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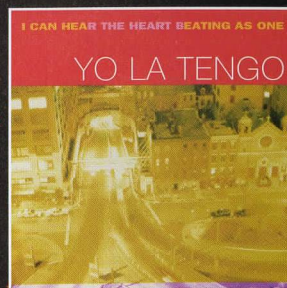
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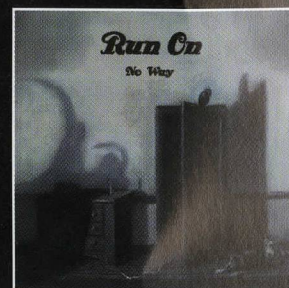




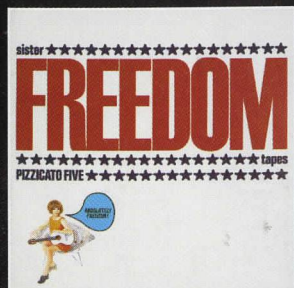
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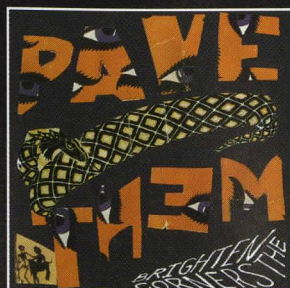
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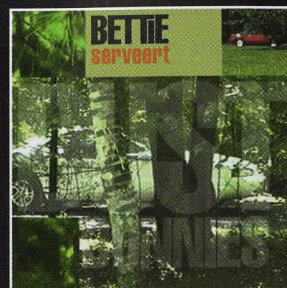
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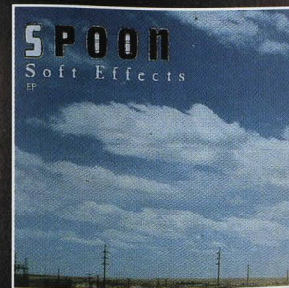
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# BUNNYHOP

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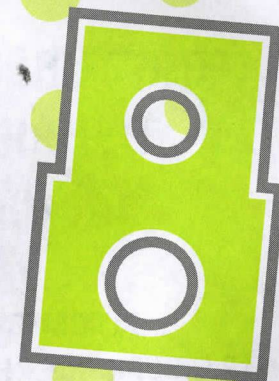
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## interviews

<b>Jessamine</b>	23
<b>Mike Anderson</b>	36
<b>Katherine Dunn</b>	49
<b>George Kuchar</b>	57
<b>David Cronenberg</b>	66
<b>Mr. Twister</b>	73
<b>Adam Parfrey</b>	85
<b>Dame Darcy</b>	99

## articles

<b>Todd Browning</b>	15
<b>Evil Clowns</b>	19
<b>Aftermirth</b>	29
<b>Accordions</b>	43
<b>Chupacabras</b>	62
<b>SÄHKÖ Recordings</b>	76
<b>Twins</b>	91
<b>Strange Magazines</b>	104

## departments

<b>Editorial</b>	6
<b>Letters</b>	11
<b>Short Person Survey</b>	32
<b>Outer Space Messages</b>	56
<b>Thoughts on Aliens</b>	84
<b>Questions for Twinkies</b>	95
<b>Print Reviews</b>	108
<b>Record Review Haikus</b>	113
<b>Event Reviews</b>	124
<b>Bunnyhop Products</b>	129
<b>Next Issue Info</b>	129

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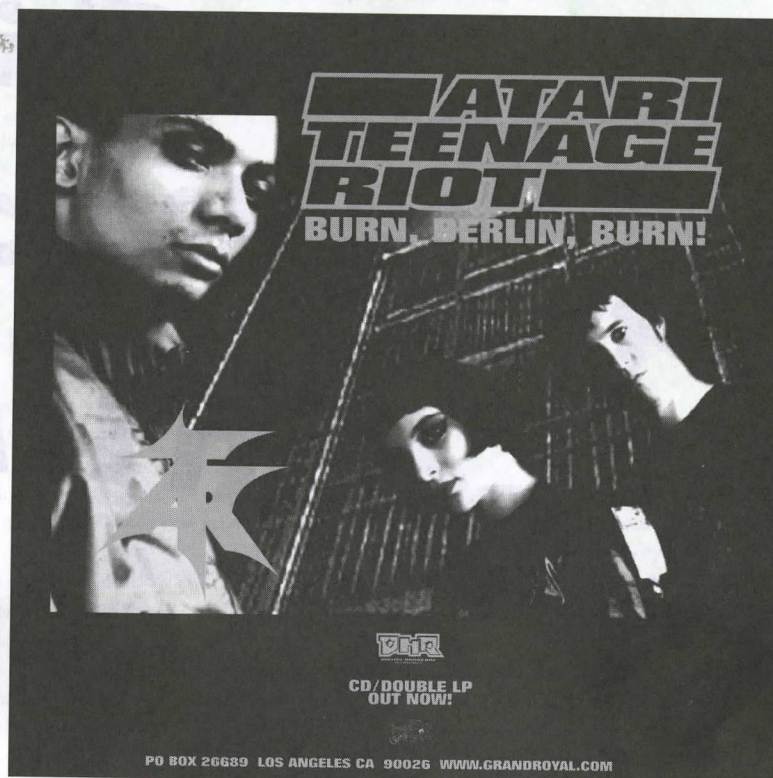
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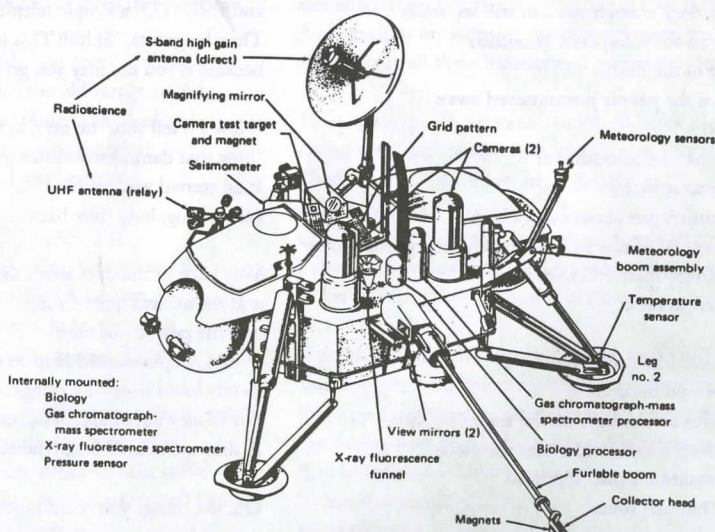


Figure 4. External features (schematic) of the Viking lander.



# And to Think That I Heard It on SWOOSHTIKA STREET

By Dr. Noë/

At the far end of town  
where the Grimey-grime grows  
and the cold wind sweeps up the dead tumbleweed  
whenever it blows...  
is the place that was known as Swooshtika Street.

And deep in the Grimey-grime, some people will say,  
if you look deep enough you can still see today,  
where the Swooshtikas once swooshed  
right there in the bush  
before all of the people just moseyed away.

Oh, what *was* the Swooshtika?  
And *why* was it there?  
Not to mention just about everywhere  
from the far end of town where the Grimey-grime grows?  
Old Mr. Nightmare still lives here.  
Ask him. *He* knows.

You won't see Mr. Nightmare.  
Don't knock on his door.  
He lives with six donkeys on the top of his store.  
He lurks deep inside, cold under the globe,  
where he makes his own slippers  
out of old tattered robes.  
And on indigo midnights in March,  
he peeks  
out of the shutters

and sometimes he speaks  
and tells of when his Swooshtikas once glistened.  
He'll tell you, perhaps...  
if only you'll listen.  
Once you arrive, you better look up  
for he will drop down his Styrofoam cup.  
It's tied up with some twine to a cup of his own  
and PRESTO! a simple telephone.  
Then he grunts, "Shhhh! This is a secret, you better not tell  
because if you do, may you go to Hell!"

"Now I'll tell you," he says, as fast as he can,  
"how that damn Swooshtika got way out of hand...  
It all started way back...  
such a long, long time back..."

Way back in the days when the grass was still green  
and the air was quite fresh  
and the people not mean.  
When people worked hard to make lots of money,  
to buy loved ones nice things, or maybe some chutney.  
For money buys happiness, the greatest reward!  
A shiny new car or happy-home lifestyle, you, too can afford!

Oh, the things you could buy! All under the sun  
from this great nation of ours, quality was job one!  
Screamin' Yellow Zonkers or maybe Fiddle Faddle?  
The choice was all yours while companies did battle!

Because freedom of choice and competition is healthy  
for the poor and the middle class and even the wealthy!

I wanted my own business, but didn't have a plan, Sir.  
Opportunity came a knocking and I didn't answer.  
And this was a time when people loved sneakers,  
from health nuts to drop-outs and even the tweakers!  
I thought, "That's what I'll do! I'll make up some shoes  
for the people out there. Heck, I've paid my dues!"

In no time at all, I had built a wee store.  
I wanted to be wealthy and not poor, never more!  
And with vulcanized rubber and great speedy speed,  
I stitched up a shoe and thought, "Yeah, this they will need!"

The moment I'd finished, I heard a mad sound!  
I looked.  
I saw something hop out of the ground  
in front of my house. It was sort of a bunny.  
Describe him? I don't know, but he sure did look funny.

He was twinkie. And oldish.  
And blue-ish. And stumpy.  
And he spoke with a voice  
that was scratchy and grumpy.

"Mister!" he wheezed and he spat.  
"I am the Fluffel. Please tell me, what *is* that!"



"Look, Fluffel," I said. "These are just plain shoes.  
And for the two-footed people, I'll sell them in twos.  
I know you don't know me and you may not even like me,  
but I'll sell these some day. These things I'll call N--e'  
after the goddess of victory in old Greek mythology!  
They're simple and nice and of such high quality!"

But something was missing and I thought and I thought,  
and then added a Swooshtika cuz check marks the spot!  
"I know I don't like it, but I think it'll grow on me,  
and perhaps," I did chuckle, "help boost the economy!"

The Fluffel said,  
"Shoes they don't need! They've already got some.  
And who'd be caught dead in a pair of such flotsam?"

But the very next minute I proved he was wrong.  
For, just at that minute, a clown came along,  
and he thought that the Swooshtika logo was just great.  
He bought the first pair for ninety-nine ninety-eight.

I laughed at the Fluffel, "You poor stupid guy!  
You never can tell what those people will buy."  
And before the blue Fluffel could put up a mean fight,  
I pushed him outside, way outta my sight.

I rushed 'cross the room, and in no time at all,  
built a Styrofoam-phone. I put in a quick call.  
I called all my brothers and sisters and aunts  
and I said, "Listen up! Now here is your chance  
for all of us Knightmares to get stinking rich!  
Get over here fast! Take the road to Fourth Fitch.  
And don't forget Mom, that old lazy bitch!"

And, in no time at all,  
in the factory we built,  
the whole Nightmare Family,  
was working full tilt.  
We would sew shoes in threes  
just as busy as bees,  
for the promise of wealth  
brought on by N--es.

And the timing couldn't be better,  
the timing was just ripe.  
For business was slowing for the shoes with three stripes.  
Their distribution was poor  
on American shores.  
And I can tell you, my friend,  
that that very moment  
was the beginning of the end.

Then...  
Oh! Baby! Oh!  
How my business did grow!

Now, sewing three shoes  
at a time  
was a tad bit too slow.

So I sourced out more work, way out overseas.  
I had Filipinos, Pakistanis and Vietnamese  
to help do the world some good, but who am I kidding?  
I needed them all to do my evil bidding!

Things were just great, I had the ball in my court  
and things that I once longed for  
I could more than afford.  
But you know what they say  
when you're making the green,  
like a whore you'll want more,  
you know what I mean?

So I thought about Michael, a rising hoop star  
and showered him with big moolah and fancy new cars.  
And just like I thought,  
for a few million dollars, his image was ours!  
We put his name on our shoes, as was agreed.  
I thought, "The new N--e Jordans!  
Yeah, that's what they'll need!"  
Needless to say, the shoes were a hit  
with grandma and grampa, the mom and kids.  
And that Fluffel?  
He just didn't show up anymore.

But the very next week, he banged on my door.  
"Came out here now QUICK!" he growled and he roared.  
He snapped, "Now what's going on? I don't understand  
how your piece of shit shoes became a name brand!  
Now the Three Stripes are dying, is that what you want?  
'Specially with those silly Swooshtika shoes that you flaunt?"

"Now listen here," I screamed, "you runty little fuck.  
Hey, just when *did* you fall off the old turnip truck?  
Remember that one poster of Hitler and buddies  
staring at a wee model of them VW Buggies?  
It was so funny, in my pants I was crappin'.  
The headline below read:  
ADVERTISING MAKES IT HAPPEN.  
Our strategy was simple: No shame, no regrets  
and squash everything that might be a threat.  
Afraid we were not, and did best to be thorough  
by buying up big names like Michael and Tiger  
and William S. Burroughs.  
It doesn't take a genius to know what we're actually sellin':  
It's dreams and new status, so stop all your yellin'!  
We sell them on comfort and a world without strife  
even though that we know they lead an advertised life?"  
And haven't you heard? Yes, God is dead!  
Those three simple words went straight to my head.  
With faith in religion gone weak and no longer

only makes name brands like N--e grow fat  
and much stronger!  
AND besides  
who needs substance when you can buy style?  
With corporate identity  
comes serenity.  
Now, Mr. Fluffel, chew on *that* for a while."

And with a kick to the tushtika,  
the Fluffel was gone.  
I gazed at my Swooshtikas,  
so right but so wrong!  
BUT...  
business is business!  
And business must grow  
regardless of poor women in torn panty hose.

I never meant anyone harm. No I did not.  
I just had to grow bigger. Or so I did thought.  
But what good would another new factory do  
if only to crank out the same type of shoes?  
I needed more control over everyone's lives  
so I could have every last penny, their twenties, their fives.  
I set my sights high and myself I did astound  
for that night I decided to build my own N--eTown!

'Fore you could say "nougat," N--eTown was born in a flash!  
A place for the people and all of their cash.  
A multilevel complex, all polished and bright,  
(though I'm sure that you've heard  
it was an abominable sight  
and an absurd piece of turd).  
But I showed all those cynics who did nothing but whine.  
When on opening day, the devoted came  
and knelt down before me in my N--eTown shrine.  
And much to my surprise, the devoted came in droves  
eager to buy all these hideous and overpriced clothes.

Then *again* the Fluffel came back with other angry types,  
armed with their picket signs and all sorts of gripes.  
They shouted, "We know what you're up to  
and we know it's no good!"  
Could they be for real? Was I misunderstood?  
I asked, "How have I erred? Oh please tell me now.  
Otherwise, be gone and don't have a cow!"

"I am the Fluffel," he coughed and he cried,  
"and I've got good proof to the public you've lied  
about poor working conditions way out overseas  
like paying \$2 a day to those young Vietnamese.  
And in Indonesia, oh this is so scary!  
If they ever should strike  
you send in the military  
to break down the doors  
and bust up their unions



and bounce them about  
like big balls of confusion.  
And to your massive workforce  
why can't you be kind?  
A pinch of your ad budget could push  
them all over the poverty line."

So I snapped, "Oh cry me a river with sad violins.  
I could care less about them and their lame next of kin.  
Now out of the way and make room for the shoppers.  
If you don't make it snappy, I'll call up the coppers."  
As Fluffel and friends left, herded out like cheap swine,  
a sigh of relief came from all those waiting in line.  
I was so pleased to see they didn't feel beleaguered,  
and bought all my crap. Boy were they eager!  
One line moved in while another moved out  
and that was when I started to think about  
how amazing it is, and even spectacular  
launching a brand in the daily vernacular<sup>1</sup>  
no longer required that we ever sell "goods"  
at least not like how a good person should.

And the kids, yes, the kids! I pontificated.  
They were proof-positive that their lives  
should rightfully be dictated.  
Not by Mom, not by Dad or General Lee  
but by none other than wee little Swooshtika butt me.  
On top of that, too, kids were so loyal to N--e.  
Here's an example. Just listen, you'll see:  
When the Swooshtika children went out to play ball,  
could another name brand kid get in the game...?  
NO! Not at all.  
You only could play if your booties had Swooshtikas  
just like the stars,  
and the other name brand kids had none upon thars.

Kids cared not about art or even read books  
or listened to Paul Anka jingles that advised:  
"Just don't look."

It was the Swooshtika they wanted  
and what they were after.  
So I thought and I thought  
and glowed with much laughter.  
"I've got it!" I screamed.  
"I'll build a big-ass Swooshtika Stamping Machine  
and take over the world with the greatest of ease  
to do what I want and do as I please!"

And before the world knew it, before they could shout  
I was stamping the planet and everything else out!  
I stamped every crevice, every nook, every cranny.  
I stamped out Ronald Reagan and his bald-headed granny.  
But I wasn't alone. No I was not  
for back came the Fluffel with a nose chock full of snot.  
"I am the Fluffel," he coughed and he gargled.

He sneezed and sniffed. He snuffled. He snaggled.  
"Knightmare, now you've gone way too far!"  
he cried out with emotional scars.  
"Your stamping machines chug on,  
day and night without stop.  
Making Poopity-Poop and Boppity-Bopp.  
I can't believe all the nightmarish evil that is you!  
And to think that it all started with that dangfangled shoe!"

And then I got pissed  
I got terribly pissed.  
I yelled at the Fluffel, "Now listen here, Dad!"  
All you do is yakity-yak and say, 'Bad! Bad! Bad!'  
You keep dissin' my shoes and talking much trash.  
I think that you're just jealous  
cuz you can't afford to sleep on a bed full of cash!  
Well, I have my rights, sir, and I'm telling *you*  
I intend to keep doing the things that I do!  
My Swooshtikas will be everywhere, for all the world to see.  
And I'm just the Creepy-Creep to do it, believe you me.  
I'll be king of the world and rise to the top  
whether rain, sleet or snow or Comet Hale Bopp!  
For the almighty Swooshtika, I do what I must.  
It's the new religion.<sup>2</sup> In N--e we trust!

And at that very moment, we heard a loud honk!  
From the Swooshtika Stamping Machine that just konked  
after stamping the world over 3 jillion times  
for a frightening total of 3 jillion crimes.  
So after running his machine non-stop  
from Winter to Fall,  
*every last inch was covered once and for all!*

By being so thorough and oh so complete,  
I inadvertently made my Swooshtika so obsolete!  
It was on everything and everywhere,  
but nowhere to be seen.  
Oh how this cruel world can be ever so mean!  
And of course by now all the world was sick of my logo  
calling me a jerk and a two-bit, no-booty bozo.

The Fluffel said nothing, but let out a giggle.  
He turned away from me with a twitch and a wiggle  
and hopped away fast and left me alone  
all miserable and defeated on my N--eTown throne.

All that Fluffel left here in this horrible pit  
was a small Scrabble board, with the one word...  
"SHIT."  
Whatever *that* meant, well, I was too dumb to know it.

That was long, long ago.  
But I've had much time to think  
about that one little word  
and why my life just plain stinks.

"But *now*," says Mr. Nightmare,  
"Now that *you're* here,  
the word of the Fluffel seems perfectly clear.  
Unless someone like you  
starts to give a shit,  
nothing is going to get better.  
I can bet on it.

"SO...  
Catch!" calls Mr. Nightmare.  
He lets something drop.  
"It's a candy Valentine heart.  
There's more from up top.  
Sow the seeds of love  
and do what you can  
to prevent future generations from  
devoting their lives to evil name brands.  
I'll help you and your friends clean up the Swooshtikas  
out of the nooks and the cracks.  
Then the Fluffel  
and all the people  
may one day come back." ✱

\* Based on Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*, God bless his soul.

<sup>1</sup> Dashes courtesy of writer Stephanie Salter who commented that  
"journalists use dashes when they print obscene or offensive  
words... I believe that N--e has so crossed that line into wretched  
excess that it qualifies for dashes."

<sup>2</sup> From "The Advertised Life" by Tom Vanderbilt, published in *The  
Baffler* #6: "an emerging mode of being in which advertising not only  
occupies every last negotiable public terrain, but in which it penetrated  
the cognitive process, invading consciousness to such a point that  
one expects and looks for advertising, learns to lead life as an ad, to  
think like an advertiser, and even to anticipate and insert oneself in  
successful strategies of marketing." (146)

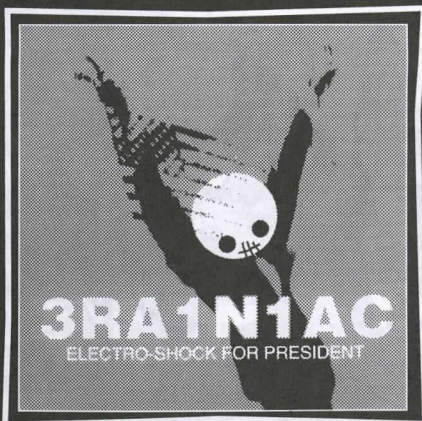
<sup>3</sup> Re-phrased from "The Advertised Life" essay: "'product idea' is more  
important than the product. Marketers fully realized the brilliant utility  
of this strategy long ago, recognizing that once they have successfully  
launched a brand in the daily vernacular, it is no longer necessary to  
sell 'goods'." (149)

<sup>4</sup> From "Dark Age: Why Johnny Can't Dissent" by Tom Frank, published  
in *The Baffler* #6: "buying things is now believed to provide the sort of  
existential satisfaction that things like, say, going to church once did." (5)

#### Reading Materials

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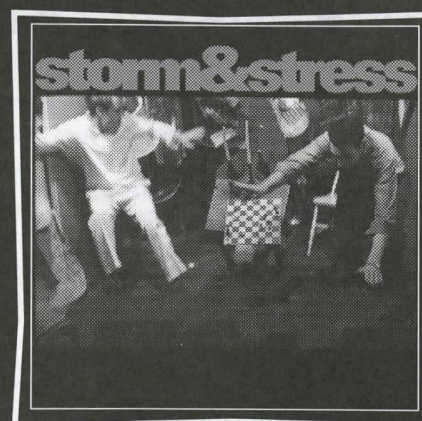
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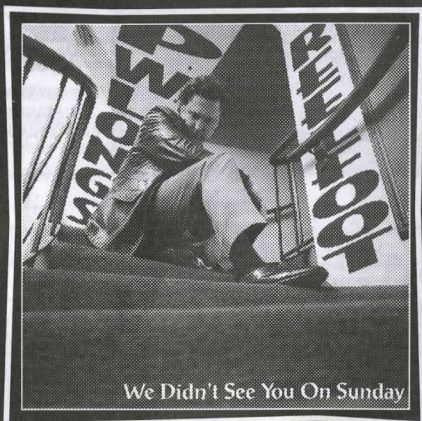
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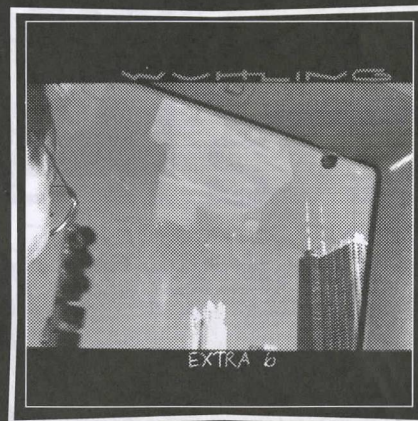
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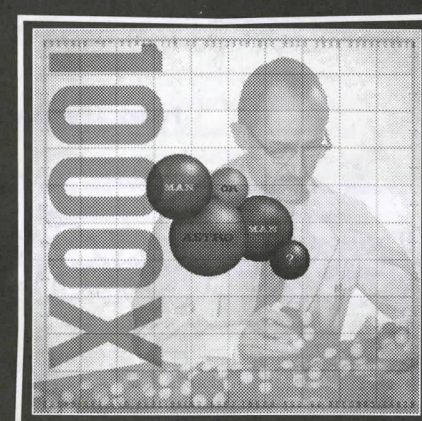
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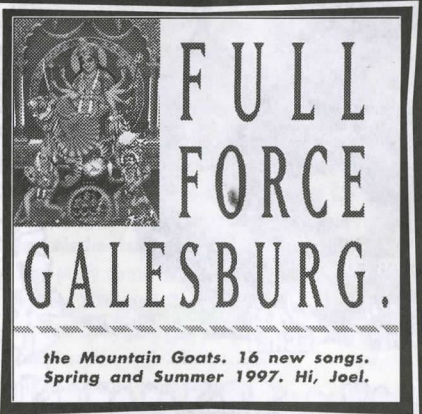
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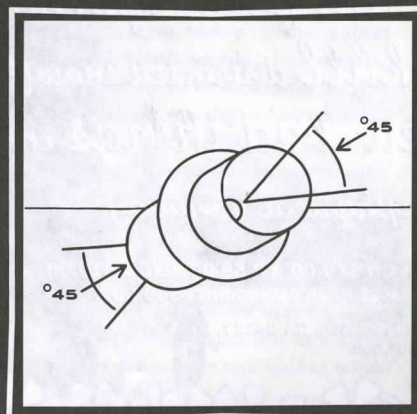
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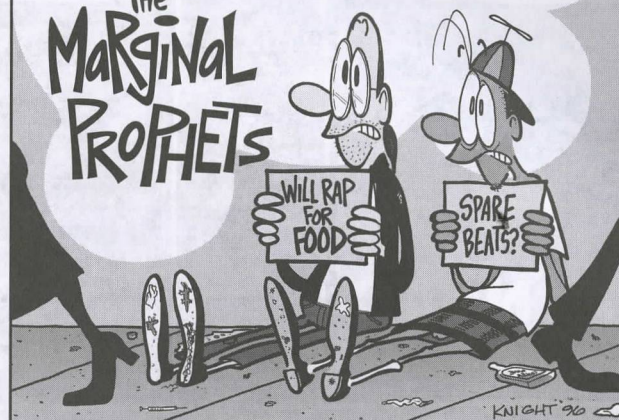
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## Dear Noël,

I'm sure that you've received a ton of mail about this article but I've just come across it and felt compelled to share this with you.

I'm throwing around a lot of generalizations and I know a hell of a lot of people whose very existence and lifestyle defies what I'm about to say. This is just what I happen to come across most of the time.

In reference to your "Are Skinny White Women Overrated?" article, I just wanted to bring up a few points that might also contribute to explaining you, as you put it, idealized image of the white woman as more sexually stimulating. First, it isn't just white women that get portrayed as the dominant sexual/powerful people, it's both women and men and without burying myself in completely generic explanations, I'd guess that it's because the people that have historically been producing our mainstream culture have been white. As Marlon Riggs demonstrates in his film *Color Adjustment* most of our examples of the "American" family on television have been white with the exceptions of *Julia* starring Dianne Carroll in the Sixties and *What's Happening* and *Good Times* in the Seventies. We're not just perceiving so-called perfection in sexual preferences, these are the so-called perfect families we've grown up with.

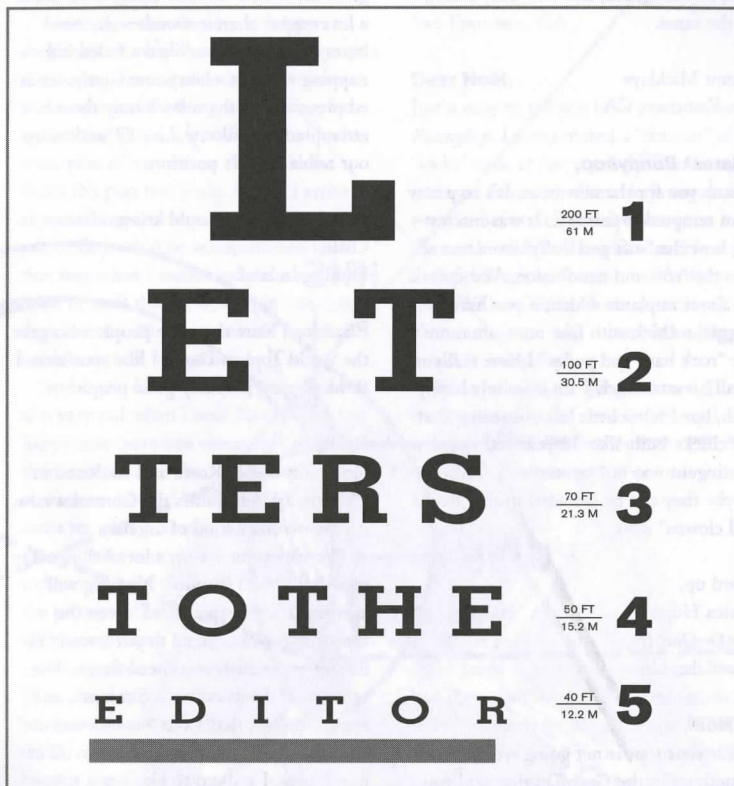
You've accurately described the appeal of the death rock culture to an adolescent in the Eighties. I've never really given much thought to the white face thing although I do remember feeling somewhat dark and unstylish at the time. (I'm not very dark at all.) My hair was way too thick for me to do the hardcore Robert Smith thing to my satisfaction. I'm still trying to figure out the significance of the make-up to any racial preference.

When I find myself attracted to the intellectual-looking white boys on the subway with the cool hair, I chalk it up to being an unfortunate drawback to the subculture that I'm interested in. More often than not I personally find wingtips and thrift store clothes more stylish than Fila jackets and puffy tennis shoes, but God some of those black and Puerto Rican guys look fine. It's just easier for me to start a conversation with a bespeckled white guy in a record store than a non-white guy just about anywhere else. I actually spend a lot of time going to jazz

shows where most of my favorite performers are black but it's way more common to find white guys there.

One of the downsides to the rise of narrow-casting (instead of broadcasting) is that instead of the slight variety of multi-cultural women made to appeal to the majority of white viewers, different races are beginning to create art specifical-

stuff. Chow Yun-Fat has all the potential to become the biggest Asian actor since Bruce Lee. He's got the action and comedy thing down pat and he's undeniably sexy. His smile and wink come-ons are always played up in films and he seems too business savvy to allow himself to become desexualized in US roles. All minorities and not just Asians need a shot



ly for their culture. There are dynamic, beautiful black actresses and models out there working: Jada Pinkett, Veronica Webb, etc. It's just that there are black films made for white audiences (*Waiting To Exhale*) and black films made for black audiences (*Jason's Lyric*, *Dead Presidents*). Your audience doesn't need to see these films, but they exist.

One great new potential to Hollywood films is the rise of Chow Yun-Fat as an American film star. There's just been a Yun-Fat Film Festival in New York and it's brought out all types to check him out. I think that most films are marketed towards white adolescent males with other films geared towards "other" audiences with elements intended to ease the "main" market towards checking out the different

in the arm like him. Plus, he's quite capable of handling himself in other serious roles.

With regard to your comments about James Iha, well just take a look at what Terri Sutton has to say about androgyny and rock and sexuality in *Bust* magazine issue #6. I don't find fey boys less sexy, although I'd agree that the presence of masculine Asian males would only add to the whole picture.

Also, Jon Moritsugu fills a void with his buffed Japanese bod in his latest *Mod Fuck Explosion*. Again I'm not referring to popular culture but the fact that there are new images of the Asian male lurking around is promising.

(If you were wondering, I'm a Mexican-American who has dated Neil

Rosario, a Philippine-born male from the band Dolomite for nearly five years and it's entirely possible that he's made me more aware of and enthusiastic about the idea of the sexy, smart, dangerous, sweet Asian male as sexual role model.)

Art and ad campaigns constantly add to the myths that we have to live with. It's more "exciting" to have mixed couples. More out there and bohemian. Plus it's aesthetically more powerful when using black and white film, e.g. the latest Drew Barrymore *US* magazine ad and Robert Mapplethorpe's body of work. Perhaps it's not just white women that become this stereotype but all women. The dominatrix, Amazonian German woman; the lusty, hot-blooded Spanish woman; the mysterious, erotic Asian woman, etc.

Did you notice that *Star Trek: The Next Generation*—for all of their good intentions with teaching kids lessons about differences via Romulans or whatever—has all the black men looking a little weird, less sexy? I don't watch it enough to remember their names, but there's the Black man with the disco shield on his face, and Worf is actually one of the more beautiful actors around with his face unfortunately hidden by a Klingon mask. Plus the Vulcan one looks pretty strange. I know that the show is about outer space, but there's plenty of normal-looking white guys on the show.

According to Ronald Takaki in *A Different Mirror*, his first chapter lists the ways in which the continued use of white as metaphor for good ("pure as the driven snow") persists today in our linking skin color with intentions. Shakespeare often uses phrases referring to the beautiful as white as the lily with rosy cheeks. (No, I can't footnote that one, you'll just have to trust me.) The purpose of the Black Is Beautiful campaign in the Sixties was not just a nifty thing to say: in addition to fighting whites in power for civil rights, Blacks needed to combat self-loathing in their ranks. Generations of oppression can seriously warp your vision of yourself.

I'm not saying that you're contributing to this impression. I've dated all types but find myself mostly attracted to white men with Asian men coming a damn close second. We all have preferences and we may never be able to explain them. Most relationships start based on purely physical attraction. We like who we think a person



is. We need to realize that fascination is based on an initial superficial impulse, but that we also need to be aware that we're dealing with people and not types.

I've heard that it's been statistically proven that interracial relationships occurred more often when segregation has occurred. Are we attracted to the person or the taboo? That's why I have a hard time with gay politics sometimes. The sexual drive is so irrational. It seems strange to build a political platform based on an urge that is so difficult to understand. But this is another whole can of worms.

On the other hand, have you ever played your ethnicity into an exoticism when first meeting a potential sex partner?

I've read a reviewer describe Madonna videos as her demonstrating to us that all of the world's problems could be solved by interracial dating.

Great article, by the way. I hope I've participated in some way to this discussion you are continuing to have with yourself and those around you about your tastes. My writing may be kind of scatter-shot, but I was reading and typing at the same time responding to different issues. It's truly the first time that I've actually stopped reading an article in order to write something down immediately.

Take care,  
Liz Bustamante  
Brooklyn, NY

**Dear Mr. and Mrs. Bunnyhop-people,**  
I hope I don't have to tell you that reading your magazine was better than watching my thrift-store microwave struggle through the partial warming of another 25¢ burrito, which is what I've been doing to keep myself entertained lately.

I'm working in San Mateo county right now picking up dead folk for the coroner. I'm the only guy here that for five days a week, twenty-four hours a day on call, picks up people who have heart attacks, O.D., kill themselves, get in auto accidents, get shot, get beaten, get choked, and sometimes rot for a few days before I have the honor to remove them from their final resting spot. (And if they were rotting, there's oftentimes a spot where they were resting.)

I would have typed you a letter, but I don't have a typewriter. I don't even have a phone. I have a mini-fridge that freezes

everything solid, and a TV that picks up nothing but infomercials and the Spanish-speaking channel. I'm sick of novellas, so I watch the microwave instead. It's a real kick if you put an egg in there. KA-PLOP!

If'n you want, and I don't blame you if you don't, I can send in stories about working in the "removal" business that are sick, shocking, sad, and unusually funny, all the same.

Danni Micklayv  
San Francisco, CA

#### **Dearest Bunnyhop,**

Thank you for the new issue. It's so pretty I am tempted to frame it. It was interesting how the "soft and fluffy" issue turned into the "soft and tittie" issue. And quite a bit about implants which, if you have ever hugged a chick with fake ones, are more like "rock hard and perky." I have really small breasts which I am infinitely happy with, but I felt a little left out seeing that the chicks-built-like-12-year-old-boys contingent was not represented. Oh well, maybe they can be included in the "freaks and clowns" issue.

Word up,  
Jessica Hopper  
*Hit Or Quit It*  
Silverlake, CA

#### **Hi Noël,**

I hear your tour is not going well...I read something in the *Guardian* that said you and Darby, et al. were "sell-outs" but I couldn't figure out why. I loathe everybody who writes for a free weekly newspaper...

Anyway, thanks for the new *Bunnyhop*—it's magnificent. I'm really impressed with what you're doing. It really is the best "zine" out there by a wide margin.

My best to you,  
Dan Clowes  
Berkeley, CA

#### **Dear Noël and Seth,**

*Live TV*, a London-based cable TV company have been employing a "news bunny" for quite awhile now. The news bunny is not as you may be led to believe at first instance some big titty, spread cheeky playmate of the month type but an actual

real-life person completely covered in a bunny suit. What's the connection between this and current affairs you may well wonder? Well, it goes something like this: The news bunny stands behind the news reader with one arm outstretched. If the news item is "good news," our bunny-like friend gives it the thumbs-up. If the news is in any way unsavory, the bunny gives the item a thumbs-down. This job is a lot rougher than it sounds—the news bunny has already survived a failed kidnapping attempt when some bunny besuited pretender to the news bunny throne attempted to infiltrate *Live TV* and usurp our noble friend's position.

Just thought you should know,  
Oisin  
Dublin, Ireland

P.S. *Live TV* are the same people who gave the world Topless Darts. I like your zine. I think you are probably good people.

#### **Noël,**

I'm finally out of Korea and stationed in Georgia. I kind of miss the Commies now, it gave my life a kind of urgency.

We see eye to eye on a lot of things. I'm of a slight build (skinny). Nothing will ever make me normal sized. Even the army has only managed to put a scant 11 lbs. on my waifish/crackhead frame. The other week I was down in Savannah and some lady said that I was "just sooooo cute" and that she wanted to show me to all of her friends. I wanted to give her a spin-kick upside her fuckin' head. "Cute huh? Can the Smurfs kick yer ass like this?"  
(*This is where we don't see eye to eye. —Ed.*)

Later alligator,  
Specialist Francisco Velasquez  
Ft. Stewart, GA

#### **dear Bunnyhop,**

a close friend who just moved out to san francisco just mailed me a copy of your bunnilicious mag and it has made me hop around with glee and shake my fluffy cottontail. i read your soft and fluffy issue here at work, where i am the lone bunny, and it made me feel warm and comfy just like back in mama's warren. thank you.

just an aside: tori's melons are certifiably fake. we have tapes in our video library to prove it. the void in the produce

section is a clear indication, as is the dramatic change in her gait. also: your heart wrenching article about the worst things people have done to their pets brought tears to my eyes as i recalled my own misadventures with my once pet rabbit, "trauma." i tied some twine to trauma's bunny leash so that he could hop around and frolic on the expansive green of my southern vermont more-bang-for-more-bucks-artsy-fartsy college lawn. trauma promptly crocheted himself deep into the surrounding shrubbery, and our relationship tumbled downhill from there.

your new fan,  
jennifer lipman  
MTV  
New York, NY

#### **Noël,**

I'm glad someone finally did a piece (uh...) on Tori's boobs. My friend used to be a stewardess on MGM Airline to the stars and she once saw Tori giving David Silver a blowjob *on the plane!* I swear!

Best,  
Tim Hinely  
*Dagger*  
Santa Rosa, CA

#### **hey there Noël!!!**

ARRGHHHHH!!!! please explain to me what it is that connects being asian to being cute!?! although i really don't mind TOO much anymore, it *does* get kinda old after awhile. now, there's maybe a little more justification in *my* being called "cute;" after all, girls of all types get cute 'n' fluffy adjectives strewn across their paths much more regularly than boys do, but STILL! i, for one, would like to see how many people would call Bruce Lee "cute" to his face while his left foot is flying at a strategic body part at roughly the speed of sound. well, okay, bad example...he's a boy...plus, he's dead...nevermind. but for the sake of argument...nah, fuck it. howabout calling Michelle Kwan "cute" while she's flipping you over a bus? huh? i guess i just have that remarkable ability to be a real, live *animegirl* without even being japanese...go fig...how come i never noticed this? oh well...

so anyway, i took the liberty of writing my own little list because yours highly amused me and made me want to respond.



here goes:

top five responses i get daily being a short asian girl...

1. "oh, aren't you just SOOOO cute?! look at those pinchable little cheeks...don't you just want to eat her all UP?"
2. "you scare me. go away."
3. "where's jan? she's disappeared!! i can't see her anywhere... (looks down) oh, never-mind."
4. "but, jan, some people are just really pretty, and some people are just really cute. look at you! you just emanate the word cute!"
5. "so what are you going to do if i don't stop calling you cute? knock out my kneecaps?"

...to which i respond:

1. if you even THINK about pinching my cheeks, any of them, i'll kill you. and just when did i become a dessert tray, i'd like to know?
2. i don't understand how a 5'3" 125 lb. asian girl with Halloween hair (it's orange-red and black; either "Halloween" or "Chernobyl", you choose...) can scare anyone, personally. i'll try harder next time, i promise.
3. i have no response. maybe i'm not REALLY abnormally short, maybe the rest of the world is just abnormally tall?
4. i'm going to wear a big sign over my head from now on that has the entire lyrics to dot warner's "cute" song written in sparkly silver metallic marker on black posterboard with a fuzzy pink frame around it that you can come up and pet. then i'll REALLY emanate "cute." either that or "cotton candy vendor."
5. how many fingers am i holding up, babe? can you count all the way to one? or how about two? there is that little sliver of british in me on my mother's side, you know...

okay, sorry if that sounded a little bitter. i was mostly joking. so anyhow...i also wanna tell you a little story. here goes:

my Bunnyhop deflowering

oh happy accident of happy accidents, i stumbled across *Bunnyhop* in the midst of a mad search for something else. once picking it up, i opened up issue #7 (my first ever exposure) and read the short asian boy piece written by Noël. immediately, inexorably...it was love at first sight.

a warm, fuzzy feeling (much like "soft and fluffy" only more warm and fuzzy) washed over me and i walked up to the cash register in a daze and sat on a park bench with a friend of mine to enjoy my newest treasure. you see, i, too, am more than slightly obsessed with bunnies and all things soft and fluffy and cuddly, and i hadn't realized how many (if any) others there are. so anyhow, thank you.

however, it wasn't quite as happy an accident as it would've been otherwise. you see, having been obsessed with bunnies and music and thinking and writing for quite a few years now, i myself had had a mini-zine of my own in the works for about the past two years. finally, i arrived at something that my overly perfectionist personality could be semi-satisfied with. that was when i assembled the conglomeration of stuff that i'd written in just three days into the 20 page minizine extraordinaire known as *bunnysludge*.

and that's why i was very happy and also very sad when i read *Bunnyhop*. i was happy that there was someone else out there with a lot of the same interests and obsessions, but sad because i thought i'd come up with a concept of my own, that no one had yet explored. my mini-zine is stylistically a lot different than yours, but the premise of bunnies and cuddle-iciousness is very much an inherent part of both. in no way does my mini-zine copy yours (how could it? i didn't even know you existed until yesterday!!) or vice-versa (not that you knew i existed until now, either) but the ideas...it's bizarre. if you're of a jungian mind, maybe it's that collective unconscious thing. i don't know, i can't explain it. you try coming up with an explanation and then see just how far that gets you. i'm currently working on issue #2 of *bunnysludge*, which promises to be much better than the first one (that perfectionist side just won't have it any other way). so, well, whatever... from one bunny to another, ciao bella!!

jan jitchotvisut  
bunniegirle extraordinaire  
chicago, il

Hi Seth and Noël,

A note from my boring, lackluster day job, where I've been devouring *Bunnyhop* #6. I bought this for the Lisa Carver/Boyd Rice interview and I'm sold (on *Bunnyhop*, that

is) and #7 was very cool, too. I thought "Recipes That'll Get You Laid" was great. I made the garlic mashed potatoes and they ROCKED. Thanks for giving me a reason to use my food processor and for hours of reading pleasure.

Thanks,  
Libby  
*Limousine*  
San Francisco, CA

Dear Noël,

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoy *Bunnyhop*. I encountered a "cut-out" of the "jocks" issue at last year's APE in San Jose and ever since then I've always enjoyed every issue, even if I can't quite get a handle on the themes like you can. (How does Tori Spelling's boobs count as "soft & fluffy"? Those things have gotta hurt.) Your outlook on pop culture is healthy, broad & irreverent.

Thanks again for the good read. (Loved the haikus of record reviews.) Sorry I missed the Kill Zinesters tour.

Roger  
*MondoCine*  
Oakland, CA

Dear Noël:

Hi! I just read my first issue of *Bunnyhop* and I loved it. It's totally awesome! Too bad there isn't anywhere in Toronto to buy it. I'm going to try to get to that Kill Zine convention in New York and maybe I'll get to meet you (I don't know when it is though). I'm really shy so maybe I won't talk to anyone, but I'll smile at you.

Giselle  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada

*Bunnyhop*,

#7 was one of the best ever things read by me. OK, wondrous! Thank you. Now, here's my pet infiction story: Everyone's out o' the house 'cept me (four years old) and my friend Patrick (of similar age). We enter, unauthorized, into the confines of my sister Lauren's guinea pig cage to alleviate some post-infancy boredom. Taking the three animals around the house playing in various settings, we ultimately settle in at the bathroom sink, observing the pigs' swimming techniques. Unfortunately,

their humble flailings ceased to interest us after three minutes, when we decided to step outside for a rousing, pretend game of pirates. We returned to the sink to find three very stiff and immobile guinea pigs (or what we learned were corpses). Punishment was handed down in the form of decades worth of sub-logical (but quite understandable) hatred from my sister. Plus, I had the unwieldy task of hucking three cold, stiff, horrific "pets" over the backyard fence in the woods.

Thank you for your beautiful zineness.

Best wishes,  
Johnny

*Bunnyhop*

is flawless, but nonetheless I enclose *I ♥ Scorpios*, a very local tabloid/zine focusing on sex/death connections and indie-rock gossip in Champaign-Urbana.

Many of *I ♥ Scorpios*' references (such as Paul West the widely desired coffee shop counter boy, or Phil Stepping who dumped me in early October) will thus be meaningless to *Bunnyhop* staff...You don't have to be from Champaign-Urbana to use the Guided By Voices "Poetry-O-Matic" (in *Scorpios* #4) however.

As for myself, I work at the Public Library. While I'm writing, I'll share a pet abuse story with you. My circa junior high best friend made the following confession to me shortly before moving: she used to put my treasured Siamese cat "Tabatha" in the freezer for a few minutes when I was in another room. The most blood-curdling detail she revealed was "how her little pink paw pads would stick for a few seconds" to the bottom of the freezer. (Attn: PeTA)

*Bunnyhop* is lovely,  
Simone Sidwell  
Champaign-Urbana, IL

## WRITE!

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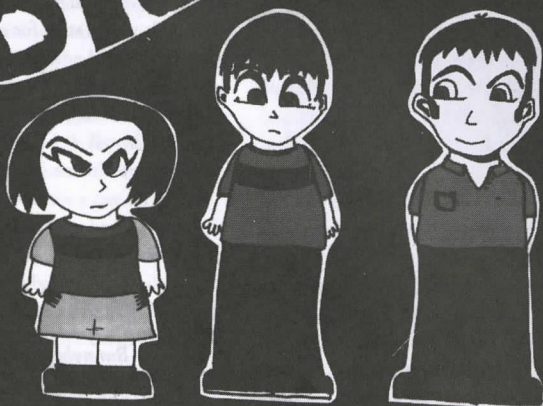
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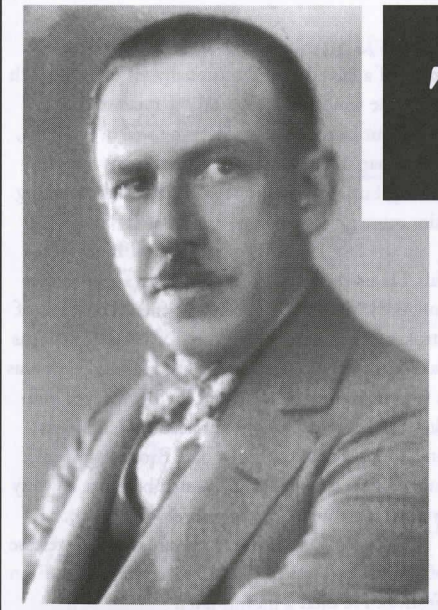


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Urban**

O F T H E H U M A N I T Y

**T**he cast of *Friends* have seemingly entranced the world with their sinister charms (and sinister hairdos), but what kind of a world is this for a person who has managed to elude their bewitching mediocrity? While everyone craves stimulation, some people have a lower tolerance for boredom than others. These people are sometimes driven to atypical interests. Director Tod Browning was such a person, a man of unusual tastes. His penchant for the uncanny is evident in his films, which frequently featured disfigured characters.

Browning was no stranger to shady territory. He was born on July 12, 1880, in Louisville, Kentucky. A port city and home of the Kentucky Derby, Louisville attracted an assortment of thieves and nomads. Fascinated by the gypsy lifestyle, Browning left town with a traveling circus around 1898. He held several jobs with various traveling shows, including barker for the Wild Man of Borneo. He also performed as the Hypnotic Living Corpse; entranced by a hypnotist, he would be lowered into a pit and buried alive. He assisted magicians and performed on Vaudeville until he began acting in films around 1913.

It is not unusual that many carnival and vaude-villian performers drifted into the motion picture industry as, in its infancy, the film was a tent show exhibit, unveiled as a mysterious novelty.

