La)
4. **The Figgs** - *Slow Charm* cd (Hearbox); **The Gentlemen** - *Blondes Prefer the...* cd (TGRC)
5. **The Poptarts** - *Fresh... Out of the Toaster: Poptarts Anthology* cd (PlumTones)
6. **The Fevers** - *Gaan Daar Waar de Meisjes Zijn* lp (Alien Snatch)
7. **The Kill-a-watts** - *Electrorock* lp (Rip Off)
8. **The Operators** - *Citizens Band* cd (Unstoppable); **Operators/Ruby Lashes** - split 7" (Unstoppable)
9. **Rev. Norb** - *Earth's Greatest Rocker* cd (Bulge)
10. **The Tardy** - s/t cd-r ep (Unstoppable)
11. **Chris Butler** - *Museum of Me* cd (Future Fossil)
12. **Atomic 7** - *...Gowns by Edith Head* cd (Mint)
13. **Epoxies** - *The Epoxies* - s/t lp (Dirtnap)
14. **The Ergs!** - *The Ben Kwell* cd ep (PFR)
15. **The Jewws** - *L'explosion du Son de Maintenant!* lp (Demolition Derby); **"I Need Your Lovin"** 7" ep (Alien Snatch)
16. **Baseball Furies** - *Greater Than Ever* cd (Big Neck)
17. **Claudia Malibu** - *Silver Tangerine Hangover* cd (Teardrop)
18. **Dick Army** - *Unsafe at Any Volume* cd (Vital)
19. **Thee Fine Lines/The Jim-Jims** - split 7" (Wee Rock)
20. **The Returnables** - *Unrequited Hits* cd (Jettison)

101 Records

...and what to think about them!

The on-going sage of one gent's expensive and perhaps ultimately foolish search for excellent music. There's a lot of crap but also a barrel full of gems. Eat up! — Mike

Ampline - *The Choir* cd

Here we have a set of reverent, all-instrumental renderings of a decidedly D.C. nature. I would, and will, argue that these gents get too wrapped up in guitar ecstasy and forget about us listeners. The songs all sound the same to me and half of them are over five minutes each. Too much jamming, not enough focus. (Tiberius - 4280 Catalpa Dr., Independence, KY 41051)

Atomic 7 - *...Gowns by Edith Head* cd

Where did you go, Brian Connelly? Ever since the beloved Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet (for whom Connelly played guitar) shut down, a nation, nay, a globe-full of lovers of instrumental rock have sorely missed your six-string action. Like Shadowy Men, Atomic 7 are an instr-only guitar/bass/drums trio. And where Shadowy Men were the perfect soundtrack for beach excursions (and watching Canadian sketch comedy), Atomic 7 set their sights on different settings—spaghetti Westerns, smoky lounges, run-down honky tonks—and come up aces time and time again. Immensely enjoyable. (Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

Baseball Furies - *Greater Than Ever* cd

DON'T JUDGE THIS RECORD BY ITS COVER! The artwork screams cut out bin bottom feeder, yet *Greater Than Ever* is one of the best punk records in ages. It's stunningly guitar-centric (the music, not the cover), but not *Guitar Magazine*, "Let's study the tablature" guitar-centric. More like, "Let's see how much guitar we can stuff into these songs." And even there it's not a matter of how many guitar tracks are stacked up or how fast the notes are played, it's the amazing density and intensity that come from playing with such manic enthusiasm; I swear 80% of what we hear on this disc is guitar. And I think it's a matter of self preservation too, that if the members of the Baseball Furies would explode one by one if they didn't play this way. And they've got a knack for hooks, too. Excellent. (Big Neck - Box 8144, Reston, VA, 20195)

Baylies Band - *Suicide Notes from the Underground* cd

Taken from "Self Portrait with Onions": "Onion juice makes me feel happy/Onion juice makes me feel fine/Onion juice makes me die." All right then. I'm hoping that the sample of lyrics will give you a sense of where this weird, heavy, sometimes metal, sometimes Zappa-influenced disc is coming from. Personally, I find it unsettling, and don't even want to know what sparked "Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things." Yikes. (Eric Baylies - 494 Church St., New Bedford, MA 02745)

The Beards - *Funtown* cd

Something's wrong here. The Beards feature the impressive talents of Lisa Marr (cub, Buck, Lisa Marr Experience) and Kim Shattuck (Pandoras, Muffs), yet *Funtown* is merely okay where I expected it to sparkle. I was drawn to this disc by the prospect of seven new Lisa Marr songs. Her magically malleable voice is in fine shape and the band's chemistry sounds fine, but the songs lack character—the poppy charm of cub, the rockin' aggression of Buck, the twangy melancholy of the Lisa Marr Experience—the kind of glue that's made past projects so memorable. No dice here. (Sympathy for the Record Industry, www.sympathyrecords.com)

The Bedpans - *80s Mod 7"* ep

We know what toilet humor is and what deadpan delivery is like; so what is Bedpan humor? We'll never know from these three songs because the lyrics are unintelligible, but if you're dedicated to Supercharger-style garage rock (cheaper, dumber, simpler, and usually better than the rest), the Bedpans will have you wetting the bed. Order now and you'll have the added satisfaction of addressing an envelope "The Bedpans c/o Suck Ass Records." (Suck Ass - 3833 SE Belmont, #1, Portland, OR 97214)

The Benjamin Cartel - *Saltwater* cd

One Ben plays drums for the Heartdrops, the other played guitar for Marky Ramone and the Intruders. The last influence I expected to surface here was Bob Dylan but, consciously or otherwise, it's there. (Further evidence: track 4: "Blue," track 5: "Tangled.") Ben Heartdrop's vocals are infinitely more tuneful than Mr. Zimmerman's, even if his lyrics aren't as clever. Granted; no surprises there but as a loather of Dylan and a liker of *Saltwater*, it's a trade I'll take, especially if they come up with more likeable pop tunes in the vein of "Bye Five Times" and "Dead Light Bulb." (Break-Up! - Box 15372, Columbus, OH 43215)

Bleeding Kansas/La Mantra de Fhigria - split cd

Bleeding Kansas are from Burbank, California! La Mantra de Fhigria are, umm, also featured on this disc! Both bands excrete unbearably bad metal, and if there are any distinctions between their sounds, those distinctions are beyond me. (Arms Reach - 1220 W. Hood, #1, Chicago, IL 60660)

The Blowtaps - *Blacktastic* cd

Cramps-y bare essentials on the one hand, artsy scum rock on the other. Ten years ago, *Blacktastic* would have come out on AmRep Records. Then, as now, there's not enough heroin in my diet for me to embrace this. (Big Neck - Box 8144, Reston, VA, 20195)

The Busted Lives - *One Flap Down* cd

If you dig sports, and you like your punk garage flavored and low (budget, brew, and fi), but not dumb, you ought to get aboard the Busted Lives bandwagon. "Hac Man" is a tribute to former SF Giant Jeffrey Leonard, and "Drinking Like an Oakland Raider" namechecks George Blanda. Problems? I thought not. (Blueball - 6517 Farallon Way, Oakland, CA 94103)

Chris Butler - *Museum of Me* cd

On display here are all of the things that make Chris Butler such an endlessly intriguing artist: novel concepts, cool pop hooks, and smart lyrics. If you'll step this way

Go Metric's Lyrics Hall of Fame "Passion Is No Ordinary Word" (Induction #11)

It worked much better in a fantasy
Imagination's one thing comes easy to me
'Cause this is nothing else if not unreal
When I pretend to touch you, you pretend to feel

Passion is no ordinary word (x3)
Ain't manufactured or just another sound that you hear at night

We got new idols on the screen today
Although they make a lot of noises, they got nothin' to say
I try to look amazed but it's an act
The movie might be new but it's the same soundtrack

Chorus

Say how it feels, real useless ain't it?
Wait until it bites right down inside you
The world is easy when you just playin' around with it
Everything's a thrill and every girl's a kill
And then it gets unreal
And then you don't feel anything (x3)

An object of desire you don't desire to be
I bet the shop window dummies give in just as easily
I try to stop but have to make you drop down to the floor
Moanin' in the darkness as we fake some more

Chorus

Written and performed by:

Graham Parker and the Rumour

From the Arista lp:

Squeezing Out Sparks (1979)

you'll see, on your left, we have two songs that were recorded using hundred year-old Edison wax cylinders. On your right, we hear a pair of cuts recorded using World War II-era wire. Just ahead, we have what seems to be a rehearsal demo, featuring the rhythm section of pop legend R. Stevie Moore and WFMU's Irwin Chusid. Through the doors at the end of the hallway are the prizes of the collection, the rich, full-production pop gems. Even if the novel approaches of the previous artifacts didn't catch your fancy, you're sure to marvel at the likes of "The Idiot Trail," "Heartweld," "Painted Rain," and "Starved for Summer." For the pop fan who needs to trod down the path less traveled, there's a bit of everything on *Museum of Me*; it's heights are frequent and marvelous. (Future Fossil - Box 6248, Hoboken, NJ 07030)

Chalet Chalet - s/t cd ep

Though not the first band out to capture the sounds of Gang of Four and/or the Buzzcocks (Thundercats, the Uniform, the Fuses, and Computer Cougar also come mind), Chalet Chalet do it pretty well. It's just too bad that they chose to put the vocals up so high. The guitars are where the action is and they're not as immediate as they deserve to be. (Walk in Cold - 8408 Lakeside Dr., Downers Grove, IL 60516)

Character - A Flashing of Knives and Green Water cd
I pity the drummer having to keep himself busy for the two-minute drum-free intro to "Detroit 1972." And during the rest of these six songs too—*A Flashing of Knives* sounds like a tired band jamming to fill time. Honestly, I've heard more interesting records on the new age label Windham Hill.

(Set International - Box 159118, Nashville, TN 37215)

Cheez - "Wild World" & "You're So Vain" cd-r
Renaissance man Russ Forster is best known for his films and zines, but he also has a long history as a musician, though this is the first time I've heard one of his projects. Cheez is Russ going solo and as the name implies, indulging in kitschy covers. The Cat Stevens song is surprisingly straight forward in both tempo and tone. The Carly Simon cover is pretty cool, using tortured guitar feedback to entomb a heartfelt vocal; it sounds like Syd Barrett. (\$2 ppd, Russ Forster - P.O. Box 18187, Chicago, IL 60618-0187)

Claudia Malibu - Silver Tangerine Hangover cd
Winner of this issue's Most Pleasant Surprise Award, *Silver Tangerine* languished in the pile of 'That cover is so lame the music must suck' cds for weeks and now I can't get the songs out of my head. These whispered, sunny afternoon pop songs inspire the most relaxing day dreams and spark a list of adjectives (sparse, spacey, tender, reluctant) and bands (Kinks, Galaxie 500, some of the Elephant 6 roster). Quite nice, indeed. (Teardrop - Box 3194, Amherst, MA 01004)

The Cost - Chimera cd

They have a song called "Tepid Pools of Mostly Water." Woo hoo! Break out the party hats! Wanna read some of your free verse poetry, too? (Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

Crank Yankers - The Best Uncensored Crank Calls - Volume 1

Is *The Man Show* too subtle for you? Well, here you go: foul-mouthed puppets playing out (clearly scripted) crank phone calls. I don't have a problem with foul-mouthed puppets (the episode of *Greg the Bunny* I saw was pretty funny), but this reeks of pandering to pay the bills. It'll leave you with the phrase "my friends and I are so much funnier, why don't we have a show" ringing in your head. (Comedy Central - 1775 Broadway, NY, NY 10019)

Crimson Sweet - "So Electric" b/w "No Hot on Cold" 7"

The set up on the A-side is pretty great, high energy pop'n'rock that teeters on the edge of new wave. The only drawback is that it doesn't have the killer chorus I was expecting. The flipside is scruffier and less poppy. Both cuts are enjoyable when they're playing, but not memorable. I'd like to hear more. (Slow Gold Zebra - Box 20506, NY, NY 10009)

The Decay - s/t 7" ep

Interesting story...In 1984, SS Records co-pilot, Scott Soriano, traded tapes with the Decay, a quartet from Switzerland. Over the years, Soriano periodically weeded out the junk from his tape collection, and the Decay survived each purge. A couple years ago the Decay's demo caught his attention, again. After deciding that he wanted to reissue the demo, he spent months trying to contact the band but to no avail. He chose his favorite four songs from the demo and reissued them anyway. I like the tale more than the music (fuzzed out, pissed off synth punk) but then again I still haven't figured out if 33 or 45 rpm sounds better (it may, in fact, be 39 rpm). (SS Records - 1114 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814)

Dick Army - Unsafe at Any Volume cd

"The Man on Your TV" has some nearly poppy "nah, nah" backing vocals, and not only does the closing track, "I'm Spent," go over three minutes, it fades out! NYC's best punk band fading out the ending to a song? What gives? Is Dick Army maturing? Thankfully no, but they do have a few new tricks up their collective sleeve. There's more variety in the tempos and arrangements of the band's Black Flag and Husker Du-like moves. Likewise for the lyrics, which are fueled by "work sucks, beer doesn't" populism. So, yeah, all of that reeks of maturity, but *Unsafe at Any Volume* still rocks. (Vital - Box 398, Harrisville, NH 03450)

Les Dirty French Men - "You a Cop?" b/w "Spending All My Money" 7"

Great band name, song titles, cover art, and band chemistry; the songs are almost there. They've got the energy and sound of cool, smartass garage punk, but the choruses aren't on par with the rest of the package. Promising. (Dart - Box 1843, Fargo, ND 58107)

Dirty Vegas - sampler cd

When they want to sell cars to the 25-35 crowd, this is the music they use in the tv ads. Lame dance rock that one bunch of clueless twits (ad execs) think another bunch of clueless twits (hipster wanna be's) think is held in high regard by yet another bunch of clueless twits (hipsters). (Capitol)

Dutch Kills - Scale 300 feet to the Inch cd ep

Mellow rock music that's somewhere between Neil Young and the intro to Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here." Not

as appealing as the former, nor as grating as the latter.
Eh. (dk@dutchkills.com)

The Enemies – *Seize the Day* cd

Slick, professional punk from the type of band that pops out of nowhere and gets to open for all of the cool touring bands. It's not that the Enemies are awful or out of place, but they make me wonder: why these guys?
(Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

The Epoxies – *s/t* lp

By and large, the 80s sucked but every time I listen to *The Epoxies* some part of me questions that generalization. The Epoxies have all the elements of a classic new wave band—hooks, high energy, synths, 80s garb—so much so that they run the risk of being a parody. Or as a friend of mine said, the Epoxies are to new wave what the Stray Cats were to rockabilly, a decent, not great, representation for those who weren't there the first time. But *The Epoxies* is much better than that. For all of the band's heavy-on-style leanings, sonically, their lyrics bend toward the timeless, and *The Epoxies* would rise to the top of the heap in any era. To me, they sound like a great poppy punk band that often, but not always, uses over the top synth lines to deliver the hooks. (Dirtnap - Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111)

The Ergs! – *The Ben Kweller* cd ep

Again and again, *Ben Kweller* reminds me of the first time I heard All's "Just Perfect," when I realized that pop and punk weren't mutually exclusive philosophies. This mighty, mighty fine record pops and punks with the best of them (All, Replacements, Figgs), and even aches a bit too ("I'll Call You When You Think of Me"). I could take issue with the fact that there are eight songs (which is neither an extended player (three-six songs) nor a longer player (10 or more songs), seven songs can be rounded down to an ep, nine can be rounded up to a longer player. But eight? Oy.), but that would be pointless nicksnapping and might divert attention from the real question: who the hell is Ben Kweller? (Fongul Records - 11 Mercury Circle, South Amboy, NJ 08879)

F. M. Knives – *Useless and Modern* cd

Of the 100+ records reviewed for this issue, I've listened to *Useless and Modern* more than any other. It arrived first and has fended off challenges from newer arrivals all summer and fall, never leaving the small stack of review records that I want(ed) to listen to. Then, as now, the Buzzcocks, Jam, Kinks, and Who are the bands that pour into my mind whenever *Useless and Modern* is flooding my house. And if any of those bands have ever mattered to you, then *Essential and Modern* is a much more accurate title for this superior disc.
(Moo La La - 1114 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814)

Jad Fair & Teenage Fanclub – "Always in My Heart" b/w "Let's Celebrate" 7"