Within three years, Browning had performed in over 50 films, eventually graduating to director. While establishing himself as a director, he worked as a screenwriter as well as an assistant to director

D.W. Griffith in the making of the silent epic *Intolerance*.

Throughout the 1920s, Browning directed films for Universal and MGM. His drinking frequently landed him on studio shit lists. One of his more colorful debauches involved yanking his false teeth out, throwing them at a hotel assistant manager, and telling him to "go bite" himself.

This was a commercially successful decade for Browning, due largely to a complementary working relationship with Lon Chaney Sr. Browning was privileged to direct Chaney in ten films(1).

Browning and Chaney indulged each others interest in human anomalies. Chaney's characters were almost always disfigured or crippled. In *Where East Is East*, he played a scarred animal trapper. In *West of Zanzibar*, he was a paraplegic. In *London After Midnight*, he donned sharp, pointed teeth; hooks raised the corners of his mouth and loops were inserted under his eyelids, propping them open (a la *A Clockwork Orange*). In *The Road To Mandalay*, he was a pimp with a dead eye. In *The Blackbird*, he was a criminal, escaping incarceration by posing as his palsied twin brother. In *The Unknown*, he was a three-thumbed knife-thrower who performed as Alonzo the Armless, throwing the knives with his feet (Alonzo eventually blackmails a doctor into amputating his arms). He was a huge star, his success mainly due to his ability to transform himself into the grotesque. A Chaney performance was the closest thing a director could come to presenting a freak show without using actual freaks. It is not unreasonable to assume that with Chaney's success, the public would be willing to accept the next logical step: actual freaks.

In 1931, Browning pitched his idea for *Freaks*. Irving Thalberg, then working for MGM, had reservations, but Browning's confidence in the project and recent success with *Dracula* prompted studio backing.

*Freaks*, based on Tod Robbins' short story "Spurs", takes place in a circus sideshow. Hans, a

dwarf (played by Henry Earles), falls in love with Cleopatra (Olga Baclanova), a beautiful aerial performer. Cleopatra has no interest in Hans, but is amused by his attention and gifts. When she discovers Hans is loaded, she plots to marry him, kill him, and inherit his money.

The other freaks do not trust Cleopatra. One comments, "Cleopatra ain't one of us...She'd spit on Hans if he weren't giving her presents." However, at the wedding feast, they decide to induct her into their family. They pass around a huge glass of champagne (cut scenes showed freaks drooling into it) while chanting, "...gooble gobble gooble gobble...we accept...one of us..." She thanks them by throwing the champagne in their faces and yelling, "You dirty, slimy freaks, freaks, freaks! Get out of here! You filth...make me want to puke!"

After the wedding, Hans becomes ill. Cleopatra is slowly poisoning him. Her plan is discovered and, well, you know how freaks are: "offend one and you offend them all." They unleash their horrible vengeance upon her, transforming her into a sideshow superstar—a legless, squawking monster in a chicken suit.



top left  
Studio portrait,  
early 1930s

below  
Harry Earles and  
Olga Baclanova  
in *Freaks*.

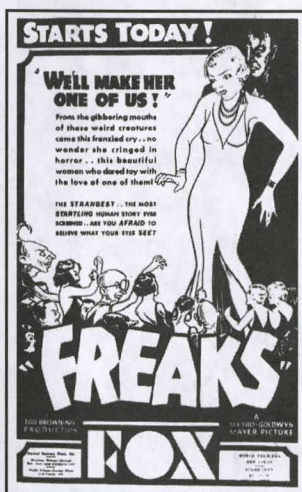




above  
(L to R)  
Browning,  
Johnny Eck,  
Frances O'Connor,  
Bill Robinson  
and  
Minnie Woolsey

below  
Newspaper ad  
for the  
San Diego  
premiere of  
*Freaks* (1932).

Casting director Ben Piazza scouted nearly a month for sideshow talent and ended up with the cream of the crop: Daisy and Violet Hilton (siamese twins, joined at the hip); Johnny Eck (the Half Boy); Prince Randian (the Human Torso, able to roll and light cigarettes using only his mouth); Pete Robinson (the Human Skeleton); Olga Roderick (a bearded lady); Koo Koo, the Bird Girl from Mars (possibly a victim of progeria); Betty Green, the Stork Woman (exceptionally homely); five pinheads (Schlitze, Jennie and Elvira Snow, Zip, and Pip); Josephine/Joseph (a hermaphrodite); two armless women; several dwarves; a sword swallower; a fire-eater; and others. (2)



Years of experience had desensitized Browning to this environment, but many at the studio were uneasy. Following complaints, the freaks were provided a separate outdoor mess hall, so, as producer Harry Fapf said, "people could get to eat without throwing up." The twins and midgets were still allowed commissary privileges. (3)

The freaks were an unpredictable lot, especially the pinheads. Schlitze, really male, but exhibited as a female (he wore dresses to simplify hygiene), was the sweetheart of the MGM lot. He was always happy and loved performing. Even on days when he was not needed, he was allowed on the set to watch filming. However, not all the pinheads were so pleasant.

Browning was bitten by one and, according to Olga Baclanova, one "was like a monkey, she go crazy

sometimes...They put here in the closet and close the door."

Despite pinhead outbursts, Browning felt at home with his carnival brood. Over the years, his disposition had offended many people. He was reputedly rude and impatient. He had chased a costume designer off the set of *The Mystic*, calling him a "fucking incompetent fairy," but he had a special fondness for his menagerie. Perhaps his comfort with them prevented him from anticipating the inevitable sour reaction the public would have.

*Freaks* was previewed in January of 1932. People ran out of the theaters. One woman tried to sue the studio, claiming the film had induced a miscarriage. The film was edited further, lopping off about a half hour of running time. Still, it outraged viewers. It did score some favorable reviews, but the majority of the reviews shamed Browning for creating such a grotesquery and/or for exploiting those poor unfortunates. The film was quickly pulled from circulation.

Reaction to *Freaks* confused Browning. He had built a career out of exploiting dark themes and images and on pushing limits. This time, however, he had crossed the line and his career would never fully recover. He directed four films after the *Freaks* disaster, but none approached his earlier successes with *Dracula* or his collaborations with



Olga Baclanova as the "human duck" in *Freaks*.

Lon Chaney.

Browning withdrew from the motion picture industry. In 1944, his wife died. He became more and more isolated from the world. He rarely left the house and, having been an insomniac all his life, developed a nocturnal lifestyle. He had few friends and a general distrust of others. A former neighbor, Mrs. de Butts, recalled his caustic treat-

ment of a friend who occasionally visited him with gifts: "he would sit there and say mean things to her about being overweight—she was overweight, more than 300 pounds. He would taunt her very cruelly, but she would keep coming back, bringing him more good things to eat."

In the late 1950s, Browning's health began to fail. He underwent surgery to treat cancer of the tongue, which made speaking difficult. A series of strokes left him unable to care for himself. He was taken in by the Snow family. Dr. Harold Snow was a veterinarian who had cared for Browning's bulldogs. After removal of his cancer-ridden larynx and another debilitating stroke, Browning spent much of the rest of his life seated before a TV tray writing, over and over, the words "fire is hot."

Browning was probably unaware of the re-release of *Freaks* on September 6, 1962 at the Venice Film Festival. He died a month later.

In the end, Browning's unusual preoccupation was his downfall. He crossed the line from titillation into public disfavor. People could tolerate an actor playing an armless man, but not a real armless man. While the idea of deformity was engaging, the reality of it was overwhelming.

Little has changed since Browning's day. People still have difficulty stomaching the sight of a freak. Okay, there was that show about the mongoloid kid, but most TV shows and movies with disabled characters are faked by able-bodied performers. As outraged as I am by this practice, I am boycotting the show *Friends* until the cast is replaced by circus freaks. How can I sleep knowing David Schwimmer is stealing food out of some pinhead's mouth? ✱

<sup>1</sup> Browning was originally announced to direct Chaney in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, but was withdrawn by Universal production lead, Irving Thalberg, probably because of Browning's struggle with alcoholism.

<sup>2</sup> Myrna Loy and Jean Harlow were originally to be cast in the roles of Cleopatra and Venus (good girl, seal trainer, and friend to all freaks), respectively. However, Thalberg decided, due to the sensitive subject matter, to distance all major and upcoming MGM stars from the project. The roles fell to Olga Baclanova, a former Moscow Art Theater star, and Leila Hyams, a dependable contract player.

<sup>3</sup> One day, Daisy and Violet happened to sit down at F. Scott Fitzgerald's table. At the time, he was working as a screenwriter for MGM and drinking heavily. One of the twins picked up a menu and asked the other what she was going to have. Fitzgerald rushed out of the commissary with his hand over his mouth.



## GIVE ME DAUGHTERS

If ever this catastrophe  
Should take a slip in the mud,  
LET me have three children  
to carry over the blood  
and I will raise them. I will raise them.  
In the city surrounded by water...  
Now give ME DAUGHTERS  
and make them ONE, TWO, THREE.  
I will raise them, they'll go to church with me.  
and everyday, in every way  
they will be so proud as the waltz around my feet  
And when the NIGHT COMES DOWN ON CEUTLES  
You will never be alone.  
You will become so beautiful  
To think of it makes me cry  
And every month, there will be a brand new letter  
written from my motel kitchen  
to tell a funny tale, send a little love  
If you ever get tired of living.  
and when they send me away, I will always play for a  
happy birthday baby.

the End  
Love, Stewart

Jonathan Fire Eater



STEWART  
VOCALS



PAUL  
GUITAR

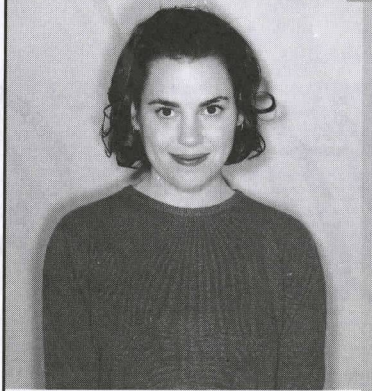
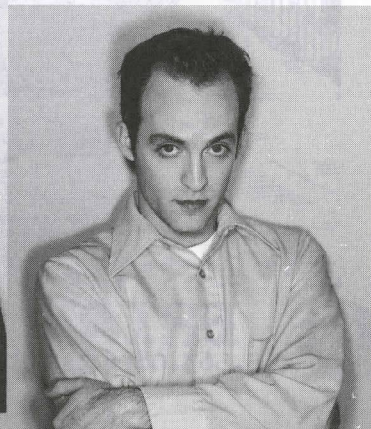


MATT  
DRUMS



WALT  
ORGAN

# that dog.



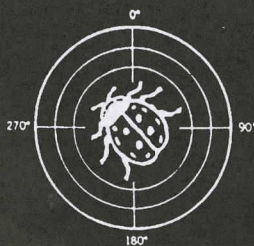
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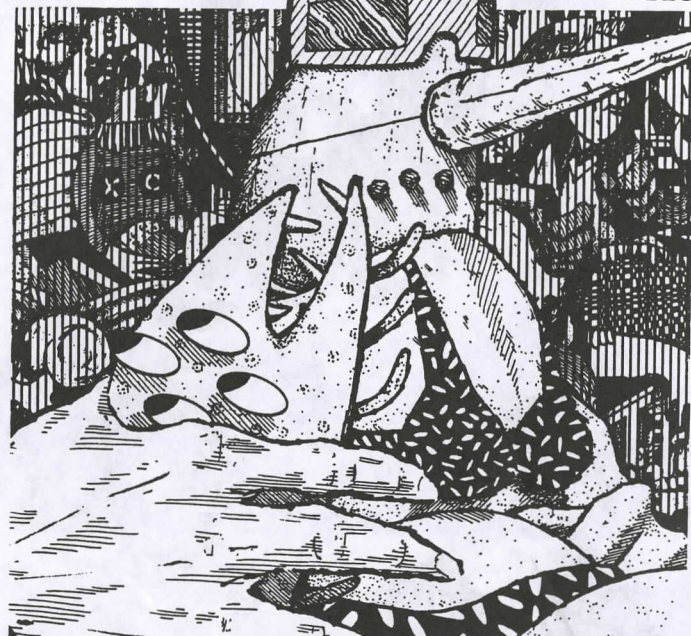
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**S**o you say you're afraid of clowns. Do their clumsy high jinks give you the heebie-jeebies? Think you're too cool to fall for that carefree clowning shtick? Well, you're certainly not unique.

People have been frightened of clowns for centuries, often for good reason. The scary clown is not always inherently evil, but is often a reflection of, or a relief from, the ills of society. The word "clown" probably came from the Icelandic word "klunni"—for clumsy person—but the discomfiting clown exists cross-culturally, inspiring laughter as a release from built-up tensions. Tensions that can

sometimes spill over into anxiety, neurosis, and as we reach the millennium—downright terror!

#### **1470 - England - Old Vice**

In an English Tudor period drama entitled "Mankind", the first of the "Vice" clowns appears as an attendant to the Devil. This character tries to bring about the fall of mankind, but not before extracting payment from the audience to witness such a feat. Only through the intervention of the clerical "Mercy" can man's doom be averted. The Vice clown was the comedian of medieval

drama, able to break through the "fourth wall" of the stage by collecting funds, threatening patrons with robbery, and playing more than one part (such as the Devil). The Vice clown became the prototype for the Elizabethan Shakespearean fool.

#### **? to early 1900's - North America - Holy Sacred Clowns!**

Native American clowns acted out the absurd within traditionalist societies by exhibiting bizarre behavior and playing pranks—sometimes too aggressively. Unruly Apache children were threatened with canni-





above  
**William Kemp,**  
an English  
clown c. 1600,  
dances a merry  
jig in London.

balistic clowns. Navajo women and children avoided getting too close to their clowns, who inspired fear as well as laughter. Kwakiutl Fool Dancers sometimes lost control, killing the victims of their practical jokes.

Among the conservative Southwestern Pueblos, clowns exhibited complete freedom to the extreme. Like a bunch of modern day performance artists, the Cochiti Pueblo clowns ran around naked, wearing huge dildos and simulating sex with anyone too slow to run away. They ate shit and drank urine. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and some

Protestant missionaries put a stop to these practices, leaving us to ponder; spiritual redemption, or censorship?

#### **1850 to 1896 - France - The Dark Pierrots and Ubu Roi by Alfred Jarry**

France's beloved Pierrot clown—the sensitive artistic soul in white-face, represented many things lyrical and poignant. With the advent of the industrialization of Europe, it was only a matter of time before playwrights introduced his darker side—the Pierrot-ombre, or Pierrot-shadow, who wore all black, often in the form of a business man's suit, as a parody of the bourgeois. These pierrots could be downright vicious, often resorting to theft and murder to get ahead in the world.

Alfred Jarry, the John Waters of his day, introduced his grotesque monarchical character, Pere Ubu, in the world's first absurdist play. A combination of Punch and Macbeth, Ubu was the ultimate white trash clown who trampled everything in his path to become all-powerful. Because it was France, Jarry himself dressed as a sort of deranged Pierrot to introduce the first and last performance of the play to a soon-to-be scandalized Parisian audience.

#### **1974–78 - Chicago, Illinois - Pogo, a.k.a. John Wayne Gacy**

A truly evil clown, John Wayne Gacy was found guilty of torturing, sexually assaulting and killing 33 teenaged boys and young men, 29 of whom he buried in the crawl space under his house.

A socio-pathological, anti-social, narcissistic, necrophiliac, Gacy was also a professional clown named Pogo who entertained hospitalized children. Gacy claimed there was a “hatred” of Pogo, he of the pointy red mouth, who occasionally frightened children by pinching them extra hard and swearing at them.

As Pogo, Gacy once attempted to attack and rape one of his employees, but the young man kicked him in his grease-painted head and escaped. Gacy claimed that clowns could get away with murder, but he was finally proven wrong; recently his sentence was carried out by lethal injection.

#### **1985 - Red Noses by Peter Barnes**

Set in 1348 in France, Barnes' play has it all: plague, flagellants, Pope Clement VI, bawdy whores, and a troop of clowns led by holy man Father Flote. While the plague acts as the great



**Tudor minstrels**  
c. 17th century

**Rio Grande Pueblo clowns**  
c. 19th century



**Woodcut from Ubu Roi**  
c. 1896

**John Wayne Gacy:  
Pogo the Pedophile**  
c. 1978





equalizer among the classes, Flote gives the dying populace hope through humor with the Pope's blessing. But when the plague lifts, and the wealthy rule once again, Flote's satiric troop is found guilty of sacrilege—right in the middle of their mock nativity scene! Flote is actually a saint, but is betrayed by a former clown colleague. The Pope turns out to be a marvelously wry sort of devil figure. A nice twist on the genre.



child outcasts, “the losers,” band together to defeat the red-nosed foe. While crawling about the sewers, the children are shocked to find...It's a girl! Made into a TV miniseries with Tim Curry as the campy, fanged villain.

#### 1992 - *Shakes the Clown*

Someone at Columbia Tri-Star allowed comedian Bobcat Goldthwait to write, direct, and star in this parallel universe film where comedians are perpetual clowns, holing up in

their clown bar, passing the time between gigs. Despite his success as a merry-maker, Shakes has an out-of-control drinking problem. He and his pals indulge in their vices, including mime bashing, whenever they happen to spot the sensitive souls. But Shakes is actually the hero of the film; the villain being Binky, a coke-addled, homicidal fame-monger in a blue polyester leisure suit.

Goldthwait allowed a lot of potential clown satire to slip through his gloved fingers, focusing

on profanity and barf to get laughs, and Tom Kenny as Binky stole the movie during his disco inferno-style variety show number. Sing along, kids: *It's a fun-a-delic show — no other show can match it. Binky cartoon fever, abbbbbb, catch it!*

Why Binky has not been marketed extensively by Columbia is yet another Hollywood mystery. ✱

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Woodcut from *Red Noses*  
c. 1985

Pennywise, Derry foolish?  
*It looks for a young snack*  
c. 1986



A coke-addled Binky from  
*Shakes the Clown*  
c. 1992



Who knows what evil  
awaits us?





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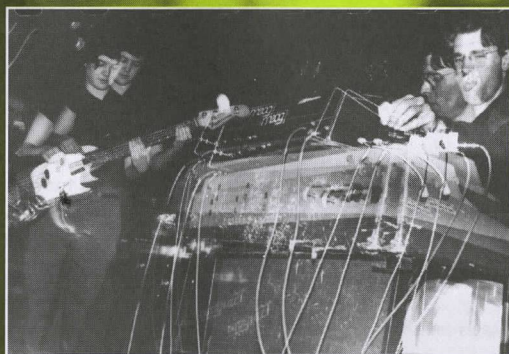
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## JESSAMINE

interview Noël photos Maya Hayuk &amp; Susan Robb

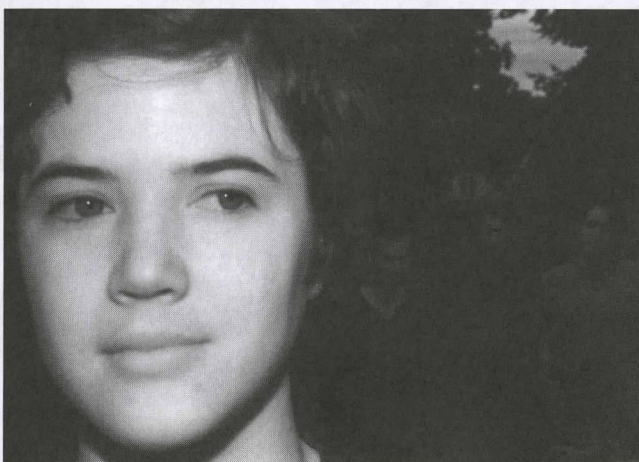
At the tail end of last summer en route towards Seattle's Space Needle, I found myself under a blanket of indigo and silver glitter, barreling over mountains and snaking through heavily wooded ravines of northern Washington in Dave McGurgan's

burgundy, bullet-proof *Yakuza* mobile at top notch speeds of 90 mph or more. Twenty-four hours later found me holed up in the dark carnival laugh-clown-laugh walls of Moe's with my fine feathered friend Robin at my side. We were there to witness an eagerly-anticipated coupling of Jessamine with the kindred spirit of Sonic Boom, but little did I realize what sort of space age joyride I was in for. Although their hauntingly stellar improvised piece "only" lasted an hour or so, I'd say it was perfect sound forever. ¶ Since 1992, Jessamine have hashed out a succulent deep dish of brooding sour Kraut rock, playing with precision rhythmic dexterity and shimmering, blissed-out ferocity. They soar through similar atmospheres that fellow space cadets Can, Spacemen 3, Flying Saucer Attack and Silver Apples have explored, and blast on through to the *other* side. Heavy, rubbery bass lines weave through the crunch and munch of aching, distorted guitars. Percolating keyboards oscillate wildly. Blown speakers bubble and scrape. Synapses snap and iris' dilate. Multi-colored unidentified flying objects hover nearby while sales of Orbitz natural fruit-flavored beverages skyrocket. ¶ Jessamine reside in Portland, Oregon. Currently, they are: Andy Brown (keyboards), Dawn Smithson (bass, vocals), Rex Ritter (guitar, vocals) and Michael Faeth (drums).



photos Maya Hayuk





above (L to R)  
Dawn Smithson  
Michael Faeth  
Andy Brown  
Rex Ritter

**Noël: So tell me, who are you more like: your mother or your father?**

Rex Ritter: I'm more like my mother.

**How so?**

Well, I look more like her. My dad's kind of a, you know, regular man from Ohio. He's a car salesman. I'm a little more sensitive—I know that's a horrible word—like my mother. I relate to her a lot more.

**Ohio, the formative years.**

Yeah.

**How long were you there for?**

I believe I moved out to Seattle when I was 19 or 20 years old. I dropped out of college there and came out with my brother to play in a band. That was about 8 years ago.

**What did you expect to find when you were moving out West?**

A friend and his brother and my brother and I had gotten together and played once in their house in New York. We decided we'd move somewhere that summer to form a band. It was just for the fun of it, certainly no expectations. It was far enough away from Ohio.

**What three words would best summarize your experience growing up?**

Small town life.

**Did you ever spend much time staring up into the heavens, looking for other forms of life?**

(Laughs) Not specifically, unless you mean that metaphorically.

**I remember watching *Close Encounters*—I guess I was three years your junior—being forever affected by that film, erringly picking out the helicopters and airplanes in the night sky, hoping they were something else.**

The film that was like that for me was *Rumblefish*, the level of distraction that had set in on Mickey Rourke's character. I had never seen that portrayed in any way and no one had really talked about it. It

was one of the first films I had seen that struck me in that way.

**Distraction?**

Maybe distraction isn't the right word. There was just something in the way he would drift off—all background noise disappearing into a monologue, for example—that seemed familiar. It was more like being touched by some outside force that doesn't allow you to stay focused on everyday life. I'm sounding really hokey right now.

**(Laughs) Have you always been musically inclined?**

No. I didn't start playing the bass until six months before we were going to form a band. I don't know if I'm musically inclined now, but there's just something about it that I really liked. A lot of it, for me, is the idea of community. Getting together and living together, working towards a similar goal has always been part of the attraction for being in a band. Leading a life together also comes out in playing together.

**What was your conception of music when you first started playing?**

(Laughs) I was mostly into rock back then and bands on Dischord and SST, Sonic Youth and the Minutemen, etc.

**Lately, I've been pretty disillusioned with rock music, which makes me wonder: Why rock music? What convinced you that you could inject some sort of life into such a seemingly stale art form?**

I don't think I had any ideas like that, I think I just wanted to "rock" at that time (laughs). Coming from Ohio, you mostly get just classic rock. But to be totally honest, the reason why I wanted to play—the bass is what I first started with—was Black Sabbath, I just wanted to play riffs like Geezer Butler. Since then, I can't believe the number of things that I've learned. There's just so much music that I haven't even heard yet, so much work that people have done in serious ways that I'm only now starting to hear. Not only find it and hear, but to actually be able to *understand* it in some ways.

**Aside from the processes involved in creating the latest record, what do you believe is the quintessential difference between the first and the second?**

I think that the first record is really obvious and

the second is more subtle. It's strange with the first record, but it's really hard to play those songs now, it seems so simple and obvious.

**But even then there was a marked difference between the first and second side of the album.**

The whole second side was basically written during a period when my brother had left and we didn't have a drummer. Then he came back and we figured those songs out in the studio so those songs were a bit more improvised. In that one song "Don't You Know That Yet?", it was [originally] just a drum track and we built it up from there. We were starting to move away from the strict rock structure.

**When we talked earlier, you mentioned how you find difficulty articulating words. How do you feel about singing?**

I never wanted to be the singer, but it's really hard for someone else to articulate your words, for it to be expressed appropriately. It's one thing I hope to be able to improve on, but you have so much time for revision that it's easier than just speaking at the moment. Also, I don't have to be entirely clear, I can be murky and obscure in lyrics, which is what I prefer.

**The reason why I asked was because I had noticed the last two times I had seen you play there was a definite sense of anxiety when you performed "Periwinkle" where you're sans guitar, which in some ways fends off the crowd.**

I'm just the singer on that one.

**Besides being more taken with soundtracks, instrumentals, and incidental music, I've been feeling that lyrics have been less important to me as the years have gone by. Perhaps in junior high, lyrics were everything to me; now, I just don't pay attention to them much. How important are lyrics to you?**

I really like it when vocals are just another instrument or in the mix and you don't necessarily understand them. I particularly like the way [Can's] Damo Suzuki is a singer because he's singing in a language that's not his first language, so it's obscured even more. It's really hard to understand what he's singing and that makes it so much better for me. You get weird abstract impressions of phrases and such—but it's difficult to put together an idea—which is the way I wish our vocals and lyrics were. At times, I think that lyrics can be really great; I'm



**“There are things about darkness that really draw me in. Certain music some people might call ‘scary’ by composers like Penderecki and Gyorgy Ligeti seem really familiar to me.”**

really into Talk Talk's *Laughing Stock*. Even [Pavement's] *Slanted & Enchanted*, the lyrics on that were really great.

**I didn't mean to give you the impression that I've abandoned lyrics altogether. I really love the lyrical aspect of certain bands. It's just that lyrics and singing have become so highly negligible lately. Singing can be so gratuitous at times.**

Oh, no, I totally understand what you're saying. **Now you guys apparently lifted the name Jessamine from a book, correct?**

It was the torturous process of trying to find a band name. We sat around for a month and everyone threw out horrible, horrible names. Dawn happened to be flipping through *10,000 Dreams Interpreted* because it has word after word after word and then gives a description of what it means to dream about that thing. She happened upon the word “jessamine” which is an archaic spelling of “jasmine”. None of us hated it, so it was great.

**What's the description for “jessamine”?**

Can it be off the record? (*Laughs*) It's incredibly cheesy.

**You should just tell me.**

Well, it's something to the effect of “approximating a fleeting pleasure.”

**There's nothing corny about that.**

I think the exact phrasing of that is pretty corny. I would just not want to go around promoting the idea that that's what we thought of ourselves.

**(Laughs) “Hey, get a load of these guys!”**

We should've been a goth band! (*Laughs*)

**Oh shit!**

Aren't we kind of a goth band?

**I can see how you could crossover, which makes me wonder where the dark themes are coming from. Is it you? Dawn?**

Hmm. I definitely think it's coming from me and Dawn. There are things about the Northwest that are honestly kind of heavy and weird, and there are certain things about darkness that really draw me in. Certain kinds of music that are dark or what some people might call “scary” by composers like Penderecki and Gyorgy Ligeti seem really familiar to me. Their music has been used in Kubrick films, from *The Shining* to *2001*. There's a quality about in that music that I really like. I don't know if I would say it was necessarily evil, but there was the Seventies period Miles stuff that's so intense, like the song “Rated X” from *Get Up With It* or “Go Ahead, John” from *Big Fun*.

**Well you know, goth is making a comeback.**

(*Laughs*)

**I read once that you were less preoccupied with playing guitars, having some ideal that the keyboards would take over. Do you still feel this way?**

I definitely never want the guitar to be the center of the band again, like the rock riffs we had at one point. I hate when I make predictions about what we'll do in the future because they're often totally

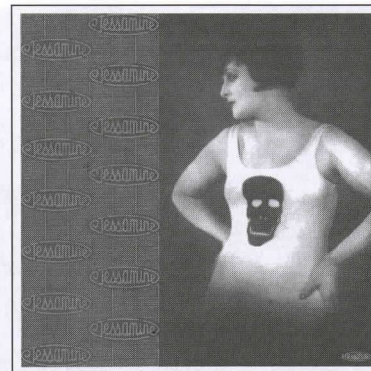
wrong, but I believe the rhythm section will be the most dominant part of the next record. Before, Andy and I were able to make a lot of noise on top of what they were doing, but I have a feeling we'll be accenting what they are doing.

**I've always felt the rhythm section was strong, regardless of all the noise that was being created. As of lately, I have felt that the keyboards have been less gratuitous and become more appropriate. I feel Jessamine has become fully integrated.**

I'm really comfortable with *not* playing at times. On the album, there are many moments where I don't play. When we play live, we have to listen to each other so much that it really helps for someone to just slide out for a minute—Michael does that with the drums really well—so that something else is able to develop. I still like playing the guitar, I don't imagine myself playing anything else.

**You're not gonna take up the triangle?**

(*Laughs*)



Jessamine (1994)



The Long Arm of Coincidence (1996)





**Earlier, when we were exploring the idea of dark themes, you professed your predisposition for such music. How did that figure into your writing?**

The thing with me is that when I hear something that sounds right, I *know* it. Sometimes it's hard for me to steer into it, or steer others into it. When it happens, the sound behaves in a certain way with whatever production things we may be doing, I hear it back in the way where I *know* it's the right way it should sound, or that I've heard it before. It's like those moments where you lose connection with the world. You're adrift, but it's not a bad place, just a specific one. One way of talking about Jessamine, or at least for me and what I'm trying to get Jessamine to be, is supposed to be the way I feel. You're supposed to be hearing what I'm hearing and feeling what I'm feeling when you're listening back to it. One thing that does not get talked about much because Dawn and Andy don't do too many interviews is the spiritual aspects of the band. There are others in the band who are so much better grounded, spiritual, really live well and good. The strange thing is, Andy makes some really weird sounds that just blow me away. From the person that I know him to be, I'm surprised how messed up his sounds are sometimes. It's been really hard to just try and play without any set things we're going to do, I could never in my life imagine we could just roll tape and play. There's some belief that maybe there's something "in addition" to us that comes out when we play. I'm not great at articulating this aspect of the band.

**Do you listen to much music that could be considered techno, ambient, electronica or drum & bass?**

I know that Dawn listens to a lot of ambient music, though I'm not clear what the strict definitions are.

**concerning these musical forms?**

I guess a lot of it doesn't sound very good, though some is really great. There is definitely a degree of analog loyalty in me, but you can't deny good music when you hear it. There are a lot of interesting things being done with the computer, too. I just hate it when suddenly it's a form. One thing that's most annoying to me in what I have heard of certain kinds of techno is that they sort of build up the same way. I think Mouse On Mars is good.

**I love what they're doing. Actually, what's piquing my interest are the sounds themselves, which touch those weird nerves inside.**

Also the complexity of the rhythms, too, are definitely compelling.

**References to Can have followed your band since who knows when, but have you ever been ever accused of trying to follow in their footsteps a little too much?**

No one's done that yet. I haven't seen that much press about this record in particular. Also, the influence wasn't as prominent on the first record. I can imagine that there'll be people who'll hear it and think, "What a horrible Can rip-off band." I think we were more influenced by their ideas. There's only one song in particular, where we've just really ripped them off, it's the vocal line at the end of "The Long Arm of Coincidence Makes My Radio Connections". Oh, and on the first album, "Don't You Know That Yet?" If we could be narrowed down to one song, we are "Spray" or some bad version of it. (*Laughs*)

**When you're 78 years old, where and how do you imagine yourself to be?**

It's going to be a small, quiet place. I hope I'll still have my hearing. ✱

## Jessamine I discography

### Singles

"Ordinary Sleep"/ "Cheree" (Silver Apple)\*

"Cellophane"/ "I'm Not Afraid of Electricity" (Silver Apple)\*

(\*Both singles have been reissued together as a double pack on Silver Apple (now Histrionic Records))

"Your Head Is So Small It's Like A Little Light"/

"Soon The World of Fashion Will Take an Interest In These Proceedings" (Sub Pop)

"Reflections" split 7" w/ Sabine & Buddha On The Moon (Audrey's Diary)

"From Here To and Now Otherwise" split 7" with Flying Saucer Attack (Enraptured)

"Live Off The Record" giveaway with *Ptolemaic Terrascope*

"Seagreen" split 7" w/ Transparent Thing (Darla)

### EPs

Jessamine & Spectrum *A Pox On You CDEP* (Space Age Recordings)

### LPs

Jessamine LP/CD (Kranky)

*The Long Arm of Coincidence* 2LP/CD (Kranky)

### Compilations

"All the Same" on *Follow The Bouncing Ball* CD (Ba Da Bing!)

"(I'm Not Afraid of) Electricity" on *The New Atlantis* LP/CD (Space Age Recordings)

"Ordinary Sleep" on *Monsters, Robots and Bugmen* 2CD (Virgin UK)

"22:30" on *Harmony Of The Spheres* 3LP (Drunken Fish)

Be sure to look for Jessamine's singles compilation, *Another Fictionalized History* 2LP (Histrionic), due Fall 1997.

### Addresses

Ba Da Bing! Records, POB 204, Leonia, NJ 07605

Darla Records, 625 Scott St. #301, SF, CA 94117

Drunken Fish Records, POB 460640, SF, CA 94146

Enraptured 45s, 8a Penwith Rd., Southfields, London SW18 4QF

Histrionic Records, POB 42607, Portland, OR 97242

Kranky Records, POB 578743, Chicago, IL 60657

*Ptolemaic Terrascope* Magazine, 37 Sandridge Rd., Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 7BQ, England

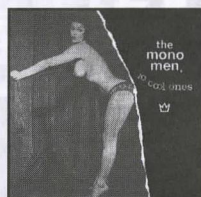
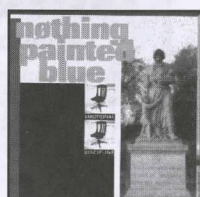
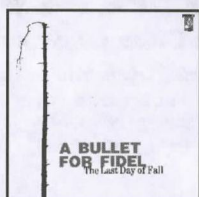
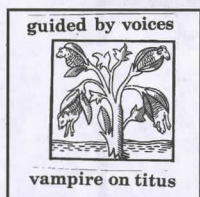
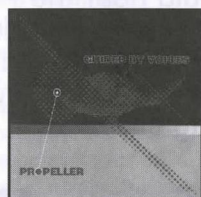
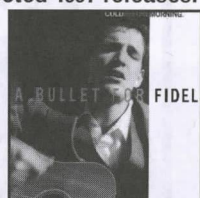
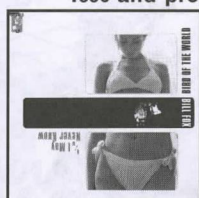
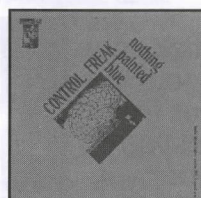
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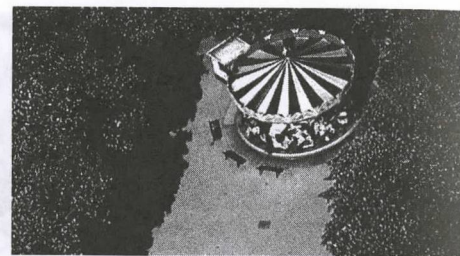
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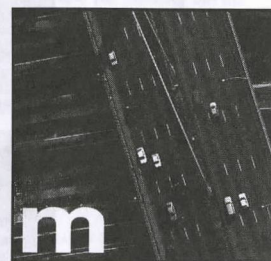


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# AFTERMATH

## ON FELLINI, JERRY LEWIS, AND (OTHER) CLOWNS

by A.S. Hamrah

It takes a pampered, Italian jet-setter like Federico Fellini to find nobility in the last vestiges of clownhood. It takes a man without the remotest possibility of ever being considered a clown to get all nostalgic for that much-maligned profession. That's exactly what Fellini did in his 1970 made-for-TV, before-the-fact mockumentary *I Clowns*. Only someone bearing so few real scars from his childhood, yet so willing to exploit that childhood for the purposes of what may graciously be called whimsy, would make a film with the surface sophistication and utter wrong-headedness of *I Clowns*. To reveal the truth of what clowns mean to people it takes a man of greater vision than Fellini. That man is Jerry Lewis. Let's face it, no one thinks of clowns anymore as noble, even in a shabby, genteel, kind of artsy/scary way. When people think "clown" they think loser. And Jerry Lewis knows that. If this isn't proven by his career and his life generally, it's proven by his movies, specifically *The Family Jewels* and *Hardly Working*.

Fellini divides *I Clowns* into three broad parts that roughly ape the three ages of man. In the movie's first section, we get a recreation of young Federico's first experience with the circus (he cried), and reminiscences of the clownish village idiots he grew up around (they're pigs). In the second section, Fellini gets a documentary crew together and traipses about Europe interviewing old, retired clowns (they tend towards the senile). Like the townspeople of Fellini's past, his crew is made out to be as clownish as their subject. In the film's last—and most inexcusably drawn-out—section, a clown's funeral is presented as a tedious circus act, the only audience being the one watching



the movie. There you have it: childhood and loss of innocence, adulthood and old age, decrepitude and death. Deep stuff, as you'd expect from the maestro who brought you *La Dolce Vita* and *8 1/2*. This is no simple documentary on a dying mode of showbiz. This is a major statement about the human condition. Since each sequence is so unentertaining and pointless, what else could it be?

Fellini evidently expects that once you've grasped the form of *I Clowns*, you'll forget about the content. Like the clowns that crowd his frames, Fellini keeps a lot of balls in the air. And who asks, "Why?" when there's such a flurry of activity to keep the eye busy? The larger questions that a schema like this one brings up are doubly obscured in *I Clowns* because not only are you supposed to be watching the clowns go through their tired paces, you're supposed to be seeing their routines as commentary, too. But, frankly, all I could think while watching these clowns was "why?" Why be a clown; what kind of people become

clowns; how do they arrive at such a life-altering and ultimately alienating decision; what do they get out of it; aren't they embarrassed; do they realize how pathetic, how woefully inadequate to the task they've set before them they are?

Although Fellini and his crew interview a number of old clowns, these questions are never raised. Old photographs and gruesome cinematic portraiture are served up instead. Fellini has no compunction about lighting these old guys in unflattering ways and letting them run off at the mouth. In some quarters, I guess, this is still the quintessence of the documentary form. I think it's shallow, and I think Fellini does, too. Why else does the love he expresses for the clowns of his youth, a love he

admits, to his credit, is tied up with a fascination for the grotesque, turn so sour? As coy a filmmaker as Fellini is, he can't hide his mean streak. As yet another clown tells another story about yet another dead clown of his acquaintance, all that's left is the bitterness of a confused filmmaker who wants to punish clowns for reminding him too much of people who aren't clowns professionally, just by accident of birth.

An historian of clown life tells Fellini that "The circus no longer has any meaning." The last act of *I Clowns* sets out to prove this statement but only provides yet another mask for Fellini's lack of real insight. The clown funeral, ostensibly for a fallen comrade-in-greasepaint-and-frightwig, but clearly intended for the very concept of clownhood itself, is perhaps as unfunny, ponderous, and downright ugly as anything I've seen in a movie. Aesthetically barren in an extremely uninteresting way, it takes the film's stupidity just where you'd expect it to: a circus ring empty except for one sad clown. Upon



further reflection, though, the only appropriate ending for Fellini's atrocious (his word—not mine—used in another attempt to deflect criticism) paean to decaying clown faces would've been a circus fire. There Fellini would definitively kill off the circus antecedents he both hates and is obsessed with.

"Clown acts are short today. You have to kill them in ten minutes," says the proprietor of a contemporary circus to Fellini. If only he had. Anyway, that's not even true, I would argue: Look at the unrelenting career of Jerry Lewis. Like Fellini, Lewis is an obsessive filmmaker who ultimately can't escape the circus. Like Fellini, he has a very

Lewis's tightrope walk. Today, I can believe most viewers would think *Hardly Working* a piece of shit, marked as it is by awkwardness and low production values, and an un-Lewisian resort to the zoom lens. It shares a hastiness and a slapdash feel with *I Clowns*, but whereas viewers might perceive that as an example of Fellini's artistry, they're more likely to see it as proof of Lewis's incompetence. The fact that the style suits the subject matter perfectly would probably elude viewers untroubled by the jarring inappropriateness of Fellini's approach to his subject in the highly regarded *I Clowns*.

In order to discuss *Hardly Working*, *The Family Jewels* must be invoked first. I won't describe the plot, except to say that Jerry plays seven characters in it—one of which is a disgruntled clown called Uncle Everett Peyton. As far as I can ascertain, this is the first appearance of the bitter clown in American culture. I'm not talking sad clown here—a figure that goes back to God-knows-when—but a bitter, dysfunctional, hateful, and ultimately evil clown. In his one scene as this character, Lewis sets the standard by which all other such clowns must be judged:

#### Uncle Everett Peyton:

(He speaks elegantly, a slightly more cultured Buddy Love from *The Nutty Professor*, addressing some fellow clowns in their dressing room as they all remove their makeup.

Importantly, the other clowns are older and frowzier. As he delivers these lines, Everett does his nails. He wears an obscenely small clown hat and has a huge white towel draped around his neck.) Well, peasants, this is it. No more make-up, no more ghastly one-nighters, and best of all, no more squealing brats. This time tomorrow night I shall be on my way to Switzerland.

**Older clown:** Switzerland? I don't understand, I'm curious, why Switzerland?

**UEP:** (Smoking a cigarette with exaggerated cool.) Boy (referring to the other clown), I'll tell you why. Because when you creeps were busy squandering your money, I was putting mine in Swiss banks looking for the day when I might choose to retire. That day has come. And I don't have to listen to those squealing brats the rest of my life.

**OC:** Those "brats," as far as I'm concerned, are the reason for existing!

**UEP:** (clapping his hands daintily, sarcastically) Hooray for you, sucker. As far as I'm concerned those brats were nothing but a means to an end! (Wiping the make-up off his mouth with extreme disdain.) And I'm there now. Or at least I will be in a few days.

**OC:** Oh, you'll be back. You'll miss your country, if nothing else.

**UEP:** No chance, sweetheart. I've taken care of that. I've renounced my United States citizenship. For a couple of reasons. One being, no more taxes!

It's hard to convey the insane yet restrained relish with which Lewis delivers these lines. It must have seemed crazily wrong to all-of-a-sudden be hearing this in 1965—in a movie whose audience had to be primarily children. It makes sense, though. Here was Jerry Lewis, half of the hippest nightclub comedy team of the early Fifties, reduced to playing a kiddie act. The irony certainly wasn't lost on him. In this scene, Lewis sums up the pain and disgust many comedians who started out with serious aspirations must have felt eking out livings as the clown hosts of afternoon kiddie shows on local TV. It's this disgust that eventually led to the figure of the evil clown, the psychologically tortured clown who might be a helpless alcoholic, or worse.

At the end of *The Family Jewels*, Jerry, playing Willard, the films most deserving and nicest character, has to don the clown regalia of Uncle Everett to resolve the film's plot, which involves gaining custody of a little girl who loves him. His relationship to her is muddled: He's big brother to her, best friend, servant (he's officially her chauffeur), uncle, and surrogate father. He's her whole family. Willard becomes her Uncle Everett, who is represented by an empty chair in this scene, in order to become her father. The last two shots of the film have Jerry/Willard/Everett/Father swallowing the camera lens with his clown mouth and then turning his back on the audience and walking away. The position of the clown has become sticky, but Lewis places it squarely in the heart of the family.

It's here that the problem of the clown is traced back to its origins, and it's here that the questions raised by *I Clowns* are answered. As every budding comic has found out, the dysfunctional family can be healed through laughter. The family can be made whole, but not the world; the world doesn't change. It's this realization that's fueled Jerry Lewis's whole career, and it's this realization that can be read in the face of the angry clown who hosts *The Telethon* every year, and who won't be happy



evil clown photos  
Billy Caliente

ambiguous relationship with his sources of inspiration. Unlike Fellini, though, Lewis is incapable of the snobbish distance Fellini grants himself in *I Clowns*. Fellini appears in his film as himself, above-it-all and gently amused. Lewis, in all his movies, but especially in *The Family Jewels* and *Hardly Working*, where he actually plays clowns, always plays himself no matter how many characters he's supposed to be playing, and is so not-above-it-all that he's practically being buried alive. And *alive* is the operative word here. Jerry isn't a decrepit shell of a once-glorious clown, but a man fighting for air. His lack of distance only makes his films better. The cool, formal elegance of 1965's *The Family Jewels* shows Jerry's awareness of this; the messy shabbiness of *Hardly Working*, made fourteen years later, shows Lewis in a crisis state, one where he can only succumb to that which he is trying to escape, namely being a clown.

The fact that the American public made *Hardly Working* the number one film in the country during the first two weeks of its 1981 release shows the weird precariousness of



until everyone out there proves they love him and his kids by choking out a laugh and coughing up a donation. Here is the damaged hipster as kiddie show host, not content until the world completely stops producing sick kids who will never be right.

Or, failing that, produces kids who can at least grow up to be good workers instead of useless clowns—the clear subject of *Hardly Working*. In *The Family Jewels*, there's a scene at a gas station where a Bubble Up soda machine is featured in the mechanics of a gag. Jerry has to fill in for ten minutes for a friend who works at the gas station. In *Hardly Working*, Jerry, as out-of-work circus clown Uncle Bo Hooper, is reduced to begging for full-time employment at a gas station where a 7-Up soda machine is featured prominently, in one of the many product placements Lewis used to float the film. A lot of people watching *Hardly Working* might just ask, "What's with the 7-Up? Why is it so important in every shot in this scene?" and leave it at that. But the path is clear, from the freer world of a movie where soda has a stupid/funny name like "Bubble Up," to a constricting world where even the brand names of pop have been reduced to number, and films can't be made unless they full up on paid advertising. *Hardly Working* is so packed with corporate sponsorship it threatens to burst in an explosion of Dunkin Donuts boxes and 7-Up bottles, like the grocery store at the end of the 1964 Lewis film, *The Disorderly Orderly*. In *The Family Jewels*, Jerry was exorcising inner demons. In *Hardly Working*, he's just trying to stay alive (to bring the point home, *Hardly Working* includes a dance scene parodying *Saturday Night Fever*), and to stay alive at that point in his career, Lewis had to go work for the man.

In fact, the man really is The Man in *Hardly Working*. After failing at several lousy jobs, it turns out the only place this ex-clown can stay employed is with the Post Office, that last rung on the Federal Government's civil service ladder. Uncle Bo Hooper is Uncle Everett Peyton without the Swiss bank accounts. He couldn't retire; the circus is shut down for good, it's not the "almost" shut down circus of Fellini's film; and his final humiliation is that he's become a postal worker, with all that implies. In the eyes of the other characters in *Hardly Working*, being a clown was humiliating, because—really—it is humiliating to be a clown, just as, in the minds of many people, it must be humiliating to be Jerry Lewis. Who wants to be a clown? And by being one, Bo has been left completely unfit for any kind of normal life. When he finally gets the hang of postal work, Bo's coworker compliments him by remarking, "Today you were no clown." Bo's reaction is completely out-of-line.

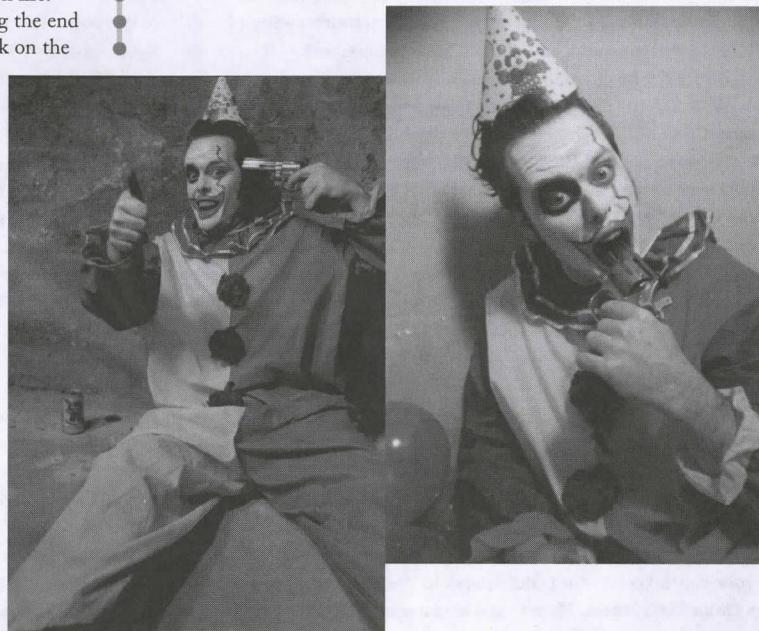
With hurt and anger in his voice, he snaps, "Don't call me that, understand? I'm not a clown! Not anymore!" Like many postal workers, even those without the added burden of having been professional clowns, Bo is headed for a breakdown.