Better than Jad's record with Yo La Tengo, not as good as his album with Phonocomb. Teenage Fanclub do an admirable job of supporting Mr. Fair, keeping their place in the background and allowing Jad's quietly engaging personality to take the spotlight. The a-side offers some of his best ever love song lyrics.
(Alternative Tentacles - Box 419092, SF, CA 94141)

The Fevers – *Gaan Daar Waar de Meisjes Zijn* lp

Nearly everything Travis Ramin touches turns to gold. He's played a part in two awesome power pop bands (Candygirl, Tina & the Total Babes) along with one decent rock band (Short Fuses). And now the Fevers and their magnificent debut album. My, oh my. *Gaan Daar* is more polished than the ep the Fevers did for Lipstick Records, but that choice only lets the pop shine all the brighter. Think Rolling Stones, circa '67, or the first Big Star record, pick up the tempos a bit, and you're on the right page. But you won't get the full picture until you've fully absorbed *Gaan Daar*, because the Fevers cop moves from all parts of the pop universe and toss in a bunch of their own, too. This record is as riveting as its title is baffling. (Fantana/Alien Snatch - Morikeweg 1, 74199 Untergruppenbach, Germany)

The Figgs – *Slow Charm* cd

The first track, "Intro" makes it obvious that *Slow Charm* is unlike any other Figgs record. Having insured that we're off balance, the Figgs get us back on solid ground with "Back to Being" and "Sit and Shake," classic Figgs rockers that serve as the perfect set up for the brilliant songs that follow. "There Are Never Two Alike," "Soon," and "Public Transportation" are weird and spacious and confident and soaked in sounds seldom heard on Figgs records (check out the XTC guitar fills and jazzy keyboards that color the background of "Soon"). If their last record, *Sucking in Stereo* was the band at full-throttle, *Slow Charm* is the band unwinding at an after hours gathering. (Or, *Sucking in Stereo* = tension; *Slow Charm* = release.) And easing off the accelerator brings out the songs' hooks and accentuates the band's broad palate. Like the title suggests, *Slow Charm* is not the most immediately satisfying Figgs record, but it is one of their best. (hearbox.com)

Thee Fine Lines/The Jim-Jims – split 7"

"Way cool Kinks/Headcoats ripoffs"...any time I get to type that phrase I'm a happy guy and we're headed toward a positive review. What's even cooler is that Thee Fine Lines have gal/guy vocals, thus "way cool Kinks/Headcoats/Headcoatees ripoffs" is more on target. Right fine, Thee Fine Lines. The Jim-Jims snagged their name from a Velvet Underground song ("Heroin"), and their sound is decent garage punk rock but Thee Fine Lines are three winners on this split.
(Wee Rock - Box 333, Springfield, MO 65801)

The Gentlemen – *Blondes Prefer the...* cd

Reviewing records is like taking a multiple choice test: you're best off trusting your first response. Last issue, I started reviewing *Blondes Prefer*, labeled it "the missing link between the Stones and Aerosmith" but held off on further elaboration so I could listen to the record for a few months. I had it right the first time. This is where the Stones should have gone after *Exile on Main Street*. The six songs written by Mike Gent (also of the Figgs) are the headline news here, but the contributions from Ed Valauskas (also of the Gravel Pit) shouldn't be overlooked. ROCK. (The Gentlemen's Recording Company - Box 391035, Cambridge, MA 02139)

German Cars vs. American Homes - One in a Million cd

For the first five or six songs I swore I was experiencing the second coming of Devo, Tin Huey, and the Talking Heads—smart ass art school types who drive all over the music map but know exactly what they're doing, using a sharp sense of humor to keep themselves in check. Some of the brilliance is dulled by the sheer volume of ideas (17 songs), but *One in a Million* is quite a find. I hope this is just the start for these guys. (Mishap Productions - 25-22 38th St., #1, Astoria, NY 11103)

John Guliak & the Lougan Brothers - The Black Monk cd

Country music is all about "singer > material" so mixing in covers is kosher because of the weight given to interpretation. John Guliak has an engaging 'wiser than his years' persona and good taste in songs. Sprinkled in among his originals are songs by Howard Harlan, Townes Van Zandt, and Uncle Tupelo. He also turns in a bluegrass cover of "Old Slewfoot," a traditional done by Buck Owens, among others. Not bad.

(Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

The Hi-Frequencies - s/t cd

If all the unsolicited records we received were this good, I'd never leave the house. The Hi-Frequencies bounce through 14 well-mannered garage tunes that conjure up thoughts of early Beach Boys, Ben Vaughn, Junior Varsity, Buddy Holly (whom they cover) and even a dash of Alex Chilton. They also earn points for naming a song after Bo Diddley's drummer, Jerome Green. (And of course, they use the Bo Diddley beat, too.) Quite good.

(Teen Regime - Box 100167, Pittsburgh, PA 15233)

The Jewws - L'explosion du Son de Maintenant! lp

What gives, man? Garage rock is supposedly all the rage and yet one of the best bands on the circuit—whose rhythm section, Matt and Rebecca, are also in Junior Varsity—has to go overseas to land a record deal? The Belgians are putting us to shame, folks. Meanwhile, us Yanks are scarfing up EuroGarageRock like it's good or something. Pardon the jingoism, but you needn't look across the pond for uppermost garage rockin' action. (Demolition Derby - PB 4005, 2800 Mechelen 4, Belgium)

The Jewws - "I Need Your Lovin' (But I Don't Need You)" + 2 7" ep

Talk about a study in contrasts...1) there's the religious angle—despite their band name, I don't think any of the band members are among the Chosen People; 2) the gender angle—one chick and two dudes; 3) the racial angle—one black gent and two white folk; 4) the nationality aspect—they're an American band (sure, they'll help you party down) on a European label, and 4a) they're named the Jewws and they're on a German label. (If there are any Cultural Studies majors who want to write about contemporary garage rock, this is their band.) But none of that plays into what the Jewws do, and do well: fire off unrelenting updates of Bo Diddley and Kinks riffs. Even better than their lp! (Alien Snatch - Morikeweg 1, 74199 Untergruppenbach, Germany)

Jucifer - I Name You Destroyer cd

Can you remember a better cd title? I can't. What about the music? Here's the breakdown...Songs 1-3, 10: Hordes of evil guitars circling angelic vocals. Rest of the disc: The formula is blown as the vocals lapse into screams,

leaving nothing to contrast the guitars. I name this disappointing!

(Velocette - 83 Walton St., Atlanta, GA 30303)

Kermit's Finger - Jacque's JonBenet Bombshell 10"

If punk rock is all about doing what you want regardless of what other people will think, then Kermit's Finger are a textbook punk band. This 10" has virtues a plenty. It's a self-released 10" in the 00s (what could be more expensive and less practical?). It's got JonBenet on the cover (what could be less timely? The Tea Pot Dome scandal?) There's only one song over 1:40 (that being their cover of the Nervous Eaters' "Shit for Brains" which clocks in a Grateful Dead-like 2:28). There's a song about visiting the comic store ("Comic Book Shop"—metaphors, smetaphors, right?). And the songs themselves are pretty good, especially side two. Thanks, fellas.

(Poorest Quality Records - Box 458, Boston, MA 02129)

Kill the Hippies - Exterminate the Brutes 7" ep

A 00s punk band with a unique personality? It sounds possible, but has it happened? Let's examine the evidence. The first song sounds like it was taken from Queen's debut record from 1973, the second sounds like a lost track from a '77 era CBGB band, the other four songs sound like a snot nosed British punk from '79...and all six songs manage to sound like they were played by the same band. Pretty remarkable.

(Hotsauce - Box 13161, Gainesville, FL 32604)

Kill-a-watts - Electrorock lp

If you like your rock songs short, fast, stupid, catchy, fun, and comically rude, then *Electrorock* is essential. If you don't like your rock songs that way, get your head examined and then get *Electrorock*. What amazes me most is that the Kill-a-watts can dish out 12 doses of this spectacular garage punk without repeating themselves. Hell, they don't even use any of the songs from their previous three singles. And they include trading cards of the band members. The Kill-a-watts are to music what EC comics are to literature—and it all works. (Rip Off - 581 Maple, San Bruno, CA 94066)

The Killing Tree - Bury Me at Make-Out Creek cd

Make no mistake about it, these guys are metal. They've got the metal guitar sounds, the six-minute songs, and the death references, yet the Killing Tree aren't fully committed to things metal. Their lyrics are laced with emo-y self pity and have titles that would have Ronnie James Dio turning over in his grave. (Well, they will have that effect when he dies.) "Pillow Talk"? "Replace My Heart"? Do you want to frighten the kids or be the house band on *Donahue*?

(Government Music - Box 268162, Chicago, IL 60626)

Mark Kleiner Power Trio - Love to Night cd

From the lighter end of the power pop spectrum (Marshall Crenshaw, Matthew Sweet) comes *Love to Night*. Unfortunately, it lacks that killer single to draw me in and eventually elevate the other tracks past filler status. (Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

Knockout Pills - s/t cd-r

Two of the four Knockout Pills used to be in the Weird Lovemakers. The Knockout Pills aren't quite the exhilarating punk rock'n'roll roller coaster ride that the

Weird Lovemakers were, but they are a pretty damn good ride in their own right and they're off to a boffo start. (Knockout Pills - Box 3775, Tucson, AZ 85722)

Lakeside Project - *Animal Logic* cd

Hey, did you know that Kent's old band once reached #132 on the CMJ charts? Big deal, right? But if I had to write a press release for this dud, I'd stoop to such trivia, too. Or, I'd quote my brother, who was visiting the day *Animal Logic* arrived and insisted on hearing it. After ten minutes he came down stairs and summarized his thoughts: "Oh my god, this sucks. You can quote me on that." (Matchpale - Box 1801, Brockton, MA 02303)

The Leg Hounds - *...Date Your Daughters* cd

These guys are just like Led Zeppelin! Well, in so much as both bands released their first two albums in the same calendar year. The recipe for *Date Your Daughters* is the same as the Leg Hounds' debut (garage punk, power pop, a touch of country), but makes for a better record. Opening with an instrumental helps draw attention to guitarist Drew Leg (Drew Hound? Drew LH?) because he doesn't do what you'd expect, his leads actually lead. I wouldn't let these guys date my daughter, but I'd be happy to hear they played one of her parties while I was out of town. (Bulge - Box 1173, Green Bay, WI 54305)

Loose Change - *God Save the Scene* cd

I counted 54 skulls on the cover. As for the content, it's modern punk, all right, lots of screaming vocals and burning personal issues...did I mention the skulls? (Out of Step - Box 509, Vineburg, CA 95487)

Carolyn Mark & the Room-mates - *Terrible Hostess* cd

Combining country twang with loungy suave, Carolyn Mark reminds me of the late, great Jody Grind. And like the Jody Grind's Kelly Hogan, Carolyn Mark has the pipes to work both sides of the fence. *Terrible Hostess* is all right and once the band's material catches up with their talents, they may really be onto something. (Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

Graig Markel - *The Gospel Project* cd

One man band? Cool enough. Indie rock with rigid drum machine tracks? The ice is getting thinner. A 'gospel project' from a one-man band using rigid drum machine tracks? That's either got to be so good it can walk on water, or so bad it plunges through the ice and into the depths of lameness. The blueprint sets us up for weirdness, but the delivery is hum drum. Maybe if there were more Prince in Graig's diet, he could pull this off. (Pattern 25 - 610 20th Ave. East, Seattle, WA 984112)

The Means - *Vil/Viol* cd

Holy flashback to the sludge rock from labels like AmRep and Touch & Go, Batman. Aside from a couple of unexpected moments, like when they add horns and when they scrap off the scuzz and go acoustic, nothing here delivers the ends I sought: "Say, this rocks." (Doubleplusgood - Box 18721, Minneapolis, MN 55418)

The Model Rockets - *Tell the Kids the Cops Are Here* cd

Imagine your favorite power pop band playing your favorite 60s AM radio hits, and you've got *Tell the Kids*. The Model Rockets revel in the best pop sounds of the past and the production team of Kurt Bloch and Scott McCaughey really help those sounds sparkle. With their rich harmonies, insistent hooks, and guitars that jangle

and chime, the Model Rockets craft daydreams that are soaked in melancholy and come across like guys who are resigned to being out of step with the times. And if sounding like Big Star, the Byrds, the Lovin' Spoonful, and the Kinks is out of step, so be it. *Tell the Kids* has all-time favorite potential.

(Not Lame - Box 2266, Ft. Collins, CO 80522)

The MultiPurposeSolution - *s/t* cd

Guitar riffs, I find three engaging, reminding me of Dag Nasty and Pegboy. Mix, I find three uneven, allowing hi-hat to eclipse guitars. Lead vocals, I find three grating, making Dicky from the Mighty Mighty Bosstones sound like Mel Torme.

(Diwad - 78 Merrill Rd., Clifton, NJ 07012)

Rev. Norb - *Earth's Greatest Rocker* cd

Blazing across the disc is a bunch of quotes, one of which is from Winston Churchill: "Action in pursuit of perfection equals paralysis." Relative to *Earth's Greatest Rocker*, my take on that is Welcome to a more spontaneous record—and spontaneous it is. Whereas solo album number one was a tale of a shattered heart, solo album number two is a battle for the good reverend's soul, complete with supporting performances from God, the Devil, and Norb's British cousin, Skip. So, that's a bit about the substance, how about the style? Well, mate, this disc is goofy, perhaps more overtly goofy than any previous Norb project. The first three songs are titled "The Hucklebuck," "Dance the Alexander Hamilton," and "Hey, Man, Let's, Like, Rock" (which has set the record for most commas in a song title). And while the balance certainly tips toward Norb at his goofiest, there's still plenty of room for weirdness. Take the epic (8:27) "My Drums Are Cooler Than Shit." Often, the long songs I like are appealing due to the extent to which I lose myself in them. (Examples: Figgs' "Tint"; Berserk's "Lucifer Chin"; Fastbacks' "Meet the Author.") Not so with "My Drums Are Cooler Than Shit," it's downright uncomfortable and try as I may, can't be ignored. I either have to pay attention to all 507 seconds or skip to the next track—background music this ain't! As for the spontaneity mentioned earlier, the playing feels looser, the tone lighter, and the lyrics more off the cuff—almost seems to be a conscious effort to steer away from the (brilliant) bummer that was the last record. I have yet to decide which of the records I prefer, but the fact that *Earth's Greatest Rocker* is in contention with *Touch Me I'm Weird* is a damn good sign. (Bulge - Box 1173, Green Bay, WI 54305)

Brett O'Neal - *Distractions Kill* cd-r ep

The highlight of this bedroom pop ep is "I'm an Optimist" (sic). It may not be spelled correctly, but it is one of the most wonderfully facetious songs I've ever heard, complete with Brett's arid dry delivery. So, the next time you're feeling down, try this: "I'm an optimist, I'm healthier than David Crosby/I can run faster than Larry Flynt/Better memory than Ronald Reagan/and I'm way more alive than John Lennon." I hope Brett has sent this to the *Dr. Demento* Show.

(Wee Rock - Box 333, Springfield, MO 65801)

Operation Makout - *Hang Loose* cd

Operation: More melodic version of Sleater Kinney. That's not a bad thing, nor are the primary changes from their

debut ep: no more gross out cover art, and Jesse the bass player is a much better singer now.

(Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

The Operators - *Citizens Band* cd

Another inspiring Handstand Command release! Take the insistent guitar lines you'd hear from the Fall or Erin Smith (guitarist for Bratmobile and the Cold Cold Hearts), heighten the sense of melody, and you've got a sense of where the Operators are coming from. They up the ante with a wonderful way of arranging the vocals without cluttering the scenery. *Citizens Band* is so good that I'm tempted to skip "The Bottle"—the opening song and my favorite song from the band's debut ep—because I'm so anxious to get to the newer songs. I could drop a phrase like "post-punk" but then I'd be yielding to the same sort of pretense the Operators so deftly avoid (which, in turn, might lead to a tangential treatise on temptation, and that's best left out). Any way you slice it, *Citizens Band* is splendid.