The breakdown arrives one day when Bo, for no apparent reason, decides to deliver the mail in full clown regalia; an act which, in a moment of recognition, starts a full parade, complete with confetti shower, amongst the people on Bo's route. Lest the reader think I'm reading too much into Bo's breakdown, the film makes this explicit when a news helicopter pilot is heard announcing to his listeners (you, the audience): "As we understand it, either a radical or fanatic mailman with the Fort Lauderdale personal service snapped his satchel, so to speak, dressed himself as a clown and preceded to make his deliveries." The only thing left for Uncle Bo is to quit his job. Unable to hack even being a mail carrier, he returns to clown life. Lewis's last act as Bo, exactly mirroring the end of *The Family Jewels*, is to turn his back on the viewer, this time hugging a dog instead of a little girl. Being a clown is all he's suited for.

Chris Fujiwara, the Al Gore of American film criticism, has pointed out the similarities in the endings of Lewis's *The Errand Boy* and Fellini's *8 1/2*, proving conclusively the superiority of the Lewis film. I can only add that the giant, exploding champagne bottle, not a very common clown prop, I imagine, appears in both the penultimate scenes of *The Errand Boy* and *I Clowns*, but the Lewis film was made eight years before *I Clowns*. Take that for what it's worth. Lewis's and Fellini's shared affinity for Chaplin, the first great movie clown, is also worth mentioning in this context. Fellini tries to believe in the maudlin sentimentality people associate with Chaplin. Lewis simply wants to be Chaplin. Like Chaplin, he was the first of his generation to act in, write, produce, and direct his own comedies. Like Chaplin, he was recognized in France long before Americans caught on. His reference, as Everett, to the renunciation of his US citizenship can be seen as a tribute to or a swipe at Chaplin, whichever, since Chaplin did just that after being accused of Communist activity during the HUAC witch hunts. Lewis and Fellini share a love for brassy soundtracks, Lewis's use of music usually adding to his scenes, Fellini's serving to cover up their poverty. Similarly, canned laughter is used in *Hardly Working* in a disjunctive way, in *I*

*Clowns* it's supposed to sound as real as any of the other post-synch work.

None of Fellini's clowns are bitter or dysfunctional; they seem retarded or senile, or simply physically deformed. It's these accidents of nature that Fellini holds up to ridicule, horror, and pity. It's just another freak show. Jerry's clowns are formed by their environments, and have deformed and retarded psyches that manifest themselves in physicality and the acting-out of undesirable emotions. Lewis asks his audience to examine this, and to understand it, despite the stupid jokes. Fellini, for all his sophistication, goes for the cheap laugh. In *I Clowns*, one of the retired clowns tells a gory anecdote about a tightrope-walking colleague whose leg was cut off by a wire. "The blood fell like rain on the public below," he tells us. Jerry Lewis bleeds all over the place, too, but his wound is a lot deeper. ✱



*I CLOWNS (THE CLOWNS)* (d.: Federico Fellini, Italy, 1970, available in the Xenon Entertainment Group's Cinematheque Collection, 1440 9th St., Santa Monica, CA 90401 tel: (800) 829-1913, fax: (310) 395-4058.)

*THE FAMILY JEWELS* (d.: Jerry Lewis, USA, 1965, Paramount Home Video) and *HARDLY WORKING* (d.: Jerry Lewis, USA, 1980, Fox Video. There are no tapes of these movies currently available. Good luck renting them, catching them on TV, or seeing them at your neighborhood revival house.)



# do SHORT PEOPLE got no reason to live?

All I have to say about short people is that when I was growing up, I was always one of the tallest girls in class. My best friends were on average 5'3" (tops) in high school, and I always felt awkward and amazon-ish compared to my cute, petite friends. Their shoe size was a diminutive 4—mine a whopping 9. I was a freak! Was it too much to ask to dance with a boy that didn't come up to my chin, or worse yet, my bust line? I had to stoop in order to compensate for the height difference. Thank gawd puberty hit for the boys, and by the time I was in college, all my best friends were 5'8" and beyond. (Unconscious selection on my part?) And of course, now I really enjoy my height, unless I'm talking to someone who's 5'3" or shorter—then I feel the old awkward self-consciousness come back.

Also, I did have a chance to wait on Emmanuel Lewis a couple of times when I slung hash at Chicago for Ribs. (He always brought in his own orange soda to drink.) He's really short, only came up to my mid-thigh, and *did* have the balls to actually try and look up my skirt as I was taking his to-go order, and gave me the old wink and special hand touch when I was giving him change back. I couldn't believe the cute little Webster we all knew and tolerated was actually a horny little dude on the make (other waitresses can attest to his flirtatious manor and look overs). Oh, and he didn't know how to tip for shit, but was harmless nonetheless.

• **Amy Bloebaum**, 26, indie publicist, Dish Media, 5'8"

I have no beef against short people. I just don't like dating them. I like women who are at least as tall as me, and big bones are totally okay. There's something about having sex with a tiny person that makes me feel like I'm a pedophile. The weird thing about hugging a short person is that their face goes right against your chest. I guess that could work to one's advantage.

• **Dave McGurgan**, 28, editor, *Yakuza* magazine, 5'11"

I'm 6'3" and weigh in at a mere 165 lbs, making me one of the storkier folk around. I don't appreciate the low urinals made for short people and young'ns. Sometimes finding shirts can be a problem because my long arms always stick out. As for short people having no reason to live, I think that's a little extreme. We should just dump them on a desert island where they can exist and reproduce as they see fit, folks like Gary Coleman, Alf, Tattoo, E. Dominic Black, and others too short to mention. Okay, thanks.

• **Fritz Chesnut**, 25, typical offensive artfag, 6'3"

Short people have it all over tall people. It's been statistically proven that short people live longer. Tall people have more heart and circulatory problems than the more wisely built

smaller folk. Maybe one day the true symbols of health and longevity will be portrayed accurately by the media. Maybe you should start the hype rolling.

• **Liz Bustamante**, 28, film equipment rental blah, blah, 5'3"

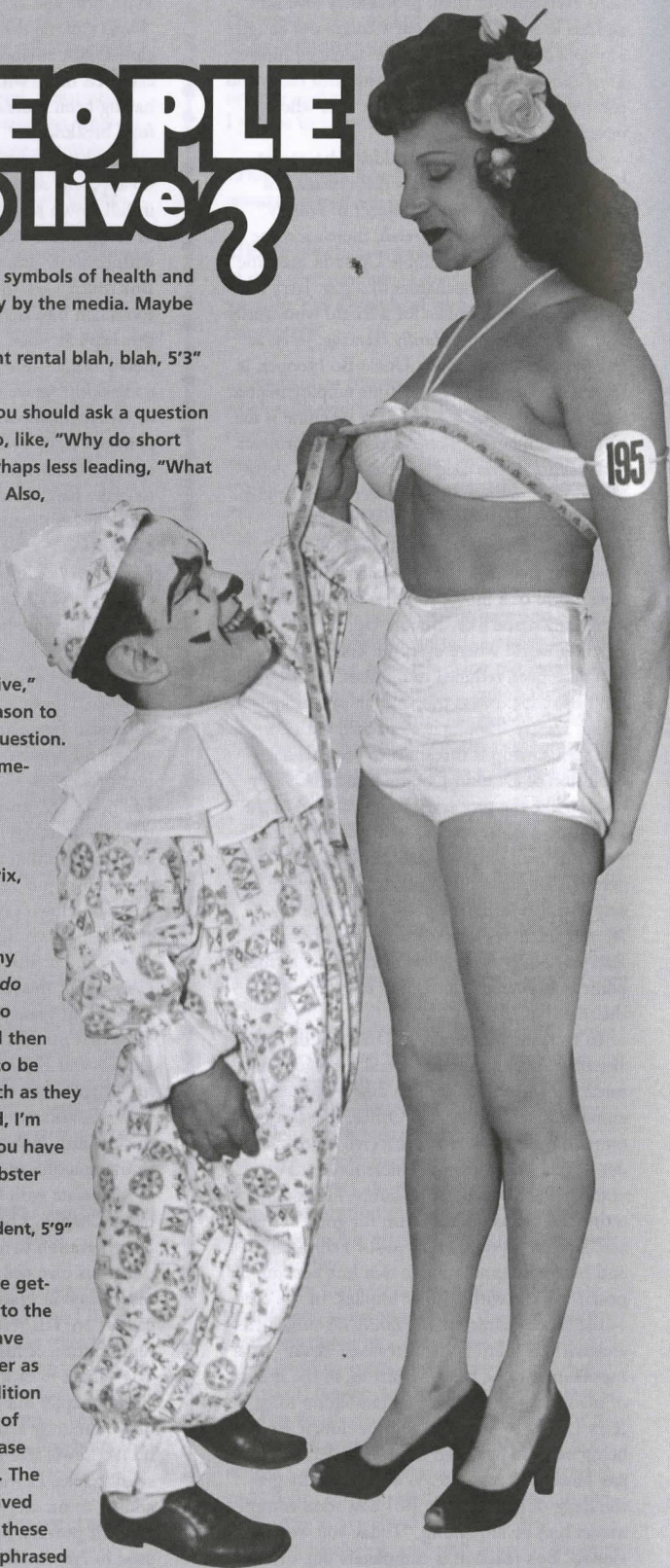
If you want more than a yes or no, you should ask a question that can't be answered by a yes or no, like, "Why do short people got no reason to live?" or, perhaps less leading, "What is short people's reason to live, if any?" Also, this question is playful but incorrect grammar makes it particularly hard to decipher...say you think that short people's miserable stature precludes a worthwhile existence. Do you respond to this question with, "No, short people don't have a reason to live," or "Yes, short people don't have a reason to live." It seems that both answer the question. Left with the question as sent, I'm somewhat stumped (no pun intended). Ah well, here goes: No, short people do have a reason to live.

• **Ana Marie Cox**, 24, suck.com, editrix, freelance smart-ass, 5'5"

The question makes me think of Danny DeVito on the cover of *Cigar Aficionado* magazine, and then him acting next to Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Twins*, and then him in *Get Shorty*. All of these seem to be rather unpleasant images and, as much as they might be the fog that clouds my mind, I'm starting to believe that no Virginia, you have no reason to live. But then again, Webster always brings a smile.

• **Oliver Maxwell Irwin**, 22, artist/student, 5'9"

Even though they have a tougher time getting dates, the short might well cling to the notion that smaller physical bodies have been scientifically proven to live longer as both the divine sanction of their condition as well as a Darwinistic endorsement of their biological superiority. In either case their inheritance appears predestined. The tall merely function as gangly, short-lived negative points of reference spurring these puny titans along according to the ill-phrased





principle of overcoming "the Napoleonic complex"—a cosmic imperative ordering the tiny to their rightful office at the right hand of God and a scientific promise to the future. This will to power afforded our tiny brothers and sisters is nothing less than their skeleton key to the universe.

• **John Hughes**, 27, philosopher, 6'1"

Short people epitomized by the likes of the sorry and sweaty Randy Newman can die for all I care. But people of relatively smaller stature that make me laugh and cry and can bowl the high numbers with the best of them rock my world. The only problem I've ever had with short men is that I usually will not date them. As it is I'm almost 6 feet tall. Anyone under 5'9" kinda makes me feel slightly disproportionate. Maybe I'm just brainwashed. After all, girls are usually shorter than their boyfriends. It's too bad Dudley Moore had to go and make short men seem as pervy as can be. Perhaps that is not such a bad thing. If a man can provide a good shrimpin' and shtimpin' and can make you French toast in the morning, he's worth his height in garnets.

• **Miss Murgatroid**, 27, musician, 5'10.5"

I'm tall enough that when I go to see a movie, I have to hook my legs over the seat in front of me. It's fairly uncomfortable. I also can't sit up straight in most foreign cars and I haven't fit into bed properly for years. At the very least, short folks can point and laugh at this stuff until the years of abuse that my spine has to weather from a world constructed for people 5'8" and dropping finally pulls me down to their eye-level, a stooped and rickety hunchback slowly falling forward into the grave. That's a fine thank-you for all the times I've cleaned the hard-to-reach spots and retrieved cans off of the high shelves at the supermarket, you ungrateful stumpy bastards.

• **Jon Skuldt**, 24, Coat-Tail Records honcho & nucleus of White, 6'4"

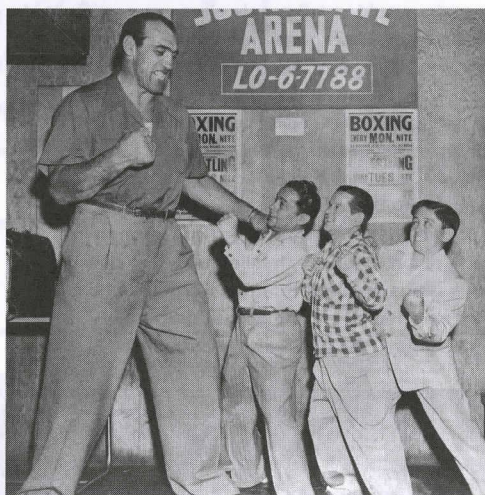
Speaking as a professional homosexual with seven years of downtown NYC residency under my belt, Lord knows I'm not averse to picking on people for their physical imperfections. But short people have plenty of reasons to live. Enjoying closer proximity to the sidewalk, they've ideally suited for spotting lost change or jewelry. Although they're denied the thrill of riding any roller coaster worth the 2 x 4s it's cobbled together from, it is a piece of cake for them to lapse into baby talk at the movies and gain admission at the cheaper children's rate. And they're far less likely to be in the line of fire when some burger boy goes postal at Jack In The Box and starts spraying bullets into a flock of average height bottom-feeders. Perhaps the more pressing question here is "Do short people got no right to live?" If they make sure to holler so I don't trip over them in a crowd, and refrain from kvetching when I mistake them for an ottoman or settee, I suppose we can let them go about their little lives. Unless they get all politically correct on me, I got no time for dwarves

and midgets telling me they're "vertically challenged" or, worse yet, "little people." Where I come from, "little people" have pointy ears and make their homes under toadstools.

• **Kurt B. Reighley**, 29, freelance crank, 5'9"

Actually, I just saw some news magazine show about how short people are discriminated against in work and worse...IN LOVE! The show did this line-up of men and asked women to choose who they would most like to go out with and, apparently, most women would rather go out with a 6'2" serial killer than a 5' brain surgeon / literary genius who treats women like gold...go figure! Personally, those aren't the inches that concern me! Also, it's been statistically proven that for every inch of height, a person's income raises an average of \$10,000. No wonder platforms are so popular again!

• **Michelle Ferguson**, XX, publicist, 5'6"



Short people have plenty of reasons to live: They are great to sit behind at movie theaters and in front of on airplanes. They can wear Garanimals. They have an unfair advantage in games of hide-and-seek. They respond to, "Hey, Shorty." They can order off the children's menu at most restaurants.

• **Eric T. Miller**, 25, editor/publisher, *Magnet* magazine, member of the Tall Peoples' Club since 1983, 6'2"

Any time I used to complain about my lack of height while growing up, my mom would tell me I'm lucky that I'm not REALLY short. There are only a few times when it is a real pain for me to be Paula Abdul-sized, like trying to find goddamn pants that I won't have to hack off 5 inches off of, or at shows when Mr. Six Foot Sweaty Guy decides the best view of the band is right in front of me. On the other hand, I've always been attracted to tall guys—this probably stems from the fact that all the men in my family are about 6'2" or so. The tallest fella I ever smooched was 6'5", but we were sitting down at the

time. I imagine certain, um, positions would be difficult to execute with a fella over a foot taller than me...but that doesn't make life not worth living, kids, just more exciting. Yow. Oh, so, yeah, short people DO have a reason to live, even if they do end up being the butt of certain people's jokes. On another stinking side note, my middle name is "Willow", so you can imagine the nice cracks I heard when the movie starring that "little person" came out. Sheesh.

• **Yoonie Helbig**, 18, zine editor, 5'3"

Some of my best friends are short, of course they deserve to live. That makes me a completely unbiased, non-discriminatory, politically correct individual, right? To tell you the truth, I consider myself pretty low in discriminatory tendencies (those with extra high Hootie-factor excepted) without crossing the boundary into college campus blowhard righteousness. So if I'm such the picture of tolerance, why couldn't I answer the survey with just that simple sentence about my short friends? It comes down to the personal confrontation / admission of guilt: when you go beyond short people, I mean, *really* short people, into the realm of "little people", that's when my open-mindedness takes a freakish turn. I need to just say it. I'm obsessed with midgets. It really isn't easy to admit to a perversion of that magnitude. I should probably explain the roots of my fascination and let you judge its severity on your own.

It began in a similar way to the roots of evil often discussed by talk show racists. Midgets were entertaining and novel when utilized as wacky Hollywood extras (who doesn't love a good Billy Barty movie?), but I hadn't really encountered too many in my own young life. When I was old enough to actually conceptualize *Under the Rainbow* (too much time on my hands), my entertainment with the little people turned quickly to disgust. They started giving me the creeps. On the rare occasion that I'd pass one of "them" on the street I would shudder as if a large rodent had just scurried across my foot. How embarrassing! I was a good person with a good education. I was of liberal, open-minded ilk. I was repulsed by an entire group of human beings, therefore I was right up there with some of those talk show racists.

I felt like a loser, and the next time I passed "one" on the street, I discreetly made myself look. Weird. The pudgy hands, the miniature features, the overall stubbiness was actually intriguing. I became less afraid of what was different. I still got the creeps a little bit, but like with a bad car accident, I had to strain to keep from staring. Of course, once I confronted the issue, my "sightings" snowballed and midgets started showing up relatively frequently in my life. Coincidentally, I was asked by my boss to research the casting process for *The Wizard of Oz*. In thumbing through a medical reference book at a relatives, I flipped to the dog-eared page with the description of the hypopituitary dwarf. My obsession developed rapidly, almost delving into perversion when on a few occasions, I found myself inquiring with some



experts about the existence of midget porn. I found some, as well as hearing rumors of a live midget sex show (no place like New York), but my curiosity didn't quite cross the line of deviance and I left those for the midget lovers who are less repressed/socially healthy than myself.

I'm not particularly proud of my love/hate relationship with the world's little people. Only those closest to me knew about it before, and I'm not really sure whether or not it caused them to question my integrity. I try not to flaunt it. Remember that white kid in college who came from a small town, and immediately ran out and tried to meet all the people of color he could? He had no prejudices and finally an opportunity to find out how "they" think and what "they" think about. I'm not going to become that kid. Some of my best friends are not midgets. But gosh, they sure are interesting.

• **Sara Cameron**, twentysomething, philanthropist, 5'8"  
*Sara Cameron is in no way affiliated with the US Census or the Department of Weights and Measures.*

Small, nice people exist only to be spanked by big, mean people.

• **Robert Lord**, 26, DuPont Anal Thermometer Tester #12, 5'11", "huge penis"

If 5'5" is short, then I'd have to say that short people have every reason to live. Life is better if you're short. You don't have to duck to get in doors, you don't have to stoop in the shower, you can conceal yourself in smaller places than tall people can and you're closer to bunny size, as I'm sure the long-eared zine staff will realize and appreciate.

• **Arianne Foulks**, 19, zine editor/student, 5'5"

I ask you to refer please to Psalms 25, Verse 18. David talks here of "mine afflictions." I will take liberties and assume he is referring specifically to the "vertically challenged." With this in mind, we find that he lobbies vigorously in this Psalm for forgiveness from the Lord. In Verse 20: "...deliver me: let me not be ashamed for I put my trust in thee." Turn now to Job Chapter 19, Verse 21. I think that you will discover, ladies and gentlemen, that we are all tall in the eyes of the Lord.

• **Rev. Devin Sarno**, 30, co-owner, W.I.N. Records, 5'10"

Short people got no reason to live because they are liars—particularly those little Napoleons who are rock musicians. Generations of fans have been deceived when, after gazing longingly at the larger-than-life publicity photos from an album cover, poster or video, they actually attend a concert of their heroes and the awful truth washes over them: "Aw fuck, Neal Schon's not even five feet tall."

• **Jack Boulware**, "over 30", columnist, *SF Weekly*, 6'1"

I think the more operative question would be: "WHAT THE FUCK IS UP WITH TALL PEOPLE?" I think tall people

think they are so superior 'cuz they got a better view from up there. I personally believe that all people under 5'5" should have their own concert standing areas. Or better yet their own secret clubs.

• **Marcelle Karp**, thirty-ish, superstar, *Bust*, so much shorter than Noël

Aside from the dozens, maybe hundreds, of names that spring to mind that justify the existence of short people (Mugsy Bogues, Miles Davis, Sarah Jessica Parker, The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, The Artist Formerly Known as Stephin Merritt, etc.), all you tall people should think about the fact that, should you manage to eliminate small frys from the face of the earth once and for all, YOU WOULD NO LONGER BE TALL! YOU WOULD ALL BE OF AVERAGE HEIGHT! We're all doing our part, don't screw it up.

• **Mac McCaughan**, 29, "singer" for Superchunk, 5'8.5"

Where else would us tall people place our martinis at cocktail parties? Short people make suitable ashtrays, too.

• **Tara Sin**, 23, *We Like Poo* zine, 5'7"

I'm a vertically challenged lass who's oft pursued by vertically challenged males. Unfortunately, I usually don't feel animal lust with condensed love gods. Maybe my answer to this question is short women got a reason, but short men (Noël excluded) got no reason to live... 'cept to cavort around with taller folks who claim height is not an issue and with those smaller folks who enjoy being compared to salt and pepper shakers!

• **C. Mia Juhng**, 29, Sideshow Records, 5'1"

Of course short people have a reason to live! I think people today are too quick to dismiss the social, cultural and economic consequences of life in the mid-Atlantic states without dwarf tossing. What are you going to do, toss dead midgets? Disgusting.

• **Phil Campbell**, 24, staff writer, *Memphis Flyer*, 5'8"

I just want to remind everyone that all your favorite TV and movie stars are short, really short: Prince, Matt Dillon, everyone on *90210* (I tower over Luke Perry!), Beck, Michael J. Fox, Sly Stallone, Iggy Pop, and just about everyone on any Aaron Spelling production ever! And just think if these fine entertainers didn't live, what a sad sad world it would be. But ya know, I only date tall guys, so chalk me up for hypocrite. God bless us everyone!

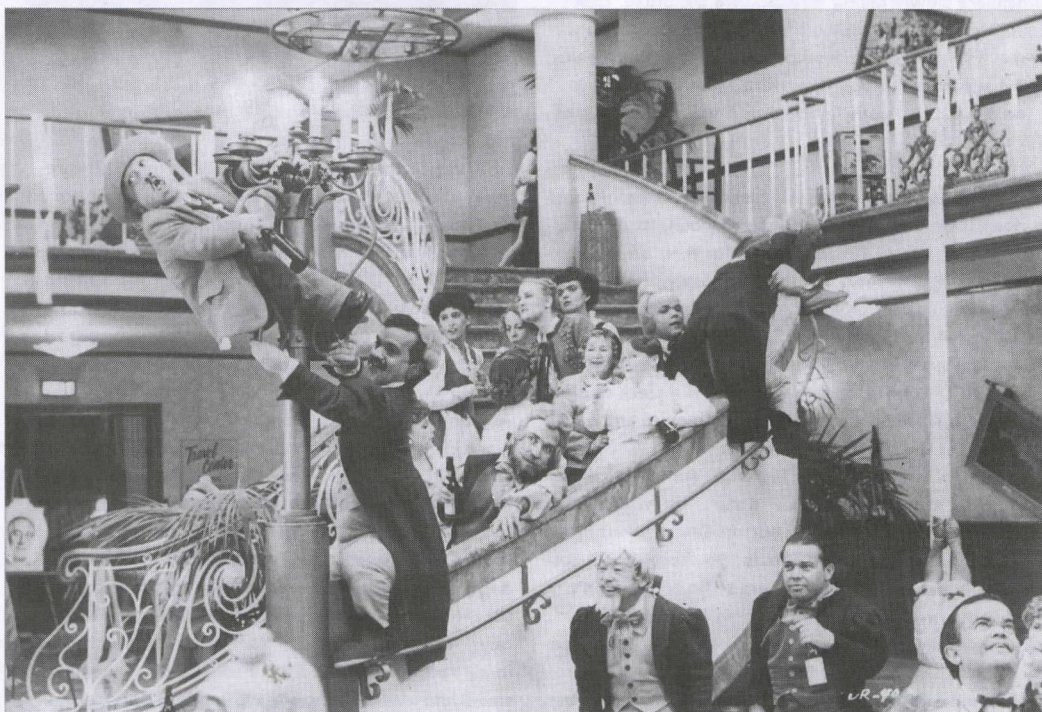
• **Tammy Watson**, XX, advertising, 5'7.75"

Wutchyou talkin' 'bout Willis?

• **Marc Kate**, 25, artist / wage slave, 6'2"

So yeah, I'm short. Big fucking deal. Some people prefer to call themselves "vertically challenged". Ha! I laugh in their faces...(or their chests, it depends on what shoes I've got on). I'm short and I'm proud - 5'2.5" to be exact. I think of my comrades in the land of the little and I smile. Hervé Villechaize, Dr. Ruth, Prince, Oompa Loompas, Webster, the Munchkins and James-motherfucking-Brown. Say it once and say it loud, I'm short and I'm proud! PS Tall people suck.

• **Tara Sin**, 23, *We Like Poo* zine, 5'2" ✱





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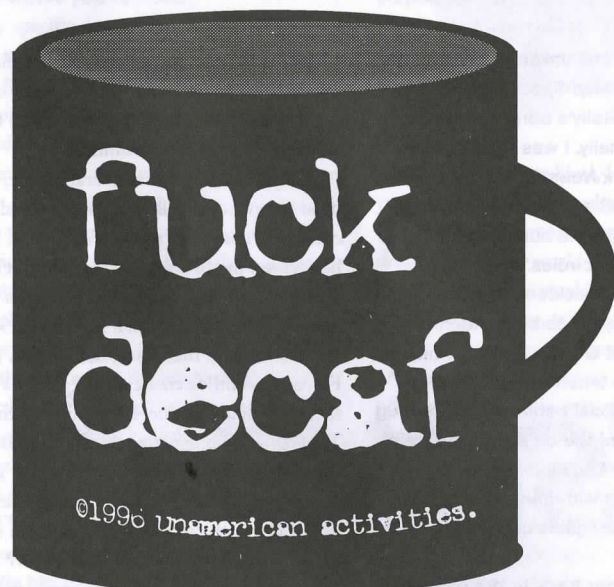


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# Mike Anderson

## the little man who fell to earth

interview Noël photos Lorraine Mahru

**S**pecial Agent Dale Cooper's heavily caffeinated dream sequences in *Twin Peaks* would have been mere drips of piss in a ten-gallon hat had it not been for the finger snapping disco dwarf in the blood-red suit who reminded us about, among other things, fashionable gum. Known simply in the much ballyhooed series as "The Man From Another Place", Mike Anderson's feverish behavior and "simulated double-reverse" tongue left an indelible, if not traumatized, cat scratch on our collective psyches. But don't hate him because he's unable to partake in certain carnival rides. Standing just a pinch over three and a half feet, it comes as a surprise to most that 43-year-old "Little Mike", as he is affectionately known, is neither a dwarf or a midget. Despite the shrieks of befuddlement his swaying hips inspired in slack-jawed gawkers and haircurler queens, he has spent most of his life in a wheelchair, victim of an inherited condition called *osteogenesis imperfectus*, or "brittle bones." Several years of orthopedic surgery and a handful of metal pins later, Little Mike has danced his merry way into

our bumpy little hearts and unkempt living rooms, whether in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *The X-Files* or biting Lauren Holly's bony buttocks in *Picket Fences*. (Personally, I was most touched when I read a *New York Newsday* article in which he proclaimed being little brings him closer to God, "fitting right in with the bunnies and the rabbits and the chirping birdies.")

I had the happiest of accidents last summer when Little Mike happened to be wandering around the Zine Fest at Golden Apple Comics on Melrose. He was quite taken with the lovely Lorraine Mahru—the official t-shirt girl, shutterbug and fashion template of the oh so controversial Kill Zinesters Summer Vacation Tour—and was gung-ho enough to flirt with her platform shoe tallness. The subject of squids came up...

**Noël:** Do you remember back in the day when I met you at Golden Apple Comics in Los Angeles? You were looking at these stickers my friend made that read, "I Heart Geeks". Then you tried to convince us that the new word to use instead of "geek" was "squid".

Mike Anderson: Oh yes, computer squids. That would be the new word. Has it caught on?

**I don't believe any of us have used it much. Where did that term come from?**

Actually, I heard it from several people, but the most recent was a fellow whom I would have to consider a computer squid. We were in Beijing and he accused me of being such a thing. It's such a pregnant term and there's a lot of angles from which it could have come to such a position. Squids themselves have metaphorical qualities. (*Cackling*) For example, they create exotic patterns on their skins which are far more complicated than a word. They go from one pattern to another. Bing! Bang! Bing! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! That's not only a complicated means of communication, but it would be more efficient than human speech.

**So how does this relate to a geek?**

I guess it's an instance of comparing the squids to the other fish in the sea and seeing them as more articulate. Let's put it this way: "Squid" could be a convolution of "whiz".

**Would you consider yourself a squid?**

Yeah, I think so. Maybe not just a computer squid.



Other than the fact that they're carnivorous, but that might be just a commentary on the fact that they're just so delicious! (*Cackling*)

**In the credits of *Twin Peaks* and *Fire Walk With Me*, you were listed as "The Man From Another Place." Where are you really from?**

I'm going to make a Biblical reference here, but this is a point where David and I disagree. Actually, I don't know whether David really disagrees with me or not because he's really cosmic-consciousness oriented, very aware of the centrality of perception and things like that. On the other hand, *Twin Peaks* has this really sharp line between good and evil. I don't think there's anything that thinks of itself as evil, but rather it's seeking justice from its own warped point of view. Christians, for example, believe that anything that is not of Christ is from the Devil. I don't know whether David really believes this or thought, playing the market with the series. There's a Biblical reference where Christ says, "In my father's house, there are many rooms." (*Cackling*) Now, that implies the existence of things other than the world that we live in. And if you look at Hindu religion, they speak of worlds and worlds without end, and they're not talking about planets. If you step outside of that, you'll discover that there's worlds and worlds without end. So even the Christians' "my father's house has many rooms" has the concept of worlds beyond the one that we live in.

**And that's where you're from.**

It's not very specific, but not from here.

**What was most significant about the time you spent living in Denver, Colorado?**

While I was there, I attended a school for handicapped children. There were about 200 students in the whole school and that was grades kindergarten through 12. In a school of 200 students, that enabled me to achieve a number of things. I sang the graduation invocation and the tribute to the homecoming queen; I was student council president and blah blah blah blah. It was a small pond so it was easy to get to the top.

**You were the big squid on campus.**

Exactly. Little squid. When I was in junior high, and this was at a special education school called Boettcher in Denver, my friends and I had this fantasy that we were all from different planets in the galaxy. This is in the Sixties and *Star Trek* had just come out and we were all *Star Trek* maniacs—

**Was it really big back then?**

Yeah, it was really popular. This is the time when I had learned to speak phonetically backwards like was done on *Twin Peaks*. This is a perfect example of something learned for the sheer living hell of it, but then turned out to be my claim to fame!

**Strange.**

Yeah! Stranger than fiction. So when I got out of college, I went to electronics school for a year and got a job working on the ground support system for the Space Shuttle at Martin Marietta in Littleton, CO. I did that for about four years.

**What were your hopes and dreams growing up? Were you an only child?**

No, I have an older sister. Originally, I wanted to be a scientist, but as I got older I got into cosmic-consciousness and I envisioned that I would not live my life in the material world at all, like I would be a Hare Krishna or something. That was my original ambition.

**So in the Seventies when you decided to live a life beyond the material world, you were part of a commune?**

I lived in a variety of different communes during that period. We thought that communism was a good strategy to contend with capitalism, a good way to survive it. The problem we had with the communes was that our whole goal was to *be*. We had our children, our spouses, etc., and our goal was to live together in peace. What happened with all of them was that there was eventually no other purpose or goal, so they'd break up into other factions and people seeking advantage for their own particular group within the group. What would have worked better is if the whole group had some sort of purpose that existed outside of the group for which the whole group could strive. For example, making a profit: At least with money, almost anybody can derive some sort of benefit from it. Have you read any of the books by Alvin Toffler?

**No, I haven't.**

The first one, *Future Shock*, I had read about ten years after it had been writ. By that time, it had come true with a vengeance. It was so much a description of the world that I lived in that it was unbelievable that it would ever come true. His follow up, *The Third Wave*, talked about the world we live in today and it was also very right on. But a lot of what he said in that book is still coming into being. I believe what I read in it because the first one was so accurate and most of the second one has already been so accurate. One of the things he described were social groups that included spouses and children, but whereby they had interlocking skills. Rather than a wandering band of computer programmers (*laughing*), it was where one person was good with taking pictures and the next person was good at developing them. This basically describes a healthy company except that he imagined everybody wouldn't be going to separate homes at night.

**Some people associate communes with cults;**

**do you believe there's any validity to this?**

You don't mean a cultural cult, but rather a theological cult. We can start with the Rev. Jim Jones and take it up to the Davidian Compound, and all these right-wing militia groups; if you just take Christianity and look at how you're supposed to lay dominion over the Earth—and that the end is coming soon!—I just think that whole belief system tends to lead more to radical cults, especially apocalyptic cults, than any kind of left-wing, let's-all-get-in-bed-together group.

**What I don't understand is how you became a communal guru. Was this true for all the different communes you were a part of it?**

I was in a commune with a lot of people who saw me that way, while some didn't. That's all.

**Were you comfortable in that position?**

No, because if they assigned guruhood to me and then, as a result, expected my behavior to conform to their expectations, then there was a problem. Then, instead of me really being their guru, I was supposed to be the guru they had inside themselves. During the time that happened, it was because I was chanting my mantra, etc., and had every intention of going out of the material world absolutely. Completely. This was something that a lot of people either feared or admired. A lot of people asked me, "Where are you now and how did you get there?"

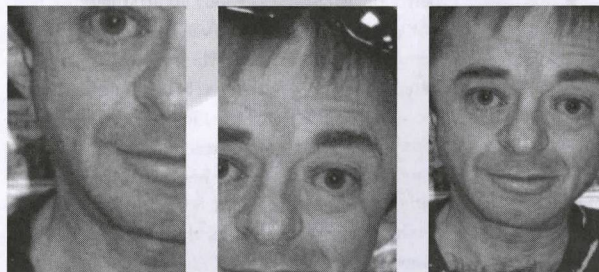
And I made my best effort to tell them where I was and how I got there. But ultimately, the definition of the guru and of my enlightenment was *myself*. I couldn't tell them their definition was *themselves*. I think with a lot of cult figures, their enlightenment is the definition of themselves and that everybody's definition should be the same. If I was a guru, it was none of my business, it was theirs. I'm suspicious of anybody that sets forth to teach anybody anything. Why are they doing that? If they've got some special knowledge of some value, then why don't they simply put that knowledge to use? What's the use of claiming it's valuable and teaching it to someone else?

**You don't believe in the idea of teaching.**

No! I believe in the idea of *learning*.

**How does one learn without a guru?**

That's not the guru's business. There's one thing





# "I sent in an application for membership to the Little People of America and it was ignored! The reason, I believe, was there was a category that said 'dwarf type' and in that blank I filled in 'Sneezy!'"



you can learn from a man that sits on a pedestal for thirty years and that is how to sit on a pedestal for thirty years!

**(Laughing)** "So tell us, how do you do it?"

I just don't see the guru as having a function. "I'm a teacher." "What do you teach?" "I teach people how to teach." *(Cackling)* And so on and so forth. Now we've got a whole population of people who know how to teach people how to teach.

**You want more action and less talk.**

I think that knowledge—and this goes into epistemology—is kind of like happiness or coolness and warmth. If you feel a cool breeze, it's not an absolutely cool breeze in the eyes of every human being and in the eyes of God; it's relative to how you feel then and other breezes that you've felt. The breeze comes and at that moment you feel it as a cool breeze, but in a moment the breeze will stop. This is what knowledge is like. If you know something that, at this moment, is useful to you, you better use it because in the next moment it won't be useful. To me, it's like a Christian, Hindu, or anybody that's got to convince other people of his religion because what he really gets out of it is reinforcement that he's right. The more people that he can get to go, "Ah, he's right!," that means deep down inside himself it can assuage whatever doubts he may have. Four thousand people saying, "Right!"

**Validating his ways.**

Exactly, so that's what he's really getting out of this proselytizing is a validation of self to himself. Let's say that he really did have some sort of experience that was absolutely validating, that God spoke to him in some way that there was no question in his mind that this had happened. No matter that any philosopher could come along and tell him that he could not possibly know that that was fact.

Subjectively, let's say it was such a nature that he was validated. Well then, that person is almost better off *not* to tell anybody about it because he's not going to get any more validated by hearing people saying, "Yes," and when they hear how validated he is, they're more likely to think that he's a nut and more likely to *unvalidate* him. This is the root of my feelings about teaching. If you're doing something useful, you *will* be teaching; teaching without the intention to teach. To me that is genuine teaching, whereas the other thing is more like showing off. "I *know* this." *(Laughs)*

**You're an awfully spiritual person, aren't you?**

Well, I think that's in the eye of the beholder. If you say that, that is a comment that you are making.

**Do you disagree?**

I think that there's nothing but spiritual. *(Cackling)*

**I'm sure that you've heard every short person joke in the world. What's the best one?**

What do you call a midget with fifty pound balls?

**Fucked?**

Half nuts, take it from me.

**(Laughing)** Oh shit!

It's got multiple meanings, I'm sure.

**I've heard that people of short stature basically have the same amount of hormones coursing through their bodies as would a person of "standard" height, but due to their size, the sexual appetite is much stronger. Is that true? I've been told that Hervé "Tattoo" Villechaize was a sex maniac.**

That's right! Absolutely true! You can print that in your magazine.

**Has this always been the case with you or—**

Damn right! *(Laughs)*

**Are a considerable number of women out there who are more than curious about having sex with the vertically challenged?**

I don't know about the vertically challenged, but I would say, yes, there is a "following." *(Cackling)*

**What was your most unusual sexual encounter?**

I was in this disco one time and there was this really tall women, about 5' 11" and really thin. She walked up to me and she was smiling at me and batting her eyes. She asked, "Can I pick you up?" And I said to her, "I don't know. I'm a pretty heavy guy." And she stuck her arm out like a muscleman and said, "I'm a lifeguard." So I said, "Okay," and she literally picked me up off the floor, wrapped me around her neck and spun me around the dance floor. My feet weren't touching the ground, and if you can imagine that kind of spinning, it was sort of magical. She then whispered in my ear, "Baby doesn't have to worry anymore! Mommy's gonna take goooood care of baby!" And something deep down inside myself said, "Man, you are in the Big City now!" *(Laughing)*

**So then what happened?**

As we kept dancing this way, she kept teasing me like I was her baby. And so she asks me, "Can I hold you in my arms like a baby, like this?" And I

looked at her, kinda winking, and said, "Well, baby's hungry." To make a long story short, she held baby and baby got fed.

**(Laughing)** Right then and there in the club?

In the disco! That's fairly noteworthy!

**That is! What other similarly noteworthy story do you have to tell?**

I can't say similar, but here's another interesting one; this involves Boy George.

**(Laughing)** And this is a true story?

Absolutely! I worked at this disco in New York called Area. It was very chic and they managed to pull in the rich and famous all the time. One time they were having a birthday party for Boy George. I had been working there every night for a couple months so I was very comfortable and to some degree, this was *my* disco. They were holding this party—it was a slumber party, pillows hanging from the ceiling—and I marched back there and asked, "So where is Boy George? I came back here to see Boy George, so now where is he?" Kinda stomping around like that. Well I didn't see him, but then tap, tap, tap on my shoulder and I turn around and here's Boy George, and he's not just the guy who plays Boy George, he was in his Boy George outfit with the hat and little strand of hair coming down over his face. For a moment I was stunned. Just stunned. He stuck his nose up in the air and marched away because I didn't really have anything to say. Well the next time he came to the disco, he wasn't dressed as Boy George, he looked at me and I stuck my nose up in the air and marched away in the exact same fashion as he had done at his party. Later that evening, we were all in the boys' room smoking pot and in comes Boy George and sits right down next to me in the pot smoking group. I wasn't quite sure what to do and I still had an attitude on, so I got up and I moved to a different position in the circle. Then he got up and moved and sat right next to me...again. After that I just got up and ran away! I felt that I could have gone home with Boy George.

**Did you want to?**

No, I hadn't been in the big city for *that* long. I'm not gay, but even now I think it might have been interesting to have gone with Boy George.

**Maybe he was curious.**

Yeah!

**Maybe he's never made it with—**



—a little man! Yeah! Maybe some little man had been the greatest love of his life! (*Cackling*)

**On a related club note, you were touted as a defender of freedom of expression by participating in dwarf tossing and midget bowling, weren't you?**

No, I never participated in dwarf tossing. I defended it on national TV on a whole series of talk shows.

**So why did you defend it? I'm sure that didn't bode too well with the Little People of America.**

No, it was just one more wedge between us. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, we need this group because animals are not allowed to make decisions for themselves; we need a group to look out for their interests and to say, "No, it's illegal to do that to animals!" Now little people, on the other hand, are allowed to make decisions for themselves and should be allowed to make decisions for themselves. The person I knew who was working in dwarf tossing, he was three feet tall, black, the only member of an overextended family—we're talking like a family of 20-30 people—who was working, and he was making \$500 a day. He was the only member of the family who was working, so he was the big hero. Now we see people on Sunday mornings who pad themselves up and hurl themselves at each other as hard as they can, and the reason that's okay is because we're paying them millions of dollars. It doesn't matter if they break their neck because they're getting paid so much. But little people should not be allowed to have those same freedoms! (*Silence*) Do you see what I'm saying?

**The same freedoms as...**

—to pad yourself up and hurl yourself against other people for money. What they're saying is that little people should not have the right to make these decisions for themselves, that they should be placed in the same category as animals who need to be protected because they can't make these decisions for themselves. Hitler, for example, said, "Let's have special laws for blacks, gays, Jews, and dwarves." And while, no, I haven't participated in dwarf tossing, I will defend to death my right to flight!

(*Laughing*)

When that was made illegal as a performance art in discos, I did midget bowling.

**So you participated in that.**

I invented it! I laid on a skateboard covered with fur—it was a work of art by one of my fellow artists in New York—and had local celebrities bowl me towards the pins. Of course I could control my course towards the pins, but when people read about midget bowling, they imagined this dwarf tumbling down the alley towards the pins.

**It appears that you're not very supportive of programs, laws, etc. that one might consider "special treatment."**

I wouldn't say that's true at all.

**I'm not agreeing or disagreeing with you, but I believe that the Little People of America do have some legitimate concerns regarding discrimination.**

But the Little People were attempting to institute discrimination by saying that it's okay to toss big people, but not little people.

**Right.**

No discrimination existed until their legislation came in. Little People of America want to legislate discrimination *against* little people from engaging in activities that others have a right to. They don't like me.

**Because of your views on dwarf tossing?**

Because of my views on everything. For example, I sent in an application to the Little People of America with a \$15 check for membership and it was ignored! The reason, I believe, was there was a category that said "dwarf type" and in that blank I filled in "Sneezy".

(*Laughing*)

I thought that was hilarious! As a result, they didn't cash the check or accept my application for membership. I picked Sneezy because he was the most one-dimensional of them, whose personality is based on the fact that he sneezes! (*Cackling*) Let's put it this way, I've gone to Little People of America meetings and they were planning their activities and I said, "Look. Anybody can go out to have picnics. Anybody can go out and fly kites. Anybody can go out to dances. We have a room here with forty little people! I think we should go up in the forest, all put on pointed hats, dance in a circle and sing fa-la-la-la!" Their whole idea is to help little people be more normal. If they succeed in helping people be more normal, that would be a disaster! We have something that is very special and unique.

Do you realize that in San Francisco, there's people jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge all the time? So by the time 990 people had jumped off the bridge, there was a flurry of people that jumped off and committed suicide right around that time, all of them hoping to be that 1,000th person. To me, this is how drowning people are in their anonymity, in trying to be special in this faceless sea we live in.

**What the Little People are saying is that being "special" can be both good and bad with stigmas and stereotypes attached to it.**

I agree with you there, but if I have these stereotypes attached to me and I walked up to this stranger who

I've never met, now he has no idea what's in my mind at all, but I already know what's in his mind. I know where his buttons are. Any time you can predict somebody, you can manipulate them. If you already know where people's buttons are and you set them off in the right order, you send them down a previously ground path. For example, let's say I'm shopping at a grocery store and there's some old man who would see me and—very innocently on his part—sees this cute little fellow shopping. And what does he say to me? He goes (*in baby-boo voice*), "Are we goin' shopping today?" He doesn't even realize the condescension in his voice, but what he's really revealing is how cute I appear to him. Just in order to make him realize it without attacking him, I turn to him and take a stance like Shirley Temple with big puffy cheeks and say (*in baby voice*), "Why, we sure are!!" (*Cackling*)

**He wouldn't expect that!**

It embarrasses him because he just realizes what he has done. But it is not an attack; it is no more of an attack than what he has done. I think that if you've got something unique about yourself, or maybe even just a little different, instead of making it into a stigma, "Oh, this is a terrible problem I'll try my best to overcome," isn't it possible that it's a good thing and that it was given to you by God and that there's a richness in being little? The stereotypes, stigmas and all that stuff is *part* of that richness. Stereotypes are fun to explode and they're fun to exploit. Both of those things I enjoy and that's a richness of life—in life—that we have.

**Is there much deviation in the roles you've played? I honestly believe that your height will always be a determining factor in the kind of roles offered to you. From what I know, the prescribed roles for midgets and dwarves are elves, gnomes, Oompa Loompas, etc.**

But if I saw that someone was going to shoot the Magic Johnson story, I would not audition for the role of Magic Johnson. I don't think it's any more restrictive than that.

**What was it like working with David Lynch?**

It was completely different than acting. There's a thing that actors have called motivation, and unless you know your character's motivation, you're just like a mannequin out there saying words. David Lynch made sure that we were not allowed to have things like context and motivation. When I asked him about the context of a scene, he would just say, "There is no context." He would deny such a thing existed.

**What would that do to you?**

It meant that I would follow his directions exactly. He'd say, "Rub your hands together just like this,"





above  
Little Mike let  
loose in the toy  
section of K-Mart.

and I'd rub my hands together. "Now can you go like this, 'Huuh uh, huuh ooh,'" and I'd do that and he'd say, "That's it, buddy, you nailed it!" Something different than acting, nothing internal to it at all.

#### **Are you still in touch with him?**

I saw him at Jack Nance's funeral. We don't get along; I think he believes that I'm evil.

#### **He does?**

It's just the way he acts. Subtle things.

#### **A friend of mine wanted me to ask you: Why did the Man from Another Place inspire such loathing and fear in its viewers?**

I think that David Lynch's work, like a lot of the modern artists of our era... began with Surrealism with Dali and that group, along with Freud, in which they discovered not just an inner life to human beings, but an unconscious life with its own colors, forms and flavors. Surrealism began to address this part of our mind, and on through Dadaism and Abstract Expressionism. What's so disturbing about David's stuff is that there is no sensible conscious interpretation. However, it's very obvious and recognizable through our unconscious minds. We don't know what it is, but

## **"I'm not gay, but even now I think it might have been interesting to have gone with Boy George. Maybe some little man had been the greatest love of his life!"**

still it rings a lot of bells and hits a lot of buttons. The more nonsensical it gets in the conscious realm and the more powerful it gets in the unconscious realm, the more upsetting it becomes to us. I think my character possessed these qualities, and there was a lot to that character that was really recognizable to people's unconscious. It was such an unusual image that it was a new experience to their conscious minds. It was strong in both being incoherent consciously and powerful unconsciously.

#### **At one of the clubs you worked at, Andy Warhol frequented the place.**

Yes, I knew Andy Warhol for the last year of his life. I was in a thing he did for MTV called *Andy Warhol's 15 Minutes*.

#### **I heard he took up an interest in you.**

For the first six months, I didn't know it was him, and for the second six months I did know it was Andy Warhol. At first when he would come up, he was just this annoying old man, asking questions like, "What do you think you're doing?" And I would answer with some sort of smart ass reply. Then at some point, I realized, "Holy lollapalooza! This is freakin' Andy Warhol!" It changed my attitude toward him, and he realized that I knew who he was now. When I first arrived there, I was from Colorado. I don't know if you're familiar with Denver.

#### **No.**

Denver is more of a cultural void than you will find anywhere... maybe on the face of the planet. It's an anti-cultural culture.

#### **In what sense? Denver doesn't inspire much?**

No, but if you even write a poem, it's because you think you're some kinda hot-shot!

#### **(Laughing)**

Plus, living in Denver, you are surrounded with absolutely magnificent natural scenic splendor! So any (in *Queen's English*), "I think that I shall never see / a poem as lovely as a tree," is actually very trite compared to a tree. This is the kinda beauty and depth of meaning that they live with. So just to go out and walk through natural wilderness like that is more intense than anything that Hollywood could do. So as a result, when I came to work at this disco and see Andy Warhol, that's how it was possible for me to not know who he was. I don't know if you know about his

history much, but once he became famous, he was able to sell everything with his name on it. Then what he did was try to make art and *not* put his name on it and then tried to sell it and he couldn't do it; nobody could sell it for him. But if he signed a canvas and literally pissed on it, it would sell. This really pissed him off, so to speak. What it meant is that they were no longer interested in who he was or what he was saying about anything; they were just buying the name. That's why he pissed on a canvas. Some people work with oils, some work with acrylics, but part of the medium he began to work with was fame. He began to work in fame and be about fame; the concept of fame really attracted his attention. He was all about it towards the end, but so is our 20th century culture to a large degree. So when I knew he was Andy Warhol, he became disinterested in me completely because I had been contaminated by his fame. I was no longer reacting to the person that he really was; I was, just like everyone else, just reacting to the name Andy Warhol.

#### **How do you cope with your own celebrity status?**

It's a problem when I can't find a job or when I'm having difficulty supporting myself, only to still have people come up and pour adulation on me and want my autograph. I've had fans much wealthier than me that were like, "Oh, this is such an honor!" At those times, it almost seems like there should be some benefit I can derive from that. Ultimately, there's not a material benefit that you can derive from it unless you can generate products like "Man from Another Place Toothpaste." (*Laughing*)

#### **Or "Man from Another Place Squidbars?"**

Yeah!

#### **Are you content with the idea that you will perhaps go down in history as the Man From Another Place?**

No. It's possible that you're right, but I'm not content with it. Instead, I'd rather go down as the only little man in history to rival Elvis, but I just don't think it's going to happen. ✱



# the Interpreters

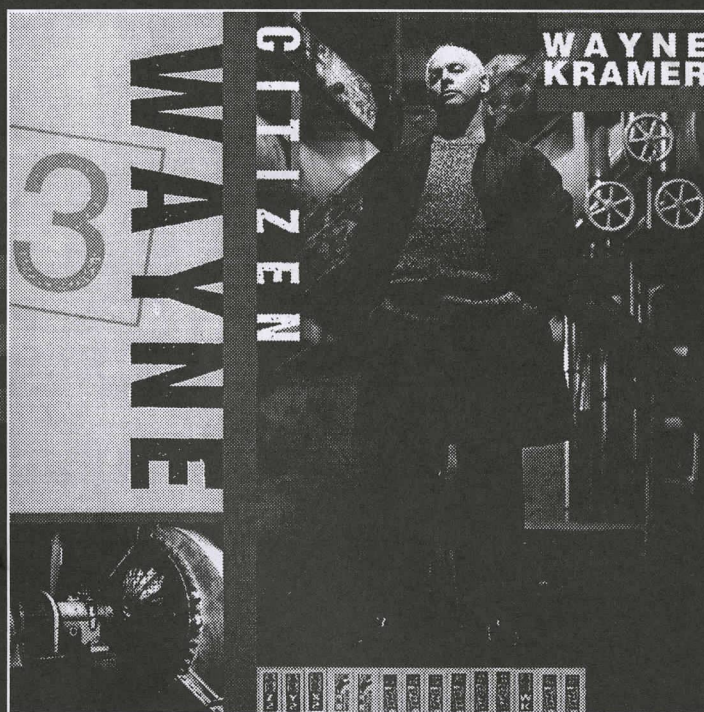
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# July





# ACCORDION MANIA!

BY JENNY GOTWALS

Q: "What do you call 10,000 accordions at the bottom of the ocean?"

A: *A good start.*

Q: "What do you call an accordion player with a pager?"

A: *An optimist.*

**T**he accordion inspires many jokes such as these; even accordionists themselves tell them. What is so bad about the accordion? For years it has been maligned as unmelodic and unsightly. Why stand to play the accordion when you can sit and play the piano, and be civilized about the whole thing? The accordion is not seen in traditional symphonies or even high school marching bands; its assumed screechiness and crassness holds it back. Despite such stigma, the accordion is currently enjoying a resurgence in use, and also popularity. It is estimated that over 75,000 people in the US know how to play the accordion. Many of these musicians bring such energy and enthusiasm to the instrument that they cannot be overlooked as menial talents, or indeed, as tone deaf fools. It is no 15-pound instrument to be taken lightly. But why does the accordion have the power to inspire both hatred and heartache, sneers and swoons?

I was initially attracted to the instrument upon playing a small concertina—a bellows box with buttons on either end—and after witnessing sever-

al street musicians in San Francisco who played the accordion. It suddenly seemed that accordions were everywhere I looked. With the mariachi band in the tacqueria, as some sort of fashion accessory for Sheryl Crow, in my mother's closet, played by the keyboardist at the Palace show, at an experimental music concert, in the Counting Crows video, in the shower with Frank Jordan. Such a wide range of venues, and such widely disparate types of music for one instrument caught my attention and held it among the bellows for one looong slooow note.

Okay, my mother doesn't really have an accordion in her closet, but once she did force me to dance around the living room with her to a Time-Life polka CD, causing my friend Rich, who was in medical school at the time, to pronounce her clinically insane. Was it because she was dancing like a lunatic or because she was doing it to a polka CD? I think those things are intrinsically linked. The melodies of Motown would not have inspired such a diagnosis (nor, perhaps, such crazy dancing) as the polkas did. Accordion music causes other people besides my mother to go a little loopy in the head. In the accordion's heyday in San

Francisco, one of the accordion schools had its entire second story and roof built in the shape of an accordion, including all the necessary keys, etc. Such dedication! Try to imagine a tuba-shaped house, or a car which doubled as a drum machine. Unfortunately the accordion house is no longer with us to illustrate the extent of such obsession.

I recently went to an accordion festival, where bands of all genres performed. Everyone there was crazy. The band members and the crowd were dressed up in Cajun good ol' boy clothes, ladies with big skirts and men with boots and big hats, dancing and dancing. Older people and kids dancing, some people dancing solo, and two preppy teenagers doing the shag and assorted musical theater routines. It was pretty bizarre. I guess that I don't normally see people dancing as if their life depended on it in the middle of Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. Maybe that's Fisherman's Wharf for you, or more likely, its accordion mania at its best. Huge polka dances, big skirts, lederhosen, sweaty men swinging ladies with big hair, etc. What could be more fun?

Partly due to San Francisco's love affair with the accordion (it was named the official instrument of







## MISS MURGATROID: HIGH PRIESTESS OF HELL

Alicia Rose is an accordion freak who steals our hearts and then sticks them with pins. Under the name Miss Murgatroid, she has released two CDs and several singles of accordion music. Her songs veer from experimental to carnival-esque. She combines aspects of vaudeville music, dirge, and distorted noise. The most recent release, *Myoclyonic Melodies*, is an amazing soundtrack to nightmares, old German silent films, and nights of vomiting. Alicia began playing the accordion several years ago. Her first accordion was a Hanukkah present, a gift from a family whose combined musical talent had previously overwhelmed her.

She claims to hate all other musical instruments, but found the accordion to be "tactile," and "strap-on." Besides its pleasing physicality, the noises she can produce on the accordion continue to intrigue and astonish Alicia. The accordion's great range of timbres and tones cause her to call it "an instrument of doom, decay and beauty."

"I was into music like Brian Eno and Wire from a pretty early age, so I was into distortion from the beginning," Alicia admits. Although you might not imagine an accordion played with a distortion pedal, it was only a few months after Alicia's accordion lessons began that she got one to begin manipulating her music. And warp it she does! While capable of a gamut of sounds, an accordion has the tendency to still sound like, well, an accordion. As Miss Murgatroid, Alicia goes hog-wild with distortion pedals, often teasing the "accordion" sound out of her music, and causing my friend to dub her "the Jimi Hendrix of the accordion."

During her first performance at the Chameleon in San Francisco, she wore a Wonder Woman mask to hide her stage fright. At that show, her music caused someone in the audience to get physically sick. She cackles about that, how that sort of terror and disturbance is what she wants to convey to listeners, and how "the *feng shui* is off" in her compositions. She pauses a minute and then admits, "I'm fucking weird, man."

Alicia is 6 feet tall, and with a glittering accordion strung across her chest, she certainly can come across as "fucking weird." Asked about her performance costumes, she sneers, "Well, I don't wear a clown suit, but do I try to wear sparkly items and glamorous dresses." At a recent show at San Francisco's Make-Out Room, Miss Murgatroid was fabulously decked out in a shiny burgundy prom dress and pigtails. Much of the packaging on her records also shows a taste for the glittery and outrageous. In one of the photos on the cover of *Myoclyonic Melodies*, she holds a bejeweled face of her accordion in front of her head. She sells stickers with accordions printed on red sparkly paper. This draws attention to her novel and flamboyant use of what could be seen as a tired, cheesy instrument.

For the record, Alicia feels ambivalent about the recent rash of accordion fame and the general social status of accordion players. "Sometimes I have a hard time getting anyone to take me or the accordion seriously,"

the city in 1990), and partly due to the recent revitalization of the instrument, the San Francisco Accordion Festival is now a yearly event, complete with a contest to pick "The Main Squeeze." This honor is mainly bestowed upon older members of the accordion playing community, and attendees can vote for a mere 50 cents. This all might seem a bit kitschy or tongue-in-cheek to an outsider, but it is also very serious. All the performing bands play together regularly, and some are popular enough to have t-shirts, newsletters, and web sites. There is something warm hearted about bands/musicians who use the accordion in a kitschy way; it's part of the fun. Those Darn Accordions (a highlight at the Festival) work that sort of angle as much as they possibly can; the ladies wear big crinolined dresses and beehived hair, playing such crowd pleasers as "The Devil Went Down To Georgia" with a big accordion duel. The crowd loves it and everyone wants to dance and clap and scream. No one is even thinking of dissing them for playing accordions because they are having a great time. Even people who malign the accordion have to give in a little to such a display. They can mock the traditional polka garb and instruments while still having a lot of fun. (Just for the record, I voted for the eightysomething member of Those Darn Accordions who sang "Do You Think I'm Sexy")

What other kinds of kooks play accordion music? In a few words, all kinds of people. Lawrence Welk, Weird Al Yankovic, experimental musicians, old Italian men, born-again Christians, They Might Be Giants, Flaco Jimenez, Bruce Springsteen, George Bush, French folk musicians, Deborah Norville, a woman who sings Beatles songs on the streets of San Francisco while wearing a Viking helmet. Some of these people were trained on the instrument in their childhood, others have only recently taken it up. There was a general decline in interest and fashionability of the accordion starting around the Sixties, but recently the accordion has been featured more and more in popular/rock music in America. It has existed as a part of more regional, ethnic music since its initial introduction into the musical culture of America.

In San Francisco, where the accordion began its reign of this fair land, it was a large part of Italian culture. Parents sent their youngsters to accordion school and, instead of only the dorks playing the accordion, all the most attractive youth did so. Whenever traveling players came through town, they gave concerts throughout town, sometimes at the Opera House, and one group of players was billed as "an orchestra of 25 Virtuosi of the Accordion and Harmonica—the sensation of two

continents!" Excitement and interest reigned supreme. In fact, throughout the beginning half of the century, accordion virtuosi (as they were always called) were often sex symbols among American young ladies. Perhaps they were hoping for a moonlit serenade, or maybe they were impressed by the great fingering prowess of the famous gents. That was low, I know, but I felt a need for a comic interlude ala Shakespeare. In actuality, the number of women accordionists seems to be relatively high. There were plenty of women in the Italian and Polish accordion schools in the beginning of the century, and there are many contemporary players, and "virtuosi" at that, who are female. I have not found any evidence of female accordion players as sex symbols, but perhaps that will change, as fashion models have recently been photographed with accordions.

Accordion players in the first heyday of the accordion were able to add to the spirit of their community, to pass on to their children an art form which was respected, exciting, and central to much cultural activity. A friend's mother recently lamented, "If I had really raised you as an Italian, you would have learned to play the accordion from childhood." This community spirit was integral in Chicago, where many polka records were recorded locally by Polish record labels. Some of the turning points for the Polish community in Chicago during the Depression revolved around the release of polka records. After months and even years of poverty and little excitement, "The Beer Barrel Polka" was released just as the economy was starting to get a little better. People were interested enough to socialize again, and "you could get a big 26-ounce stein of beer for a dime, and things were really rolling" in the Polish dance halls, according to Alvin Sajewski, who put out records of Polish music with his father. The continuance of life-as-usual, in the form of peaceful gatherings for song and dance was vital for the Polish immigrants. And boy, did that polka ever get things rolling! When The Andrews Sisters recorded "The Beer Barrel Polka" in English, introducing it to a larger audience, the song and its musical style became popular with much of America.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Lawrence Welk...*

Just at the time when greater America was becoming interested in polka music, Lawrence Welk came from South Dakota with an accordion on his knee, and played his way into American pop culture. Welk brought the instrument to the masses through his radio broadcasts and long-running TV variety show. His orchestra played traditional polka



music as well as American favorites of the time. "The Lawrence Welk Show" spotlighted many talents, most of them family acts such as the Lennon Sisters (who spawned such publicity paraphernalia as action-adventure stories, in which the girls solve mysteries at the dude ranch in between warming up for their next act), and professed to be a show for, and created by, "regular folks". Welk, along with his whole show, was beloved by many. The show was a hit in spite of, or perhaps because of, the blandness it presented; weekly installments full of bad love songs, the smiling faces of children, and happy middle-aged musicians.

"The Lawrence Welk Show" tried to present a family environment, an approach which was lauded for a time, but eventually came to be reviled as "cheesy" and stupid. The shifting of cultural opinion on Lawrence Welk (whose name now sells retirement "villages") may have had a lot to do with the drop in popularity of the accordion for most of the country. During the Sixties, far greater problems plagued the nation than the adventures of Welk's regular performers, and Welk's brand of white bread sentimentalism (captured mainly in his blubbing cries of "That's wunnerful!" after performances) began to fall out of favor against race riots, wars, gender fury, and the rising drug culture of the time. "The Lawrence Welk Show" is sometimes played now on TV, since we are blessed with the option of infinite reruns. I recently watched an episode with my mother. I, of course, was totally into it, intrigued by the sea green pantsuits and flowing costumes, and kept screaming "play the accordion" at the hapless announcer (who kept filling in for Welk—I guess he had gotten too senile by that point in his career). I was not rewarded by any great accordion showdown, unfortunately, just a lot of love duets. My mother, a child of the Sixties, was horrified and amused that I was so interested in Lawrence Welk—that I even knew who Lawrence Welk was. She kept insisting on calling my grandmother to tell her that I was forcing the family to watch Lawrence Welk, a social icon loved by my grandmother, hated by my mother, and then loved by me. Is this Lawrence Welk's fate? After being dissed by one generation, he becomes popular with another as an object of ridicule and kitsch value? That's not such a bad fate. Whatever my kitsch-related interest in Welk, I am not really ridiculing him. Not anymore than I ridicule anything else, that is.

Despite the decline during the Sixties, the accordion's importance among ethnic enclaves around the United States has been maintained over the years. In 1987, Flaco Jimenez, a respected

accordion player, won a Grammy for his recordings in "Chicano music." This was also the year that the music magazine High Fidelity proclaimed "The Year of the Accordion in Pop Music." In the time since, the ranks of accordion players seem to have swelled. Most of today's most celebrated accordion players, though, have been at it for years. Weird Al Yankovic (who is not related to, though he shares the same name as, Frankie "the polka king" Yankovic, another accordion great) has been playing the accordion since he was a child. Legend has it that Weird Al's grandmother would give him a dollar every time he would come over to her house and play his accordion for her. He still grovels for money and attention, plays the accordion on many of his albums, and encodes secret messages about the accordion in the center of some of his vinyl recordings.

Guy Klucevsek is an accordion player who, on his various recordings plays "traditional accordion music" (the Virgin Megastore considers his music to be "Classical"), i.e. polkas and similar sounding music he composes, as well as compositions by superstar new composers like John Zorn and Laurie Anderson. One of the other composers whose work Klucevsek plays on his album Manhattan Cavalcade is a visual artist named Christian Marclay who claims "traditional" accordion music is "cheesy and unfashionable." Does this place his own, "nontraditional" accordion music in the fashionable category? Honestly, I can not make out much difference between a traditional polka and Marclay's reworking of the form.

Fashionably non-traditional musicians often learn the benefits of the accordion in their schooling. Anthony Braxton, a famed experimental musician, recently asked one of his former students, an accordion player, to collaborate on an album of duets for the saxophone and accordion. Students in the Mills College Masters in Composition program can choose the accordion as their main instrument of study; Visiting Professor Pauline Oliveros is considered by some to be "the most exciting composer for the accordion this century." That must mean Weird Al is out of the running.

But what about Weird Al as "the most exciting composer for the accordion this century"? He has arguably given the accordion most of its exposure during the past two decades. Although most of Weird Al's compositions are brilliant imitations of other's songs, he is not any two-bit musician. His technical accordion playing is good (honed since childhood, after all), and he is able to use the instrument well while also poking a little fun at the kitsch value of accordions and their traditional

she sighs. "They always say, oh yeah, Weird Al, Lawrence Welk, the Space Lady [queen of the San Francisco street performers]." She suggests that groups such as Those Dam Accordions "give the accordion a bad name." This frustration seems understandable, especially from someone who is not interested in poodle skirts or polkas, but in the more sinister and sonic folds of the accordion. She would rather go to a meeting of young composers than the San Francisco Accordion Club. (At her first and only attendance, she found herself one of only 2 people under the age of 40 in the room.) Still, Alicia has to admit that in some way, she enjoys the fact that the accordion is the black sheep of the musical instrument family. "I get the pleasure of making it good," she said.

The accordion also does Alicia some good. "For me, the accordion is a voice: it provides a soundtrack to moods and nightmares," something no other instrument could ever do for her. Every time I listen to *Myoclonic Melodies*, I feel like I'm in a trance, or going through the Tunnel of Love at the State Fair, only to discover dead bodies dripping blood inside. My feelings alternate from joyous to suicidal. I'm not sure any other music has produced such strong emotional reactions in me. "It is its own genre," concedes Miss Murgatroid. Most record stores find it difficult to decide what section to put it in, though somewhere in between The Boredoms and the soundtrack to *Blue Velvet* would be nice, I guess.

Although she herself enjoys both composing and performing, Alicia demurs, "it's hard for me to imagine people being impressed." Despite this self-deprecating attitude, many people seem to be impressed—Miss Murgatroid has a loyal following. People sometimes record her shows and she has even heard rumors of people flying in to San Francisco just to see her play. Alicia currently resides happily in Portland, Oregon. She has recently played at The Knitting Factory in New York and hopes to tour internationally, and may even be coming to a town near you.

— Jenny Gotwals

## MISS MURGATROID DISCOGRAPHY

### \* SINGLES

"Heavens To"/"Hell To" 7" (Hell Yeah Records), 1991  
 "Shadows on My Wall"/"The Dead Magician" 7" (Worry Bird), 1994  
 "Time Theory 11:11"/"Railroad to Kali" 7" (RGI Industries), 1995

### \* ALBUMS

*Methyl Ethyl Key Tones* CD (Worry Bird Disk), 1993  
*Myoclonic Melodies* CD (WIN), 1996  
*Through Alien Empires* CD (Japan Overseas), forthcoming

### \* COMPILATIONS

*Fuck You Spaceman 7"* (Planet Pimp Records)  
*Snake Is Long - Tribute to the Hanatarash* CD (Stomach Ache Records)  
*Stock Footage - A Tribute to Roger Corman* (Worry Bird)  
*Blood Orgy of the Leather Girls* Soundtrack LP (Planet Pimp)  
*Wavelength Infinity - A Tribute to Sun Ra* CD (Rastascan Records)  
*Mondo Drive In* CD (Blood Red Vinyl)  
*When I'm Hungry I Eat* CD (Gourmandizer)  
*KAOS: Theory* CD (Mayonnaise/Cottelston Pie)  
*Devout - A Tribute to Devo* CD (yet to be released)

### \* ADDRESSES

WIN Records, POB 26811, Los Angeles, CA 90026-0811  
 Planet Pimp: 1800 Market St. #45, San Francisco, CA 94102  
 Hell Yeah: PO Box 1975 Burbank, CA 91507  
 Stomach Ache Records: PO Box 424762, San Francisco, CA 94142  
 Rastascan: POB 3073, San Leandro, CA 94578-3073  
 Mayonnaise/Cottelston Pie: POB 11821, Olympia, WA 98508.  
 Gourmandizer: 3010 Hennipen Ave. S, #154, Minneapolis, MN 55408  
 Blood Red Vinyl: 2134 NE 25th, Portland, OR 97212  
 Japan Overseas: 6-1-21 Ueshio, Tennoji-Ku, Osaka 543 JAPAN



music. (His polka compilations on each album, such as the recent "Alternative Polka", are very funny.) Weird Al is not alone: many of the musicians playing accordion today really get a lot of mileage out of the kitsch aspect of the accordion. However, I don't think Weird Al, or anyone who plays the accordion regularly as a musician, is playing it just as a joke—that would be a bit like pulling too hard on a hopelessly limp dick.

Is that what kitsch is about? Pulling on dicks? Or valuing something for its shocking/funny/ugly aspects while also utilizing it in some way? Do all the people who now have black velvet paintings from the Seventies really "like" them? Someone once asked me, as I was wearing some pink chiffon housecoat, "Are you wearing that because you like it or because you think it's funny?" There is a thin line in our common slacker aesthetic between what is mocked and what is accepted. Embracing things formerly thought of as "tacky" or awkward (black velvet, bell bottoms, the moog, the accordion, etc.) is about first bucking and then reinventing that notion of tackiness. Can't you like something and think it's funny at the same time? The incorporation, then, of silliness into our daily lives is what we may be able to gain from the kitsch-o-rama of the accordion revival. Can we blame anyone else for the need, the ability,

the strength to be able to live life in a continuously clowny way? Don't you think Weird Al has a lot of fun? He must.

Do the people who go to experimental music shows with accordions have a lot of fun? I honestly do not know. Most of the time I go to that sort of thing, I can't say that it is fun. Maybe in a cerebral way, or interesting. But fun? I guess I'm dissing all my experimental musician friends here, but I do feel like there is some sort of lack of silliness. Miss Murgatroid is the one "experimental" performer I have seen who has captured my attention and caused me to both think about the music and have a great time listening to it. Overly serious attempts by angry rockers get really boring too; nothing is really so sacred anymore that laughing at yourself or someone nearby should be too much of a problem. But let's get away from stodgy musicians, and try to determine what imbibes the accordion with its overload of kitsch.

The accordion has been, and in some ways still is, very much a folk instrument, married to ethnic music from day one. This may account for both its stigma and its now-beloved place in the hall of kitsch. Even the music played by Lawrence Welk, smiling denture king of accordions, was ethnic by virtue of its white, middle class, midwestern roots. All the "America the Beautiful" songs and "Silent

Night" choruses combine to make his show just as ethnic as Tex Mex bands. (A small side note: Recently in *Orlie's Lowriding Magazine*, a Chicana singer, Stefani, told how "her grandfather...was a great inspiration...she would watch and listen to him play his faithful accordion and sing the old rancheras.") Not all things ethnic are kitschy by that virtue, but most of the accordion-related topics (polka, Italian love songs) contain something that has to do with totality of involvement, something very similar to the energy put into every performance by a band like Those Darn Accordions. It ends up being kind of hard to make a fool of yourself any way less than whole-heartedly. Kitsch is characterized by the revitalization of something that was once central to some people. The accordion happens to be a little different than, say, bell bottoms, as it actually has an important social history along with its standard wackiness.

Even though an accordion may be maligned, scorned, or laughed at, it can still be used for the greatest fun imaginable. And in the end, that stigma of cheesiness can only assist in helping the accordion march on up to its place beside other much-loved instruments of our time: the kazoo, the Moog, the human beatbox... ✻

## FOR THE HISTORY BUFFS...

The accordion and similarly-styled instruments have a presence in almost all genres of folk music worldwide. The accordion is a major player in China, Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, Russia, the US, Mexico, Brazil, and even parts of Africa. I have yet to find or hear tell of evidence of accordion presence in South East Asia, but that does not rule it out. The accordion's popularity as an instrument may be based upon its portability along with its lovely tonal qualities and piano keys. The *Golden Encyclopedia of Music* calls it an "organ-like piece of furniture." Few accordion players, however, would think of their instrument as mere furniture.

The facts surrounding the accordion's birth are slightly contested. Its forefather is the "sheng" (or the "cheng," since some one insists upon changing the spellings of everything Chinese every 20 years) a reed instrument made in China. This makes China the home to just about every major accomplishment: fireworks, spaghetti, the accordion. It's really quite amazing. The Chinese were smart enough to construct bellows that pushed air across the reed, thus leaving their mouths free to sing along with the music. The singing musician in the subway was born. Supposedly, Marco Polo brought this sheng instrument back to Italy at some point in his travels. That seems a little historically suspect, but let's just go with it.

Once they had their grimy paws on this bellows device, craftsmen in Germany and Austria developed a bellows box with buttons on either end in 1821, and in 1829 an instrument with piano-like keys was patented in Vienna as an "accordion." Voila! The piano-keyed box was not put to much use throughout the

rest of the century, however, and button boxes are still much more popular in Europe. Early accordions had around 12 treble keys and at least 2 bass buttons. Today accordions are made with approximately 40 treble keys and up to 120 buttons.

The popularity of the instrument increased throughout the century, although it "remained essentially an instrument of the people, heard in cafes, dance halls and music halls all over the world" (*Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*). Aha, now we see that even though born in the time of Wagner and all that national fancy shmancy music of Europe, the accordion was always the bastard brother to the real organ, never afforded its place in the high culture that I'm sure its creators hoped for. (However, this bastardization did pave the path for the accordion's future use as accompaniment to all sorts of ethnic music.)

Now we come to the bright and shining point in our story when the accordion is brought to America. During the 19th century, waves of immigration brought many Europeans to the sunny shores of the US of A. Many Italians settled in San Francisco. One of them, Colombo Piatanesi, brought his accordion from his hometown in Italy. He made the first accordion built in America at his North Beach store, Colombo and Sons, in 1907. Some feel this instrument to be the first true accordion, rather than the ones previously made in Europe. In fact, many of the accordion players who lobbied the city of San Francisco to declare the accordion its official instrument, called upon this historical building of the "first" accordion in San Francisco as a major reason the instrument should be so lauded by the city.

Accordion manufacturers, accordion schools, and accordion playing flourished in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco from about 1910 through around 1950. In 1916, San

Francisco's accordion club was the only one of its kind in the world. In 1933 there were 8 accordion factories in North Beach, and enough local virtuosi to demand the publication, half a decade later, of a long historical treatise called "Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco." People, you see, are really into their accordion mania!

During this same time, accordion schools were flourishing in all major cities, especially Chicago (with such a large population of Polish immigrants it's no wonder. The polka must go on!) In Texas, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans took up the accordion from German immigrants and incorporated it into what is now termed the Tex Mex or *Norteño* style of music. Cajun and Zydeco music also utilized the instrument. With a range of almost eleven octaves, it lends itself well to many styles of playing. The large amount of accordion training that went on is especially interesting considering that accordions were not usually included in orchestras or even marching bands. Very few classical composers have written pieces for the accordion.

By 1965, Colombo and Sons had stopped making their own accordions. Instead, they imported the instruments from China, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Italy, among other countries. After surviving three generations of owners and accordion players, and even a move to Marin, Piatanesi's store has recently closed its doors. Despite the recent upswing of accordion players, there does not seem to be a similar resurgence in accordion makers and technicians at the local level in the US. However, given the accordion's importance in so many genres of music, and its popularity among new performers, perhaps this will change.

— Jenny Gotwels



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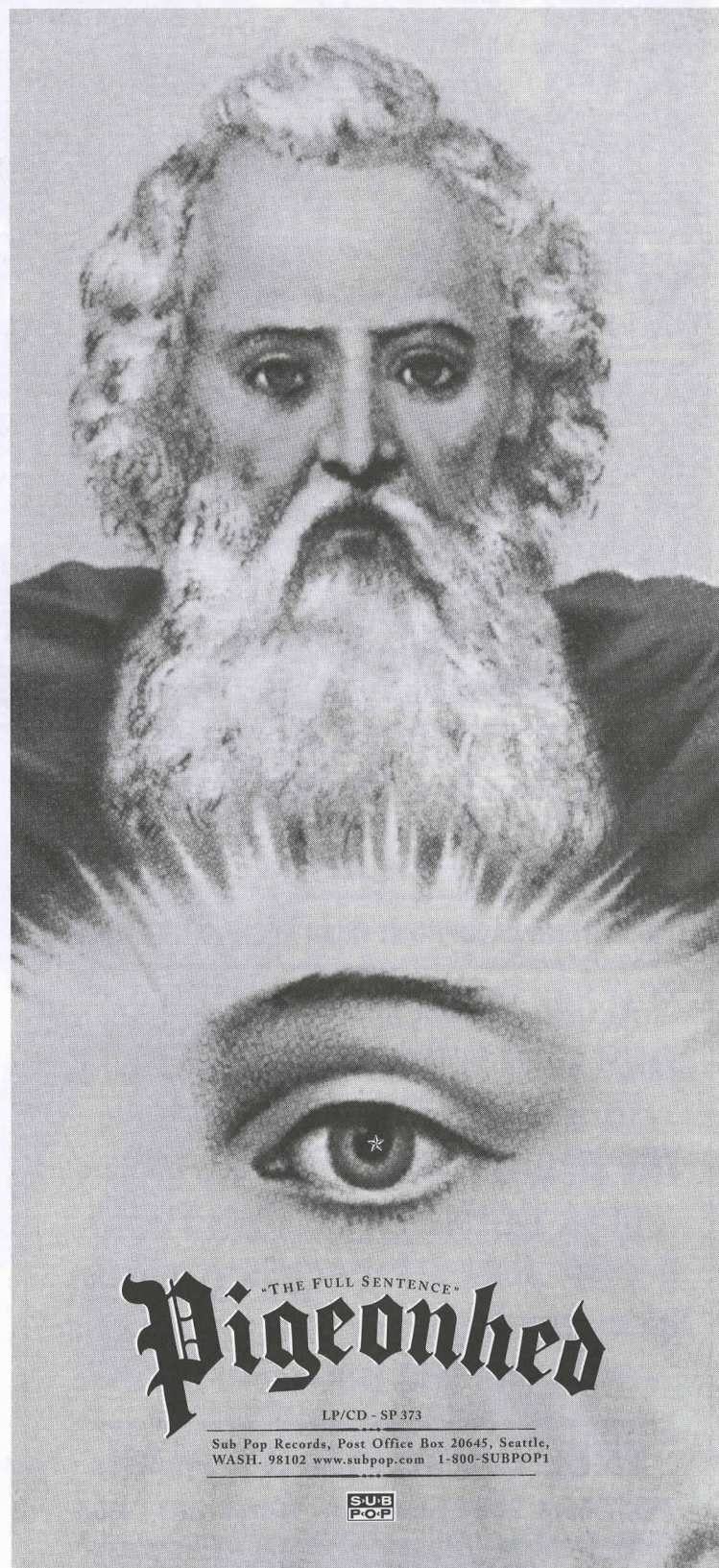


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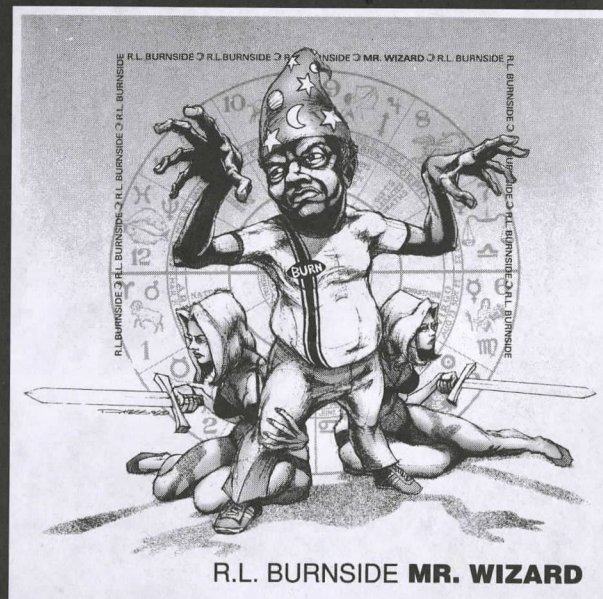
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# katherine DUNN

When Katherine Dunn was the geek, my little dreamlets, she spoke in a soothing tone and told fabulous tales about the queer and the clandestine. Her progeny is a parade of physical curios in *Geek Love* whose aqua-finned, paralleled, telekinetic existences sully their motivations and weigh upon their hump-backed consciences. Our wide eyes burrow beneath the brightly-lit surfaces of sideshow spectacles and cuddle in a caravan cupboard of ruses, rituals and alienation.

With *Death Scenes*, Dunn implores us to peek through the keyhole of early twentieth century criminal investigation. The book, a combination of text and photographs, pushes the cinematic, smart-aleck, whiskey-louse investigator of yore into obsolescence and thrusts an interrogative light into the bloodshot eyeballs of perverse meticulousness.

In real and fictional accounts, Katherine Dunn explores power dynamics by examining the facets of society that require our mental and emotional faith, such as religion, cults and science. She is preoccupied with the confused responses that people have to one another and their environment and investigates the difficulty of awkward individuality and the complicated ease that comes with sameness. Her language jabs and weaves beautifully and her characters illicit

empathy in spite of, or perhaps because of, their failings. Her tall tales wind and fly like colorful acrobats whose shabby sequins and sweaty pits are all too apparent in the catch-net of reality. When Katherine was the geek, she assured us that there were no good old days.

**Noël:** What did you do this morning?

Katherine Dunn: I read the paper, drank lots of coffee and took the dog out for a walk.

**Noël:** We were just talking about coffee the other night and whether or not we agree with it.

KD: Oh really? Do tell.

**Nicole:** The first thing that I have in the morning is a cup of coffee and by the time two o'clock rolls around and I haven't eaten very much, I'm snarling and difficult to deal with. I think I might have to cut my consumption down a little bit. Caffeine is a stimulant for me in a very bad way.

**Noël:** I, on the other hand, mostly appreciate coffee mixed in with ice cream or something. I take the wussy route.

KD: I think anyone who drinks black coffee has a serious masochistic problem.

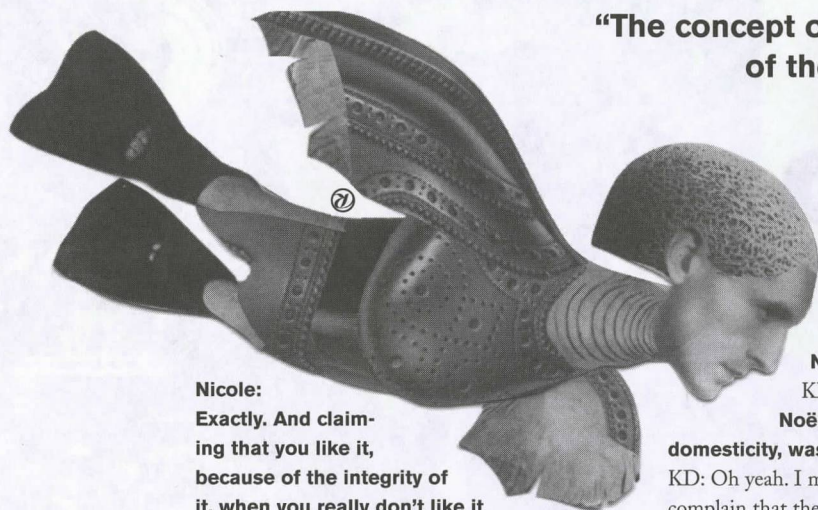
**Nicole:** People who drink black coffee are very proud of the fact that they drink black coffee.

KD: It's a very courageous and gutsy thing to do, not unlike eating bitter-sweet chocolate instead of semi-sweet.



interview nicole ARMOUR & noël art rob REGER





**"The concept of cults seemed to me to be a clear demonstration of the way humans deal with power and responsibility. What attracted people to cults and what they got out of them was a primary concern."**

**Nicole:**

**Exactly. And claiming that you like it, because of the integrity of it, when you really don't like it at all.**

**Noël: What about sharp cheese?**

**Nicole: Now that's a whole other story. Sharp cheese is far superior to black coffee.**

**Noël: So why don't you start consuming sharp cheese in the morning?**

**KD: How about some really wonderful, outrageous Roquefort on a healthy whole wheat cracker?**

**Nicole: With the aim of snapping my senses to attention.**

**KD: Sure. Just eat that five or six times before noon. Those zaps of protein into your system will probably prevent all kinds of fluctuations. Always think of adding rather than subtracting. I think it's a puritanical impulse to subtract. Don't say to yourself, "No I shouldn't do this." Of course you should do it! Just add something else that will counter it. Now, I was hoping that you guys would let me ask you questions too, but I think you'll be comfortable with that.**

**Nicole: It depends on what they are.**

**KD: I just mean conversing about the topics that Noël mentioned to me rather than just having me pontificate. Not that I'm unwilling to pontificate.**

**Noël: We know that you have all the answers. So weren't you traveling just a few weeks ago?**

**KD: Possibly. Just silly stuff.**

**Noël: I've never really had an opportunity to travel that much but the few times that I have weren't about sight-seeing. Maybe that has to do with seeing too many postcards of the Grand Canyon. It feels like it has more to do with romanticizing conversations in greasy diners, things that I can do in my own city. But traveling, for you, is more of a disappearing act. Is it also part of the creative process?**

**KD: To tell you the truth, I don't like to travel. When I was young, I loved it and I did it a lot. It**

**was a combination disappearing act, itchy feet, curiosity and a desire to see the world. It's been quite a long time since I've felt that way.**

**Noël: What's your son's name?**

**KD: Eli.**

**Noël: As you were sliding towards domesticity, was it awkward at first?**

**KD: Oh yeah. I must say, though, that people often complain that they can't do their work now that they have children and I certainly never found that to be the case. For me, my son was a real center of gravity because I had to make sure that there was a roof and dinner, and that probably saved my life because I might have neglected them if it hadn't been for him. He was often an inspiration and an instructor for me. He was a major motivator.**

**Nicole: That brings up the idea of the nuclear family—it seems as though that concept is falling apart. We're constantly being inundated with "family values" and attempts to restore the family unit, but do you think that's even a possibility?**

**KD: I'm not a sociologist or an historian or an expert on cultural affairs, and I want to go on the record as saying that I'm not an expert. My opinion is that all of this rhetoric about "family values" and the disintegration of society in the wake of the destruction of the nuclear family is hogwash. It's political rhetoric serving different agendas and representing different points of view. Human culture has a history of extremely varied familial setups. The primary influences which seem to affect them are economic and physical. A totally agrarian culture has a different structure than a mercantile culture. What we're looking at now is a gradual evolution towards what will be functional in the next century. The fantasy of the tight nuclear family that was beyond disillusion because of tradition, the Church or social pressure has never been anything more than a fantasy. It's always an ideal. *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* were considered to be unrealistic even when they were on. We used to look at those programs and jeer! Mythology and fairy-tales are filled with reconstituted families. There was a long period of time when a woman's life expectancy was considerably less than a man's because of childbirth fever. That was the primary**

**cause of death for women. The distribution of chores, or the necessary work of maintaining a family required somebody to be the caregiver and the housekeeper. The man would frequently remarry, biology being what it is, and the new woman would want her children to have supremacy over the other woman's children. These myths and fairy-tales grow out of things that happen.**

**Nicole: It seems masochistic on our part to establish ideals for ourselves that we realize are simply ideals. Why do we set up standards that we can't meet and then beat ourselves up because we can't match the ideal?**

**KD: That's such a fascinating human phenomenon and it seems to be very general in history. The whole idea of religiously dictated morality could be described in those terms. The whole concept of chivalrous or aristocratic designs for proper behavior to Captain America's description of a good American to Mom's idea of what a good little lady is. Those things establish a standard which you never actually obtain. We might want to consider looking at that pattern of unobtainable ideals and look at the basic techniques by which humans operate. Our primary tool is our ability to change our environment.**

**Nicole: That's an interesting contradiction. We can change our environment and yet people are so reticent to do that.**

**KD: We get that dynamic tension, don't we? We change it because we're constantly building and destroying and growing things where things have never grown before. The human animal is the most resistant to change at the same time that it's the most flexible. The basic technique is that you imagine what you want and you form a picture in your mind. You decide that you're going to design something that will help you move around and keep you warm. You think of something that approximates a skirt or a robe or a pair of trousers. But you have to visualize it first in your mind and you present yourself with a problem in order to come up with the solution. The process is always the same. You visualize it first and then you punch it out into reality. The process of socializing people often follows a similar pattern. We create a fantasy of the way things ought to be or the way that we would like to be—the New Year's Resolution being one of the pettier but more endemic forms—and then we try to make them into reality. Nothing is**



ever perfect but we're always striving for perfection.

**Nicole:** Then there are things like a beauty ideal. What it's comprised of changes but the existence of a beauty ideal is persistent.

**Noël:** A *Newsweek* article pointed out that voluptuous women were considered ideal in the earlier part of the century as opposed to now, but that the hip to waist ratio is still within the same range. Even ancient Egyptian art has had an impact on our beauty ideal, though some feminists are more inclined to blame the media entirely.

**KD:** We can look at the female nudes of Rubens and they're certainly more robust than *Vogue* models.

**Nicole:** Or even Marilyn Monroe in comparison to Kate Moss. It all has to do with cultural trends. But whatever way you look at it, most women don't fit the ideal.

**KD:** I've heard about economic cultural influences on the standard. At a time when food was expensive and the poor tended to be thin, those who could afford a little extra indulgence and enough food to gain a little storage were considered to be the ideal.

**Noël:** Much like when the upper-classes were once very pale and the lower-classes, who had to work in the fields, had darker skin. It has since become reversed because sunbathing is associated with leisure.

**Nicole:** You bring that up in *Geek Love* when Arty talks about bound feet and people who grow their fingernails really long because being able to do those things suggests luxury and idleness.

**KD:** What do you think about that?

**Nicole:** I think he says that his "life allows superfluity." I thought it was interesting that he could look at his deformity and hold it up as an emblem of his not having to exist in the same manner as the masses.

**KD:** He was really freed from the responsibilities that the norms had to deal with.

**Noël:** Do you mind if we backtrack a little? You mentioned that you were the only child in your immediate family who graduated from high school and that your brothers were responsible for seeing that happen. But in a family that—as stated in the endnotes of *Geek Love*—believed in "mortality as a mere statistical probability," it surprised me that your future was favored over the long-standing tradition of boys carrying on the family name. Do you think this was unusual considering the times?

**KD:** School was a safe place and books were seen as a ladylike occupation, so I'm afraid that it wasn't

all that unusual. There have always been women who have gone out and received an education, but I think that quite often, men have sacrificed in order to provide their women with some method of protection; they often thought of it that way, and I was willing. My older brother, in particular, worked to make sure that I was properly taken care of.

**Nicole:** Historically, women were encouraged to read, paint and play music because it suggested that the man of the house could afford to have them do that.

**KD:** It was a status symbol for the man. But, once again, let's recall that that's only in the middle class and upper-middle class. Blue collar people of all genders have always had to work. There is that other element of the mobility of the American fantasy. Even though you may dig ditches, your children will read or buy or write books for a living. They won't have to blister their paws and break their backs. There's generation after generation of immigrants who have come with the fantasy of making that leap through the generations—where they will work in a really brutal and destructive fashion—so that the next generation will be able to literally change economic classes.

**Noël:** Were there other writers in the family? I got the impression that everybody was equally adept at storytelling.

**KD:** There are no other writers, but everybody in my family is a better storyteller than I am. I'm at the bottom, my older brother is probably the second worst storyteller. My little brother is a wonderful storyteller and he makes his living trucking. My mother, the painter, is the master storyteller of them all. I pale in comparison to the capacities of my familial members, believe you me.

**Noël:** I want to see that contest.

**KD:** I wouldn't even enter it. I always end up sitting against the wall with my jaw on my chest in amazement.

**Noël:** When you dream up the complexities and fine details of a novel or a short story, are there any particular rituals that you go through in an effort to obtain a clarity of vision?

**KD:** It varies from project to project. I've never come up with a patented system. Sometimes it starts with an event or a line in a song and you know instantly the entire plot and how everything will work itself out. Sometimes you're really just inching your way as you go. Writing fiction is much too complicated a project for one frame of mind. I even think of them as different personalities because they're different processes. One really important process that's really close to the beginning is putting myself into a theme and a self-induced hypnotic

trance of imagining everything very precisely. What would it look like? What would it smell like? What would it feel like? That's essentially my first draft. Recording all of that data in no particular order. Just to record as much of that sensory and emotional detail as possible. Then, when I'm in a more analytical frame of mind, send in Miss Grundy the grammarian to boot things into shape.

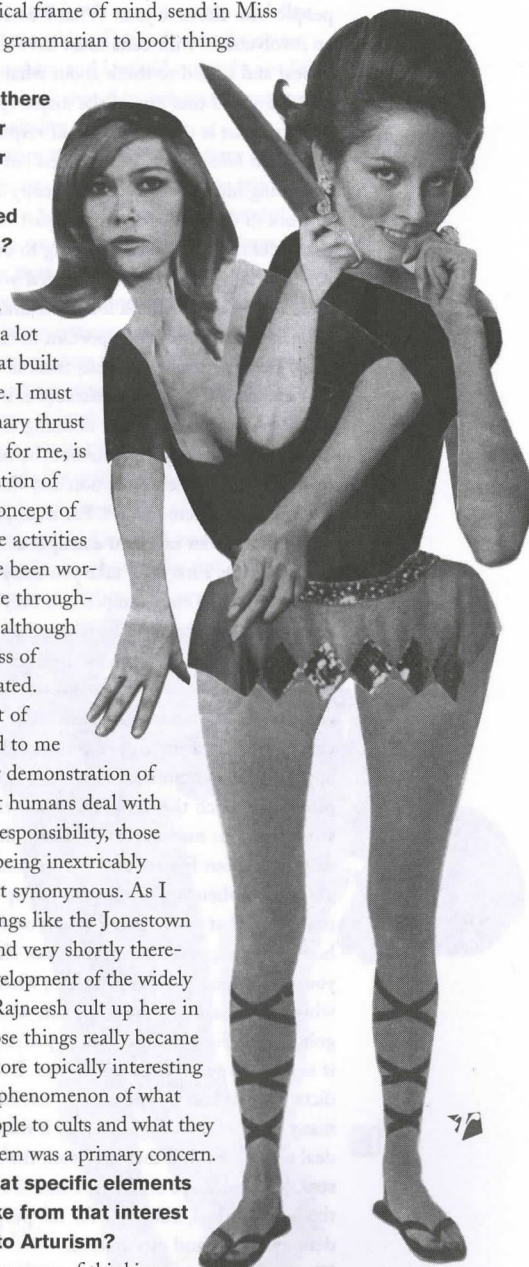
**Noël:** Was there a particular headline or newsflash that inspired *Geek Love*?

**KD:** Not a specific one.

There were a lot of things that built up over time. I must say, the primary thrust of the book, for me, is the examination of cults. The concept of cults and the activities of cults have been worrisome to me throughout my life, although my awareness of them fluctuated. The concept of cults seemed to me to be a clear demonstration of the way that humans deal with power and responsibility, those two things being inextricably linked, if not synonymous. As I watched things like the Jonestown Massacre, and very shortly thereafter the development of the widely publicized Rajneesh cult up here in Oregon, those things really became more and more topically interesting to me. The phenomenon of what attracted people to cults and what they got out of them was a primary concern.

**Nicole:** What specific elements did you take from that interest and apply to Arturism?

**KD:** In the process of thinking about them I came to the conclusion that I could not simply accept the idea that everyone who got caught up in a cult was bamboozled, exploited or manipulated against their will. That seemed to me to be taking too much responsibility away from the





**"We have not yet come to any kind of moral, responsible stance with our relationship to the wheel, so why should we have a more ethical approach to something like genetic manipulation? Of course it will be abused, but it's also just a tool!"**

people who chose to join. What I decided was that an involvement with cults must have some real appeal and I tried to think about what that appeal was. I decided that one of the major appeals of the cult structure is the abdication of responsibility for one's own life. And as you pointed out, Arturo describing himself as having the luxury of not having to work in various ways, is really part of the process that I defined for myself in trying to understand. If you look at human culture in general you find many areas that seem to have a lot in common with your basic cult structure. It's important to recognize that there are destructive cults, but there are many cults that are neutral or even constructive. But it is a social structure. One of the defining characteristics of a cult is that they separate out the members from the rest of the population and they do that in a number of different ways. For example, I think the military is an excellent example of this kind of cult structure. First they take you away from home and send you to boot camp. Then they ask you to wear special uniforms and cut your hair in a certain way. Their behaviors define a member as compared to the rest of the world. The military, religious convents and prisons often have many of the same characteristics of the cult structure and I think the appeal for the committed long-term convict is often very much the same. Once you enter this structure, your moment-to-moment, day-to-day decisions about life are taken off of your shoulders. You know when you're going to get up in the morning, what you're going to put on for clothes, how you're supposed to shave or not shave, how you're supposed to wear your hair, when and by whom your hair is going to be cut, what you're going to eat for breakfast, where you're going to get it and who's going to give it to you. Everything is dictated. You know, freedom is a "terrible" thing and many people are so frightened by it that they cannot deal with it. I think that they seek the security of structure and that's not always bad. Of course, in the book it's bad, but that's for the purposes of demonstration and exploration.