(Unstoppable - Box 440422, Somerville, MA 02114)

The Operators/Ruby Lashes - split 7"

I love the Operators—see the above review for more details—and their song on this split "What the Mailman Doesn't Bring" is my favorite Operators song yet. I melt every time I get to sing along with the backing vocals during the chorus. I listened to the Ruby Lashes once or twice but whenever this record hits my turntable, the Operators' side is face up.

(Unstoppable - Box 440422, Somerville, MA 02114)

Orange Seventeen - "(We Want) Rock n' Roll Tonight" b/w "Plunder" 7"

Up top, on the a-side, are the unapologetic sounds of early 80s metal with Kiss sentiments and Rob Halford vocals. The flip is late 80s demon metal—We no longer want to party with you, rather, we wish to destroy you.

(Dart - Box 1843, Fargo, ND 58107)

Otep - *Sevas Tra* sampler cd

Grr! Otep are upset. They're downright unkempt, and they've got a song called "Blood Pigs." I have no idea what that means, but I fear it! Or at least I think that's what I'm supposed to do. My favorite song is "My Confession" on which, during the obligatory quiet-then-loud routine, they toss in sitar and one of the Otep-ers is growling like a caged dog. Growling, I tell ya! It's hysterically non-threatening. (Capitol!)

The Pattern - *Real Feelness* cd

Man, has Chris Applegren become a better singer. With the PeeChees his needlessly ironic squawk took a band whose music I liked and rendered them useless. Knowing that he fronts the Pattern I readied myself to loathe *Real Feelness*, but I must confess that he, they, and it ain't bad. The fact that there's any accuracy to a statement like "the Pattern are comparable to the Figgs" is remarkable, but there it is. Not bad.

(Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

Pirx the Pilot - *Fri Night Seafood Buffet* cd

This disc is permeated by an unrelenting, almost tangible refusal to get sucked down the drain of mainstream, flair culture (think *Office Space*), and Pirx the Pilot are equally vigilant in not taking themselves too seriously. As on their last cd, X comes to mind but *Fri Night Seafood Buffet*

is poppier, especially on "Page 23" and "Midnight Baseball." Good stuff.

(New Disorder - 115 Bartlett St., SF, CA 94110)

Plate Six/Spanish Boat Patrol - split 7"

I love the concept behind this single: **Plate Six** and **Spanish Boat Patrol** are comprised of the same guys, the latter is a side project from the former. In and of itself, I'd applaud such an approach, the topser is that I can't tell the difference between the bands. After humming through the moody, mid-tempo number on the a-side, I was hoping the side project was a surf band. No luck. Spanish Boat Patrol sounds the same, sans singing and with bass harmonics tossed in.

(Bent Rail - Box 2283, Birmingham, AL 35201)

The Poptarts - *Fresh...Out of the Toaster: Poptarts Anthology* cd

Growing up in Syracuse, New York, I always thought that interesting things happened everywhere else in the world except Syracuse. The area's lame local music scene did nothing to prove otherwise. Or so I'd always thought. Though the Poptarts existed from 1978 to 1980, it was only last summer that I stumbled upon the story of this Syracuse quintet. Wow. Drawing on such classic sources as Phil Spector, the Beatles, and Jonathan Richman, (and predating the better indie pop bands of the 90s), the Poptarts deliver simple, inviting melodies and gorgeous harmonies. The liner notes apologize for the low-key production (nearly all of the songs were done live to tape), but the hands off approach only strengthens the timeless appeal these songs radiate. If only one of these songs had come out during the band's lifetime, the Poptarts would, at the very least, have a cult following and be popping up on Rhino compilations. Even by my never-quite-timely standards, *Fresh...Out of the Toaster* has been out for a while (it came out in 1997) but it, and the Poptarts, deserves all possible attention.

(PlumTone c/o Gael McGear, 272 Lorraine Avenue, #2 Syracuse, NY 13210)

Pretty Girls Make Graves - *Good Health* cd

When it's firing on all cylinders, *Good Health* sounds like Sarah from Velocity Girl fronting *Steady Diet of Nothing*-era Fugazi. It doesn't hit those heights as often as I'd like, but the potential is there.

(Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

The Queers - *Pleasant Screams* cd

Joe Queer: Hello, this is Joe Queer.

Lookout Representative: Hey.

JQ: Just wanted to phone in my new record.

LR: Is reminiscent of your top-flight sophomoric punk, like *Beat Off*?

JQ: I dunno.

LR: Is it akin to the pure pop brilliance that characterized *Don't Back Down*?

JQ: I dunno.

LR: Hmm, well, is it a mere echo of past greatness wherein eight of the songs are lame covers or lame collaborations?

JQ: Umm, yeah, I guess. Can I get my advance?

(Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

The Race - *The Perfect Gift* cd

Painfully self-aware indie rock that's not as poppy as Pavement, not as fractured as US Maple, and well short of a band like Pie that tried (and succeeded) to do both. The perfect gift here is the stop button.
(Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

The Red + the Black - *Plans for Next Year* cd

I didn't know what to expect here. "The Red and the Black" is a Blue Oyster Cult that's been covered by both the Minutemen and Firehose. Meanwhile, the label, Self-Starter, also released Palomar's ultra fab *Palomar II* disc. If only *Plans for Next Year* had connected with any of those bands (yes, even BOC!) rather than conjuring up four of my least favorite adjectives: slow, moody, fashionable, and boring. Check out Palomar instead.
(Self-Starter - Box 1562, NY, NY 10276)

The Resinators - "Way Gone" b/w "Gotta Go" 7"

I'd like to give you something to hang your hat on, dear reader, but there's not much to recommend about these nondescript garage rock tunes. There's a heap of potential in the guitar riff for "Way Gone," but the vocals trip up the proceedings.
(Dart - Box 1843, Fargo, ND 58107)

The Returnables - *Unrequited Hits* cd

Unrequited Hits reminds me a lot of the Feelies and Hypnotovewheel, lots of jangle in the guitars and lots of nerdy heartache in the lyrics to go along with the peppy energy and cool backing vocals. And like those other bands, the Returnables know enough about pop craft so as to leap past "couple good songs and the rest is crap" syndrome, stringing together a slew of great singles that make this album a head-to-toe pleasure for discerning pop fans.
(Jettison - 6008 S. Harlem Ave., Summit, IL 60501)

Sacrilegious - *Seven Songs* cd

Oy, what a mishmash. The opening track swerves from jangly guitar to tuneless yelping. The sounds and tempos seem like hardcore, but the songs are structured like and last as long as boring rock songs; "The Glut" has a seventy-second intro! The band's name may be amusing but *Seven Songs* reeks of really bad Husker Du (like the flipside to that band's cover of "Eight Miles High").
(New Disorder - 115 Bartlett St., SF, CA 94110)

Sagger - *Skull Rider 7"* ep

A rare misfire from Big Neck Records, one of the most reliable names in the garage and/or punk biz. I may not like this ep, but I love the name of the genre to which they lay claim: spite rock.
(Big Neck - Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195)

Salem Lights - "Barefoot in the Bathroom" b/w "Wolves Fear Sheep" 7"

The a-side is a mild rock song, with undercurrents of 60s psychedelia, that is too long and too slow. The b-side is longer, slower, and, with the gobs of needless guitar noodling, worse.
(Funhouse - Box 20708, Oakland, CA 94611)

Sanbox - *Sanbox Rocks* cd

Well-done pop punk that will appeal to fans of the Mr. T Experience or the Lillingtons. I'll bet they're nice guys who put on a good show, are fun to hang out with, and

are deserving of a longer review, but it's as cut and dry as the first sentence.

(Sanbox - Box 397, Piscataway, NJ 08854)

Schmoogie - *I Buried Snoopy* cd

With a name like Schmoogie, my expectations were subzero; I was expecting *Cat in the Hat* and Spin Doctors boogie. I was pleasantly surprised by the Guided By Voices and Pavement-isms that abound here. The hooks don't hit the heights of those bands' best, but a few come close.