**Nicole: The subject of horror comes up in *Geek Love* as well. What do you think a good horror story needs to be considered frightening? What is it about horror that we find so titillating?**

KD: I'm an admirer of Stephen King, who I think is a wonderful and remarkable writer, and he has a

book called *Danse Macabre* which is a lengthy dissertation on precisely that topic. One of his initial conclusions is that the horror writer, and the horror story, is a defender of the norm. It is meant to define the monster and to fend it off. I think there is a pattern in good horror stories in establishing a norm and the horror or the monster is the interruption to the norm or the attack upon the norm. As Stephen King claims, the horror writer becomes the defender of the conventional and the most conservative of conceptualizers.

**Nicole: So the satisfaction that we get from horror is reassurance?**

KD: Definitely. I think that horror stories and scary stories in general, like ghost stories, monster stories and adventure stories, are a form that goes back to the cave days. The Cro-Magnons were probably sitting around the fire telling their kids that the sabertooth was going to creep up in the middle of the night and get them if they didn't watch out. There are thousands of purposes within our culture for a good scary story. We can use it as a teaching tool to get your attention and the scare will make you pay attention to what the lesson is. It's a fundamental propaganda tool. The politicians of today are using exactly the same technique on the American public. Every time you pick up a newspaper you read a lot of scary stories: Ebola, *E. coli*, the current patriot militia movement. There are thousands of scary stories being peddled on a daily basis, and by and large somebody has an agenda to convince you that they're true so that you will acquiesce to the spending of your tax money on this or that program. I also think that there's a really basic learning process, almost on an animal level, that involves being scared artificially. When you consider the physiological fact of fear, what you're talking about is a massive activation syndrome in your body where a stimulus delivered to you by auditory, visual or sensory means frightens you. A huge cocktail of hormones, triggered by your intellectual processes, washes through your body and you become a more functional animal for the purposes of fight or flight. Your pulse quickens, your respiration goes up, your eyesight is sharper, your ears are sharper and you are more equipped to fight or run like hell than you were when you were calm and sleeping beside the fire.

**Nicole: I've always thought fear was a**

**strange thing to derive motivation from.**

**Usually fear is the only thing that can get me to do work. That's the level that I functioned on at school.**

KD: Fear is your friend. Of course, it's a really strong, sometimes miserable sensation but I believe that one of the purposes of telling scary stories is to get you accustomed to the physical sensation. You've got this massive pounding in your chest, you're over-hearing and you can see tiny things in your peripheral vision that you would normally not be able to see. From a very early age, we have had much experience with this, telling ghost stories around the camp fire, so that we have endured the sensation in a totally safe, ritualized form so that when the fire alarm goes off at 3 a.m. you are not going to stop and say, "My heart is beating so quickly I'm going to die from a heart attack." You realize that you're scared because there's something dangerous going on. You understand the physical sensations that you're having and react accordingly. Learning to control that enormous capacity for fear is part of the purpose of scary stories and all of those other ritualized, relatively safe situations that we put ourselves in to enjoy this bizarre little frisson of adrenaline.

**Noël: The book also deals with the sciences, the family themselves being the result of the intentional ingestion of chemical concoctions. Now, we live in an age where scientists can sift through our genes and eliminate birth defects and people can decide whether or not it's worth having a child that's a human anomaly or one that suffers from mental deficiencies. I was curious to know how you feel about this. What is the overall effect when we can start tinkering with life like that?**

KD: My general feeling is that there's no use belly-aching about it because it's going to happen. It's important to note that Al Binewski constitutes bad science. I wouldn't want anyone to think that I was anti-science, but, unlike religion, I consider science to be a process. The science of biology is very new. For many hundreds of years it was simply a labeling discipline and nobody had any idea how anything worked. I think it's very important to recognize that we still have very great gaps in knowledge and are simply at the threshold of a huge study that will take hundreds of years before we really come



to any kind of genuine understanding of the concept of life. There's a great deal of vanity and posturing among scientists, but even if they can manipulate things at this point, the real knowledge is very rudimentary. We can't doubt for an instant that it will be hideously abused.

**Noël: I think that's what's troubling for some people. For example, dwarves are concerned because they feel like the sciences will be applied to them and they will be eliminated by choice. It's frightening that their uniqueness is a stigma and that they're considered useless beyond being forms of entertainment.**

KD: There have always been problems of that kind. Deformed children, twins and female children were abandoned at birth or killed at birth by the Athenians. We have not yet come to any kind of moral, responsible stance with our relationship to the wheel, so why should we have a more ethical approach to something like genetic manipulation? Of course it will be abused, but it's also just a tool. A hammer can kill people or it can build doghouses or it can build the Taj Mahal. A tool is a tool.

**Noël: The sciences have always been used to provide empirical evidence that can be applied to a political agenda, like in Nazi Germany, or the use of crack science like phrenology: "Oh, his cranial capacity is far too low for rocket science. Eliminate him. For all we know, he's probably a chronic masturbator."**

KD: Exactly.

**(Everybody laughs)**

**Noël: It's true. If the cranial capacity of an individual is below so many cc's, all they do is masturbate.**

**(Even more laughter)**

**Nicole: It's interesting that you designated Al Binewski as an example of bad science because in the beginning of *Geek Love* you talk about how his genetic engineering is analogous to gardening. The surgery in the book helps people find an identity, albeit in several people's cases it doesn't work effectively. Do you think that body manipulation, surgery or science in general are forms of creative expression? I was thinking along the lines of plastic surgery and being able to alter how you are physically and become something that you didn't initially start out as. Is that going too far?**

KD: Too far for what?

**Nicole: For example, changing facial structure, and whether or not that's a healthy expression.**

KD: Well, I think it can be healthy and it can be crazed. It can be a sign of idiotic people who have

far too much money and time and not enough to do. On the other hand, it can also be a useful tool and perfectly functional. If you're in the entertainment business and you want to go on working past the prime of your personal attractiveness, who's to say that you should not augment your assets by going and getting a chin tuck or a nose job? It's just like putting a transmission in your car. If it's the thing you make your living with, what are you going to do? There's not one purpose for this stuff. Forgive me for saying this, but I think the young are so puritanical. They're so anxious to put everything in black and white terms. I was an extremely puritanical thinker and there's tremendous energy that comes from that; but it's the nature of the beast that you get old and see many sides of the picture and realize that there are a lot of mitigating circumstances.

**Nicole: One of the great things about *Geek Love* was that you raised a lot of issues and presented as many sides as you could; there was some stance taken with regard to cults and science, but it seemed to be presented with the intention of raising issues for the sake of considering them rather than making conclusions about them.**

KD: Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I'm very, very glad that you got that impression. I have to admit that I know and have read the work of writers who strike me as very wise but I have never felt like that. I have never felt that I *know* anything. I do feel that my gift is simply to ask questions and pose those questions, so I'm grateful if it didn't appear that I was taking any great liberties.

**Nicole: Talking about genetic engineering and technology leads me to think about developments like cybersex. Our fear in expressing our sexuality and technological developments make it seem as though it's an imminent possibility that sexual contact will no longer be necessary. Have culture and technology always catered to our desire to stay in our shell?**

KD: I think there's some merit to that point. Perhaps one of the first technologies to cater to it was the drawing of images on visionary surfaces. I'm sure that pictorial pornography as a substitute for physical contact goes back a long way. I don't think there's anything wrong with non-contact sex. Everything from cybersex to phone sex to printed pornography...

**Nicole: It came up because most of the sexual relationships in *Geek Love* are individuals trying to serve themselves and none of the relationships were mutually beneficial.**

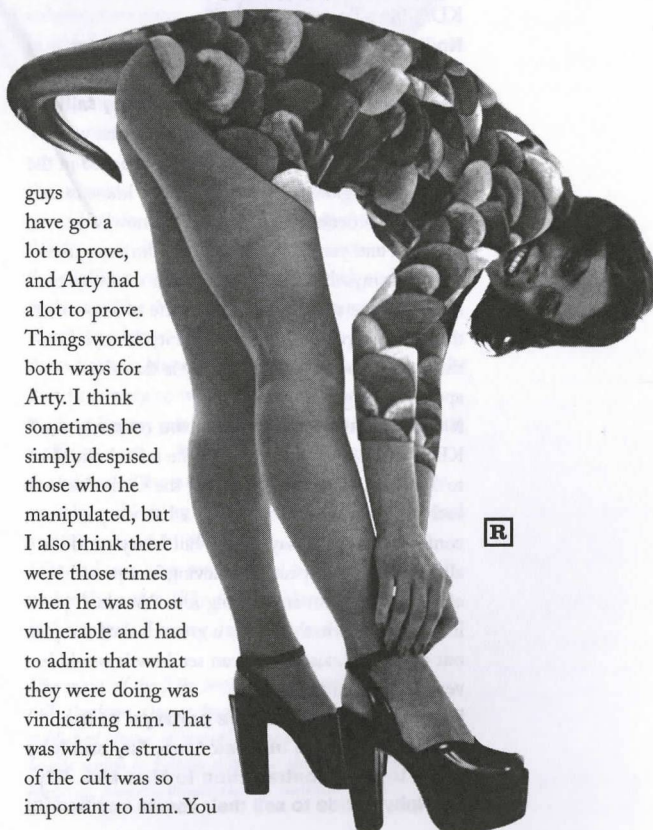
KD: Well, there's Al and Lil, who were a very happy couple. I say that in defense.

**Nicole: Arty and the twins stick out in my mind specifically.**

KD: And when Oly chooses to have Chick artificially inseminate her. I would point out that the relationships in the book are not meant to define all human relationships. Primarily, they're about power relationships and I would certainly not wish for anyone to think that this defines the spectrum of human possibility.

**Noël: One thing that was never clear to me was whether or not Arty believed in his own greatness as a father figure, a successful businessman or even a cult leader. Some might argue that his disrespect for others reflected his self-loathing, but he was still dependent upon others as a cripple. His reign might have been due to his insecurities and I liken this to short men throughout history and the theory that their insecurities drove them to greater heights. Is this an unfair assessment of either Arturo or short men?**

KD: I used to be a bartender in a fairly rough bar. One of the things that I noticed on a consistent basis was that guys in wheelchairs and short guys tended to start more fights than anyone else. Short



guys have got a lot to prove, and Arty had a lot to prove. Things worked both ways for Arty. I think sometimes he simply despised those who he manipulated, but I also think there were those times when he was most vulnerable and had to admit that what they were doing was vindicating him. That was why the structure of the cult was so important to him. You

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could not make a decision to get a portion of your body amputated unless you were of sound mind and in good health. He didn't want half-wit idiots choosing to be like him, he wanted people who could make a choice to choose him because that was the ultimate validation. At some subterranean level, he realized that if people wanted to be like him then he must be okay.

**Noël:** The problem I have is that whenever a short man has power it's always due to over-compensation. That theory doesn't necessarily apply to people of "normal" height doing the same things. It's similar to a woman who is successful and assertive and is then accused of being a bitch rather than capable.

**KD:** I would point out that there are all sorts of factors involved here. A guy who happens to be 5'2" is treated differently than a guy who's 5'10". The guys who were 5'2" or in a wheelchair at my biker bar got shoved around. Maybe the real reason they started the fights was because they were pushed to it. I would hesitate to make gross generalizations about short people.

**Noël:** You're talking to two short people.

**KD:** How short are you?

**Nicole:** I'm about 5'2" or 5'3".

**Noël:** I'm about 5'4".

**KD:** Oh you're not short!

**Noël:** Believe me, we're considered short.

**Nicole:** Do you think that ignorance or blindness must always be accompanied by faith?

**KD:** No, I don't think so. I've known some very, very intelligent, true Christians who believed in the Christian religion as a doctrine. I don't know exactly what that process is that can see, acknowledge, question and yet choose to believe. I'm not gifted with that myself and so I can't claim to understand it. But I have seen enough in my life to know that there are people of great perspicacity who yield themselves to faith. All I can say is that there appear to be great rewards.

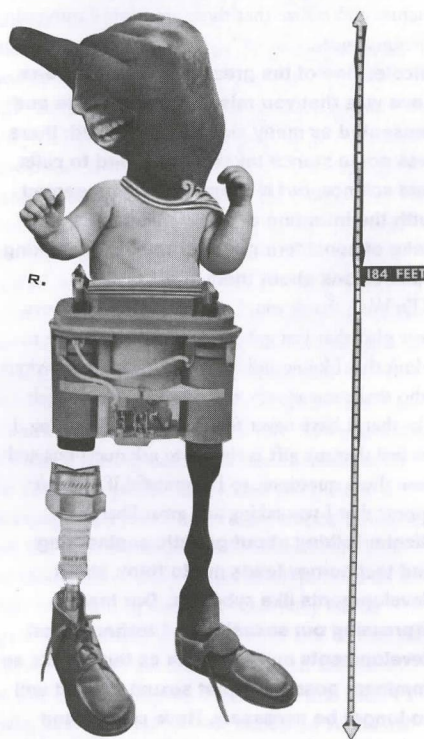
**Nicole:** What do you believe the rewards are?

**KD:** I think it would be cool to be a Catholic. Not to dump on any other faiths, but the Catholics have such a great system. You can do whatever you want, confess everything, say a few Hail Mary's and it's all right. The prospect of believing in a paradisiac afterlife is such an enchanting idea. Wouldn't you like to believe that? It takes a great deal of the pain out of human existence. I can see how it would be very, very rewarding.

**Nicole:** With regard to the portrayal of the female characters in *Geek Love*, Elly and Iphy seem to be in contradiction to Miss Lick. Elly and Iphy decide to sell their assets and benefit

from serving male desires whereas Miss Lick wants to save people from male desires. Which is the better attitude to take, in your opinion?

**KD:** I personally sympathize more with Elly and Iphy's attitude. A man who is muscular and not well educated might have to decide which type of physical labor to do, because he is being hired for the size of his muscles and the capacity to bear burdens. I think that's the position that Elly and Iphy are in. They've got this set of possibilities and they're trying to make their own decisions about how those decisions should be explored. I think Miss Lick has very good intentions, but I think, for me, one of the morals of the story is that most of the evil in the world is done with the very best intentions.



**Noël:** Miss Lick's perversion and voyeurism were all in the guise of saving these women from exploitation.

**Nicole:** I really, really like the character of Miranda. She seemed so satisfied with herself and able to cope with the fact that she was disfigured. I wondered if she's able to accept her freakishness because she's found a way to make the human form a subject through medical illustration.

**KD:** I think her preoccupations probably dictated her choice of topics or her area of study. I think that she had to get her legs under her, mentally

and psychologically, before she could do that. Also, her history of rebellion suggests that she was in the process of coping with that at a very early age.

**Nicole:** It just seems as though the ultimate way of dealing with the human body is to make it a subject and having a mental distance from it so that you're in a position to study it, but not have to deal with it directly.

**Noël:** Like seeing it as shapes instead of imbuing it with sexual or political meaning. That's exactly the realization that people have when they see that drawing nudes isn't a turn-on. It's actually kind of boring and disgusting. Going on to one of your more recent published works, *Death Scenes*, it's disturbing to look at, but after going through your introduction, it made more sense. My father passed away about two years ago and realizing how long it took my mother to mourn his death made me wonder: Why are we, as Americans, so ill-prepared for death?

**KD:** I think it has a lot to do with the physical circumstances of our very upholstered and protected culture, that people do not die as often or as young as they used to. Hygiene and medicine have made remarkable strides in the last hundred years—and very dramatically in the last fifty years—that have changed the life expectancy of the average American. Now, children are, by and large, protected from the great majority of diseases which used to take them so randomly. The same with young people under the age of thirty. Most of the diseases that had, at one time, been tragically fatal are now the affair of a few shots and simple treatment. The things that kill most young people these days are accidents, murder or suicides, not because [those forms of death] increased but because the other causes of death have dwindled so dramatically. The second factor is the institutionalization of illness. People no longer die at home because doctors no longer make house calls. The sick go to the hospital and are treated there and their loved ones visit them on a very regimented basis; the process of death is sanitized and out of sight. This is probably the first time in human history that this has been possible. We can literally turn our backs on the ever present possibility of death. I think that humans, being the extremely versatile animals that we are, got used to it very quickly. The luxury of declaring death as bad taste is something that we've eagerly grasped because it's painful and scary.

**Noël:** You mentioned the abandonment of customs like the photography of the dearly departed during the Depression era. Are there any similar customs that you would



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**attribute to our current attitude towards death?**

KD: Probably, though none spring immediately to mind. There have been some studies that indicate that although people no longer have formal portraits taken of their dead, they often do photograph their dead loved ones and keep them as private momentos rather than displaying them. They carry cameras into the funeral parlor and take a last shot of the dead in the coffin. Apparently many people do that. The research that’s been done has been surveys of photo processors who process the film of private individuals. They say that there’s a great deal of it still going on.

**Nicole: On a different note, we’ve recently seen a barrage of stories about JonBenet Ramsey, as well as the televised misfortunes of talk show guests. They both seem to be popular because they remind us that our own lives are not so bad. Do you think that freakshows have a similar function? Have the newshour and the talk show replaced the carnival?**

KD: Anything that occurs in a carnival could scarcely compete with some of the talk shows and all that’s made available to us in the mainstream media. I think the news really does serve that purpose. The reportage is so seldom of any quality that we can’t call it the delivery of facts.

**Noël: When I was listening to the radio the other morning, I heard that news programs have had to start competing with programs like *Entertainment Tonight*, which reports on entertainment happenings, because some news events overlap into each area.**

KD: They call it “infotainment”. I think we’d probably be mistaken if we were to say there ever was a good old days, when reporters were accurate and news was responsible and unbiased. That’s just as much a fantasy as the good old days of low crime rates and nuclear families. I have to say that one of the positive attributes of all the weirdness that crops up on the talk shows is an increasing amount of tolerance or an awareness of the different approaches to life around you. Anything that contributes to a wider awareness of the complexity of the universe is a good thing. We yearn so much for simplification but of course things aren’t like that and the more we’re brought to an awareness of that fact the more we benefit.

**Noël: One of the issues that Nicole brought**

**up about JonBenet is that there’s nothing conclusive about the incident at this point, and the news stories are all based on speculation. The speculation feeds off of itself and sustains a story that is tragic but rather unimportant.**

KD: Well, how many six-year-olds in America were murdered on that day? Probably quite a few. JonBenet was a pretty white girl from a very wealthy family who was murdered under suitably theatrical circumstances with a sufficient number of video tapes of her performing in a guise that makes a large number of adults very uncomfortable. So, she’s just prime fodder. It has nothing to do with the case. Nobody has any idea about what’s really going on with the evidence, the suspects or the investigation. They’ve moved on to discussing the merits and faults of kiddie beauty pageants and the evils of *The Globe* for publishing the morgue photos. All of these things are the peripheral stories that they’ve had to develop because they didn’t have any real information.

**Nicole: On *Entertainment Tonight* an interview subject said that children are supposed to be innocent and should therefore be portrayed as innocent. What’s so compelling about the story is that a six-year-old child represents an element of sexuality and that fact compromises our notions of innocence, childhood and nostalgia.**

**Noël: The fact that she’s a pretty white girl is similar to the Polly Klaas case which is something that would not have made international news had it been under different circumstances.**

KD: How many little black boys disappeared in Atlanta before any kind of coverage took place at all? I think the more we look at these things the more sadness can engender the many different aspects. Or, if you’re more healthy about it, fury.

**Nicole: Speaking of fury, the topic of boxing has to come up. What is the appeal for you?**

KD: It’s classic. Every writer from Homer on up has been fascinated by it. The setting is always the same; it has this sort of den-like structure with white paint and white lights with darkness beyond and two semi-nude characters flailing away at each other in a peer situation (and that’s a crucial element). They are ideally, as the sport demands, equal in weight and equal in skills and what you really have is a clash of character or a clash of will. It’s an

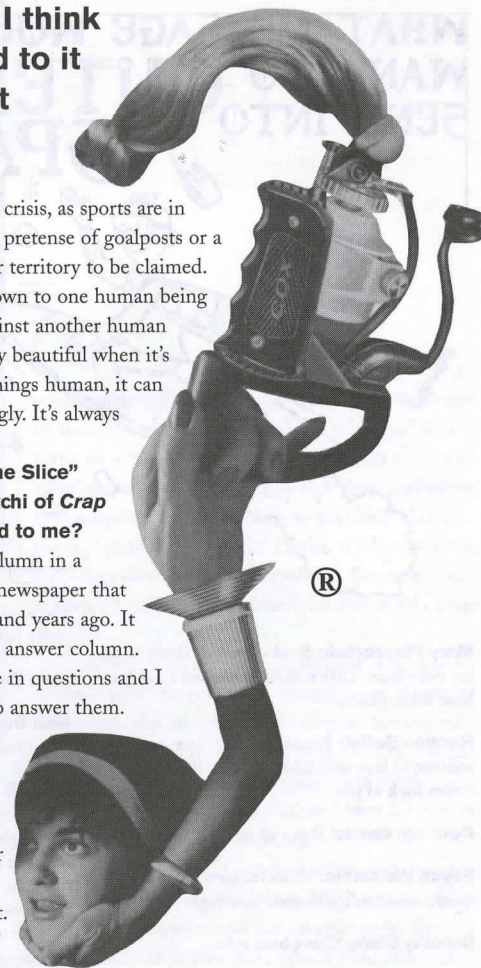
artificial, ritualized crisis, as sports are in general. There’s no pretense of goalposts or a ball to be moved or territory to be claimed. It’s just stripped down to one human being testing himself against another human being. It’s very, very beautiful when it’s good and like all things human, it can also be very, very ugly. It’s always extreme.

**Noël: What is “The Slice” that Sean Tejaratchi of *Crap Hound* mentioned to me?**

KD: That was a column in a weekly alternative newspaper that I used to do years and years ago. It was a question and answer column. People would write in questions and I would undertake to answer them.

Domestic relations and cooking were excluded from the column, two areas in which I consider myself to be completely incompetent. The topics were of any variety and it was the ultimate nonsense column. I would seriously go and try to research each of the questions. It was done tongue-in-cheek but was the most wonderful day gig for a writer. It ran once a week and fifty percent of the work was done by the readers. I loved long letters from the readers and I would run them because they were often very witty; I thought that they were so well-written that they were angling for my job. It was great fun, actually, and I really enjoyed it. After *Geek Love* was published, the editor of the newspaper thought to capitalize on it by publishing a collection of my question and answer column in book form. It was called *The Slice* and was later republished by Warner Books under the name *Why do Men Have Nipples?* The real answer, of course, is: Just in case. ✱

*Like many of the folks featured in this issue, Ms. Dunn calls Portland, Oregon home. She also doesn’t care for published photos of herself so boo hoo. Why Portland people weigh in heavily this time around is sorta mind boggling, dontcha think? Fuckin’ weirdos. – Ed.*





# WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU WANT TO SEND INTO OUTER SPACE?



**Larry Green:** I love you, God.

**Eddie Rutter:** Ask if the women are as sweet up there as they are on Earth.

**Albert Dambrose:** For people to cut down a lot of talk, to concentrate more on things and balance more their mind and their mouth and know more what they're talking about. You don't have to say as much if you know what you're talking about.

**John Catrambone:** Stay out of trouble.

**Nick DeFrancisco:** I would say New York state is the best state in the union.

**Jerry St. Clair:** I got an idea of what's out there 'cause I fell into a black hole, and it was filled with silver light. And I'll tell you, there was a couple hands in there, and I don't know where they come from. So, if that's outer space, I don't know what's out there.

That was about twelve or fourteen hours after I was wounded in the service that I saw the silver light. And the farther I fell down in the black hole, the less of a sense I had of anything. I didn't feel any pain, then all of a sudden there was a bright silver light. And that is the truth I'm telling you, as sure as I'm sitting here. It ain't made up or nothin' I seen on TV.

**Jim Perry:** I'm glad the way is lighted or I wouldn't be able to see!

**Eleanor Bearer:** Come and get me!

**Phebe Brown:** Oh, I'm not very adventurous. I'd stay right where I am.

**Rita Butler:** I don't have an answer for that, just that it don't come fallin' down on us.

**Leona Bell:** (*whispers*) I need a good man!

**Charlie Perkins:** Send the money! That's where it's all goin', isn't it?

**Marion Kinnin:** Happy day.

**Helen Petteys:** Watch out, I'm comin'!

**Rita Butler:** She's climbin' that ladder!

— David Greenberger

**Mary Pieszczoeh:** Send somebody down to fix my two chairs. They're fallin' apart and I need to have them glued up.

**Herman Seftel:** Friendship — to love one another, to love each other, the way the reflection comes back to you.

**Dora Gerkewitz:** Peace all over the world.

**Sayde Weinstein:** Whoever goes into outer space, come back with good greetings.

**Dorothy Stein:** Come back safe.

**Sophie Terkel:** I'd like to know what kind of plant life we have in outer space. Are there human beings in outer space? Don't you puzzle about that? I've often thought about that.

**Andy Legrice:** Peace. You can't have no fightin' with the devil — he's got hot pants.

**John Fay:** Like Andy said, we don't want no war. We been through that before. We don't want no war, there'd be no world this time.

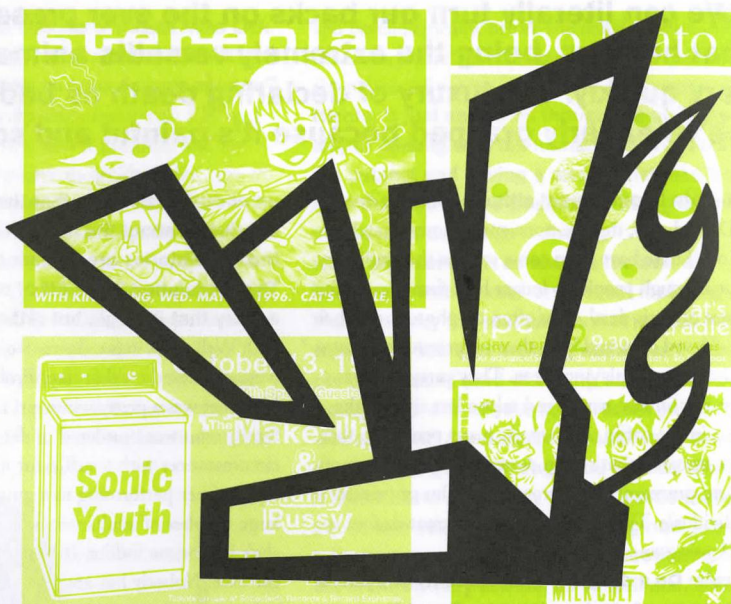
**Andy:** We're advanced enough, clean up the stuff we left behind.

**Ed Rogers:** Go on with it, go on with doing it, with the thing, with space. I mean go on with what he was, ah, keep going with outer space.

**Bernice Moros:** Find out what's up there.

**Leona Quant:** I don't understand outer space. I guess I'd want it to explain to me what outer space really is. What is the opposite of outer space? That's my question — I guess my answer, too. I don't know.

**Howard Sherwood:** How cold is it? Before I go up I've gotta know.



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# george KUCHAR

Interview by Sean Bokenkamp



Everyone is standing on the sidelines these days. Not many volunteers aching to join the parade. Cat-calls come easy in the peanut gallery. Give it a try, it's easy. Self-appointed emperors map out their curbside kingdoms while invisible borderlines fluctuate in a constant battle over derogatory territories. Setting their empires up in opposition to everything, they stand for nothing. Gutter-mouthed smart-asses in full regalia. Waging all-out gossip in a merciless merry-go-round of regicidal character assassination. Didn't you hear? The emperor wears no clothes.

The king is dead, long live the king. And each one clobbering themselves a crown out of the dingy copper of their two-cents-worth. It's easier to choose from your repertoire of sarcastic and snide quips than it is to choose a side in it all. Heckle-drunk, puffing their smirks with all kinds of bloated smarm. Everyone pictures themselves a king and a comedian, but they're too petrified to put down their raspberry schnapps long enough to mumble one of those much needed trite colloquialisms: "But seriously, folks." Regurgitating a sickly paste of derisive buttery scoffs from sugar-glazed smiles. Lemon sours and curdled grape bitters. You know what they say, envy always grazes the other side greener. May I propose a toast? A Bronx "cheers" to you all.

So what happened? The freak show of the past was swaddled in circus tents and the curtains of small stages. The upstanding patrons of society spent their

dime for a peek through those curtains to see the "fringe" which lay on the other side. Feigning a scientific curiosity, they examined all sorts of freaks; cataloging and classifying the numerous physical and mental abnormalities possible within the human form. Their dime purchased more than mere titillation, but also piece of mind. By looking at that which they considered abhorrent, they reaffirmed their own position within the parameters of the mainstream "norm." Entrenched within this position, they are able to see past the curtains before them: the objectivity of opera glasses.

But the quality of the freak show itself has changed over time. The modern freak show has crept out from behind the curtain and set up open admission in a House of Mirrors, complete with revolving door and a revolving clientele. People enter, conducting themselves with reserve, as if they were entering a museum. The glass within serves as mirror, as window, and as lens. And as people gaze into it, it magnifies their curiosity, reveals the naked voyeurism behind their scientific objectivity. All categories (preserved under the glass of display cases, separated by frames)

reflect everything around them. The lens at the center of this House of Mirrors reflects a "fringe" which turns on a hinge. As it turns, it examines everyone, whether you pay your dime or not. It is impossible to distinguish the audience from the exhibit because the lens at the center of the House of Mirrors is the revolving door itself. The revolving clientele is the main and only exhibit. Don't be shy, folks. Step right in.

Amidst this chaos, George Kuchar is busy with a dozen projects, spreading himself thin, trying to share with you his gluttonous hunger for the jelly of objectified and objectifying eyes. George and his twin brother Mike started making 8mm movies in the late Fifties, and the world, and how it looks at itself, has not been the same since.

The early films of George Kuchar illustrate his lust for the luster of the cinema. With the aid of his 8mm movie camera and his imagination, George resurrected the dead magic which Hollywood had tried to bury in the vaulted tombs of its dusty film archives. Using his friends and acquaintances as channels, these early films are a seance in celluloid. Through cinematic voodoo, the mundane qualities of life are transformed into a hypnotically lurid feast of visual delights. In the gloom of the movie theater, our hands, with those of the actors and the filmmaker are bound together on the Ouija board of the silverscreen. We are all implicated, our expectations jostled by the gentle maneuverings of invisible and insistent hands. Sometimes it feels like someone is pulling your leg. But you never know, maybe the place really is haunted?

The camera captures apparitions, the projector brings the undead back to life. The camera shapes the faces of kissing couples in the light of Greta Garbo, Louise Brooks, Rudolf Valentino. We see New Yorkers from the Sixties going about their daily lives in cramped apartments. The search for an errant lover takes on mythic proportions in *Corruption of the Damned*. In *Hold Me While I'm Naked*, TV antennae bob in the cold winter wind, players on a



rooftop stage. Through the secret incantations of long-extinct chemical emulsions, the dreams of assorted and sordid characters are brought to life. Although their lifelong dreams and sexual aspirations are illuminated in vivid swathes of Kodachrome color, the characters themselves are gritty and real. Overweight or scrawny. Faces percolating with zits. Loins smoldering with 360 degrees of horny and hard-up. With an unflinching eye, George reveals and revels in the things that people try to hide: frailties which resemble virtues which resemble vices which glow with a quirky kind of ugly beauty. Intoxicating.

Some might accuse George Kuchar of trying to shock his audience by forcing them to peer into the tawdry lives of the miscreants who dwell on the "fringe" of our society. However, no matter where the camera goes, George goes along with it, and the most dynamic part of his films is George himself. One gets the feeling from his films and videos that he isn't trying to make fun of the people in front of the lens, no matter how bizarre or normal they appear to be. George uses the camera to examine and to exalt. He investigates his own, as well as other people's quirks and foibles. The camera explores our darkest, most closely guarded insecurities, and at the same time, questions the defense mechanisms which we erect around those insecurities. Ultimately George leads the way, at times exposing his own insecurities, and at other times allowing his theatrical side to run amok, giddy with the power of punchy dialogue.

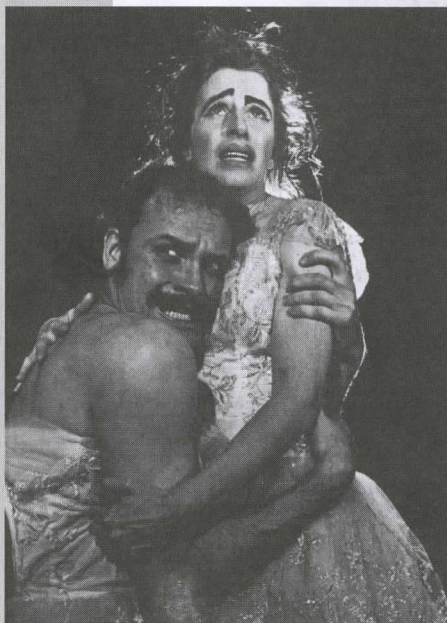
George is obsessed. Obsessed with nearly every genre of movie making. Every dramatic manifestation of nature: from tornadoes to bigfoot, drag-queen crooners to thunderstorms. Over the past thirty odd years his imagination has churned the raw material of UFOs, vampires, ardently perverted Christians, glam B-movie stars, tipsy housewives, obese Mafioso, and schizophrenic debutantes into a compelling and remarkably cohesive body of work.

While some are content to just stand on the sidelines, George's films take their place at the head of the parade. In a deceptively loose pastiche of images, his work reflects a million and one possibilities and positions in life. Tangling the tastes of the fringe with the aesthetics of the center, George creates pieces which defy definition. B-Movie horror-flicks shiver before your eyes like a *Showgirls-Citizen Kane*, soap-opera psychodramas which resemble an unholy marriage between *Fatal Attraction*, *Towering Inferno*, and the Ziegfeld Follies. The center teeters around the sidelines which swing into the center. George is content to let the avant-garde chase its own tail. Meanwhile, George just keeps on moving, like he has for the past thirty-odd years, like the mother of all tornadoes, sweeping up everything he encounters

and mixing it into the *Wizard of Oz* of his films and videos.

**Sean Bokenkamp: Can you describe how you and your twin brother Mike decided to start making movies?**

George Kuchar: I guess we were very enraptured by the alternate reality of the thing. That reality also had an interesting shape or frame around it. In other words, it was artistically molded in a pleasing structure that included appropriate music and lots of playing around or fakery (painted backdrops and miniature props like toy airplanes, etc.). The people were all nice looking too and didn't smell.



**How did you divide labor? Did you two act as one well-oiled machine, or were you both naturally drawn to different aspects of the film-making process?**

When he would get tired of shooting a scene, he'd hand the camera over to me. We never really thought of ourselves as a "team"...we just had one camera between us and were pretty much always together in the early days. Anyhow, Mike and I found that our different styles changed the pace of the pictures during certain points and that made them less monotonous in tone and more full of surprises.

**Was there a form of "twin dynamic" existent between you and your brother which enabled you to work well together, as if you were communicating via some unearthly form of telepathy?**

Not really. We were just sharing our picture-making toys and having fun. We also shared the same friends

and movie-making helped us have more fun in the relationships.

**How did your parents react to your early film-making efforts?**

They had their own miserable lives and moved in circles to a more down-trodden beat. There is always a gulf between the two worlds and the films didn't bridge that dimension in time and space, although mom did have a great screen presence. It was never cultivated because of the drudgery of daily living. The spark would ignite something in her whenever the 8mm movie camera was aimed in her direction. She was relieved of the drudgery for a few minutes when that happened.

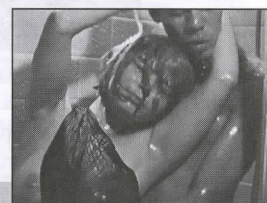
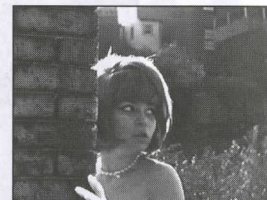
**In these early films, who were you able to get as actors, and how has that changed as your films have become more well-known?**

We always worked with our friends. This is still the rule although, for me, the students in my film class become the stars now...but, in a way, we are also friends because the project is what has brought us together. You have to meet people somehow...and school is as good a way as any, you meet a lot of people in one big lump. We became friends on a picture because picture-making is a friendly activity. You talk, get to touch one another and share in a lot of laughs. It also makes the pictures happy to watch by all those involved in its making and the audience senses the vibes too.

**What led to the dissolution of you and your brother's film-making partnership? Was this an amicable split which developed naturally, or did the Kuchar Brothers' juggernaut self-implode under the weight of sequins and spontaneous adulation? Or was this decision made under the malevolent influence of noxious gasses produced when the semi-toxic makeup of breath-taking, yet overheated divas, liquefied under the tinted gels of relentlessly harsh movie lights?**

We both got jobs and had enough money to get more cameras and buy our own film stock. Also, our styles and interests became different so it was a natural progression. No animosity was involved. When I had a tough time with a sequence and it wasn't working in the editing process, Mike would be the one I turned to for advice and he was able to see it more clearly and help in patching it up. So we were still attached in that respect.

**How did the social and political climates of New York of the Sixties and San Francisco of the Seventies influence your subject matter? And**



above  
Scenes from *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966).

left  
Cover from Curt McDowell's *Thundercrack!* (1975).



**in turn, how much did your subject matter help or hinder your ability to find actors?**

During the Sixties in New York City I got to rub shoulders with a lot of bohemian artists who were making noise and news in the cultural life of that metropolis (and the world). It was all fun and exploration. Men and women explored together. During the Seventies everybody in San Francisco was exploring erotic avenues and shopping around. Men and women were having fun doing that even though VD was rampant and crabs were a distinct possibility. Now the crabbiness accompanies the isolating of the sexes and contact seems no longer encouraged. Perhaps the escalating of the disease factor has encouraged this. The fun factor has taken a plunge.

**Over the decades have you found a more receptive audience for your films in more liberal decades like the Seventies, or in more socially and politically conservative decades like the Eighties?**

There will always be the much needed social pariahs to welcome my work and make me feel at home in their entertainment venues. What's really sad is to go to some of these so-called progressive "new" colleges and watch young people react to work the way my friends' moms used to react...with a kind of Fifties prudishness and sense of self-righteousness. I'm about three decades their senior and they're telling me to behave! I mean, it should be the other way around shouldn't it? Where's their crazy spirit? Women are especially prone to this. It's like they're trained again in the good housekeeping of the Fifties...trained to find dirt made by their piggy husbands. The same old, tiresome bondage in a new politically correct guise. Dished out to them by those pseudo-moms of the Nineties. I'm surprised they don't revolt to make their own revolting mess, something that would hopefully give mommy the shits.

**How long have you been making films investigating the UFO phenomenon? How have your efforts been influenced by depictions of and interest in UFOs in the mass media, past and present?**

**Have you been contacted, and are the aliens suing for libel?**

For at least 15 years I've been incorporating the UFO mystery into some of my projects. In the Seventies (mid to late, I believe) a massive wave of UFO incidents swept the planet and California was not immune to the "intrusions." It was during that period that I spotted the aerial anomalies



above  
George Kuchar in  
*Thundercrack!*

and it threw me for a loop. I embarked on a search for answers that spanned the series 16mm films I made in the ensuing years. Raised as a Catholic and prone to superstition, it caused a lot of ancient thoughts to boil to the surface and I was cooking in my own seasoned juices. But it got me out of the house and I met a whole carnival of lost and enlightened souls who were also riding this merry-go-round of mystery. Evidently, it's a very ancient indoctrination, this UFO thing, and hints at deeper inner space than outer. It's a highly personalized, universal experience that suggests a dialogue with something so deep that we can (so far) only know it as "alien."

**In *Ascension of the Demonoids* you talk about the gender of UFOlogy.**

**"Self-revelation can only come about during interaction with someone or something else, and luckily the world is full of folks interacting with your hidden self. They are called 'sinners'"**

**Do you feel that a person's perception of out-of-this-world visitors is determined by their gender or sexual orientation? Be specific, neatness counts! (Such as how one character claims that those who see UFOs are usually women, and another claims that men always perceive UFOs as phallic cigar shapes.)**

I don't think that sex has too much to do with seeing certain UFO shapes. It's more universal than that. Sex is a big part of it because communication with a so-called "UFO entity" can include sexual activity as it is a form of merging and acceptable communication in that realm. "They" (whoever or whatever "they" are) find it an interesting and curious energy to interact with plus they're rather mischievous. Care should be exercised as to how deep you want this "communication" to go as it is unknown and possibly detrimental to physical and mental health; for a time, anyway. The interaction will usually alert you to this, as it is generally meant for your growth and well-being so clues will be given and should be deciphered and heeded.

**How has your on-screen persona changed from the Kuchar Brothers' 8mm films, to your own 16mm films, to your Hi-8 video pieces? Does the nature of the medium dictate your relationship to it?**

The years batter you pretty badly and so you do change here and there as your on-screen persona proceeds in time. Plus, it's boring to keep doing the same thing again and again. After awhile you're glad when equipment breaks down or when footage is ruined because then you have to tackle the work at hand in a new way. A new approach. Movies are a bigger, heavier ordeal to manipulate and so they become dressier than the lightweight, plastic elements of video technology. In video, you must make the mundane have weight.

**Do you think that the personal/confessional and mundane aspects of video give it weight? And are these qualities being abused in forms such as *Bloopers* shows, *Dangerous Accident* shows, *America's Most Wanted*, etc.?**

The video project must handle the basic questions of life, which, of course, includes death. Death, not in the sense of titillation, such as is viewed in prime-time snuff shows, but rather as part of a complete

picture or composition that balances life. It doesn't have to be a blatant dialogue or "how-to" flick. Just mundane things that hint at a broader horizon somewhere out there. Of course the horizons are inside us all, so there is no need to go afar with the video camera. The kitchen or toilet will suffice.

**Several of your movies have scenes which reference in some way the famous *Psycho* shower scene; why does this scene resonate so much with you and why does it seem that so many of your characters wind up, through the course of the film, in the shower?**

They are trying to clean up filthy living. It's a cleansing ritual.

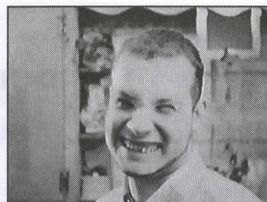
**Can you elaborate on what "filthy living" is?**

We have to pay the devil his due. This can be somewhat shameful when viewed in the context of public living. But we are all private somewhere beneath the fashions of the time, and those private parts need airing now and then. There are bumps and kinks on the highway of life and if they are left unexplored, a deep neurosis may set in. Luckily, the other travelers on that highway of life have their own idiosyncrasies, and late at night, when all decent folk are in bed, many of the rest-stops along the highway are jammed by people probing their innermost deposits. Human nature is so complex that at certain times one needs to clean house, so to speak, and see what hidden obsession gives energy to our actions. Those actions may prove catastrophic if we don't realize their source. Self-revelation can only come about during interaction with someone or something else, and luckily the world is full of folks interacting with your hidden self. They are called "sinners." At that dark hour religious or pious people wouldn't touch you with a ten foot pole. But sinners would use one, and can even touch you with rubber novelties of extraordinary length.

**Why are you afraid of clowns?**

They are garishly made-up laborers out to clobber a laugh out of the innocents of the world. Something so full of polka dots and stripes should be avoided at all costs. They mimic the shapes and colors of nature's warning signs; spots and stripes that designate dangerous animals, although, clowns attack the nervous system with activity designed to convulse it with laughing seizures.





left  
Scenes from *Corruption of the Damned* (1965).

### Why do UFO abductions always seem to involve anal probes?

"They" are always looking for inroads to our true nature. Perhaps the UFO enigma mirrors our pre-occupation with sexual fantasies and fears, preferring to intrude via the backdoor, so to speak, so that the message becomes more intimate and yet still clinical or medicinal; like a doctor's thermometer.

**In the movie *Crumb*, the mother subjected the Brothers Crumb to numerous enemas when they were children. Do you believe in the therapeutic value of enemas? What is the correlation between mental stimulation and enemas?**

It's a shower for the inside. Really filthy people need it and it's a form of exorcism for the age Aquarius.

**Do enemas serve as a kind of religious rite in honor of the appearance of aliens, as a sort of communion in commemoration of immaculate anal probes?**

I don't think they're interested in the washout from an enema. Blood, maybe. The blood of once "sacred" animals since the phenomena may be more spiritual than scientific. It may deal in sacrifices and deliberately trash scientific disciplines.

**If you could cast only one of the following as your leading lady, who would you choose: Marcel Marceau, Marquis de Sade, or J. Edgar Hoover? Why?**

Mr. Hoover would probably fill up the movie frame better and would look more like the matrons who nursed me in my youth.

**Has dressing in drag lost its forbidden allure and shock? Has it become an empty gesture, or is it now enjoying the wide social acceptance that it always deserved?**

It doesn't interest me. In the locker room of my local gym it's kind of sad to hear these muscled men of physical beauty discuss with a friend that they're going home to change into a French maid outfit. It's kind of a fantasy that kills another fantasy. It's fun in a movie when there aren't enough women to fill the parts needed for the plot. But movies are total fantasies to begin with...or else they end up that way due to B.O. (box office) potential.

**Are physical or mental abnormalities more conducive in creating cinematic sex-fiends?**

Movies are for people who like to sit in the dark,

which hides all kinds of personal abnormalities.

**Do you see movies as a way to escape one's own personal abnormalities, or as a way to revel in the personal abnormalities of others?**

Movies are a kind of cheap vacation and vacuum chamber from the pressures of your own life. In that vacuum one is more able to see a whole assortment of similar or different abnormalities in a clearer way, bringing a kind of healing perspective to the whole problem of living. We become the abnormalities of the characters on screen because there's a lot of them in us even when the movie doesn't ring true. We're all phony at times, and anxious to please...anxious to make money and be cheap and plastic. Anxious to wear so many masks and to even experience what it must be like to be a cannibal and eat human flesh. Thank God most of the audience lives vicariously through the performers, instead of abandoning the popcorn for more grisly fare.

**In at your video work, self-consciousness about food seems to play a pivotal role in shaping your on-screen character. How concerned are you with how the audience perceives your appetites and desires?**

I would hope my fans invite me over to eat. Making pictures is such a calorie consuming chore that you always have to dangle a carrot in front of your nose...or a chicken leg.

**In your recent piece, *Weather Diary I*, you, as a white male film-maker, came under fire from a crack militia of vindictive politically correct college students; do you feel that this was an organized attack, and where do you fear P.C. will strike next?**

That was at the Flaherty Film Seminar in upstate New York. It was in a chandeliered auditorium full of college-educated cineastes. Places like that are actually a cesspool of repressed savagery and should be avoided at all costs. Happily, my weather diary video ripped the lid of civility off of that phony setting and revealed the most ideologically motivated members of that assembly to be petty, mean-spirited and hate-filled goons for their particular agenda. The video tape lacked the PBS gloss and divisive stance that this film seminar was feeding on. It depicted me in a motel room befriending stinky mutts and middle American kids while battling faulty plumbing, severe storms and my own gastric

distress. When I sensed that certain participants, who were dominating the screening with their divisive, nationalistic and tribal perspectives, were trying to demean my contribution to this documentary by categorizing me by my race and sex instead of seeing me as me, I blew up and blasted the whole event as a disgusting affront to the memory of Robert Flaherty... a man whose documentary films oozed universal harmony and a love of nature, the human animal along with the furry and scaly animals. Well, you should have seen the mean, personal attacks they then hurtled my way. I was told by the most idealistic leader in their midst that I was a "greasy guy with rotten teeth". Another angry young woman recognized that I came from the Bronx (because of my accent) and she snarled that she was from the Bronx too and knew all about people like me; I was nothing but a "Bronx smart aleck." She hated me because she recognized that I was from her tribe and the whole damn event was supposed to be touting "tribal solidarity"...at least that's what the bulk of the documentaries were stressing. It was all phony! So many of the participants had become the thing they hate. It was truly shocking and exposed that place for what it is: a catered event to fatten up a carcass that is already factioned to pieces...the pieces grossly over-bloated with arrogance and activated by vendetta-driven agendas. Truly disgusting and a shocking smorgasbord of educational misguidance.

**In light of how hurtful and judgmental people can sometimes be, what has kept you making work in which you open yourself up to the camera for so many years?**

You see me. I see you. Sometimes it's not a very pretty sight.

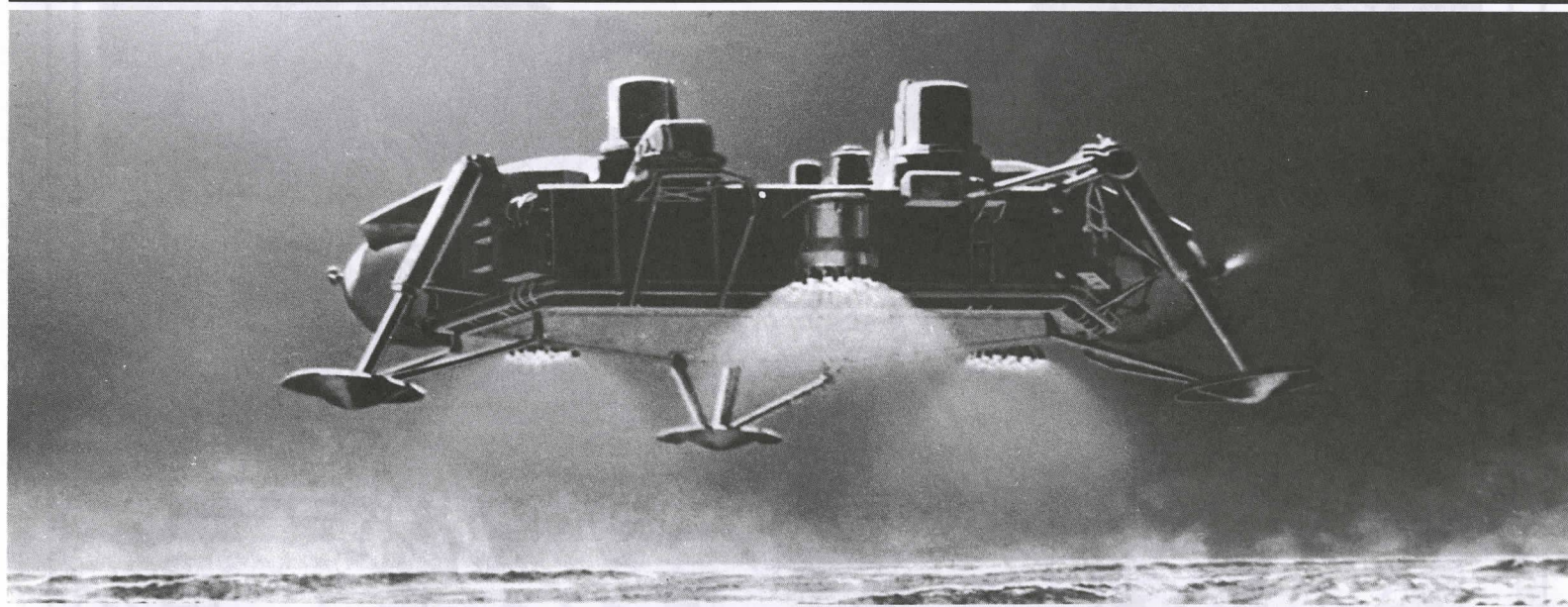
**Where can people see your videos or films?**

Canyon Cinema in San Francisco, and the New York Filmmaker's Cooperative in NYC distribute my films to non-commercial venues and flophouses (like the Museum of Modern Art in NYC). The Video Data bank in Chicago and Electronic Arts Intermix do likewise with the video work. Electronic Arts is located in the "Big Apple." In mid-April the autobiography of me and my twin brother, Mike, will be published, and is entitled: *Reflections From a Cinematic Cesspool*. The publishing house is called Zanja Press, and I'm told that "zanja" means "ditch" in Spanish. It'll have the sad adventure of my life plus photos to document the physical decay of a once promising entity. I wrote my part of the book, and Mike penned his. People who have typed the text find the whole miserable tale a laugh riot. The text will also be embellished (or blemished) by some original illustrations which I made expressly for this book. The editor also says it has the power to generate intestinal gas, so any future readers must be warned of this unintended fallout (or blow-out). John Waters wrote the introduction, and I didn't ask him if he got gas after digesting the chapters. ✱





# Matthew Sweet



## Blue Sky On Mars

Landing: March 25 1997



©1997 Volcano Entertainment All Rights Reserved [www.zoology.com](http://www.zoology.com)  
Management: Russell Carter Artist Management, Ltd.

Produced by Brendan O'Brien and Matthew Sweet  
Mixed by Brendan O'Brien





Brian Brooks, "...I give you the GOAT SUCKING JonBenet", 1997, ink and zipatone, 8.25"x8.5"



# CHUPACABRAS

## BANALIZATION OF URBAN MYTH & BLOOD-SUCKING SLUTS

by Shamira Gratch  
illustrations by Brian Brooks

"El sangre es la vida." (Deuteronomy 12:33)

*To be sung to the tune of "Copacabana":*  
His name is Chupa, the Chupacabra,  
He don't do merengue, don't do the cha-cha,  
Yes, he's the Chupa, the Chu-pa-cabra, (ooh)  
His mealtime's a taste of macabre (yeah)...

It is a "grey alien," it is a monster, it is a panther, it is half man half wild beast. It has red eyes, oval eyes, slanted eyes. It has a simian face, frog skin, and chicken legs. It has membranous wings, a dinosaur tail, tiger claws, black fur and an exposed spine that bristles with spikes. It hops like a kangaroo, flies like a giant vampire bat, and swings like a monkey. It is odiferous like the devil's sulphurous panting. It is extraterrestrial and is sucking its way to world domination. It is the abandoned pet of alien visitors. It is from Africa. It is the carrier of AIDS. The apocalypse is upon us, brothers and sisters, and it has a web site for you to visit.

### Canovanas, Puerto Rico:

*The goat's white fur is sepia stained with dust, his neck strawberry red from rope burn. The goat is Mayor José Soto's bait. Mayor José Soto's right hand jabs the air with a giant wooden cross and his left hand grips a loaded semi-automatic. They are trolling, but nothing bites. The pair pick their way to the outskirts of town and keep their fumbling vigil until dawn trickles blood orange into the burned out sky.*

*The chupacabra doesn't want them tonight.*

*The chupacabra sleeps; Mayor Soto and the farm animals of Puerto Rico do not.*

September, 1995: one hundred farm animals and pets found dead in Orocovis and Morovis, Puerto Rico. By November, the epidemic of mysterious deaths has spread to Canovanas. Cats, dogs, rabbits, horses, mules, cows, goats, cocks and turkeys, all with a single puncture wound in their necks, their bodies exsanguinated. By December, José Martin, the island's leading ufologist, has published a portrait of the chupacabra on the Internet.

Julio Lopez's bunny was a victim of the chupacabra: "The damage to the cage was incredible. It tore through the metal tubing and barbed wire... It killed the rabbit and tore out the heart and entrails."

A furry, red-eyed beast is said to have opened a bedroom window and mauled a teddy bear. It left a trail of white slime and rancid meat on the windowsill. A witness describes the chupacabra as "belonging to the monkey family, but it isn't a monkey exactly."

In the autumn, the golden pelts of "chupa mangos" litter the streets of Puerto Rico. The skins splay like thousands of fallen yellow finches in the gutters. The fruit is the size of a child's fist, and women sell twelve for a dollar at stoplights. After school, the children suck mangos and hurl the pits at dozing shoeshine men. Yellow sugars crust their cheeks; yellow threads of flesh wedge between

their teeth. *Chupa me culo* (Suck my ass), the children taunt as they slurp mangos.

Naughty words make them laugh, but the word "chupa" makes them shiver. Most of the children have buried their desanguinized mutts and Siamese cats under wreaths of tiger lilies and Popsicle stick grave markers. They are not allowed to play outside once the sun sinks. Their parents warn, *Tal vez las chupacabras tienen hambre para niños esta noche* (Perhaps the chupacabras are hungry for children this night). Their fathers prop shotguns against the bedtables; their mothers check the door locks over and over.

The level of hysteria rises and Cristina, the bleached-blond, Spanish-speaking equivalent of Ricki Lake, airs a show in the United States on chupacabras. Three weeks later, the chupacabras are blamed for one hundred and fifty cattle deaths in the vicinity of Miami. The chupacabra's telltale signature, puncture wounds and desert-dry corpses, begin to appear throughout the world. Areas struck by the chupacabra span the globe: Massachusetts, Texas, California, Moscow, and Central America all became targets. Sujayla Curras, the producer of "Cristina", muses, "It's happening [the chupacabra]. There are T-shirts about it and merchandising like you can't believe. It's got it going on like Brad Pitt." Somewhere between the shores of Puerto Rico and the Florida beaches, the chupacabra evolved from a blood-slurping demon into a ferocious and furry iron-on.

The chupacabra has found a way to infiltrate the human species that is more powerful than dos-



ing the water supply, more nightmarish than burrowing into human blood cells, and more brash than body-snatching. The chupacabra has discovered that the most effective way to propagate itself worldwide is through the insidious, faddish commercial media. The chupacabra can shift shapes and meanings in the collective imagination of the media: it can be vampire bats that snuck over on a cargo boat from South America while simultaneously being one of the many experiments gone awry in the jungles of government covert cavortions. Postmodern monsters/aliens are blessed with the ability to encompass many truths. It is the overlapping shadows of these many images and facts that create a horrific chupacabra. We fear the most that which we cannot fit into a tidy definition. The creature's slippery identities are aided by the most nightmarish Bat-Belt tool of all: Adobe Photoshop®; as well as the Internet's democratic policy of allowing the masses to publish any fart, burp or itch that passes through them and call it fact, or art, or both.

More dangerous than tracking the chupacabra through a lush rainforest of cocoa-crazed monkeys and rabid capybaras was my search for the species of chupacabra known to inhabit the Internet. I found myself taking copious notes on a thousand wildly different descriptions and dissimilar facts. The chupacabra is cited over five hundred times on the Internet and has its own web page. There is a chat room where insights on the chupacabra are discussed by users with names that match their reliability and wit, like "Yeti" and "Loch Ness." I fast lost track of "The Chupacabra" and found myself swimming in chaos. Captain Ahab had it easy—one giant white whale lumbering along through the salt water; how can your harpoon miss that? Instead I was forced to chase a thousand squirmy tadpoles, all of them mutating

into oddball amphibians: stunted legs, tails falling off, and bloated gills melting into lungs.

We, the victims of this messy monstrous wrath, do not merely have to dodge a single spurt of flame from between Godzilla's chapped lips. The modern victims of modern monsters are subjected to a more torturous takeover. It is a monster that uses the tactic of death by inundation—a weapon that is not easily side-stepped or line-danced around. Saturated by the glow of our TV

sets, the gloss of our magazines, and the gar-  
rulous "information" highway traffic  
jams, we are surely lost in the amor-  
phous jaws of the monster. We are

sucked in by our wallets to par-  
take in the alien takeover of  
our minds and resources.

Aren't those fuzzy  
wuzzy chupa stickers  
cute? Won't I look  
hip in this cheeky  
chupacabra  
t-shirt? We can all

become members of this alternative,  
yet oh-so-mainstream cult. Just to  
say the word can mean you are  
witty and with it, or by now

passé. You are in the "in" and  
the "straight up" of those who  
"know what's going down." For  
people who revel in cheese and  
tickle their friends by saying  
"chupacabra" five times fast,

there are ways to express your  
individuality and wacky  
sense of humor through the  
mere expenditure of cash  
money. There are chu-  
pacabra t-shirts with goofy  
glow-in-the-dark logos,

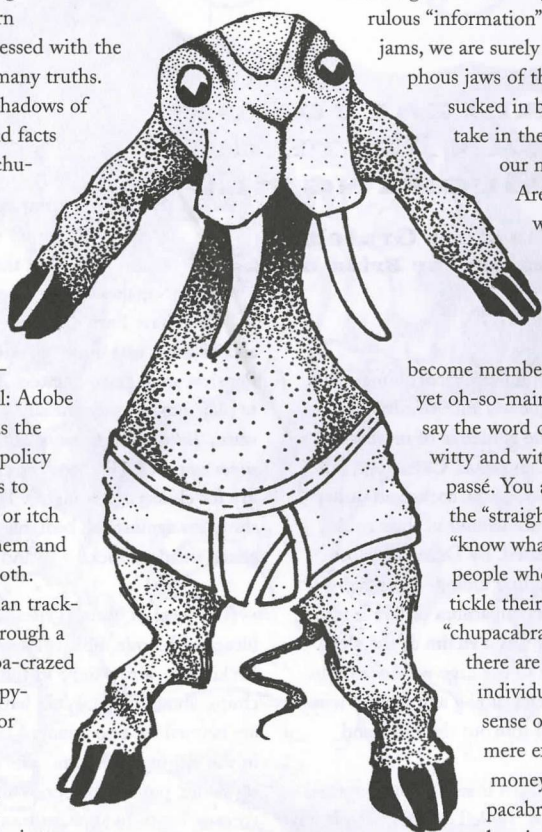
bumper stickers, casts of chupacabra footprints,  
songs, sandwiches, musical groups, and photograph  
contests. It is a game of global telephone, and the  
media powers have whispered in our ears, "chu-  
pacabra." Each person who hears it understands it  
a little differently. In turn, the people reinvent the  
chupacabra, flooding the airwaves and frazzling  
the optic nerve fibers of the world. It seems the  
public can chew the chupacabra and spit it out  
faster than a chupacabra can suck a sow clean.

Due to the Internet and the hyper media  
sources we are plugged into, urban myth can

spread faster and farther than ever before. We all  
have the power to broadcast our whimsy, dreams  
and nightmares instantly. The phenomenon is a  
modern day electronic version of oral tradition.  
The people add their own ornaments and flourish-  
es, pinch the details and massage the text. It is a  
neverending process passed down not by the gen-  
eration, but by the second.

The spheres of myth and fad blur. Capitalist  
culture thrives on the plunder of popular culture.  
We sell, buy and manufacture the elements of  
transitory culture that also eventually fall under the  
more permanent rubrics of myth and history. The  
chupacabra is an expendable resource, a product.  
However, it is also absorbed into the ever gelati-  
nous social dialogue, a thin layer of whip cream in  
the Jello dessert of archeological stratoms, screened  
onto the T-shirt of history and glowing in the dark  
annals where cultural icons are stored for the next  
retro craze. So we feed the media monsters and  
the monsters feed us; we buy the chupacabra prod-  
ucts and we manufacture them. Yet what is it that  
holds our interest long enough to make us giggle  
at a chupacabra editorial cartoon? What is the  
attraction between human and chupa? It's sexual.

The chupacabra's premise of bloodsucking is a  
quality associated with a more well-known species  
of monsters: vampires. The vampire bestows on the  
chupacabra a history of sexualized identity. Many  
vampire tales link themes of seduction, virgins and  
perversity. When the shadowy man leans towards  
the delicate virgin and says with his kinky accent,  
"I want to suck your blood," the audience squirms  
with titillation, anticipating the kiss of death.  
Anthropologists link modern-day kissing to ritual-  
istic cannibalism. Ritualistic cannibalism, termed  
"morbid affection," is the eating of deceased com-  
munity or family members in order to demonstrate  
love or garner [the deceased's] coveted attributes  
(*The Extraordinary Endings to Practically  
Everything and Everybody*, Panati, 1989). Vampires  
operates within this tradition by gaining the char-  
acteristic of immortality from virgin girls' blood. A  
virgin girl has not yet tasted the forbidden fruit  
(another example of the inter-mingling of food,  
sex and mortality), and therefore her blood is forti-  
fied with pre-fall innocence. The phrases "hungry  
for love," or "You look so good I could eat you,"  
give voice to a deep feeling in humans which links  
the fundamental need for and desire of food with  
love and sex. The lines between the human drives



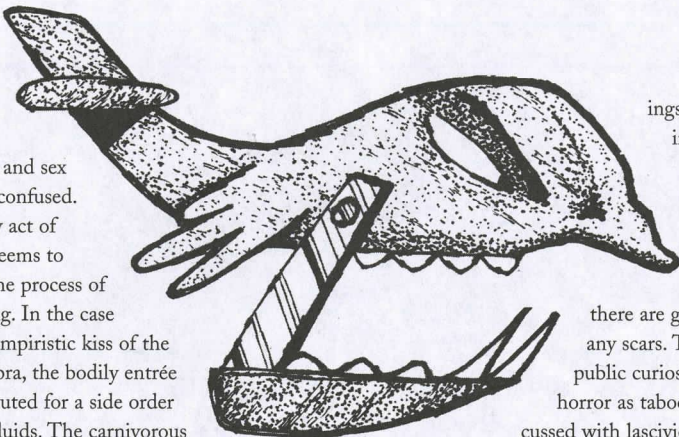


such as eating and love and sex become confused.

The very act of kissing seems to invoke the process of devouring. In the case of the vampiristic kiss of the chupacabra, the bodily entrée is substituted for a side order of vital fluids. The carnivorous cravings and cattle mutilations

of the chupacabra become a place where modern human imaginations can revel in a primal orgy. The bacchanalia includes bloodsucking and overtones of animal sacrifice; however, there are no spiritual aspects attached to the proceedings. The chupacabras and their victims represent vague symbols of ancient ceremonies. The meanings to us are reduced to the thrill of mortality. Similar to the rush of a rollercoaster ride, the abject gore of the chupacabra allows us to acknowledge our tenuous link to personal and species survival, which is based on feeding our mouths and fucking like froggies.

The word "chupacabra" is the blend of two Spanish words, the verb "chupar," which means to suck and the word "cabra," which means goat. I have been told that in some Spanish-speaking cultures the verb *chupar* can be used as slang for "slut" or "whore." The implications of the etymology of "chupacabra" seem also to hint towards another element of underlying sexual phenomenon. There is a sexual arousal in the "fear" humans have of alien creatures wanting them sexually. In the numerous accounts of alien abductions told by humans, there is the ever-present theme of sexual molestation and sexual experiments. It is something of a science-fiction rape fantasy in which the public can revel safely, due to the sterilized "scientific" setting of an alien lab thousands of light years outside the boundaries established on the planet earth, and the sheer ridiculousness of this "abnormal" situation. Sex in its more "perverse" (read: homoerotic and sadomasochistic) forms can be opened for discussion publicly in such formats as the *National Enquirer* or "Hard Copy" in this way. Checkout line publications negate any serious consideration of the ideas, allowing us to fantasize, even add to our pleasures by taunting us to sneak a peek at such smut. The victims of these pernicious prob-



ings can let their imaginations run wild, no earthly creature is responsible or categorized with blame;

there are generally not even any scars. There are only public curiosity and delicious horror as taboo subjects are discussed with lascivious detail.

So we find sex even at the root of a squat, slimy monster. Admittedly, the alien/monster of the chupacabra lacks the alluring qualities of an earthling supermodel (barring the junkie-that-just-crawled-out-from-under-a-rock look that has been in vogue). Perhaps the attraction is in the exoticism of the creature. Anyway, if the appeal of the chupacabra is somewhat sexual, the next pertinent question is, girl or boy? Usually monsters and aliens are thought of as males due to their aggressive natures. Chupacabras are not necessarily female; however, the Spanish word for goat is always feminine. Linguistic coincidence? Perhaps, perhaps not. The fusing of the word "chupa" which is a derogatory term generally applied to females, with the word for goat, which is feminine, indicates that chupacabras might be viewed as creatures of the female persuasion. This would play into a male desire to relinquish the sexual power of dominance in the safe confines of a fantasy world. The chupacabra possesses the phallus in the form of a deadly tooth, and it inflicts the vulnerable wound, or "yoni," onto its victims. Hence, the possibly female chupacabra is bestowed with the male symbol of sexual power. This fantasy allows men to revel in the powerful, yet deadly sexuality of the female, as well as partake in some overtones of homosexuality to boot. Yet it also serves as a warning against the negation of the binary division of the genders. While it illustrates the fluid dichotomy of this division of gender and unmask it as a mere construction, it also wags the moral finger of tragedy in the faces of the sexually adventurous. Females endowed with "male" characteristics, such as sexual autonomy and aggression are females linked inextricably with death, the ultimate demasculinization. Stay away from her, you big galoots. The sexually aggressive female is denounced for her desires as promiscuous

and evil. Ultimately, the female chupacabra is powerless, rendered cute, nonthreatening, and humorous by the commercialization and sanitizing of her image.

What is the scariest aspect of the chupacabra invasion? It may not be that your pet mouse Gerald could get his brain sucked out through his nostrils. The most ghoulish aspect of the chupacabra is the understanding that it is merely a novelty swept up by the real monsters we ourselves have created: hyper-active media married to a merciless capitalist system; as well as a sexually screwed up world of stifling and false gender divisions. Both of these monsters have tentacles that weasel into our lives more thoroughly than serial killers and psychic fiends. Both of these monsters suck the life blood from everything until it is bone dry, boring and reduced to jingles and buzz words. As Rod Serling might say, "They have realized tonight that there are no blood-sucking chupacabras, that is, besides their own selves." ✱







**Rob Reger**, "Crash", 1995, mixed media, 19"x15"



# DAVID CRONENBERG

Interview by Nicole Armour

*"There are people for whom evil means only a maladjustment with things, a wrong correspondence of one's life with the environment. Such evil as this is curable...by modifying either the self or the things..." —William James, Varieties of Religious Experience*

I've thought about sex with David Cronenberg ever since I saw *Dead Ringers* for the very first time in my friend's basement. A set of twins and their pathetic attempt to define themselves together and apart; pharmaceuticals and surgical instruments for mutant women; rubber tubing and bed frames...there was something uniquely exciting about the sterile atmosphere and clinical sexuality.

I've often imagined our meeting. At his insistence, we're travelling in a car and the hum of the motor and the evenness of the pavement are exhilarating. He maneuvers the car concisely, on our libertine road trip, and his exacting gaze pulls at my skirt and prods me expectantly in the side. I stare at him wondering if he *always* wears his glasses. In my haste I mistakenly grab for the emergency brake. I am his fumbling, self-conscious plaything.

I don't believe for a second that he would be captivated by my normalcy.

One of Cronenberg's many strong points is his consistency. Essentially, he has spent his career working on the same project, his characters precariously suspended between owning control and submitting to chaos. He is perpetually concerned with the breakdown of social order and examining its disintegration through the anarchical effects of widespread disease and the abandonment of sexual norms. He suggests that the body is as resilient and mutable as the mind and will adapt in response to any distress. Since his cock-shredding first feature film, *Shivers*, in 1975, he has progressively refined his aesthetic and his vision, though he would never admit to it.

*Shivers* has been called "veneral horror." As the story goes, the tenants of an apartment complex are systematically afflicted with fatal promiscuity, propagated by viscous and tenacious parasites developed during a science experiment gone wrong. At the end of the film, after a frenzied orgy in the complex swimming pool, the diseased inflict themselves upon the city at large. There is no closure—only the suggestion of a toxic apocalypse.

In *Rabid* (1976) Cronenberg enlisted the services of porn star Marilyn Chambers to address the same epidemic concerns. As the victim of a motorcycle accident, Chambers' character Rose receives a skin graft and develops a phallic protuberance in her armpit. She plunders the city's porn theatres and shopping malls to penetrate gullible fools with her incising quasi-penis, feeding on blood and spreading her virus. The film features Marilyn Chambers in a hot tub, in a pile of hay, dead in a garbage truck.

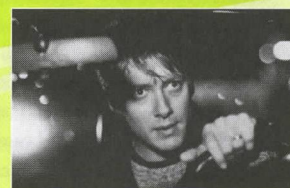
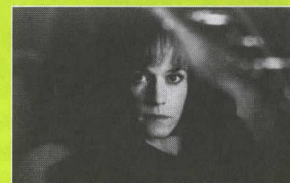
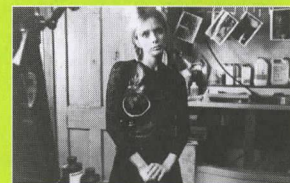
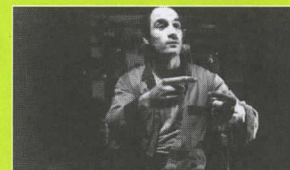
The pandemonium became much more localized in *The Brood* (1979). Cronenberg's dissection of divorce examines the annihilation of the family through the institutionalization of an asexual wife and mother. From an external, distending womb-sac, she gives birth to a pack of disfigured babes who act on her every violent and irrational thought. Frank, the counterpart to this exaggeration of motherhood, is ineffectual and the prototype for the Cronenberg male character.

*Videodrome* (1982) marks Cronenberg's first attempt to depict a character in the throes of a more personal, mental chaos. Max Renn becomes enraptured by a snuff TV show called "Videodrome" whose signal induces brain tumors. Max's reality corrodes as televised sex acts become actual and video cassettes are plugged into his fissured, gastric mangina. Sharing Renn's perspective, we throttle, bind and burn becoming sycophants of the "new flesh" agenda.

Hallucinatory uneasiness and the romantic male character persist in *Dead Ringers*, *The Fly* and *Naked Lunch*. In these films, the individual continues to maintain a nebulous relationship with technology and art until delusion and a lack of identity result in entropy.

And now he has made *Crash*, adapted from the novel by J.G. Ballard, where emotional paralysis instigates the fetishization of the automobile. It is repetitious, confrontational, anaesthetizing and delicious.

David Cronenberg doesn't make very much sense to me and I distrust my immediate response to his work. He believes that the creation of art must be free of political, social and cultural concerns and thinks criticism is in contradiction to free expression. This distaste for criticism means he never has to answer for his questionable depiction of women or his penchant for graphically-filmed sex. The schism of art versus theory is only one of many divisions in his work. The mind is at odds



top to bottom  
Vaughn (Elias Koteas),  
Gabrielle (Rosanna Arquette),  
Dr. Helen Remington (Holly Hunter)  
and James Ballard (James Spader)  
in *Crash* (1997).





above  
**Mommy** (Samantha  
 Eggar) hatches and  
 harbors her awful  
 offspring in  
*The Brood* (1979).

right  
**Alarmed, Max Renn**  
 (James Woods)  
 considers his  
 duplicate set of  
 sexual organs in  
*Videodrome* (1982)

with the body and social responsibility restrains imagination. He maintains that his objective is to put characters in sexual and existential predicaments and then record their responses. In assuming this position, he ignores the fact that his characters do not have a life outside of his fiction. He is not tabulating actual observations. Instead, the result of his project is an audience that is overwhelmed and jarringly aroused by issues and images that we are hesitant to consider. We are the subjects of his experiment. He possesses complete control and administers information as he sees fit. It is his intention to make us look and then look away and make us feel uncomfortable in our bodies and with our thoughts. He infests us and then ridicules our attempts to understand.

In a dark theater, he compromises my security and lords it over me. I am a willing subject, David, and submit myself to your inspection.

**Nicole Armour: You've previously mentioned the Freudian phrase "polymorphous perversity." According to my understanding it refers to a young child's early sexuality. But how can a child have a sexuality before they're aware of their sexual organs?**

David Cronenberg: Well that's included in the concept of "polymorphous perversity." Freud felt that when a child was developing, it went through various phases. The anal phase came first and the genital phase came last and that was considered to be the civilized, adult phase. Freud said that there was still a sexuality before there was a focus on genitality. "Polymorphous" simply means that it took many forms. So the child's sexuality was diffuse and came from everything. Eating was as sexual as defecating was as sexual as sleeping and so on. You wouldn't call it erotic, but sexual. Gradually this becomes focused. There have been many philosophers, from Nietzsche to Norman O. Brown in the Sixties, who wondered if it might not be possible or even desirable for adults to maintain a kind of "polymorphous" sexuality. It was only called "perversity" because relative to the norm of genital sex it would be considered "perverse". It wasn't meant to be a value judgement.

**Does this relate to your concept of "omni-sexuality", or is that something entirely different?**

No, no, it *does* relate to that.

**Do the sexual mutations of some of your characters fall under the category of "omni-**

**sexuality"? I'm referring directly to Rose in *Rabid* and Max in *Videodrome*.**

Well, I think it's a theme that I explore a lot and it doesn't really matter what you call it. That's what's happening with the characters in *Crash*. They're going beyond normal sexuality and, in a sense, they're going beyond sex. Everything is eroticized, and when everything is eroticized the whole concept of normal sexuality becomes almost irrelevant. You are beyond gender at that point, and you are beyond sex.

**Well, both of those characters that I referred to are essentially victims of their sexuality. It contributes to their demise. So, is "omni-sexuality" positive and liberating or should we fear it?**

First of all, I'd have to go back and start thinking about those other movies to see if I actually agree with you. I'm not going to necessarily accept what you've said. Basically, it's a conceptual thing that's achieved by everyone at moments in their lives although they might not understand it or be aware of it. The only reason that it would be a danger is because it's not understood and not accepted by society as it is now. If society considers something



that you're doing to be "perverse", it tends to want to suppress you and destroy you. If everyone was the same way, would it be dangerous? I'm not so sure. But, it's hard to imagine what society would be like, I must admit.

**You once said that we are part of a moral system but that we can be free if we exist outside the system. Do you think you have an agenda, through filmmaking, to suggest alternatives to prescribed morality?**

I don't have an agenda in the sense that I have a very specific scheme that I think should be realized and that everyone should adhere to. I'm an explorer, of myself first and then everyone else as a byproduct. When I make a movie like *Crash* I'm really exploring possibilities and I deliberately remain as neutral as possible. One critic said that the most disturbing thing about *Crash* is the absolute lack of a moral stance. Well, that's the point. The point is to ask yourself: What would happen if everyone was aware that morality is variable, conceptual and a

human invention? Many people feel that areas of human culture have shifted away from the old forms of morality to the extent that they're not connecting anymore. As a result, what you have to do is reinvent morality, reinvent sexuality, reinvent ethics and reinvent emotional connection. That's what the characters in *Crash* are doing: They're fumbling and they're experimenting and they're not necessarily as successful as they could be, but that's the project they're engaged in. I, as a filmmaker, am letting them do that because I want to see what happens. I'm not necessarily saying that what they're doing is the best solution, but I *am* suggesting that it's happening whether we like it or not. The old forms of things linger long after they've had the life sucked out of them because it's habit and structure. It takes our reality a while to catch up. **Do you think that the sexual practices of the characters in *Crash* provide some sort of catharsis for them? In your movie *Shivers*, sexuality seems to be manic and I wondered if you thought that the sexuality depicted in *Crash* wasn't as chaotic but more releasing.** I think certainly at the beginning of the film sexuality is not releasing. It's very detached and doesn't

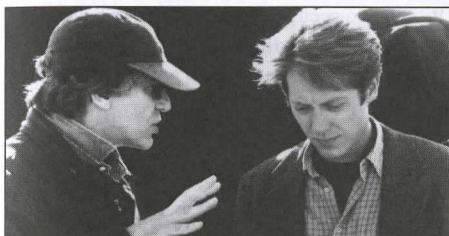
really work very well. Maybe it works mechanically, but it doesn't seem to be working much emotionally and, of course, catharsis is emotional rather than physical. What they're seeking, then, is to find a way to make it become cathartic, and therefore emotional and satisfying, and they go to some strange lengths to do that. So by the end of the film I think, for the two main characters anyway, yes, it has become that. They go a very strange route in order to come back to each other and reconnect. That's the process they've embarked on in the film.

**In *Videodrome* technology seems to be dangerous and anti-human and Max Renn is acted upon to a large degree. In *Crash* the characters seem to want to meld with technology. Do you think they're taking a progressive step or should we still regard technology as ominous?** I've never looked at technology as ominous. I feel that in the early films that was definitely apparent and I feel that people imposed that structure on



**"Technology is the human will made physical. We can't say, 'Look at what technology is doing to us.' We are technology. It's us doing it to us."**

those films because they needed to in order to understand what was going on. In fact, technology is us. We can't say, "Look at what technology is doing to us." We are technology. It's us doing it to us. There is no technology other than as an extension of us; the way this phone is an extension of our mouths and our ears. Technology is the human will made physical. It's absolutely an extension of us and our will and our bodies. We have to understand that there is no technology in the universe apart from that which has been created by



humans; it's human creativity. So, if we don't like the environment that technology has created for us we have only ourselves to blame. It's not being imposed on us, it is us. In a way it's like a mirror. If we don't like what we see in the mirror then we can decide to change it but we have to realize that it is a mirror of us.

**In *Videodrome* the viewer shares Max Renn's experiences because the movie unfolds from his point of view. For that reason it has a fantastic or dreamlike quality. *Crash* seems to be the same way, at least visually. Was it your intention that the audience enter a dream with both of these movies?**

With each movie I'm creating a hermetically sealed little universe that I'm inviting the audience to come into. On the surface, it looks like the world they've just walked in from off the street, but, in fact, is not. It has its own rules and its own set of concerns. With *Crash* in particular, I had an assistant director who had a hundred extras at any given moment that we could put on the street to make the street look normal and live and the extras would have to react to what was happening with the cars. I wasn't interested in the extras. I didn't want to see them and I didn't care what they thought. If we were doing it realistically, there would be people on the streets, but I wasn't trying

to be realistic. The movie operates very much on the level of dream logic and metaphor.

**Why has your technique in depicting the struggle between the mind and body changed from the organic forms of the parasites in *Shivers* to the more technological forms of *Videodrome*, *Dead Ringers* and now *Crash*?**

Well, I think *Videodrome* had a lot of organic forms in it and if you think of *Naked Lunch*, it too had a lot of organic forms in it. I don't really think it's a change or an evolution, I'm just attacking the same subject matter from different angles and it's quite conceivable that my next movie might have all of that back in it. I don't really think in terms of what I should do next. It's all intuitive, basically; whatever seems to excite me and make things come together in a way that I can create a film that's got density, textures and levels and so on. This is more a critical observation that someone must make. If they want to see some evolution in the films, that's fine, but I don't think about it in those terms.

**Initially, you gave physical representation to intangible psychological trauma, in the form of such things as parasites and a brood of evil children. Now, everything has moved entirely inside.**

In a way, the whole of the movie *Crash* is a physical representation. I mean, it's interesting for me to hear you say that, but the process of doing this feels very familiar to me and it's hard for me to notice what it might mean or how different it is to you.

**Horror films generally have a clear definition of what is good and what is evil. The horror in your films usually seems to be the result of an accident. Do you think you're replacing the fear of evil with the fear of chaos and a loss of control?**

For me, it's a relativist universe; I don't believe in absolute good and absolute evil. I think these are human inventions and human concepts as most everything in our life is. I don't believe in God, therefore I don't believe in a Devil so I don't have that as a basis. And when we talk about human evil, I might use that term to describe acts that we've seen in human history, but I don't mean it in the religious, absolutist way. If you're an organic creature, which we are, chaos is evil. Chaos is disillusion, chaos is destruction. But on the other hand, chaos is also the mother of creation. It's not clear



cut and I think I'm constantly playing with the tension between all of those constructs and I'm willing to let things happen in the films without a lot of comment on my part because, for me, they're my experiments. I want to see what happens and if I start by saying, "This character is really evil," I've limited the possibilities as soon as I've said that. I've limited the things that he can do and how he can be perceived by the audience. I've lessened the possibility for subtlety in the film as well. I try not to do that because I don't have those inbuilt categories and structures in my own mind.

**In reference to *Dead Ringers*, do you believe that the differences between men and women are biologically determined?**

Well I think it's pretty obvious that they are to a huge extent.

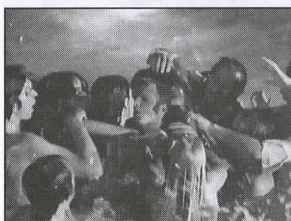
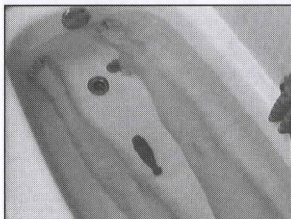
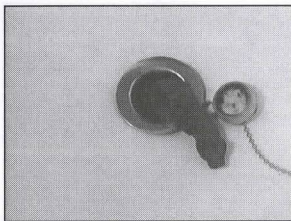
**You don't think that any of it can be accredited to socialization?**

But you begin with the biology. And there are hundreds of thousands of years of strength behind the biology. But then once a child is in society, everything is up for grabs. There is no question. I'm not big on absolutes, and that includes determination. One of the things one discovers in doing twins research

above  
**Gabrielle (Rosanna Arquette) in *Crash*. Braces, buckskin and Benzes.**

left  
**David Cronenberg and James Spader on the set of *Crash*.**





above  
A putrid parasite  
probes an  
unsuspecting  
bathing beauty in  
*Shivers* (1975).

right  
Cronenberg on the  
set of his mangled  
masterpiece.

## "Suicide fascinates me because if the human body is the first fact, then mortality is also one of the first facts and the only way you can impose your will on death is to commit suicide."

is how much of human behavior, it is suggested at least, is genetically determined. But it doesn't feel like that to us. It's like a robot being perhaps amazed to find that he's a robot. I don't know if human behavior is genetically determined. It doesn't feel like that to us and we don't want it to be true. In the sense that I believe that we create our own reality, if we don't want it to be true, then it isn't. Up until now, sexuality has been genetically determined and from this point on, if we've decided that it won't be, then it won't be.

**So many of your male characters are scientists and doctors. Why are you preoccupied with these figures and the role that they have in society?**

They interest me because I'm interested in artists. I have characters who are artists, as well, and I see them all as basically being the same. I'm interested in characters who want to get to the bottom of things, who want to see past the veils that society casts over us and who don't accept what is given to them as necessarily being the absolute reality and that there's nothing more. I'm also interested in characters who are intrigued by the human body. All of those things lead me towards scientists, doctors and artists rather than, say, lawyers and policemen.

**In your film *Stereo*, Stringfellow says, "If there can be no love between researcher and subject then there can be no experiment." What exactly did you mean by that?**

I mean that there is no such thing as objectivity. There is no possibility for a person to objectively observe another person. The characters and the individual textures of each person will influence each other. For example, there was a lot of psychic research done in Russia on card-guessing and telepathy and so on. I would only work with certain combinations of scientist and subject. You could say that the scientists wanted certain results so badly that they kind of brought them about. That's possible. Or it might be that it does take combinations of people to make those things happen and reveal themselves whereas with other combinations of people it won't happen. It's like one director with an actor and another director with the

same actor: you won't get the same performance. I forget what the law's called in physics, but it says that you cannot observe something without changing it. Whether you're observing molecules, atoms or mice, the mere fact of the observation alters everything. (*He is speaking of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. Thank you Ms. Poiser. —Ed.*) That's what I was really talking about.

**Why do so many of your films end with the male character committing suicide?**

Well, let's see, there's the twins and Max Renn... **Isn't there a suicide in *The Dead Zone*?**

Well, he doesn't *really* commit suicide. It's a heroic act and he knows the risk is that he might die, but I wouldn't say that that's a suicide. But suicide does fascinate me because if the human body is the first fact, then of course mortality is also one of the first facts and the only way that you can impose your will on your death is to commit suicide. Otherwise, death happens accidentally. There are some cultures, like Japanese culture, which incorporate suicide as a possibility within the culture. Western culture doesn't tend to do that. It's partly Catholicism and the idea of life being precious, but there's another...I haven't really dealt with suicide in the way that I'm talking to you about it, but it is an interesting take on life and death.

In some cultures, all of life is a preparation for death. To some, in the west, that seems to be life-denying and to others, it seems to be coming to grips with the reality of human existence in a very straight-forward, pragmatic way. These are two very different takes on the same thing. It seems to me that even if, as an artist you wanted to shape your death and didn't want to just die in a hospital or be hit by a car accidentally, the only thing you can do is plan your death and carry it out according to your plan. It's a discussion one must have with oneself.

**Which is directly related to *Crash* because it brings up the randomness of death and being confronted with something so monumental purely by surprise.**

Right. And the idea of courting death when you feel like it. Not necessarily seeking it out but not running from it either.

**At the 1995 Toronto Film Festival you hosted a screening of Todd Browning's *Freaks*. Why was that a great influence for you?**

Well, it wasn't actually an influence because I didn't see it early enough in my life for it to have an influence. Once again, it deals with the human body and the possibility of what can still be considered human and normal and what is perverse and





what is not perverse. It's a rural, naive, carnival setting, which is not one of my favorites, I must say, but it does deal so strongly with things that do interest me. And it's striking because he's using real freaks and that's so rare. It's not a make-up movie, and I thought that was pretty extraordinary. I think it's still banned in England. It touched a lot of buttons in people and upset them very much. I think people were really disturbed to see freaks onscreen. There's a beautiful photo of Tod Browning with his arms around the pinhead girl and some others and there's a great love and affection for them on his part. No condescension, no disgust, no revulsion.

**The thing that I found particularly interesting about it was the amount of time he spent showing the characters performing mundane tasks like lighting a cigarette.**

That's right. I think that's what disturbed audiences. When they're displayed in a carnival, that's one thing, but to have to understand their lives and how they've adapted, that was too strong for a lot of people. I connect it to the two sides of the Rosanna Arquette character in *Crash*. Some people in England and other places have written scathingly about the scene when James Spader has sex with her. They regarded it as sex with a cripple and believed that that was hideous. It makes you ask yourself, "What if the cripple happens to be your wife of thirty years?"



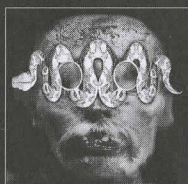
Are you not supposed to have sex with her because she's a cripple? On the other hand it was interesting to receive a letter from a disabled person who loved that character because she did not hide herself because she was crippled. She incorporated her new body and what she was into her sexuality.

**And she was granted a degree of humanness.**

She's human and she's unafraid. People don't understand that this is something that the disabled

would aspire to. God knows that I'm not trying to be politically correct, because I certainly wouldn't suggest that *Crash* is politically correct, nor do I want it to be, but in this particular instance it is, you know. It's interesting how people think of it as disgusting sex with a cripple and don't really think of a cripple as a human who might have sexual desires. I would connect that with *Freaks*. \*

above  
**Catherine Ballard**  
(Deborah Unger)  
**and James Ballard**  
(James Spader):  
Splendor in the  
grass.



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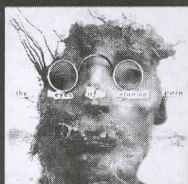
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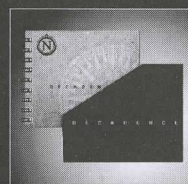
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# MR. TWISTER

## THE AMAZING METER-FEEDING CLOWN

Mr. Twister, a.k.a. Cory McDonald, is a clown just about all the time. A Santa Cruz native, Mr. Twister was a self-described loner as a child, labeled as a discipline problem in school because of his dyslexia and hyperactivity. Practicing being a clown from an early age showed him that his tendency towards freakish behavior could actually be appreciated.

Mr. Twister made international news in 1995 when he was ticketed by Santa Cruz meter maids for “unlawful deposit of coins,” feeding the parking meters of others so they wouldn’t get a ticket. One meter attendant even followed Mr. Twister down the street, ticketing all the cars which Mr. Twister had added a quarter for, regardless of the time left on the meter before the quarter was added. As a result of his crusade, the City Council abolished the unlawful deposit law.

After Mr. Twister gathered all this media attention, his bookings dropped off as people thought he would be expensive, overbooked, or followed by a media circus (not true). He still does most of his work on the streets of Santa Cruz and the surrounding area, where he is wildly popular because of his incredible rapport with children and balloon twisting skills.

Immediately after zooming up for his interview on his skateboard, Mr. Twister approached two nearby children and asked them if they would like a balloon. He then proceeded to whip out a heart with a monkey clinging to it and a rainbow multiballooned arch. Then, two grownups approached. They wanted a heart too, and a balloon collar for their dog. Two more grownups approached, requesting balloon por-



INTERVIEW BY SARA BRUCKER

PHOTOS BY CINDY RAGIN

traits of their two little dogs. When they gave him a dollar, he commented, “I throw this in the meters to annoy the heck out of the meter maids!” HONK, HONK! *[honks his nose]*

Finally Mr. Twister suggested that we duck into the not-yet-open-for-the-day Poet and Patriot Irish Pub to avoid more balloon excitement (he’s on the pub’s dart team).

**Sara: Are you a clown when you play darts?**

Twister: Well, only on occasion, like when I really want to, you know, “Playing you guys is a joke, and let me prove it.”

**S: So did the name Mr.**

**Twister from the balloons or from the meters?**

T: I got the name Mr. Twister from an individual who used to work for me, just before he went insane. He was going over a bunch of new clown names that he wanted to try, just throwing them out, and he said, “Twister, blah, blah,” and I said, “Wait—go back one! Twister... if you don’t want that one, I’ll take it.” It sounded good to me because it signified “warped,” you know?

**S: Which came first, the clowning, the balloons, the meter feeding? I guess the metering came last.**

T: The metering came [because] I like to keep people from getting parking tickets. So I did that for about six years, before [the city] started figuring out that I’m the one costing them all this money. They’d rather give someone a \$23 ticket than have someone else drop a quarter in. That’s just greed, straight up; there’s no way to hide it—there’s no rock, no shadow, that’s greed (HONK! HONK!). They decided to try and do something about that.

**S: So you got chased down the street by a parking meter person.**

T: I went to the law library, first of all, found out everything I could about [the law]. Then I went over to the city parks and recreation offices, got copies of



papers, the ordinance, the numbers, the whole bit. Then I went to the police station to find out the repercussions of breaking this law. They asked the old lady in the back, they asked the computer, they asked the paper files; and nobody knew anything about this law. So I figured, you know, I'm tired of being harassed by this hollow threat.

One of the parking individuals had informed me that if I ever climbed out of my clown suit, he would prosecute me to the fullest extent of the law. And I yelled back at him, "Being a clown does not exempt me from the judicial system of the United States of America! What's your problem?" I'm my own country now? Cool!

**S: "Clown Nation."**

T: Yeah, right. They decided to press it, so I climbed out of my clown suit the next day, and went down there with hundreds of quarters. It all basically started because this one parking [enforcement] individual was going down the street, basically being a jerk. Giving tickets to as many people as he can, as fast as he can. For a while, I was trying to get film of him doing this stuff, but I decided I didn't want to destroy the guy—I just wanted to stop what he's doing... The whole City Council squeaked their little noses to affirm, yeah, this is going off our books. I've got the nose that the mayor wore right here. I also got Gordon Elliott to wear it. It

came on the twelve hour parking meter that the City Council gave me as an award.

**S: So now you can park for twelve hours.**

T: Actually, I've got my grandmother's old rocking chair, which is the only piece of my inheritance from her that I really wanted. Her chair is so great, so comfortable, so wide, and people love sitting in it when they come to my house. So I put the meter by it and they've gotta pay a quarter to sit in my grandma's chair. I use those quarters to feed meters.

Anyway, I've just been having a great time ever since...before that, I was just doing it to keep a few people from getting tickets. But now I'm doing it because if that meter guy's gonna go through the effort to be a jerk, then I'm going to counter him being a jerk. That's completely against what I'm going for here.

**S: You got a worldwide response, people sending you quarters.**

T: Oh yeah, I had one guy from New York who wrote, "been out of work for three months, but sending you a dollar check anyway, just because I don't like them—take it and keep spending it in the same way." I carried that one around with me for a long time, showing it to the press.

**S: So you haven't gone to a clown college... you've taught yourself stuff like balloon twisting, right?**

T: Balloon twisting, facepainting, freestyle unicycling, stilts, dancing on stilts... Basically, circus arts have been my hobby since I was big enough to grab a fifty gallon oil drum and start rolling it around. It



was one of my first toys; I [asked] my mom, "See that horse pasture out there? I want that fifty gallon oil drum." And I'd roll around on it.

**S: Now at first I thought you were an older clown, so I was going to ask you...well, you know some people are terrified of clowns.**

T: Oh, yes! I've had 36-year-old women just turn around and see me in a department store and start screaming, "CLOWN! AAA!" at the top of their lungs, like Freddy Kreuger was standing there. "Aaaaargghh..."

**S: I wonder [if clown fear] was around before John Wayne Gacy. I was born in 1970, so I don't remember a time when people didn't know about him.**

T: Most people don't realize this, but people will really trust a clown. People trust me without know-

ing me. Even though you've got the people who are scared of the evil [clowns] who want to mess with you, some people see a clown and they trust them with their children. Just yesterday, a guy walking down the street—I've never seen him before in my life—took his child, put him in front of me, and says, "Make him a balloon, I gotta run into the store." And he ran in there and left me with his child! He's never met me! He has no idea what I look like, who I am, what I'm about, yet he left his child with me without thinking about it. That's the power of a clown, okay, and people [can] abuse that power. The movie industry has given clowns a real bad reputation. And John Wayne Gacy did not help. He used the power of a clown to get at so many

children because people never thought he'd do anything to them.

**S: Are people pretty aware, you know, that balloons cost money and everything?**

T: I had to inform a few clients, you know, if you want me to come out to your house and twist balloons all day, you know, I gotta buy [the balloons]. But other times, like once, I made a hundred dollars just trying to get from one end of the street to the other.

**S: How much does this kind of balloon cost?**

T: Well, about ten something for a bag of 144 balloons, which I can go through in an hour. So if someone wants me to

work for six hours, making balloons all day and they only want to give me \$60, I tell them they have to buy me a case of balloons, or else I'd be working for free. And you saw how fast I can make them.