(Redoent - 250 Napoleon St., #N, SF, CA 94124)

Selby Tigers - *The Curse of the Selby Tigers* cd

Well-decorated garage rock with a guy whose vocals are a cross between Grant Smuggler and Mac Superchunk (not bad) and a woman who goes out of her way to sing poorly (confirmed by "The Prom I Never Had" on which she sings really well). Best suited for people reared on Lookout-style pop punk who are now in their late 20s, early 30s and feel the need for greater kitsch in their nightclub acts.
(Hopeless - Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409)

Seven Days of Samsara - *Never Stop Attacking* cd

It used to be that metal bands wanted to frighten everyone all the time. They conjured up scary names and album covers to offend parents and lure teen stoners...but Seven Days of Samsara? Sorry, guys, everything on *Never Stop Attacking* has been done before. Someone else has screamed louder, growled meaner, played faster, and certainly come up with better band names.

(Harmless - 1218 W. Hood, #2, Chicago, IL 60660)

The Shemps - "Count Me Out" b/w "King of Garage" 7"

I didn't know where to start here, the "supergroup" expectations (the Shemps features members of the Sea Monkeys, Bugout Society, the Cryin' Out Louds, and Squeaky, who's played with everyone and lists SCTV as a fave tv show) or the "fourth banana" expectations (they're named after Shemp). How about this? We overlook the fact that they settled for a French record label and put this single somewhere between expectations A and B—two decent garage rock tunes that I like singing along with but could use a bit more fuzz on the guitars.
(Weekend Records - weekendrec@yahoo.fr)

Shuggie - *What It Is...and How to Get It* cd

There's a fine line between arena rock that hits hard and delivers big hooks (Cheap Trick) and arena rock that just wanks (Aerosmith). Shuggie are unabashed arena rockers and *What It Is...* walks that fine line. Which side of the line they're on depends on how much you dig the Steven Tyler-isms of lead singer Andrew McKeag. As a loather of Aerosmith, I'd normally have abandoned *What It Is...* after a spin or two. But given McKeag's background (he's worked with the Fastbacks and Marshall Artist, as has drummer Mike Musburger, who also has the Posies on his resume), I came back for more. I'm still not sold on the vocals but I like a lot of the Enormo Dome-ready guitar riffage and way-cool organ sounds. Plus, unlike most arena rock bands, Shuggie do know the meaning of the word restraint: the cowbell doesn't appear until the fifth song! (Buttertone, try www.shuggie.com)

The Siderunners - *Ain't Inventin' the Wheel* cd

A good country record with straight forward delivery that steers well clear of the hipster irony and *Hee Haw*-like,

'ain't country music wacky?' attitude that plagues most country music made by city slickers. (Failed Experiment - 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609)

Sinkcharmer Stars in Winter cd

One of the many great things about the Handstand Command, a music collective based in Somerville, MA, is that each band maintains a unique sound despite the overlap of band members. Sinkcharmer draws members from the Anchormen (punk), the Operators (indie rock), and the Tardy (indie pop) yet sound like none of those bands. Sinkcharmer is the quietest and least rock oriented of the Handstand bands, often opting for acoustic rather than electric sounds. In fact, *Stars in Winter* may be the first entry in the genre of Appalachian indie rock. A likeable slow burner.

(Unstoppable - Box 440422, Somerville, MA 02114)

Smart Brown Handbag - Fast Friends cd

Two points of interest: "The Sixth Year Slump," a well-crafted piece of pop, and the 45-page (!) press kit that came with *Fast Friends*. If the rest of *Fast Friends* is any indication, most of what Smart Brown Handbag does is complacent, craft > energy pop. How that generates 45 pages of ink is beyond me.

(Stonegarden - 3101 Exposition Place, LA, CA 90018)

Smoke Follows Beauty - s/t cd

Marketing guy #1: Skull on the back cover?

Marketing guy #2: Check.

#1: Song with "devil" in the title?

#2: "Devil Down," check.

#1: Naked woman on the cover?

#2: Yep, and she's covered in snakes.

#1: Free bong with purchase of the cd?

#2: Dude, if I may, no one who buys this cd needs another bong.

#1: Check.

(Kozmik - Box 27663, Los Angeles, CA 90027)

Soft Boys - Nextdoorland lp

"I screwed up when I was younger/Must I keep paying for it?/Yes, you must" ("Lions and Tigers")...If the Soft Boys made any mistakes in their youth, they didn't commit those transgressions to vinyl. *Nextdoorland* is the sound of a confident pop band returning in near perfect form after a 20-year hiatus, and without the slightest hint of the desperation that clings to most reunion albums. Free from the need to prove they still have it, or nervously awaiting the 'ka-ching' of the cashbox, (the Soft Boys' old records sold like sand in the Sahara so one can only assume it's not the anticipation of money that motivated their reunion) the Soft Boys can devote their time to crafting more beautifully twisted psychedelic pop music. The band's chemistry has become smoother and done the fine wine routine, aging so well I'd swear they've been secretly rehearsing over the years. If there's an agenda here it seems more along the lines of a band showing the world that they, the band, had it right the first time and they simply want to give it another go. The Soft Boys first run of records was largely ignored by the pop masses, and while that's likely to happen again the world's ignorance can do nothing to diminish the grace of this remarkable album.

(Matador - 625 Broadway, NY, NY 10025)

Stone Jack Jones - Narcotic Lollipop cd

The production fulfills the 'narcotic' part of the equation, but the songs fall short of the 'lollipop' part. There are flashes of Syd Barrett and/or Momus but not enough to hold my interest. The songs aren't very weird and once the production gimmicks wear off there is nothing left. (Fictitious - 74 the Arcade, Nashville, TN 37219)

Billy Syndrome - Between cd-r

Welcome to one hell of an underground rock variety show. It's not so much that Billy Syndrome is all over the map in terms of variety, so much as that he isn't even on a map. Most of *Between* is simply bad rock music, but the exceptions, if not actually likeable, are conceptually fascinating. There's the bluegrass cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression." There's "Experiments in Fear," a 15-minute (!) "electronic prog rock mindfuck." Then there's "The Power of Love," which was recorded in 1988, written for Michael Jackson, and somehow left off Billy Syndrome's five-disc (!) collection, *Bag Set*. If you like cable access tv oddities, you might want to seek out *Between*.

(Slutfish - 327 Bedford Ave., #A2, Brooklyn, NY 11211)

The Tardy - s/t cd-r ep

Holy hot damn, Jef and Steph know their way around a pop tune. Popper than their other endeavors (Jef - Anchormen, Steph - Operators), *The Tardy* is a candy-coated delight. I truly wish I had more of significance to say because I think the longer reviews tend to draw more attention from readers, and everyone should take note of the Tardy. I do know this: Every time I try to work through the unlistenable (that stack of review cds that I know will suck), I begin and end with the Tardy so as to guarantee that each session will begin and end with music that I love. The Tardy—perched atop the caste system of compact discs. (Another Handstand Command gem!) (Unstoppable - Box 440422, Somerville, MA 02114)

Things in Herds - I Can Dancing and Walking cd

This herd is split into two groups. The first is simple, delicate pop with swirling keyboards and wandering guitar lines. The second is emotionally monotonous folk pop. Unfortunately, group two dominates the gathering rendering most of the disc like falling asleep in a dimly lit coffeehouse waiting for your girlfriend's friend's boyfriend to wrap up his solo acoustic set; not totally unpleasant but barely enough to keep you in your seat.

(Trust Me - info@trustmerecords.com)

Triis Sceptered Isle - And You Make Us Shine So Bright cd ep

With Split Enz-like vocals and Guided By Voices-esque music—plus GBV and Archers of Loaf covers ("Game of Pricks" and "You and Me," respectively)—there's a lot here that will appeal to indie rock fans. (Okay, Split Enz aren't considered an indie rock band but, really, they should appeal to everyone, indie rocker or otherwise.) The real gem is "Three's a Charm," which twists the band's influences into something new. More songs like that, por favor! (kwgarrison@hotmail.com)

Traindodge - On a Lake of Dead Trees cd

Combine lyrics like "So gauge the size of how demise fits you" (huh?) with long, moeey rock songs and, well, if it

walks like emo and quacks like emo, it's emo. And it's crap...and "Flight of the Serpent" isn't about serpents. (Ascetic - 5248 Bancroft, #B, St. Louis, MO 63109)

Trixie and the Merch Girls - Dead Giraffe cd-r
My, they know how to make a great first impression. The lead song, "Gabe, Can We Borrow Your Gun?", is Ramones-core the way it ought to be, punk rock poured through a Beach Boys filter (or should that be vice versa?). The rest of *Dead Giraffe* mixes cool, low-key surfy garage rock and jam-oriented indie rock. Fortunately, the balance tips toward the former and we're left with a fine record.
(Wee Rock - Box 333, Springfield, MO 65801)