I pride myself on the fact that I can make over 500 things, and I'm constantly creating new ones. A lot of balloon artists train and apprentice with other people. But I started from scratch. All of my designs are based on origami.

I figured out the fastest, most economical way to do them, and then I just put everything into getting them out with speed. Like, I worked eleven hours the other night for the City of Santa Cruz. I got paid for the first three hours and for the rest I just took tips. I must have gone through at least five or six hundred people just in the first couple of hours. Then after that I stopped counting. For the three



hours that I was working for the city, I stopped and made a large sculpture of a Harley Davidson and a large sculpture of a dragon wrapped around a tree.

At the end of my performances I give away the big things. I write a number from one to whatever on a piece of paper and give [the piece] to the kid that guesses [the number]. I almost got fried with that, because two kids in the audience said, "22!" right at the same time, and it was my number! I was like, uh oh, what am I gonna do, only got one Harley left... Then I found out they were brother and sister, so I put one kid on one end and one on the other and they carried it out of the crowd. I was like, "Phew! Karma, thank you for coming in and saving my butt."

**S: So in this 1996 reader's survey [from a Santa Cruz weekly paper], you got three awards: the parking meter ordinance got the gold for silliest local ordinance, and you got the silver for most irritating local personality; but then you also got the gold for best local sex symbol.**

T: People, especially women, respond so well if you're just nice to them; they really appreciate that. You don't have to necessarily be good looking—just get them in a good conversation that doesn't involve sports or cars.

**S: So anyway, you decided at one point that your natural behavior would be acceptable if you became a clown.**

T: I've been addicted to cartoons since way back. Like, superheroes on TV, right? And they go out and do good and justice. Now, how do you get reality close enough to be a superhero? Like I say, clowns have power to do good or evil, but most people trust them, expect them to bring joy, to be a beacon of goodness. This is as close to a superhero as I can get without actually going insane and wearing the rubber tights, and going, "NYAAANG!" I could brighten up a room, even a room full of convicts...

**S: Have you twisted balloons for convicts?**

T: I have. Come on down to my neighborhood, down in the Beach Flats, there's a few escaped ones [there]. I also have a rep as being somewhat tough and demanding on people who don't quite get it in life... I've dealt with street punks trying to steal my

tips—by the way, I used to be known as Beebo Bobbo the punk rock slayer. During a juggling act, a punk rocker was trying to steal all my tips. I took my baton and used it to, shall we say, render him unconscious. Without losing my stride juggling. Very important to keep the showmanship, the show must go on.

Over in Seaside once I was working a festival and a bunch of gangbangers came in. One of the smaller ones decided that for a laugh he would kick me in the butt while I was bent over helping a child. So [as] he swung back his big jackboot, my partner at the time saw it and whistled to me. I turned around, saw him winding up, and as soon as he let go, I grabbed his foot and lifted it over my head. Which,



of course, made his melon kind of bounce on the hard packed sand. Then I threw him down and decided to go back to what I was doing, but he didn't like being laughed at by all his friends. So he decided to take a swing at me.

I got him down on the ground and I leaned down and said, "Hear that sound?" He said, "What are you talking about, get offa me!" I said, "That's the sound of all your friends watching you get your butt kicked by a clown and laughing. They're not even gonna help you. Those your friends? Get new ones!"

I've had a few run-ins with a lot of different things... even the cops say about me, "Approach with extreme caution." Why? Because not only am I intelligent but I know how to use it.

**S: So like you're eventually planning to go to**

**clown college or something, right? What's it gonna take for you to be able to do that?**

T: It's like winning the lottery to get into Barnum and Bailey's clown circus, where I want to go. They get about 6,000 apps for 35 openings every year. That's basically winning the lottery. Plus you need about 5 grand to survive in Florida when you go. I also just heard of one in Vermont. I thought I might go there and scope out chicks. *(sarcastic laugh)*

**S: Lady clowns?**

T: Where else are you going to find a woman who can deal with you on a professional and emotional level?

**S: There's a pretty high ratio of male to female clowns, isn't there? Like, we're talking the**

**Smurfs, right?**

T: Ohhh yeah. I've already met Gargamel, they call him the government.

**S: How long do you go to clown college?**

T: I believe the Barnum and Bailey is an 8 to 12 week course. To get a degree, you really have to work hard. That's part of the reason I've been learning and teaching myself. I'm hoping to whiz through classes like unicycling: "Watch this, teacher—I can do this forwards, backwards, and in a tailspin with only one foot! I'll do the Can Can for ya, how's that?"

**S: And balloon twisting!**

T: Balloon twisting, I found out they don't even teach that there!

**S: No! So what, then, juggling, stilting...?**

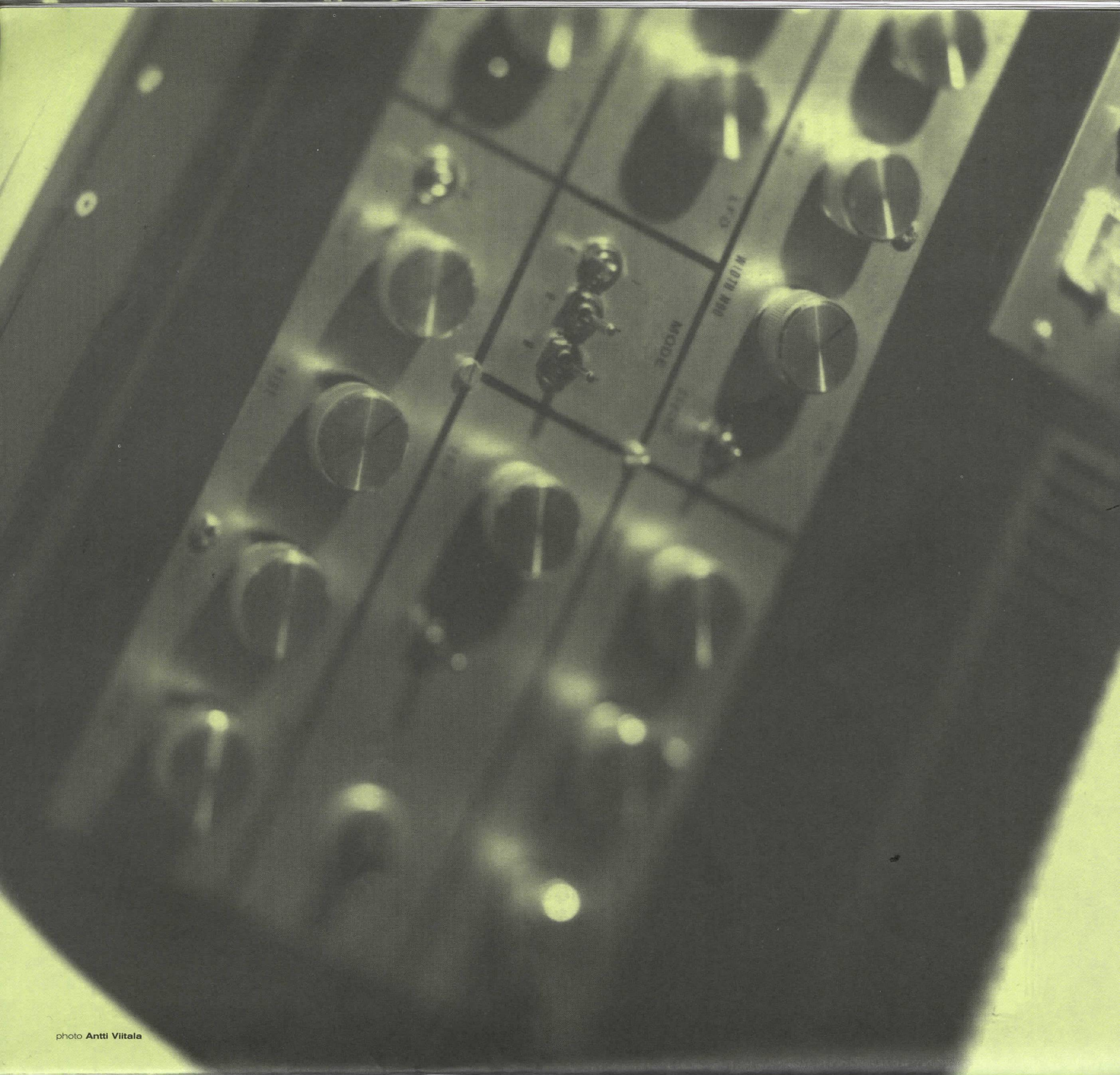
T: Yes, and doing your own makeup and costumes; clown movements, like pratfalls, how to tumble without getting hurt; you need some gymnastics, some basic balancing skills, some artistic ability. You need to figure out clown suits.

**S: Do you have any clown idols or heroes? A lot of clowns I read up on were from clown families.**

T: No, I come from a law enforcement family. I'm still wearing a uniform, it's just not all one color. ✱

*Mr. Twister can be booked by contacting Dan Young Publicity at 408-662-3368 or DYoungPR@aol.com*







# INNER SPACE

## THE STORY OF SÄHKÖ RECORDINGS

Finland would, most would assume, be an unlikely home for what is perhaps the most minimal, unpretentious modern day space music around. Since 1993, SÄHKÖ Recordings has succeeded in stunning worldwide fans of electronic music with their trademark sound that sounds so full while containing so few notes. Nevertheless, SÄHKÖ humbly survives without “proper” distribution (absolutely no distribution in the States), while gaining the respect of thousands of fans and collectors. While much electronica has always been an underground and esoteric realm, home-made and home-distributed Finnish electronica is even more of a pearl to come across. Amongst music types, the fact that you *know* of SÄHKÖ’s existence is almost as impressive as owning their material. SÄHKÖ has been admired by such electronic music dignitaries as Mike Paradinas (µ-Ziq), Jonah Sharp (Spacetime Continuum), Charles Edwards (FAX, USA), Richard James (Aphex Twin) and Mixmaster Morris. Even with attention from the big shots, the SÄHKÖ crew must be wondering: “Why are so many people faxing us for records?” To find the answer, we must first go to the source.

It is difficult to say what inspires SÄHKÖ. One could pose that the stark weather and remote geography of this land has turned the Finnish artistic mind inward. However, this music plays with something beyond introspection. The music of SÄHKÖ might be better understood by meeting its people.

### SÄHKÖ-Introductions...

My first introduction to the world of SÄHKÖ was in 1993 when I was looking to start a band in San Francisco. I put up fliers around town, listing influences from the hip to the embarrassing, the mainstream to the esoteric. The most intriguing response was from a Finn named Tony Lindgren, who agreed to meet me for coffee to compare our musical ideas. Tony had a preference for space rock, prog and general oddities. My naïve American sensibilities were surprised with his knowledge and awareness of some darn obscure music that I thought only music nerds knew about. Though Can, Amon Düül II and other commonly known stars of this era were mutual favorites, he also cited many groups far more bizarre and esoteric than I was expecting to talk about, amongst others: Grobschnitt, Agitation Free, Monochrome Set (garage/punk too obscure for me to remember) and the amazing Moondog. It was exciting to realize that someone from Finland knew as much—and oftentimes more—about obscure music than the American music snobs I had met over the years. Personally, Tony Lindgren was (and is) one of the kindest and most musically educated of my peers. We ended up becoming friends, abandoning the idea of starting a band. As I was an ambient DJ at the time, Tony found it worthwhile to educate me on SÄHKÖ records. He informed me that friends of his from Helsinki were coming to visit soon and that I should meet them. This

was the genesis of my SÄHKÖ experience.

### SÄHKÖ-Roots & Branches...

SÄHKÖ Recordings began in 1993 in Helsinki, Finland as the brainchild of Tommi Grönlund. For a “real” job, Tommi is a respected architect in Helsinki, working for a.men, a prominent architect/design group. SÄHKÖ was originally intended to be a creative project for him. I’m sure the success to follow came as quite a shock. It is joked that SÄHKÖ is surprisingly unknown in their home country, though DJs and collectors around the world pay ridiculous prices for their material. Tommi and Mika (Ø), along with Esko Routamaa, go back in Finnish raver history of the late Eighties as core members of the renegade group, The Hyperdelic Housers, from Turku, Finland. The Housers were a respected and popular group of DJs and promoters in this early Finnish electronic scene and laid the foundation for what is now SÄHKÖ Recordings. (Please note the discography at the end of this article for a detailed look into the catalog of SÄHKÖ.) In 1993, SÄHKÖ were pressing 12” singles, only issuing CD format in 1994 with *Metri* by Mika Vainio (Ø). The early SÄHKÖ 12”s were instant collectors’ items and also exceptional, minimal techno, generally of a “dance” style. This material, as with much great electronic music, works at either 33 1/3 or 45 rpm. Either played as entire songs or as passages, this vinyl is extremely strong DJ fodder. Many DJs refer to these kinds of





recordings as “tools” as opposed to songs. If you’re going to track down one of these rarities, I recommend SÄHKÖ 005. This 12” is a gem for techno enthusiasts and for those less involved. You may have better luck finding this one in particular as it is more common than the plain-cover releases previous to it.

As with many punk and indie labels, SÄHKÖ presses relatively few copies of any given release. Budget, a small market, and high import/export costs from Finland prohibit most SÄHKÖ pieces from exceeding 2,000 copies. The electronic and DJ market is also a vinyl fetishists’ market, like punk/indie.

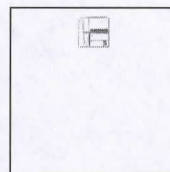
When new releases come

out, they are hungrily and globally consumed.

Many interesting works lie between these early days and the currently popular Panasonic. All of the artists in the SÄHKÖ section of the discography (actually all of the discography) are well worth checking out. *Mike Ink* is a surprisingly “fun” EP and is seemingly upbeat, though, after many listens, somewhat dark. This is a rich EP that grows with each listen. Kirlian’s *Porzellangasse Grooves* is also a great find, representing an excellent collaborative effort between two extremely talented musicians. This EP also exhibits a great deal of musical variety. At times, these “grooves” aren’t so “groovy,” while at other times, very much so. Sil Electronics’ *Tal-S* EP, more so than any SÄHKÖ release, works on any speed and pushes the envelope of the musicality / tonality schism, as nothing on the packaging designates playing speed; both sides function quite well regardless. Sil Electronics is a true member of the SÄHKÖ family.

(As it has been described to me, PUU is a secondary label to SÄHKÖ, though within legalese, I could not source it as being an imprint, or “wing.” PUU was most likely birthed to provide some distinction between two different musical intentions. Though electronics certainly are a common link between PUU and the SÄHKÖ artists, the aesthetics are definitely on different sides of the court.)

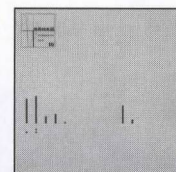
Perhaps the act that has broken all SÄHKÖ stereotypes is Jimi Tenor. Jimi Tenor, for lack of a more SÄHKÖ-ish subcategory, is a lounge musician. Yes, lounge. A Hammond B3 is the centerpiece of his work, though it is filled



Philus' pH



Jimi Tenor SÄHKÖ



Sil Electronics Tal-S

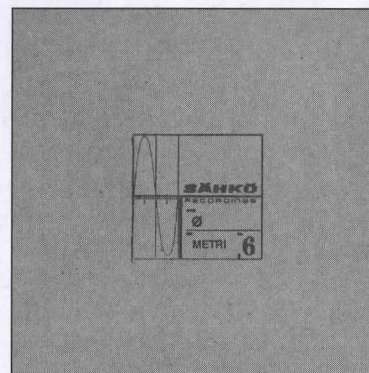
with primitive analog electronics, a saxophone, and a SÄHKÖ records first: vocals. The one vocal track in the catalog is Tenor’s “Take me Baby,” an absolute classic! This track is also the least loungey of all of Tenor’s work. Imagine Giorgio Moroder’s music with a hard, somewhat disco-ish melody and a strong, throbbing, ass-kicking beat. Ridiculously

tongue-in-cheek lyrics follow the beats: “Take me baby, take me now... Take me to the edge of explosion”(!) and “Take me to the edge of the dark star”(!). Is Jimi really a techno Tom Jones or is this song a parody of all vocal, sexually-based dance music? Who knows? Other than this breath of SÄHKÖ fresh air, Tenor’s

work is otherwise sublimely bachelor pad retro, the only postmodern bloke in the SÄHKÖ bunch. Maybe this is why he’s a PUU artist. This music, except to the most trained ear, cannot be distinguished as 1964 America or 1994 Finland. Killer!

Also of note is Tekonivel’s *Sirkus*, a demented and bizarre experimental dance EP. This track, while maintaining SÄHKÖ understated style, is a bit fuller and more developed than the norm. *Freestyle Man* is a double 12” set strictly for the dance floor. The idea here, surprisingly, is house music. Yes, a strange find in the SÄHKÖ gene pool, but house music nonetheless. Groove, bass lines, piano chords, and lots and lots of good feelin’. Phew! A change. All the while, the SÄHKÖ simplicity remains. After one listens to every SÄHKÖ release and then *Freestyle Man* on PUU, a sonic similarity is still apparent.

SÄHKÖ’s music provides you with a clean slate to work with. I have found myself listening to Ø’s *Metri* and feeling very isolated and





**SÄHKÖ's sonic trademark is not due to a style or vibe, but rather through a musical methodology of utter, dire simplicity, pushing the envelope of minimalism's rules.**

estranged. I also have listened to it and felt very warm and collected. One could argue that all music is open to one's individual mood and daily perception. This is obviously true; it would be ridiculous to promote the idea that only tonal music can influence mood. But, on the flip side, when one listens to music in which the sophisticated orchestration, composition and sampling are laid out meticulously, it's as if the moods have been premeditated for you. Much of electronic pop music works in set conventions in a similar way that rock and indie rock does. One convention to which many ambient electronic artists conform is a compositional approach that asserts mood and color through a predisposed, almost molded "vibe." When listening to a lot of ambient music, one is generally force-fed an atmosphere of pleasures: water, birds, sheep, pleasing chords in major keys, vocal utterings of "expand your mind," "relax" and "love your brother." These can only inspire a happy mood or perhaps a pressing of the "stop" button. Conversely, a dark ambient sound can be suffocating and heavy-handed, leaving no room or choice but to experience isolation, pain, or melancholy. The same is true of dance music for dance music's sake. Dance music's role is that of a premeditated functional experience. When I go out dancing, I WANT TO FEEL GOOD! I can hear the skeptics who might claim that some people go out dancing to feel bad. True enough. This is why people who go out and dance to house music generally don't do it on the same dance floor as those that dance to, say, darkwave.

It seems that a great deal of today's modern music has been "mooded" for us. What puts SÄHKÖ into a category unto itself is that the greatest impression of this music is not necessarily the music, but rather its tonality. There is a sonic trademark that is distinctly

SÄHKÖ. This is not due to a style or vibe, but rather through a musical methodology of utter, dire simplicity, pushing the envelope of minimalism's rules. It is this delivery of sound that challenges SÄHKÖ's peers in the music community. If all you can hear is "PING PING PING PING," you probably will not find the *music*, per se. You may, however, have found herein the brilliance of *Metri* and of SÄHKÖ Recordings as it is no more than the sounds that machines make. In SÄHKÖ's world, the machines are the music's authors more than the musicians. A great deal of today's electronic music, laden with sampling and sophisticated engineering techniques, often diverts the attention of the listener from the music and, perhaps by design, towards a cat and mouse game of sample spotting. "I know that beat," "That's a Human League sample" and "Where do I know that from?" become focal points of the listener's attention. The music of SÄHKÖ has no intent to be ironic, nor does it attempt to recall a genre or a sound from anyone's past. It does not sample or even reflect on styles or influences. It seems appropriate that as electronic music becomes increasingly marketable to Nineties middle-American mall culture, SÄHKÖ will likely remain extremely underground.

### **Metri**

I met Mika Vainio, SÄHKÖ's main "star" at the time, who performs as (among other stage names) "Ø". We instantly had something in common, as BPM Ø was my DJ stage name. He gave me his CD, suggesting that I might DJ it some time. I also met Antti Viitala, nickname of Paikko, a photographer whose work is on the cover art of Ø's debut CD, *Metri* (see discography). *Metri* is still one of the most intriguing *looking* music packages I have ever witnessed. Picture a tan 5 1/4" floppy disk recycled cardboard envelope, a mailer. On the front is a

A Taste of

# Finland

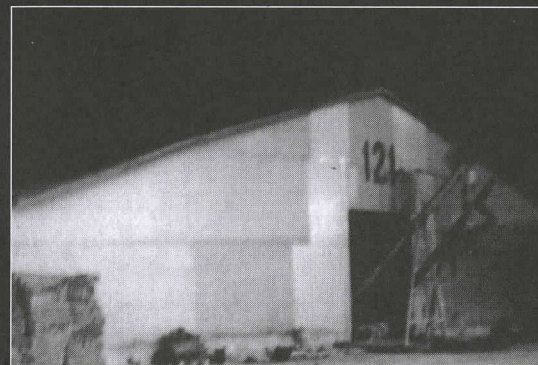


photo Mika Vainio

Finland is not typically lumped in with discussions of Scandinavia. Though it shares geographical proximity to Russia, it shares little cultural dynamics with it. Finland, though rich with its own history and splendor has spoken little to the rest of the world, more likely enjoying its own obscurity than hiding any secrets. Having interviewed friends who recently traveled to Helsinki and beyond, I have been told that it is a very worthy vacation destination. As both book and/or vacation are space and cost prohibitive, a summary will have to do.

- Finland covers a total surface area of roughly 131,000 miles. Its neighbors are Norway and Sweden to the west and Russia to the east. Many historians and other eggheads would claim Finland to be the most remote and least understood of all Scandinavian countries due to an archaic, complex language system and a sociology that could not be easily identified as Scandinavian / Nordic. Apparently, blond hair and blue eyes are not the norm in Finland, not that physical characteristics necessarily define a culture. I remember a Dane telling me that if you put a handful of silent Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, and a single Finn in a room, he could pick the Finn instantly. From personal experience, I too would agree that there is something very different about a Finn. Finns, to North Americans, may seem cold and distant. However, I have spent time with Finns and have learned that this is a silly stereotype. Different, yes. Cold, no.

- Finland is perhaps most famous for being the land of the Midnight Sun. During midsummer, day and night are only separated by a few hours of twilight in the south, with no sunset at all in the far north. This



phenomenon is known as "Kaamos." Parts of Northern Canada and Alaska will grant you this vision as well.

- Rooted in a parliamentary democracy for several years, Finland's government has since been moving towards an open democracy in recent years. Finland is also known for having outstanding social programs; 20% of its GNP is spent on social services. However, with the shift to a more "free form" democracy and an attendant rise in unemployment, this ideal social welfare system is changing from day to day. Finland is finally reacting to a changing Europe (post-EEC). It also has absorbed some of the ill effects of the vast social changes going on with Russia, its most prominent Eastern neighbor.
- Finland is home to a numerically small, yet culturally prevalent group known as the "Same," more commonly known as "Lapps." ("Lapp," however, is a slightly derogatory term, as it was the name given to them by their conquerors.) The Same are a people of ancient and closely adhered tradition and even have their own language. The Same are also the people who brought reindeer to global cultural awareness. (No, reindeer are not a myth brought about for Christmas storytelling.) Word is that the Same have been herding, domesticating, and "growing" (read: for food) reindeer for over 2,000 years.
- Perhaps the most well known gift from Finland to the world is the sauna. The sauna also dates back some 2,000 years and certainly has a very different meaning for a Finn than the slovenly, leisurely and sometimes sexual connotations that we Americans have of the "steam room." The sauna, in Finnish culture, is a spiritual and mystical place rich with tradition and ceremony, especially for the family unit. It is an honor for a Finn to bring a stranger into his or her sauna.
- Of further note is the terrain and climate. Finland contains the most marshland anywhere in the world, as well as over 55,000 lakes. Finland also holds within its borders thousands of islands. Finnish society jests that every Finnish family could feasibly have either its own lake or island. The weather in Finland is not as treacherous as one would imagine. Though it maintains cold winters, it boasts the highest average summer temperatures of Northern Europe. Its seasons are dramatic, partially due to Kaamos, partially due to its geography.

—Peter Becker

## It seems appropriate that as electronic music becomes increasingly marketable to Nineties middle-American mall culture, SÄHKÖ will likely remain extremely underground.

stamped square with a sine wave, the words "SÄHKÖ Recordings" and the title "Ø, *Metri*, no. 6." The backside sheaths a flap for security; it's as if a government document is hidden inside, or perhaps a medical prescription, or maybe just a floppy disk. Inside is a black, heavy stock CD sleeve with the titles and credits on one side and a rather stark black and white photo of a warehouse on the other side. (Mika informed me that this was the studio in which he and his friends recorded.) Separately enclosed in this package is a small black and white photo of what looks to be a military communications device, complete with knobs and switches and a handle. Later, Mika mentioned that this was one of the synths that he played for the recording, one of the synths that *he built!* I knew that this was going to be an exceptional listening experience.

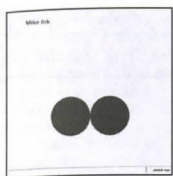
*Metri*, the debut LP from Ø, would be one proper way to introduce oneself to the SÄHKÖ catalog. It is a fifteen song full-length experience, clocks in at just under 74 minutes and is divided into two parts. After dozens of listens, the only notable separation between these two parts seems to be that the second part is a bit slower and beat free. To open one's mind to SÄHKÖ music, one must immediately go beyond hearing "minimal" or "sparse" or perhaps even musical categorization. At various times, it seems to embody techno, ambient and other musical spaces. However, it does not live within the oft played rules of these genres. This is why SÄHKÖ stands out. The tracks with beats are not necessarily dance tracks. The "chill" tracks are not always the most pleasant sounds to relax to. It is not necessarily background music, as one cannot help but pay attention to its impressively thunderous monotone quality. It is not necessarily foreground music as a lot of songs beg the question of substance.

This is not to say that the music of *Metri*, or of SÄHKÖ as a whole, is boring. Boring is a common complaint of those without a taste or tolerance for techno-styled music, or electronic music in general. *Metri* is entirely instrumental, as are all of SÄHKÖ's releases (excepting Jimi Tenors' legendary "Take Me Baby"). *Metri* lives on 4 to 8 tracks, tends to repeat exceedingly long repetitive loop passages, and lacks the lushness of a lot of ambient music, as it is free of sampling, digital sound (SÄHKÖ are diehard analog slaves) and slick studio trickery. *Metri* makes no pretense to fit into the styles of the moment. Considering this is a '94 release, it could very well have catered to the typical dance floor techno and trance conventions of that time. This stereotypical vibe usually begins with a theme, builds a groove, continues to rise, adds more rhythm, reaches crescendo, adds a chorus, adds phrasing and then returns to the groove for the DJ to mix out. Though this is obviously a crass generalization of electronic dance music, it represents a formulaic approach that countless musicians work within.

On the other side of the formula, *Metri* could have taken the ambient way out by being soothing and pretty, with little room for serious experimentation. The ambient music of this time had a penchant for 10-15 minute songs that essentially did one thing: drift on and on and on with bleeps, bloops, and samples used as spice. However, *Metri* and SÄHKÖ turned heads most likely because they defied categorization. They were just SÄHKÖ and it worked.

A friend told me once that his idea of a SÄHKÖ product was one in which a SÄHKÖ musician hits record on the DAT, plays a few sounds on a very crude box, adds a rhythm (maybe), lets it roll for 4 to 7 minutes, stops, brings the tape down to

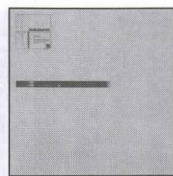




Mike Ink s/t



Panasonic Vainio



Kirlian Porzellangasse

the pub, drinks a pint while playing it for his SÄHKÖ homies, and upon artistic consensus, cuts a 12". Ah, the freedom of independence. Though the process is most likely not that simple, it does ring of probable truth. When listening to SÄHKÖ's music, one must fight the urge to say, "Hey! *I* could have done *that*." Maybe, maybe not. The simplest truth here is...*you're not them*.

The music on *Metri* often experiences little change for considerably long passages. The song ends and you wonder what happened. This music is not so much the quality of the composition but rather its stark and powerful tonality. The mood invoked through flat, crystalline sounds can very much be an open mood book for the listener. In this sense, *Metri* possesses the quality to sway the ear to a sound rather than a note.

#### Panasonic and the future...

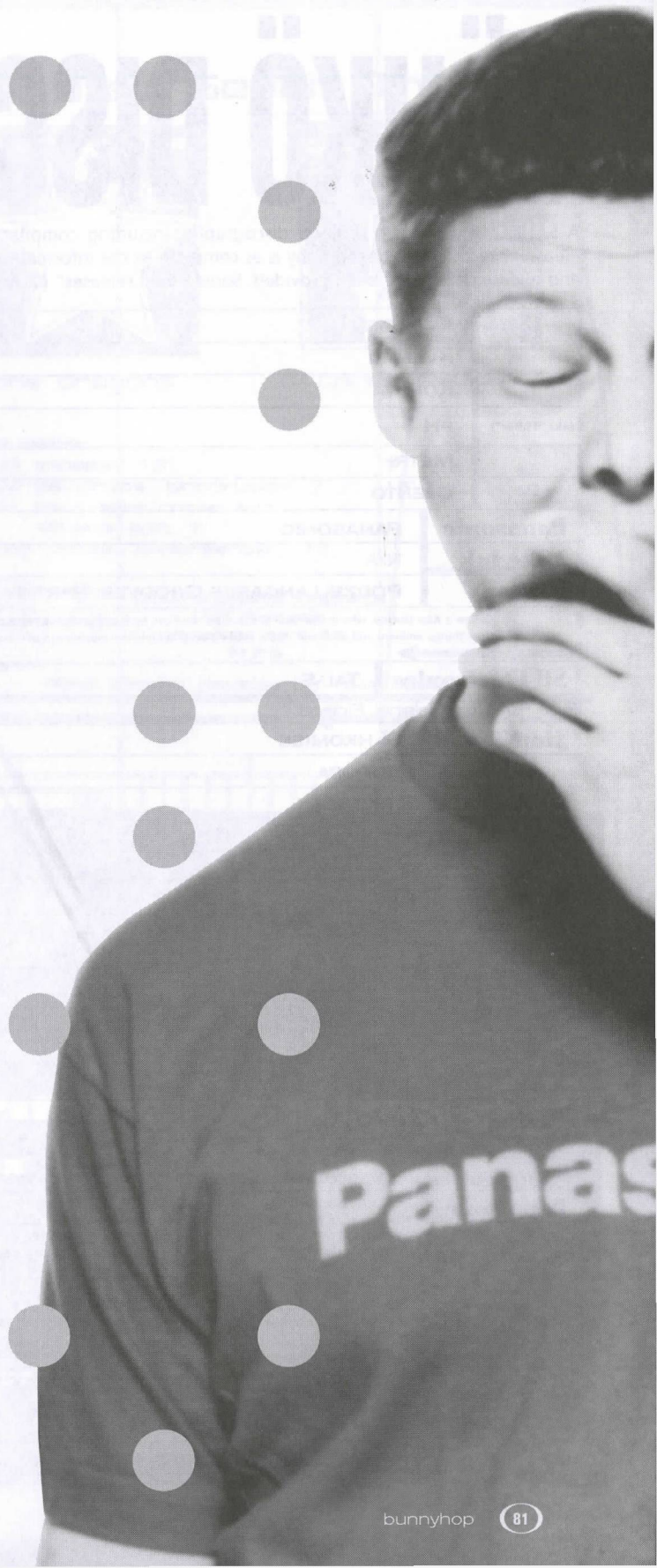
Panasonic is SÄHKÖ's prominent, front stage group now, having formed in 1993. Its two original members are Mika Vainio (Ø) and Ilpo Väisänen, friends who have known each other through the Finnish club scene and have also worked on various band projects together. The third member of Panasonic, Sami Salo, joined in 1994. Panasonic debuted with an EP released during the summer of that year and has progressed much since. With Panasonic being licensed to NovaMute (UK), SÄHKÖ's vision of minimalism, once relegated to collectors and the insular community of the DJ scene, is perhaps ready for mass consumption. As the newest and most popular of SÄHKÖ's lineage, Panasonic will continue to be heavily promoted throughout '97. They have gigged throughout Europe and have even made it to the States for at least one show in New York. Rumor has it that a once-delayed double bill tour with the seminal and legendary Suicide (an incredible "old school" / "new school" meeting) will happen

in '97. Word has it that Panasonic is once again a two member group, as Sami is doing obligatory army duty for his country and has further career plans.

As with Mika's solo work, Panasonic maintains a fresh perspective on its zenline sonic tonality, giving ironic credence to their name. The sounds of SÄHKÖ are familiar here, but a maturity of sound has risen. With new member(s) and no doubt more gear, the group continues the vision planted by Vainio in '93. The simplicity and the repetition are still there, but the sound is fuller and more...passionate? Yes, there seems to be the hint of feeling here, perhaps intended and perhaps incidental to growth. Mika and crew have perfectly taken the next step in developing the most minimal of minimal into something much bigger, much stronger and much fuller. Listening to SÄHKÖ's earlier work, one would have a hard time hearing any music beyond the machine. Then, SÄHKÖ composed as engineers. With Panasonic, the Finns have graduated to a level where they facilitate the breadth of musicality, while all the while the joke is on us. We're too busy hearing the sounds of machines to hear the music that is being played.

Panasonic is the greatest step forward for SÄHKÖ: truly innovative whilst changing *nothing* within their genre. Their music has often been called deconstructionist, yet they seem to exist in a vacuum with no cultural or even musical parallel. Panasonic and SÄHKÖ Recordings have nothing to prove. By this virtue alone, they have proven so much. ✱

—Peter Becker, DJ BPM Ø, NYC, 1997





# SÄHKÖ DISCOGRAPHY

A SÄHKÖ and relative projects discography, including compilation tracks, remixes, other endeavors and Panasonic. Please note that this discography is as complete as the information that has been made available. Most catalog numbers and release dates have been provided. Some "dual releases" (CD and vinyl) have been mentioned only when confirmed.

Ø	RÖNTGEN	1993	12	SÄHKÖ-001
	KVANTTI	1993	12	SÄHKÖ-002
	KOHINA	1993	12	SÄHKÖ-004
(aka "Philus")	PH	1993	12	SÄHKÖ-005
	METRI	1994	CD	SÄHKÖ-006
	OLENTÖ	1996	12	SÄHKÖ-012
<b>Panasonic</b>	PANASONIC	1994	12	SÄHKÖ-007
<b>Mike Ink</b>	N/A	n/a	12	SÄHKÖ-008
<b>Kirlian</b>	PORZELLANGASSE GROOVES, PART 1	1996	12	SÄHKÖ-009

Kirlian is **Abe Duque**, who is also **Facil**. The music of Facil can be found on Instinct records, a domestic label that specializes in, among other things, ambient and electronic music. Facil makes great minimal electronic music that should be checked out!

<b>Sil Electronics</b>	TAL-S	n/a	12	SÄHKÖ-010
PUU Records, Helsinki, Finland				
<b>Jimi Tenor</b>	SAHKOMIES	1994	LP	PUU-1
	EUROPA	1995	LP	PUU-2
<b>Tekonivel</b>	SIRKUS	1996	12	PUU-4
<b>Freestyle Man</b>	N/A	1996	12 x2	PUU-?

Tension Records, Hollis, NY, USA

<b>Tekonivel</b>	REUMA	1994	12	TEN-3003
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Written and produced by **Mika Vainio** (Ø, SÄHKÖ Recordings)

PI Records, UK

Ø	ATOMIT (REMIXES)	1995	12	n/a
Cheap Records, Vienna, Austria				
<b>Kentolevi</b>	KEIMOLA	1996	12	CHEAP RECORDS 12-17

Written and produced by **Mika Vainio** (Ø, SÄHKÖ Recordings)

<b>SÄHKÖ</b>	SÄHKÖ: THE MOVIE	1995	V	BLAST FIRST PRESENTS
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A 44 minute video starring **Jimi Tenor**, **Ø**, **Panasonic**, **Hertsj**, etc.) Directed by Jimi Tenor, shot on 16 mm film. Available in PAL format VHS only. Contact Mute Bank Mail Order.

Panasonic are listed separately based on their new status with Blast First/Mute. Panasonic appears courtesy of SÄHKÖ Recordings.

<b>Panasonic</b>	VAKIO	1995	CD LP x4	SÄHKÖ/BLAST FIRST
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Instrument engineering for **Vakio** by **Jari Lehtinen**. All live tracks. Graphic design by Ilpo Väisänen and a.men architects / tg. The LP version is four 10"s on clear vinyl with a cool box casing. This is most definitely a package to own on vinyl! As is...

	N/A	n/a	12	SÄHKÖ/BLAST FIRST (UK)
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Four songs from **Vakio**, 12" picture disc. Limited to 150 copies; songs are different from main release. VERY cool OP Art graphic on the disc.

	OSASTO	1996	CD 12	BFFP128
	KULMA	1997	CD	BLAST FIRST/MUTE
	BANDIT QUEEN (MUSLIMGAUZE REMIX)	1996	12	TB/Pi 1205
	OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (MUSLIMGAUZE REMIX)	1996	CD	STAALPLAAT STCD110

**Other related works:** **Various Artists**, *A Fault in the Nothing* 2CD, includes Panasonic track, 1996, Ash International (UK); **Björk**, *Telegram*, Ø remix of "Headphones", 1996, One Little Indian Records (UK); **Various Artists**, *Rancho Relaxo All-Stars*, produced by Kirlian (Abe Duque) & Jimi Tenor, 1996, Disko B Records (Germany); and **Various Artists**, *Funktio 1*, a Finnish techno collection (SÄHKÖ artists included), 1996, Function Records (FU-502). NOTE: SÄHKÖ-003 and SÄHKÖ-011 have yet to surface in any of my sources. Any word out there?

the very, very latest...

A new **Jimi Tenor** single on **Warp Records**, England is now available on a CD single and also a 7" (perhaps a 12" says the rumor mill). Finally an easy to find SÄHKÖ artist release other than Panasonic! Thanks, Warp!...SÄHKÖ will soon be releasing a 4-song EP of **Sasse Lindblad** and Ø will soon have a new release on **Tension Records**. **Ilpo Vaisanen** (Panasonic) is also slated to have a solo release soon.

Furthermore, **Erkki Rautio** (online info provider) recommends even more Finnish talent in the electronic scene to come: **The Oksanen Brothers**, **Mono Junk** (from **Dum Records**, another Finnish label legend), **Pineapple Circle** (on **Function Records**), **Marko Laine**, and **Jouni Alkio**.

Last update of online source information is 11/12/96. (Internet source - <http://www.uta.fi/~trera/finn.html>) A portion of this discographic information has been made available from this Web Site provided by Erkki Rautio. Copyright © 1996 Erkki Rautio

**Erkki wishes to thank:** Jori Kuusinen & the Groovy Beat Posse, Peter Gebert, Tomi Koskinen, Sasha Kipervarg, DJ Entox, Thaddi Herrmann, Jaakko Hirvonen, Henrik Huhtinen, Petri Salonen of Analog Clinic, Pertti Gronholm, Samu Mielonen.

The author wishes to thank the following individuals for lending super rare recordings and for providing me with crucial information. They are, in no particular order: Joshua Maremont, Ted dePalma, Matt Wilson, Marc Kate, Mika Vainio (SÄHKÖ), Erkki Rautio, Antti Diitala and Kimmo Finicuori.

My deepest thanks go to **Tony Lindgren** for introducing me to Finnish culture and SÄHKÖ Recordings! He also is one of the 150 owners of the Panasonic picture disc, so all you collector types can track him down with serious offers. (Just kidding, Tony.)

As far as availability of product, I hope the following can be of help:

**SÄHKÖ Recordings**, Peramiehenkatu 11, 00150 Helsinki, Finland  
Phone: + 358-0-638848, FAX (\*) : + 358-0-628870

**SÄHKÖ Distribution (UK)**, Phone (as above) : +44-491-825029, FAX (\*) : +44-491-826320

**Panasonic c/o Blast First Records**, 429 Harrow Road, London, W10 4RE, England

## Stores

The Panasonic material and the newest material on Warp should not be too difficult to find at any decent store (even chain store) in the import section although the vinyl will certainly be more limited. As for the actual SÄHKÖ material, I recommend DJ shops or those that specialize in electronic / avant garde. In San Francisco, check out Tweekin, Soundworks, BPM, Amoeba, F8, and the rising star of SF vinylity, Aquarius Records. In New York try Kim's, Strange, Other Music.

This info is not necessarily a plug as much as a head start to finding some rare stuff. I also recommend one of many online music groups (ambient, dance, electronic record collectors, etc.)

Good luck finding and happy listening, Sahkomies!

**Peter Becker, DJ BPM Ø, NYC, 1997**



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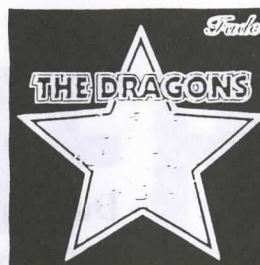
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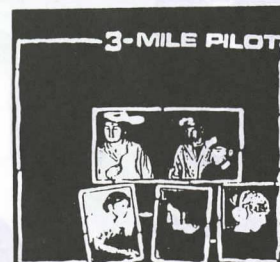
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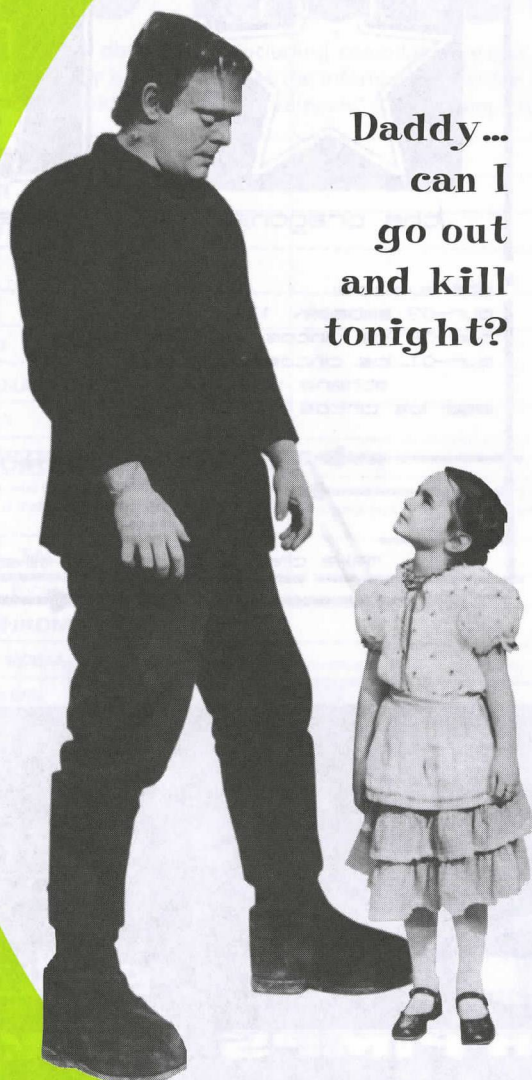
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David Greenberger asks:

## WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT SPACE ALIENS



**Walter:** Think about 'em? I don't.

**Frank:** Hey Jerry, what do you know about space aliens?

**Jerry:** Oh no, you're not getting me into that. There aren't any, so cut it out.

**Frank:** (Laughs) Okay captain.

**Jerry:** They don't exist. Spacemen, space aliens, space monsters—you can call 'em any of those names, and you can have 'em!

**Walter:** They're a dime a dozen.

**Abe:** I saw on TV that if you go in their spaceship it looks like the inside of your stomach.

**Jerry:** You're watchin' too much TV.

**Abe:** And they drool.

**Frank:** You're right about that, most of 'em drool.

**Abe:** They look like olives after they're chewed up, the center of 'em.

**Jerry:** A pimento.

**Walter:** That's not their real center, they've got a pit.

**Abe:** What is it?

**Walter:** It's like a seed, like a seed in the center of a plum or a peach.

**Abe:** No, what's a pimento?

**Frank:** It's a fish.

**Jerry:** No, it's not a fish. It's from some plant. A fish wouldn't keep.

**Walter:** You put 'em in the refrigerator after you open 'em. They're okay until you open it up for the first time. Like sardines in a can, or tuna. You don't have to worry about them going bad until after you open 'em up.

**Jerry:** That's what your spacemen look like: tuna.

**Frank:** (Laughing) Like it is in the can, or after you mix it up?

**Jerry:** Or they look like these salt shakers. (Picks up a shaker from the table.)

**Abe:** No, those are what robots look like.

**Walter:** Or the spaceship.

**Frank:** They walk among us.

**Jerry:** No they don't, I walk among us!

**Abe:** That's a movie. Creatures from outer space walk among us.

**Frank:** Red string winder thing.

**Jerry:** What's that?

**Frank:** A toy space thing had one.

**Abe:** (To Jerry) He must mean tentacles.

**Frank:** Hey Rita, what do you think about space aliens?

**Rita:** HA! Leave it there! And leave me out of it.

**Frank:** They visit you.

**Rita:** I don't even get visited by my next-door neighbor! (Laughs) Are you from outer space?

**Frank:** Yes, can't you tell?

**Walter:** I don't think we should be there, personally.

**Rita:** Be where?

**Walter:** Outer space, the moon, you name it.

**Rita:** They didn't find too much up there.

**Frank:** Not life as we know it, anyway.

**Rita:** You think there's life on other planets?

**Jerry:** It's all speculation.

**Abe:** They'd have tentacles.

**Frank:** I guess you'd have to go there to really find out.

**Rita:** Not me.

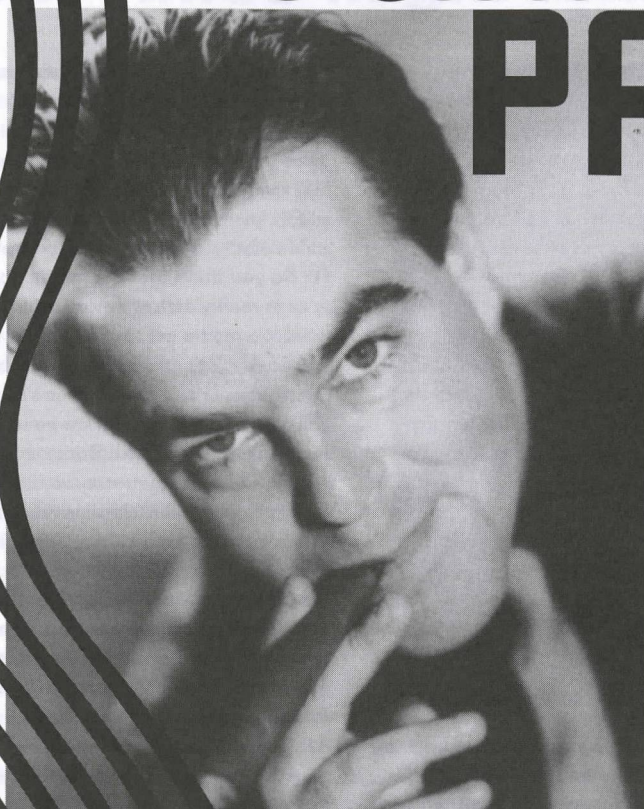
**Frank:** I think I'm going there after I die—or maybe before I die.

**Jerry:** I'm stayin' here with Rita!



# Adam PARFREY

INTERVIEW BY JASON YAKICH



Adam Parfrey is the mind behind Feral House books, undoubtedly one of America's more subversive imprints. Beginning with the release of the seminal *Apocalypse Culture* in 1987, Feral House's roster has grown to over thirty releases with no signs of slowing. Though increasingly eclectic, the various Feral House publications remain testaments to what can truly be called "fringe": a world of government conspiracies, cults, and highly marginalized personalities, many of whom are simultaneously frightening and fascinating in their beliefs and values so far from the cultural norm.

There is much quality reading material in the Feral House universe, but it was Parfrey's own *Cult Rapture*, a pseudo-journalistic investigation into some of our country's more bizarre religious sects and sociopolitical movements, that first held my attention. The sheer quirkiness of those profiled as well as the author's politically incorrect and often hilarious "and just when you thought it couldn't get any worse..." writing style make for an enjoyable, albeit unsettling, read. Highlights include the story of Bo Gritz, a patriot Green Beret whose actual POW adventures inspired the Rambo films, and a chronicle of the legendary James Shelby Downard, seemingly the granddaddy of all extant Masonic conspiracy theorists.

Interestingly, many Feral House books appear to have anticipated a greater interest in their subjects by the mainstream. Examples that come to mind are the current interest in UFOs and related conspiracies, manifested in *The X-Files* and in barbed criticism of the government's assault on the Branch Davidians by all sides of the political spectrum in the highly acclaimed documentary film *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*. Even something as whacked-out as Feral House's *Psychic Dictatorship in the USA*, a highly detailed and thorough account of one man's ultra-paranoid vision involving ritualistic abuse of children and the implementation of electromagnetics by the powers that be to influence the thoughts and actions of the unsuspecting public, may not be that far from the mark. I recently read a totally unrelated book by a very mainstream psychiatrist who seemed to unwittingly corroborate much of what seems so implausible in *Psychic Dictatorship*. It really makes one wonder...