V/A - Geek Monger - Volume 3 cd
Steve Hinkley, the gent behind this series of compilations, is one of the true good guys in underground music, one of those guys who lives to turn people on to new music. There are a handful of good pop punk bands here, including the *Taxis* (who hail from Maine!), *Calendar Girl*, and the *Mixelpricks* (for whom Hinkley drums). There's also a fun Misfits-like tune from *Fighting 407*. The rest of the bands cover a lot of turf but don't turn my crank. 4 for = .200.
(Murkta - Box 4663, Lafayette, IN 47903)

V/A - 1157 Wheeler Avenue: A Memorial for Amadou Diallo
A good cause and a genuinely informative booklet, too bad most of the bands either stink or phoned in crummy live songs. *Anti-Flag* are the worst offenders, coughing up a lamely performed and poorly recorded version of Mission of Burma's "That's When I Go For My Revolver." The *J Church* song is subpar and the rest of the bands are of no interest to this scribe (*Fifteen*, *Methadones*, *Common Rider*, *Lawrence Arms*, *Squirtgun*, among others). One worthy exception is *Youth Brigade's* "Men in Blue," which, even with the goofy funk break, underscores the fact that political punk rock was better twenty years ago. The proceeds benefit Human Rights Watch—make a donation instead. 1 for 14 = .071 (Failed Experiment - 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609)

V/A - Household Records of London sampler cd
Some of these punk songs have horns! Others don't! That's the most positive spin I can put on it. The *Captain Everything* song is okay but other than that this sampler is one whiff after another. .5 for 14 = .004.
(Household - Box 12286, London SW9 6FE, UK)

V/A - Pop for Charity: Sound Progression cd
Pop for Charity is a group that promotes local artists and bands while raising money for charities. It's a great game plan, if only they'd chosen better songs. The 20-band disc is roughly broken into three acts. Act I kicks off with *Dillinger 4* covering Motorhead's "No Voices in the Sky." Not bad. The rest of act I is mostly metal and/or grunge rock. Act II is for the indie rock crowd, highlighted by *Komodo* and *Hammel on Trial* (who turn in an amusing acoustic pop song about pulling a bank heist). Act III is full of dance pop and hip hop, the best of which comes from the *Non-Prophets*. 4 for 20 = .200.
(Doubleplusgood - Box 18721, Minneapolis, MN 55418)

V/A - Red Line Distribution Sampler - Vol. 2 cd

There are all kinds of music here including bad metal, bad punk, bad indie rock, and one good country song. For the most part the band names are more interesting than the songs (including *Examination of the...*, the first band name to use ellipses!). There are also some exceptions, like the twangy pop of *The Siderunners* (who also have a Willie Mays reference in their lyrics), the off-kilter indie rock of *Chalet Chalet*, and the All-esque punk of *Biscayne*. 5 for 18 = .278.
(Red Line - 5420 S. Bishop St., Chicago, IL 60609)

Volumizer - Gaga for Girl cd
I'd be gaga for Volumizer if all their songs packed the wallop of "I Promise You, Thomas." Sadly, the balance of the disc descends from decent to drab to dreadful. (Note for Canada-philos: Volumizer features Jade Blade, from the Dishrags, Bill Napier-Henry, from Pointed Sticks, and Rodney Graham, from U-J3RK5.) (Note for obsessive Canada-philos: The bands listed above were covered, respectively, by Supersnazz, the Smugglers, and Man or Astro Man? on the way-fab *Oh Canaduh!* compilation (Lance Rock, 1995).)
(Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

Wax Cannon - Life-Sized Animals Walking Around cd
It's 1:30 am, last half hour of the college radio show I co-hosted with my buddy, Scott. We've exhausted the stack of records we brought, and now we're scouring the new arrivals bin. Our rule of thumb: find the shortest song on the record. It's likely to be the fastest and best song on the record, too. Were it not for the "2002" clearly printed on the cd booklet, I'd swear *Life-Sized* was one of those records, it would have fit perfectly with many of the bands we played, like King Missile, Hypnolovewheel, and Husker Du. Following the "short song" rule we would have stumbled across "Cellophane." I don't know if we would have played many of the other songs, they're not quite as good, but "Cellophane" would have been played a lot and wound up on all our mix tapes. (To Wax Cannon's credit, the memory lane angle is all me; there's nothing calculated about their brand of flannel rock.)
(Commie Martyr - 610 S. Dubuque, Iowa City, IA 52240)

Yesterday's Kids - Can't Hear Nothin' cd
Like Dirt Bike Annie, Yesterday's Kids are trying to futz with the pop punk formula. Unlike Dirt Bike Annie, Yesterday's Kids come up short. There are occasional power pop flourishes, mostly when the piano parts drop in, but not enough. The one notable exception is their cover of "She's Paul's Girls" (originally done by fellow Neenah, Wisconsin-ites, Teenage Rejects), too bad the rest of *Can't Hear Nothin'* doesn't match that energy. If Yesterday's Kids slowed down a bit, they could be a great power pop band. If they sped up a bit, they could be a great punk band. Instead, they're an average pop punk band. (Lookout - 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703)

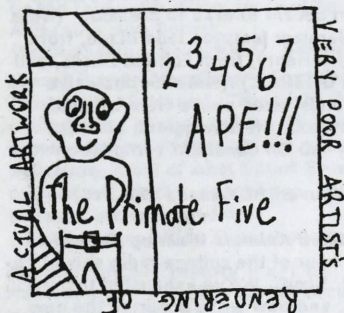
Young and Sexy - Stand Up for Your Mother cd
Buried beneath the acoustic guitars and relaxed girl/guy vocals are some decent hooks reminiscent of Stereolab, Komeda, or Belle and Sebastian. The trouble is that each song seems to wander through two minutes of folky muck before the pop steps in. Lacking the patience to wade through those long build ups, I'd rather put on a Stereolab record.
(Mint - Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6)

New discs from Dizzy:

Primate 5 Weird Lovemakers

Holy shit! Dizzy Records, a mighty but often admittedly mini force in the music industry, has caught the big boys napping and landed two (2) colossally cool compact disc releases!

Each record is stacked with red hot studio hits, prime cuts that were slated to be released...until both bands broke up (in unrelated events). But how we got here is of little relevance. Rest assured each disc showcases one of the best bands from the past decade. Now, let's get more specific, shall we?



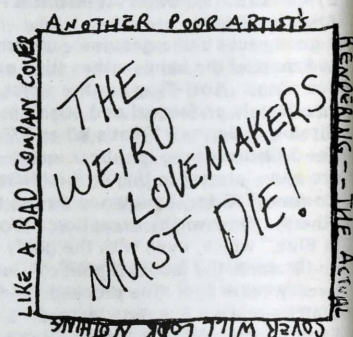
The **Primate 5** hailed from Seattle and pumped out a slew of smokin' garage records for labels such as GI, Big Neck, Static, and Dead Beat. **1,2,3,4,5,6,7 Ape!** offers 13 cuts that, truth be told, eclipse the P5's stellar singles. About half of these songs were recorded by the legendary Conrad Uno (Young Fresh Fellows, Fastbacks)!

In lining up a P5 interview for the last issue of *GM!*, I learned of nearly two dozen unreleased P5 songs. The band picked the best of the bunch and compiled **1,2,3,4,5,6,7 Ape!**. The results are amazing.

**\$6 each
or both for \$10!**

Meanwhile, the **Weird Lovemakers** came from Tucson, Arizona. They released three full lengths (one on Gouramie, two for Empty), along with a ton of singles and compilation tracks. Their raw, intense garage punk reminds me of New Bomb Turks and Scared of Chaka but tops both of those fine bands.

The Weird Lovemakers Must Die was scheduled to be the band's third studio record but was shelved when the band broke up. Now these 19 stunning songs are in circulation.



Other stuff we hawk...

milf - Everybody Should Stop Doing Everything
18 song collection culled from the best of this Buffalo band's many cassette and 7" releases.

cd-r - \$6

V/A - Day Dreaming with an Empty Station Wagon

Exclusive tracks from Figgs, Sea Monkeys, Decibels, Weird Lovemakers, Dorks, Shakes, Dirt Bike Annie, Dick Army, In Crowd, Lizards, Kung Fu Monkeys, Garage Sale, Thundercats, Mixelpicks, Sheldrakes, Kluggmen, and the legendary "Snowbeast" rock opera (Tortillas You Wanted). Along with different versions of Young Fresh Fellows, Junior Varsity and Rondelles songs that later surfaced on lps.

cd - \$5

8-track (2 cartridges) - \$10

Sticklers/Kung Fu Monkeys

A battle royale between Hawaii's Sticklers and NY's Kung Fu Monkeys. 3 tracks from each band. A split release with Wet Noodle.

7" - \$3

Egghead. - Dumb Songs for Smart People (Mutant Pop)
Posthumous 14 song collection, on Mutant Pop

cd - \$10

ZISK

Baseball is the best of sports, approach it with a sense of humor and you have Zisk, a zine by and for baseball fans.

#6 - Interview with Black Jack McDowell; Most Entertaining Players; Vintage Baseball tour; and more. 36 p., \$2

#4 - Jose Valentin's Moustache; Ballparks of the Upper Midwest; Junior Gave Me the Finger; The Special Case of Hal Chase; and heaps more. 32 p., \$2

#3 - Billy Bragg; Detroit's 4-man shirt; The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg; Coping with the Off-Season, 35 Years at the Astor; and more. 32 p., \$2



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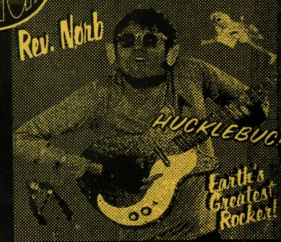
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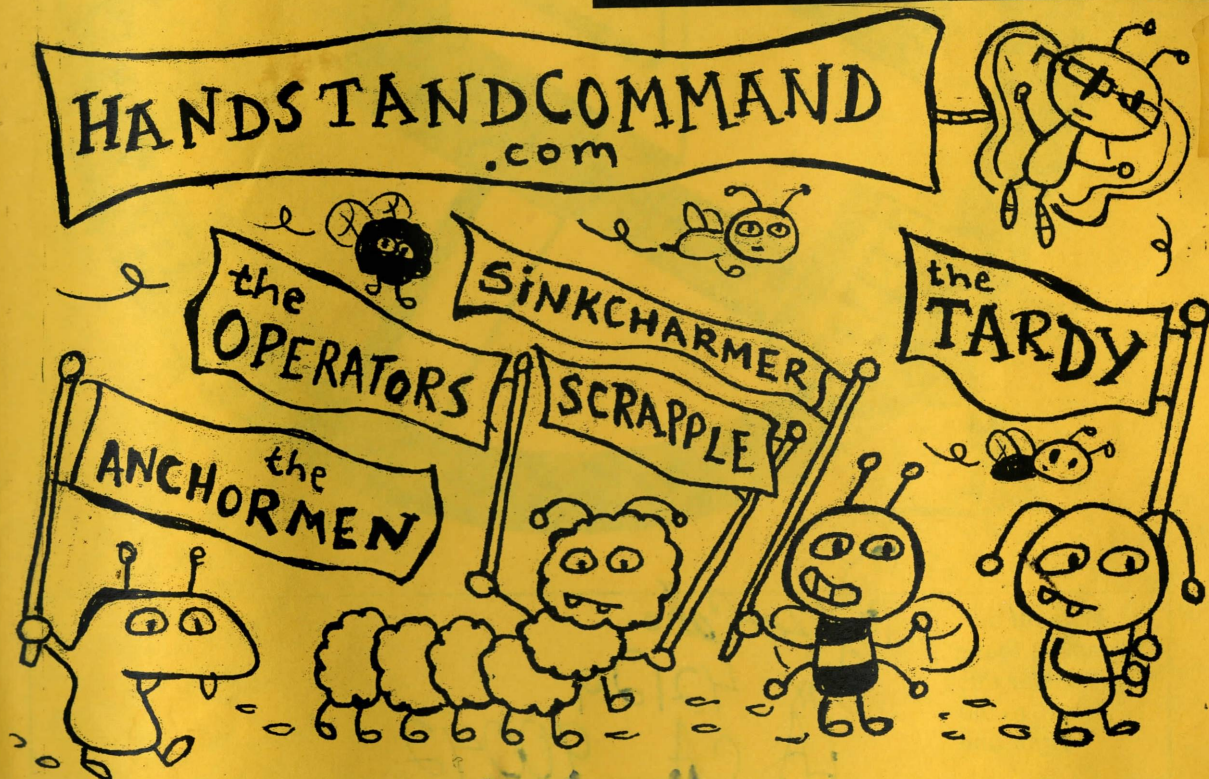
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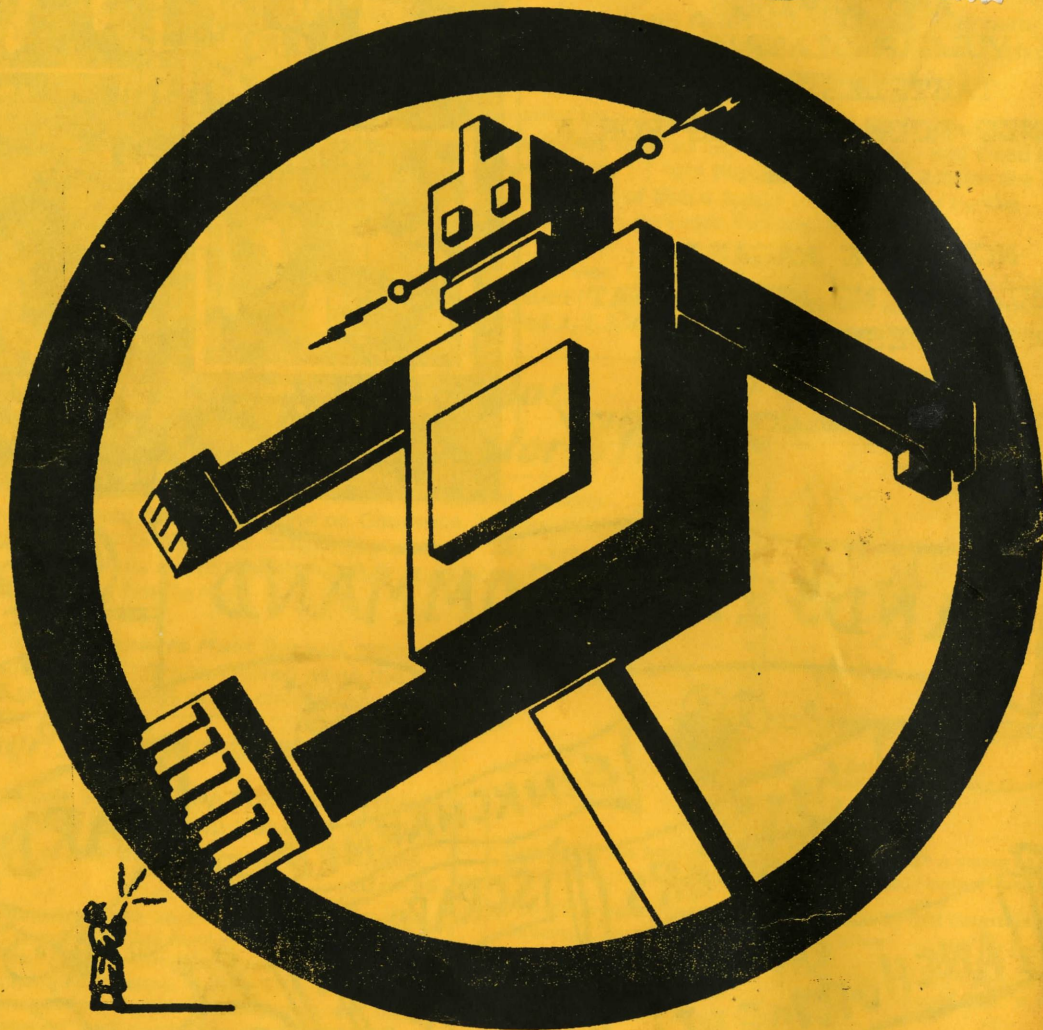
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