**JY: Could you tell me a bit about when you born, where you grew up?**

AP: I was born in New York in '57. My father was a Broadway actor; we moved out to LA when I was five so he could do TV and movies. That's

where I mainly grew up. I left LA when I was about 19 and moved to Santa Cruz and spent a couple of years at the university there.

**JY: In the introduction to *Cult Rapture* you mentioned your college years being "misspent in a feminist stronghold about ninety miles south of San Francisco..."**

AP: (Laughing) Oh yeah!

**JY: What sort of influence did UC Santa Cruz have on you at the time?**

AP: Well, I was doing theater direction. I did an adaptation of the *Ubu* trilogy. The audi-

ence was always supplied with rotten vegetables to throw at the 25 or 30 performers; by the last show the actors were so pissed they began the curtain call by attempting to stone the audience with the fruit and vegetables that hit them. It was a lively and malicious food fight which escalated into vandalism. Fresnel lights were broken, car windows smashed, legs and arms cracked, and two people ended up in the hospital. This was inspiring to me, because as a 19 year old, I got things going in a hippie town. That was quite unusual for a Santa Cruz-type of event.

**JY: Did Santa Cruz's "radical" curriculum support your interests in fringe culture?**

AP: I wasn't writing at that time, so not really. It indulged me a little bit when I did that *Ubu* trilogy, but that was before I wrote anything commercially. When I moved to New York, I got involved with a theater publishing company called PAJ and I started editing stuff like a Fassbinder trilogy, Dada and Surrealist stuff. It taught me how to do publishing on my own. I also worked at the Strand Bookstore and got together with this guy George. We did *Exit* magazine, which was a graphic-oriented publication. I started work with Amok Press.

Anyway, we did eight titles under the Amok press logo and then both went on to our own imprints after that: Feral House for me and Blast Books for him. Since 1987, I've done about twenty-seven, twenty-eight books.

**JY: UCSC always struck me as being politically correct to the point of silliness. How do you feel about political correctness?**

AP: My thought is that—in a Leftist way—it's more like Joseph McCarthy. Politically correct people want things to reflect their views, and if they don't, they want them banned. They want only one thing to go and other things not to go; that, to me, is doing away with their opposition. Political correctness on the whole is demonstrative of an almost fascist manner. I did a piece in *Cult Rapture* about the Oklahoma City bombing that was used in *Alternative Press Review*; the guy there is an anarchist. A woman wrote an essay damning him for using [my article] because I took facts from the both the right-hand and left-hand side, and that using facts from both sides meant that I was wrong.

**JY: Could you give me your views on how the commercial media in the United States distorts reality to suit its own ends and the ends of those who profit from it?**

AP: There's an interesting book by Christopher Simpson called *Science of Coercion*. The book tells how tenured scientists from universities and think-tanks advise policymakers and police agencies how to deploy "psychiatric warfare"-style propaganda. The strange thing about the media these days is that they seem to be even more narrow-minded than ever before. There are just a few powerful groups, like Newhouse and several other companies, that own most of the publishing groups in America. Associated Press only runs certain stories; there are only certain things in the *New York*

*Times*. Someone asked me for information after I wrote about Linda Thompson in *Cult Rapture*. I didn't say the things they wanted to hear so they didn't use it. If they don't hear what they want to hear then they won't write about it, because their editors know what is supposed to be written about and in what way it is supposed to be written.

**JY: Do you think that the media portray reality or is reality actually more influenced by what the media present as fact?**

AP: Since the Gulf War, there hasn't been any investigative or anti-War programs shown on television. In fact, Ramsey Clark, who went over to Iraq with some celebrated British documentarians, got an excellent documentary on the condition of Iraq, and even public television refused to show it. When something is occurring domestically, like in Waco, cameras are kept miles away.

**JY: During the Gulf War, I remember reading that some journalists were upset because they were not allowed to cover certain aspects of the conflict. I felt that maybe their frustration was somewhat staged.**

AP: There are only a few journalists who say things like that. If they want to keep their jobs, they go with the team.

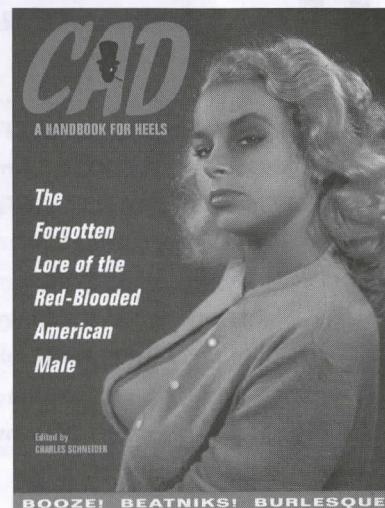
**JY: Our means of providing ourselves with information about current events and the state of our society is obviously not perfect. How could things be improved upon? Is there a better way to disseminate information?**

AP: The strange thing is, the press is free.

**JY: Yeah, it is.**

AP: What isn't free is the means to make money. You need to have a million dollars to fling a magazine into this distribution circuit. Is anti-Government research well-distributed? Not if they don't have the cigarette and automobile ads to get the magazine massive distribution.

**JY: One of your objectives seems to be exposing the readers of the books that you publish to different viewpoints, to things that**





# "It doesn't hurt to understand what the *New York Times* might find valuable to ignore."

might be suppressed from them otherwise. Do you consider yourself to be member of the media, however radical?

AP: No. I used to write a column on LA for *San Diego Reader*, one of those weekly alternative papers. I'm not a journalist.

JY: So you wouldn't consider *Cult Rapture* journalism.

AP: I'd define a journalist as an individual who makes his money listening to orders from corporate newspapers. I don't, and haven't. Do you see the difference?

JY: Yes. Do some of these problems that we've been discussing indicate that a large government is intrinsically problematic?

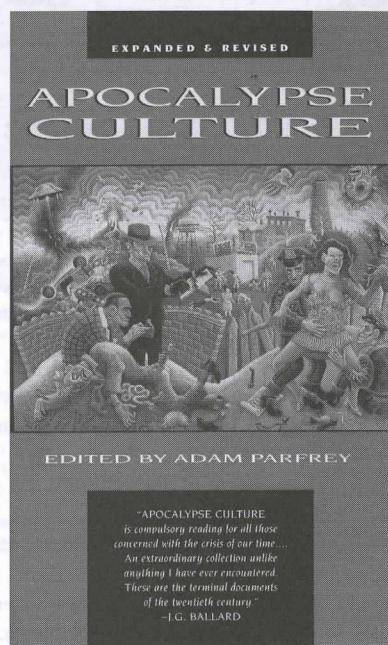
AP: The problem isn't large government, the problem is POWER. Who has it, and how do they hang on to it?

JY: I like the view that the potential for equality and more access to resources exists but that people choose not to use it for various reasons. And that choice is of course going to be encouraged by the powers that be, to a certain extent.

AP: That's true. The weird thing is that I've never been extremely political or looked at conspiracies and that type of thing. Only in recent years have I really paid attention to it on my own. I would rather believe what the *New York Times* tells me, but I've discovered that I'd be a chump and an idiot if I did. Why believe what I'm told by the government and its corporate mouthpiece at all times? After I looked into the Waco situation, I was shocked. Not that I thought that people couldn't have been killed by the government, but by the lies told to make it seem as if the entire situation could be blamed on a cult. The situation *can* be blamed on a cult: the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms cult.

JY: Your defense of militia activities has brought you a fair amount of criticism. What are some of the positive elements that you see in the militia movement?

AP: Well, one specific thing that really impressed me was their attempt to look into and examine the actual Constitution and the Bill of Rights and the insidious ways in which they're being assaulted. That's something that I had never done; I had never read the Constitution or the Bill of Rights; I



didn't care! You're not supposed to care; you're not supposed to look at them. Militias are commonly painted as "twisted white people with guns." But they are people examining their laws, their rights, and the things that are coming forth in society and I don't think that's a problem. That's what [the media] want to consider a problem.

JY: This is a quote of yours from *Apocalypse Culture*: "It is instructive then that nothing in *Apocalypse Culture* is a fiction; reality has taken on such a dire and phantasmagoric cast that fictionalizing has become superfluous." Can you elaborate on this?

AP: It is simply unnecessary to read a novel when reality has become so psychotic and fantastical. This is just another reason why the morning newspaper seems so damn stupid to me: they're trying to turn the world into a suburban dream when it's a strange nightmare.

JY: Television has recently started paying attention to what were previously considered to be highly fringe subjects: bizarre satanic cults, supernatural occurrences, UFOs, government conspiracies, and so forth. What is Feral House's role in all of this?

AP: Feral House seems to have helped explain why

your nightmare isn't a dream—it's reality. We'll keep on this path for as long as the nightmare continues.

JY: I think a great deal of civilization's progress is due to the abandonment of superstition and folklore to instead embrace a scientific, more rational approach to the world and our place in it. Do you think our current obsession with UFOs, cult gurus and conspiracy theories could be viewed as a step backward, as a return to more superstitious beliefs?

AP: People who write for television are discovering more. I don't think there is any more of it than in any other period.

JY: There has to be something primal about it that's being tapped into. It seems to me that we have abandoned ghosts, demons, vampires and the supernatural enemies of old and replaced them with the Grays and covertly trained government psychic warriors.

AP: As a matter of fact, I get calls nearly every day from individuals, who are perhaps psychotic and believe that the government is putting microchips in their brains. Some of this might be true, but a lot of it may be fucked-up individuals' sense of self-importance. Ever since the early 1800s, have people been blaming machines for invading their minds. They do on a certain level, but often not on the level they claim.

JY: What are we to make of a book like *Psychic Dictatorship in the USA* by Alex Constantine? He argues, quite thoroughly, that elements of the government are implanting devices in people's heads to control their actions, on a mass scale. Ultimately I view something like this as an excuse to avoid taking any responsibility for one's own life.

AP: The author—Alex Constantine is not his real name—actually has a plate in his head. That's not made up: I talked to a doctor that he's going to and it can be seen through X-rays. It's a very strange situation. I don't know what happened to him; I don't know if anything he says is true or not. He goes to the outer limit.

JY: He's pushing the envelope.

AP: But I don't know if he's pushing the truth. Mind control situations have been acknowledged by reporters at the *New York Times*. A man named



James Cameron performed experiments on people when he worked for the U.S. government in Canada. He put things into people's brains. The people that were tested were later given money by the U.S. government after successful lawsuits. Look into books that explain the U.S. government projects MKUltra, Artichoke, and even the book by Martin Lee that explained how the government used LSD to poison people's brains. (Laughs)

**JY:** Are you providing literature of this sort as entertainment or as education? You claim that these subjects are ignored by the mainstream [media], but it seems to me that fringe subjects, at least as entertainment, are a mainstay of television programming right now. Daytime TV talk shows are literally freakshows, with people from bizarre, tragic backgrounds lining up to tell to their pathetic stories for the amusement of the viewer.

AP: I had a situation with *Apocalypse Culture*. People from the "Sally Jessy Raphael" show called me when the book came out and wanted Karen Greenley, the necrophile, and Fakir Nasafar to [be on the show]. This was before *Modern Primitives* was out. So this program was shot, but never shown. Why? Because Karen Greenley didn't say what they wanted her to say. She didn't say that she was sorry for fucking a dead guy.

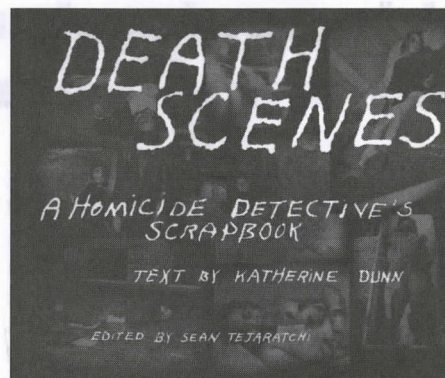
**JY:** "I'm trying to change. No more dead dick."

AP: A lot of tabloid television is for staring at weird people, but also for the guests to apologize for being what they are. Talk shows are very establishment, and part of that political/socioeconomic structure. Talk shows attempt to put across the line: "I'm ashamed of doing anything that contradicts the establishment. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry."

**JY:** There's a paradigm common to all contemporary daytime talk shows: Anything perceived as racist, or even slightly racist, is frowned upon immediately; the audience boos. If a man has been cheating on his wife, the audience boos. If a woman has been having an affair, they boo.

AP: Think about what tabloid television was like when *Apocalypse Culture* first came out in 1986. Was it like that then? I think it has changed a lot since then.

**JY:** Tremendously. Then, "Donohue" was considered to be trash. Those shows pale in



Two of the latest releases from Feral House: *Death Scenes: A Homicide Detective's Scrapbook* (above), and *Rollerderby: The Book* (right).

comparison to what we see now. The topics have becoming increasingly base; they might as well be titled: "Fucked-up People with Fucked-up Lives, Fucking Each Other"... It's just an excuse to parade them.

AP: The question is why it went in that direction. There's a lot more tabloid television than there used to be. When "Donohue" was on, there weren't very many [other tabloid shows] on at that point. There were a few, but not like today. It happened after *Apocalypse Culture* came out.

**JY:** But how many people were reading *Apocalypse Culture* at the time?

AP: All the producers of the shows were. The producer at ["Sally"] called me and said that all of them were reading it and talking to each other about it.

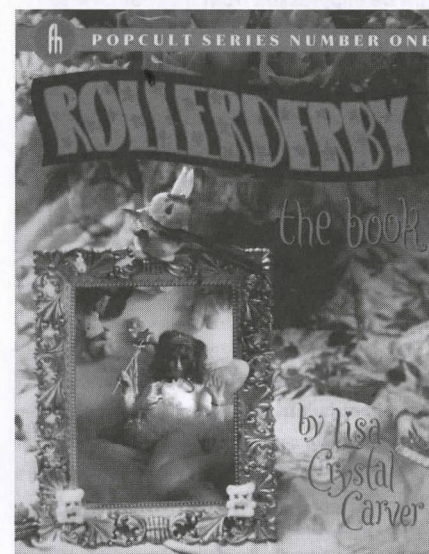
**JY:** What was it like spending time with the I CAN devotees in San Diego?

AP: Spending time with that crippled sex cult was like walking into a live Diane Arbus photo. Fascinating. Disturbing. I stayed because I knew I had a great story.

**JY:** You seem to recognize the absurdity of the beliefs and values of the people you have spent time with, yet you still hint that things can be learned from them and that they shouldn't be ignored. How can knowing about these people help us?

AP: I've written about such a wide variety of personalities, ones that are nothing but scum, others who have some small things worth sharing, and others totally run over by the machine. It doesn't hurt to understand what the *New York Times* might find valuable to ignore.

**JY:** Your article "The Endangered Freak" [in



**Cult Rapture**] has an aura of frankness that is almost nonexistent in the mainstream treatment of people with severe physical disabilities today. You claim in that essay that we must "relearn to gawk without shame, to admit our fascination with deformity to better understand ourselves." Who do you think would benefit from such a primal, more traditional treatment of freaks and how?

AP: We're all supposed to worship the Down's Syndrome kid, Corky. It would be more beneficial to realize that Corky is fucked-up and retarded, and should perhaps be seen as an amusing farm animal.

**JY:** Well, I don't know about that. In the town that I grew up in, the city parks and gardens were landscaped and tended by a team of people with Down's syndrome. They seemed happy and content with their lot; they were doing something meaningful, given responsibility. I think it would be easy in today's climate for someone to criticize that. But it seems to make perfect sense.

AP: Yes, make the retarded do something that is useful for the rest of us, particularly if we have to pay tax money to take care of THEM. Makes sense, no? \*



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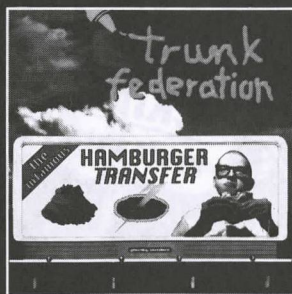
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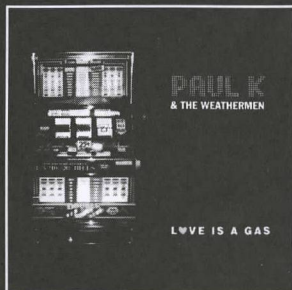


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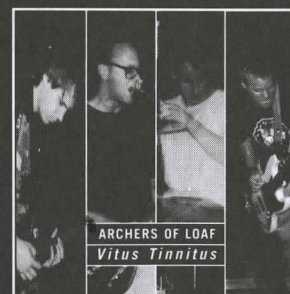


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# DOUBLE ENTRUD I N D E M N I T Y

an insider's look at the phenomenon of twins

BY CARLETON CURTIS

**H**uman beings have traditionally compared themselves to snowflakes—embracing their genetic differentiations as trademarks of pure individuality. They hold their distinctiveness as a sacred and invaluable entity, responding with anxiety if challenged (i.e. the panic felt when seeing someone else wearing the exact same shirt as you). This fear of homogeneity is particularly apparent in society's views on twins. As a twin myself, I have and still encounter endless amounts of double-takes when I'm with my brother.

And though twins are nature's inconsistencies, and quite possibly abnormalities, we never encounter gasps of horror or dismay at the sight of us; simply an insatiable curiosity to know more.

Interestingly, with the exception of Siamese twins, identical twins are seldomly regarded as "freaks". Rather, they are seen as enigmas, possessing mystical inter-twin powers such as ESP or the ability to feel each other's physical sensations. Though these phenomena are indefinite and still not thoroughly understood, twins do indeed wield the power of capturing society's interest. The relationship between twins themselves is generally considered the "ideal friendship," for not only are they a biological part of each other, but are psychologically inter-intuitive as well.

As living proof of human duplication, twins remain genetically identical and aesthetically indistinguishable, thus devaluating the comparison of humans with

snowflakes.

Most twins fall into one of two types: the one-egg, monozygotic ("identical") twin; or the two-egg, dizygotic ("fraternal") twin. Identicals occur in this way: an egg cell is penetrated and fertilized by a sperm, and then shortly after it begins the delicate process of cell multiplication, it divides into two replicas of itself. Each embryo that grows from this original division has exactly the same genes, and thus usually share identical physical characteristics while often times sharing similar personalities, ambitions, and tastes. Fraternal twins result from the fertilization of two separate eggs by two sperms. Since both sperms have been produced by the same father, the gene pattern in the resulting embryos will be similar—as in the case with siblings of different ages—but not identical.

The more kooky type of twin, conjoined ("Siamese") twins, are much more rare (1 in every 50,000–80,000 births). Siamese twins are the original superfreaks, resulting from the egg not quite splitting in half. In a literal sense, these types of twins are two different people, hence the definition of a "twin": the counterpart or exact mate of the other. Siamese twins can be attached arm to arm, hip to hip, and even head to head, yet each maintains individual personalities and philosophies. Since they often share the same heart or genitalia, conjoined people encounter ceaseless social and legal quandaries concerning the opinion that they must in fact be one person. Perplexing and possibly arbitrary contemplations such as "should Siamese twins pay for 'one' or 'two' seats on airplane flights?" arise, posing simply as an idiosyncrasy for non-united society, but as a genuinely existential question for the twins themselves.





above (L to R)  
**Chang and Eng, conjoined twins from Siam**  
 (1811–1874)

Sometimes for twins, there is intense emotional distress upon the frustration of being labeled as "one person." I felt this noxiousness as a result of my junior high basketball team. My brother and I were on the same team and were major contributors to its success. When the season ended, the coaches had to decide on a most valuable player. They finally came to the decision that we would share the award of MVP. But this made no sense at all to me. The award goes to the most valuable "player", not players. What many people seem to misinterpret about twins is that there are clear dichotomies of unique and individual differences between them.

Like Siamese twins, fraternal and identical twins encounter similar but less intensified difficulties, all of which result from the societal hunt for a panacea to satisfy their curiosities. In high school, girls and boys loved asking my brother and

I to stand side by side so they could evaluate the differences between us. People are amusing sometimes: they can't take our word that we are in fact identical twins; they first need to prove it to themselves. Onlookers have an annoying tendency to validate identicalness by concluding that twins are aesthetic mirror images of each other. They often misinterpret different fashions, hairstyles, and body weights as evidence of difference, while ignoring truly scientific characteristics such as height, eye-color, and overall genetics. In many cases during high school, after girls (specifically) mastered the physical differences between us, they seemed to want a comparison of the areas of our anatomy obstructed by clothing. Often, they desired a compare-and-contrast session of our generative forces (more commonly known as our penises). Requests to see the goods were usually rather subtle, but others were extremely direct. Naturally, I had the urge to invite them on tours, but inevitably would deny them access out of self-respect and as a tactic of tantalization.

Even I started to develop a curiosity on whether we shared the same penile dimensions. I've never seen his penis, nor has he seen mine (I think). The problem is that we both have a mutually concealed fear of each other's penis being bigger than our own, so ignorance is bliss. I eventually used the rationale that since our bodies are practically identical, our penises should be of the same dimensions also. Like most twins, we were always in competition with each other. Somewhat perplexingly though, we never had any confrontations over the same girl. This is where our different affections for women manifested: while he generally prefers passive, sexy women, I prefer the Bonnie Parker type (sexy women who kick ass).

A frequent question we encounter from people is: "Have one of you ever had a girlfriend and the other faked his identity to 'get some action' from her?" The answer was always no, for we usually never had a sexual interest in the same girls. Generally, people felt robbed by our answers: they just couldn't believe that we would pass up the opportunity of possibly destroying each other's lives forever. However, this is simply what happens in our case. Twins have a genetic and psychological

guidance which leads them to similar destinations. This refers to liking the same colors, liking the same friends, and liking the same women. I am sure that you have seen situations—whether through TV talk shows or films—where both twins like the same woman or man and all hell breaks loose. Out of experience in talking with other twins, these types of situations are not as melodramatic as one would imagine. Remember that twins grow up learning to share with each other, whether it be toys or philosophies or friends. Therefore twins (usually) do not instinctively stop and think, "Wait a minute. I can't share the same boyfriend/girlfriend. That's ludicrous."

Questions asked in hope of dismantling the twin mystique ran endlessly: "Are you guys the same age?", "Can you feel the pain if I punch your brother?", and so on. Differences in the ages of twins are measured only in minutes; in rare cases, they can be born weeks apart. My brother is only one minute older than me. As far as I know, I have never felt physical pain when my brother would get hurt (and vice-versa). However, there have in fact been cases where twins "felt" each other's pain. The "sixth sense" which twins share in these cases is a phenomenon of extra sensory perception (ESP). The telepathic power linking twins is both intriguing and undeveloped: scientists are still at the most rudimentary level of understanding ESP, and are thus skeptical of its powers.

Nevertheless, whether or not it can be explained is not the question.

Its mystique is what captivates society, and since twins are alleged practitioners of ESP, more attention is directed to them.

Aside from mental communication, ESP also comprises of sharing physical sensations. I once read a "true" story where one twin was in a plane that crashed 200 miles away from the other, when the other twin (who wasn't in the plane) instantaneously reported deep burning sensations in her stomach, almost as if she were torn in two. Society typically and habitually overindulges on the phenomenon of the unison of pain, rather than questioning the possibilities of sharing pleasure. I have never heard of a twin revealing that he or she felt sensations of bliss at the same moment when their twin experienced an orgasm or even a thorough massage. This focus on pain is disturbing for me primarily because it asso-





ciates "freaks" or oddities with negativity and suffering. Society seems to have a sadistic relationship with abnormalities, feeling sorry for—or even laughing at—people with disabilities and deformities. Attending freak-shows at carnivals is, in rudimentary terms, psychologically comforting for people—as if proving to themselves how "lucky" they are to be free from such complications.

Commercial exploitation of twins is prevalent. Images of duality and twinship are seen everywhere in society: twin towers, "Twin Peaks", the Minnesota Twins, the Barbie twins, etc. Twins are turned into commodities to sell, to entertain, to do whatever possible to make a buck. Look at the candy industry; there are endless amounts of products which utilize the phenomenon of "two": Twix, Doublemint gum, Double Dipped Nerds, Dubble Bubble, etc. The possible logic behind this type of manufacturing is that consumers assume that they are getting double their money's worth and double the sugary satisfaction.

Television has also capitalized on the catalytic power of twins to boost ratings. But if you think about it, there really are no "cool" twins on TV. Who the hell enjoys watching those twins on "Full House" or "Sister Sister"? The twins themselves are not all that bad. It's the fact that the producers of the shows dress them exactly the same on every episode. These programs gluttonously rely on the visuality of twins as the comedic impetus, failing to recognize that this dynamic predictably wanes over time. Like most sitcoms, twin shows like "Sister Sister" and "Double Trouble" lack the intrepidity to stray away from the total formulaic reliance on stereotypes.

There has been only one exception in television history where the full entertainment potential of twins was thoroughly utilized. Who would have guessed that the most clever representation of twins would have appeared on "G.I. Joe," a "real American hero"? In furthering the innovative arsenal of characters, Stan Lee conceived the action-duo, "Tomax" and "Xamot". Though their names are mirror images of each other, they still possess semiotic individuality. Tomax and Xamot were not defined by stereotypes, and that became the key to their popularity with viewers. In fact, the duo were not represented as being exact clones: rather, they were distinguishable by a scar on Tomax's cheek. Moreover, they were appropriately illustrated as the mavericks of the COBRA organization. This accurately parallels the lifestyles of twins in real life: they were co-dependent and loyal only to themselves, diverging from the centrality of COBRA's principles.

Paralleling television's commodity fetishism with twins, the music industry also markets their products (twins) with the same formulaic redundancies. Take the Nelson twins for example. Now missing-in-action, the Nelson twins actually gained some fame back in the day. They were genuine pretty boys, looking like they were straight out of a shampoo commercial. The chicks seemed to really dig them. But soon, the good looks began to peel off like cheap paint, exposing the Nelson's ridiculously deficient musical abilities. Another example of musical twin absurdity is the rap group, "Twinz" (note the funky ghetto appropriation of the plural). The Twinz had no linguistic skill, no beats, and no life. They simply did not check themselves—and thus, they wrecked themselves. Their popularity didn't even achieve that of Steven Bochco's now-defunct "Cop Rock". The concept of basing music around twins rather than basing twins around music simply does not work in successful terms. People tend to recognize the commodification as a signal of cheap and packaged entertainment rather than innovative music. There are, however, bands with twins who have achieved musical prosperity. The Breeders, that dog., Gene Loves Jezebel, and Blonde Redhead, are a few examples. It is safe to say then, that for a band with twins to be taken seriously, the twins must disregard the urge to use themselves as a gimmick. Credibility is accomplished through righteously declaring the phenomenon of twinship as secondary—and even irrelevant—in regards to the actual composition of music. For not only does the dependence on the gimmick insult their music, but inevitably the twins themselves.

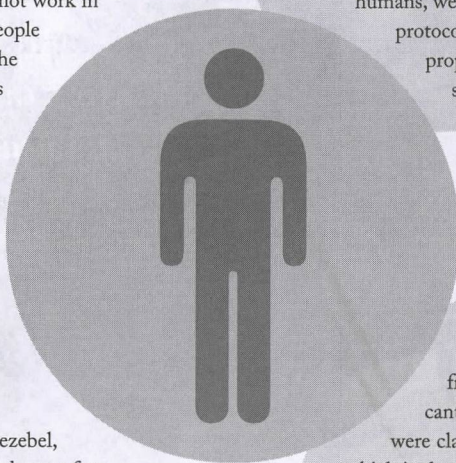
You've probably heard about the recent media uproar concerning cloning. In Scotland, scientists completed a successful cloning of a sheep. A week later, an announcement was made in the United States that monkeys had been cloned. The world was rightfully stunned at the news. Monkeys, anthropologically speaking, are the

closest relatives to mankind; soon, the inevitable question arose: "Is it possible for humans to be cloned?" Intellectuals, professionals, politicians, and virtually everyone else burst into heated debates on whether it is ethically correct to investigate such a possibility.

The overzealousness our culture possesses in regards to the "newfound" phenomenon of cloning humans seems to be misguided. Correct me if I'm wrong, but human clones have been around for centuries. Genetically speaking, identical twins are clones. Though generating clones manually with surrogate mothers defies the laws of nature, so does the statistical abnormality of a zygote splitting in half. Unlike man-made clones, "natural" twins have continuously proven themselves invulnerable to Darwinism. They have been a successful component in society, fitfully surviving nature's course. If and when we do succeed in cloning

humans, we will have disrupted the volatile protocol of evolution. One need not be a prophet to understand that you shouldn't fuck with nature's course. Rearing twins naturally is miraculous in itself, yet mankind remains incessantly greedy, validating their glut-tony "in the name of science." Though fictional, Ridley Scott's post-modernistic prophecy, *Blade Runner*, thoughtfully depicts a world freckled with actual human replicants. Sardonicly, the Replicants were classified as the "Nexus" group; that which is the next link in the human evolutionary series. Granted, contemporary scientists have not yet achieved human cloning (we think), but its imminence is practically unavoidable.

Profoundly, the most consistently recurring topic I encounter from single-birth people is not a question regarding the mystique of twins. Rather, it is the announcement of a capricious request; a wish that they themselves could have a twin. In this age of rapidly expanding technological boundaries, their vicarious desire could conceivably be met. But I always leave them with a fair warning: "Be careful what you wish for—because you might get it." ✱





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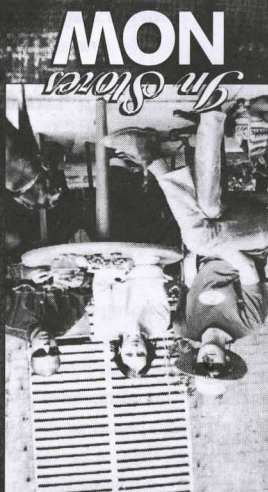
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## NAME, AGE, SEX, HEIGHT, SHOE SIZE

**Jessica Hopper**, 20, F, 5' 1/2, 5 1/2 men's

**Mari Kono**, 29, F, 5'2", 6 1/2 women's

**Jason Yakich**, 25, M, 5'7.5", 9 men's

**Nicole Armour**, 24, F, 5'2", 7 women's

**Jessibella Güber Alles**, 26, F, 5'3", 7 women's

**Sean Tillmann**, 19, M, 5'4", 9 men's

**Jenny Gotwals**, 23, F, 5'1/2", 6 1/2 women's

**Amelia Dalton**, 23, F, 5'2", size 4 shoe (Australian)

**Vicki L. Culley**, 38, F, 5'1", 5-6 women's

**Merilyn Moore**, 22, F, 4' 11.5", 5 women's

## DO YOU HAVE SIBLINGS? IF SO, HOW MANY? ARE YOU ALL ABOUT THE SAME HEIGHT? ARE YOU THE OLDEST? YOUNGEST? MIDDLE?

**Jessica**: Yes, one li'l sister. I am the tallest in my family. My sister is 12 and her boobs are bigger than mine. Keep your fingers crossed that I hit puberty this year.

**Mari**: None

**Jason**: None. My mother is 5' as is her mother. My father is about 5'9". I ain't coming from no family of giants.

**Nicole**: I have two siblings and we're all about the same height. I'm the youngest, but I have the biggest feet.

**Jessibella**: There are four of us and while I am the oldest, I'm also the runt. My youngest brother has hit 6" and he's still growing. Our pet theory is that it took a few years for mom to detox from the Sixties.

**Sean**: I have one brother and one sister. My sister is 4'11", and my brother is 5'9". I am the youngest of the clan.

**Jenny**: I have three sisters. They are 21, 18, and 12. I am, thus, the oldest. My sister who is 21 is shorter than I am. Cheerleading may have stunted her growth. The 18 year-old is the tallest. I think she is 5'4", or at least that is what she claims. She was a big fat baby. She also has the biggest boobs. Coincidence or not? You make the choice.

**Amelia**: I am the oldest of two kids and my little brother is 17. He is much taller than me, nearly 6".

**Vicki**: One biological sister, 5'6 1/2". I am the youngest.

**Merilyn**: I have an older brother, by one and a half years. It's just he and I. He is taller than me, maybe about 5'8".

## LIST ALL THE DIFFERENT TERMS PEOPLE USE TO DESCRIBE SHORT PEOPLE.

**Jessica**: assbaby, wing-dong, twinkie feets, knee high to a donkey, short short build a fort

**Mari**: petite, small, little, wee, pip-squeak

**Jason**: I think my favorite is midget. Or maybe elf.

**Nicole**: asface

**Jessibella**: runt, peewee, peanut, wee folk, tadpole, short stuff, half pint of hot apple cider half drunk up (Laura Ingalls)

**Sean**: My new nickname is Sprout. I have also been called midget, "Tickle Me Elmo", Baby Sasquatch, and, of course, shorty. All of these terms have been used solely as terms of affection.

**Jenny**: tiny, runty, midget, dwarf, pygmy, munchkin, shorty, little one, baby, minute, li'l bunny, small wonder

**Amelia**: short-ass, pint-sized, li'l, squirt, midge, nugget...Something I just have to tell you is that this tall jerk I know calls me Mildge, a clever pun on my nickname (Milly), a form of mold (mildew) and being short (midge). I hate it.

**Vicki**: runt, puny, scrawny, shrimp, wimp, squat, small, tiny, teeny, doll-like, little doll, teensy-weensy, weenie, dwarf, ittie-bittie, little girl, slight, wiry, elfin, Lilliputian, diminutive, sawed-off, dinky, itsie-bitsie



## BACK



ups and downs of being vertically "impaired." — Noël

in 1990, during my senior year in high school, fellow classmate Gemma Amboy predicted that in 10 years I would become a dictator of some heretofore unknown country. It's hard to tell if homegirl was commenting on my inevitable rise to immortality or likening me to fellow wee folk like Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler. So it made me wonder. I asked a few of my friends who wear short shorts about the

5¢

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO BEING SHORT? DISADVANTAGES? HAVE YOU EVER EXPLOITED YOUR HEIGHT?

**Jessica**: **Advantages**: I never had to go on the rides at Valley Fair, suburban hell nightmare of the Minnesota kind. Fuck rides, I was just there for the candy. **Disadvantages**: Sex with boys over a foot taller than me has gotten a little clumsy at times. I can never find pants that

are right unless they are made for boys, and then they never have a butt in them 'cos boys rarely have butts on the same level that girls got butts and so boys pants on occasion will make yer butt look bigger than it is. I exploited my height once, but I have reformed since then.

**Mari**: **Advantages**: Any size fits, easy to run and hide.

**Disadvantages**: Can't see shows very well.

**Jason**: No advantage comes to mind. If pressed to cite advantages, I suppose I could say cutesy things like, "Oh, short adults can still explore playground equipment that's engineered for children only," or "Short people don't bump their heads nearly as often."

**Nicole**: The obvious disadvantage to being short is not being able to see over people's heads at a show. I, however, have never exploited my shortness in order to get to the front of a crowd by asking tall people to "please step aside" because they make a better wall than a window. I have been told that I have an advantage during shoe sales because the smaller sizes are more likely to be left over. I don't consider my shoe size to be smaller than average, but perhaps someone with a size 9 shoe might disagree.

**Jessibella**: **Advantages**: When skin-tight baby doll shirts were fashionable, I could squeeze into my Andy Gibb tee from third grade rather than spending \$50 at Urban Outfitters. I can date all those cute short guys that tall women are too self-conscious to be seen with because they make them look like giraffes. **Disadvantages**: Just the emotional scars from cruel statuesque girls with dreams of modelhood sneering at others' littleness. Feminists yak a lot about those damaging thinness ideals, but what about the totally unattainable goal of willowy height and legs forever? At least weight is changeable. Cindy, Naomi and Linda are 5'9", Christy is 5'10", Claudia 5'11" and Elle an alpine 6'. The supermodel is the American paragon of beauty, and short women stand in opposition (about to navel height with) that image. I exploit my height every time I limbo.

**Sean**: One advantage of being short include the ever present ability to weasel your way to the front at emo shows. The one disadvantage to being short is that my neck always hurts after I make out with girls that are taller than I am. I try to exploit my height in at least 1 out of 3 songs that I write (e.g. "I wrap my tiny fingers around a root beer float," "You tried to explain style, height, and age difference," and "My chubby little head hit the concrete.")

**Jenny**: **Advantages**: You can fit in some good clothes at the thrift store (i.e. children's). You can fit under the door of bathroom stalls in case you get locked in. You can be warmer in cold weather because of compact body size—that's actually a bunch of crap because I am always cold. **Disadvantages**: You do not get as much respect in general from people (strangers, etc.). A smaller body sometimes = a lower tolerance for drugs/alcohol—this could be an advantage too, depending on how you look at it. I do not think I have ever exploited my height, although at my work often I can not, or will not, lift things, and that is based on height and also general smallness of body.

**Amelia**: **Advantages**: You have the ability to "duck & weave" in a crowd. You also tend to get hugged and "mothered" a lot, which is an advantage when you're feeling vulnerable. You can trick fun-park attendants in to thinking you're 10 when you're really 16, thus reaping the half-price benefit. Being short allows you to have friends much younger than yourself, thus you can always have your finger on the pulse of today's youth. When you're a short lady, chances are you'll have smart and perky breasts. **Disadvantages**: When asked for ID (as I am) when one is 23 (legal age here is 18), I feel like I am being called a liar. Dishonest, even. A child. I am also made to feel that despite my shaky womanly attempts to look mature and adult-like (involving token application of lipstick, nice shoes for a change, etc.) I am essentially seen as immature. This is especially bad when you're a sort of "indie" person entering the arena of the "straight".

**Vicki**: **Advantages**: You can climb around on kitchen counters without looking oafish. You can get Timmy out of the well. Short people make better gymnasts. Men find watching women's gymnastics very erotic. You have a lower center of gravity, which is helpful in sports like skiing and skating—if you fall on your butt, nobody notices. You always look graceful and delicate next to a 5'7" giantess. You can squat while working in the garden. You can throw short people around in bed. **Disadvantages**: You have to look up people's nostrils when having a conversation. You have to hem up all your pants. Bullies are rude and tend to victimize you. When men ask you to dance, they say, "How tall are you, anyway?!" Other



women accuse you of being bulimic. Employers don't take you seriously as others on interviews. You have to try a little harder. I've exploited my height to get big, strong men to help me.

**Merilyn: Advantages:** People think you're younger than you are. Big people sometimes have a sexual bent towards being with someone smaller; plays into the older man/young girl fantasy. **Disadvantages:** It takes more to get people to take you seriously. They often just see the "cute, small girl" instead. People don't always notice me in crowded areas and tend to bump their elbows against me, or generally be in my space. I also have dimples, so when I was young I got a lot of people commenting on my dimples and saying how cute I was. I hated it. It made me want to be mean and look tough and ugly.

#### IN REGARDS TO HEIGHT DISCRIMINATION, ARE THERE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN? IN OTHER WORDS, WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO GET THE SHORT END OF THE STICK? (SORRY.)

**Jessica:** Guys usually think it's all cute when you are short, part of a pedophiliaic desire to be with a "little" girl...We can get guys, no problem, but boys, man they get the shaft; any short boy is considered pretty non-threatening and cannot usually get with any chick older or taller. But damn short chicks love short boys...I've seen it happen to my best friend Sean who is same height as me and the girls follow him around like crazy.

**Mari:** Socially, people accept short women a lot easier than men. But I know some women who prefer short men.

**Jason:** Men, undoubtedly and without exception. One doesn't need to be an evolutionary scientist to figure out that men are "supposed" to be large. Being able to maintain a large, robust body is a signal to potential mates that one is healthy, or able to afford the relatively excessive energy expenditure that size requires. The vernacular phrase "tall, dark, and handsome" speaks volumes on the subject. Women have things much easier. Tall women are coveted, runway models being an obvious example. Petite women are equally coveted, however, enough that they are entitled to a much more flattering adjective than the equivocal "short": petite. Men who prefer short women are everyday, and many explanations for this phenomenon are very straightforward. Tall men might be attracted to shorter women because it exaggerates their own stature and thereby magnifies masculinity. Short men, contrarily, will probably feel culturally awkward with a woman taller than themselves. Basically, women in this sense, regardless of height, win.

**Nicole:** We discriminate according to what we perceive as being appropriately masculine and feminine. Short men are often overlooked in the mating arena because their small stature indicates that they're somehow lacking. Men are more inclined to choose short women because they're physically and visually less threatening. Additionally, the threat of a short woman being lifted off the ground is greater and this is something that I loathe; because I can be lifted more easily does not mean that I want to be lifted. Slightness is an asset for female figure skaters but something that leaves me in fear.

**Jessibella:** All small people XX or XY have something to prove. A short guy has to show he's all the man the world thinks he should be, but a short woman has to go further to get actual respect. It's a real task to show folks the robust, bad-ass chick you are when you're little. If you dress girly, it's all over. But in some ways girls got it good. Small women and tall shoes go great together. Men have to get all subtle and get "invisible" lifts mailed to their homes in plain brown wrappers, which is just shameful.

**Sean:** I haven't had too many problems because of my height, I think it is an endearing quality if you use it right. For instance, when I meet a girl and say, "Wanna go make out?" it's so non-threatening that she almost has to say yes. Saying no would be like telling a Santa bear that (s)he's not cuddly enough.

**Jenny:** I think men are more discriminated against. For example the famous example of "The Short Shop" for short men vs. "Petite Sophisticate" for short women.

**Amelia Dalton:** I once went out with a man who was my height, and all my male "willow creature" friends said, "But he's so short!" Even though we were the same height, I was much heavier than him. We couldn't do all those spur-of-the-moment Tampax advertisement things, where he swings me around in the air and we both laugh. I can't speak

for short men, but I'd rather be a short girl than a short boy. I think you know why. It's got to do with a "relative to body size" theory I like. But I also feel sorry for poor little short girls with massive breasts.

**Vicki:** Both women and employers definitely tend to discriminate against short men. Tall men are seen as more powerful and successful, and it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although most men seem to prefer willowy, long-legged women, they seem more willing to make an exception if they meet a short woman they really like. Most women, on the other hand, seem to feel more comfortable if the man is taller than they are. Some short men also seem to think that if you are a short woman, you are obligated to dance with them or go out with them and they can make real pests of themselves.

#### WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE CULTURAL STEREOTYPES SURROUNDING SHORT PEOPLE?

**Jessica:** That we are lazy and smoke a lot of crack and live off the government and keep having short midget babies to get more money every month.



**Mari:** Short people are often looked upon as less strong or powerful and more vulnerable which is often true. Short men often seem bitter, like Napoleon and Hitler, they take out this resentment in improper ways. Of course this is a projection! Not true always.

**Nicole:** It seems to be human nature to associate cuteness with all things little. That's the only way I can explain why people collect miniature furniture. In any case, if you're short, then you must be cute and cuteness is linked to childishness and a lack of authority. Short people either succumb to cuteness or over-compensate for their size by being too aggressive and arrogant. For example, there is nothing worse than a woman who exploits her shortness / cuteness by behaving childishly. Women can often be accused of such behavior. Also, our history is laden with short people who have taken aggression and arrogance to extremes. We've all accused a short person of suffering from a "Napoleon Complex" at some point in our lives. There are also an inordinate number of short fascists (Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini), however, I don't think that their stature can necessarily be related to their capacity for hatred and domination.

**Jessibella:** Little man complex megalomaniacs (Napoleon, Woody Allen, Prince). Like ugly folks, short folks develop personalities. Small women evoke the infantile (pedophilic) ideal of sexualized femininity...

Anais in *Henry and June* looks about twelve, boy is she yummy. Tall women are ballbusters, short women are easily subdued.

**Sean:** Everybody knows that God folds us under (nudge nudge, wink).

**Jenny:** Someone recently said, "You're just a little thing," and I was like, how am I supposed to answer to that? Somehow "Yes" sounds pompous, as if being "little" is the best. I don't know, short does not equal skinny, and I am definitely not "skinny", thank God, but somehow there is sort of an idea that you will be skinny if you are short. And if you are short and you have big boobs, you will never be able to find any clothes that fit because women's clothes are not made for those proportions. Short women are assumed to have smaller boobs. I do not know why, this has been a puzzle all my life.

**Amelia:** That they aren't good at wielding power (although the wheel chair-bound baddie is making a comeback).

**Vicki:** Some stereotypes are that short people are somehow deficient or missing something, that we are disabled or "challenged." Others feel that we need to be taken care of, protected or coddled. Sometimes we are viewed as children, rather than as adults. I feel especially sorry for midgets and dwarves, whom society treats as little babies. Sometimes people assume you're dumb, and speak very slowly to you, as if your brain were tiny, too.

**Merilyn:** That something is wrong with you, your growth is stunted. I remember going to the doctor at a very young age to have my bones X-rayed. The doctors wanted to make sure I had enough vitamins, etc. because I was so small. They wanted to give me experimental growth hormones, but luckily my mother refused.

#### IF YOU COULD BE TALLER, HOW TALL WOULD YOU BE?

**Jessica:** Like, 5'8" 'cos at that height, you can pick fights with people and they actually might be intimidated or scared. When you are short and scrawny, you can only be verbally abusive

**Mari:** 5'3"

**Nicole:** I'm happy with my height.

**Jessibella:** 5'7" is perfect.

**Sean:** I would like to be about 5'8", but not any taller because I wouldn't want to be gangly.

**Jenny:** It is hard to say, because by this point I have generally figured out that I have no idea of height, thinking everyone taller than me is tall, and really not being able to imagine a specific height unless given an example. But sometimes I really wish I was tall like 5'10" or maybe 6'. It all stems from never finding any pants that fit me and seeing many tall people with many good pants. It's too bad this has ended up being all about clothes.

**Amelia:** I would like to be 10" tall and bullet-proof.

**Vicki:** I would probably go as high as 5'4", but not much more. I would just want to be tall enough to accommodate those dopey clothing manufacturers' ideas of how tall a human female should be.

**Merilyn:** Nope. I'm totally comfortable with my body and don't care to change it. Okay, maybe I'd add two inches.

#### ARE THERE ANY VERTICALLY CHALLENGED CELEBRITIES OR HISTORICAL FIGURES THAT YOU LOOK UP TO? WHY?

**Jessica:** Edith Massey was short, wasn't she? Her and all the midgets that played the Ewoks in the *Star Wars* movies.

**Mari:** Yoda's smart, doesn't seem to care about his looks but is amazing looking, wise, leads a meaningful, spiritual life and is benevolent.

**Nicole:** It's interesting to note that, although height figures into society's beauty ideal, there are a large number of male celebrities who are short and, of course, female models who are extremely tall. This seems to be in contradiction to what's conventionally acceptable. Tom Cruise, Michael J. Fox, Robert De Niro, Robin Williams, Angus Young, Dustin Hoffman, Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger are short. (However, this isn't necessarily a boost for short men because you can



disguise shortness on film.) Short actors are often quirky rather than being simply divine in their gorgeousness like such tall men as David Duchovny, Jeremy Irons, and Ralph Finnes. Also, there are a number of short comedians like Robin Williams, David Spade, a couple of Kids in the Hall. This only goes to show that short men feel the need to compensate for their height through humor or self-deprecation. I admire many people, both celebrities and historical figures, but I don't know how tall they are because it's not really an issue for me.

**Jessibella:** Prince, Tom Cruise, Winona Ryder, Madonna, all near-midgets but revered as sex objects...and they tend to be empires unto themselves—look at Woody Allen. John Oates is a dwarf but as half of the Eighties' #1 pop duo he made some kick-ass white-boy-got-soul records, didn't he?

**Sean:** I used to look up to Jonathan Taylor Thomas when he was short and had that "destined to be fat" kind of face. Now that he's all tall and awkward, I'm not very impressed. I love short indie rock/emo girls like Chan Marshall of Cat Power.

**Jenny:** My favorites just happen to be pretty short ladies, Jane Bowles and Gertrude Stein.

**Amelia:** I respect no celebrity except Jon Voight.

**Vicki:** I think Dustin Hoffman and Dudley Moore are very sexy.

**Merilyn:** It's nice to find out that a celebrity you thought was average is actually kinda small. Prince! There's a man who got everybody to notice him. He's sexy, artistic, and a total freak. Also, I saw a picture of a friend of mine before I met him, and I thought he was average sized, and when I met him and he turned out to fit my body size pretty well, I was pleasantly turned on.

#### IF EMMANUEL LEWIS AND GARY COLEMAN GOT IN A LI'L RUMBLE, WHO'D WIN? AND WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE TREND OF SHORT, FUNNY, NON-THREATENING BLACK MEN/BOYS?

**Jessica:** Emmanuel Lewis is bitter as shit. I saw this interview with him on *Entertainment Tonight* last year about this time and Mary Hart was asking him how his career was going and he told her the last three roles he's played have one child and two Santa elves and he's an adult and he wanted some serious roles and was giving Mary all this fuckin' attitude like it was her fault. He's like as old as my mom and every year he gets like two jobs as a Santa elf. I doubt he's making any residual \$ off Webster, but who the fuck cared in the first place? That woman who played Webster's white mom lady, her 9" long buzz cut was reason enough to cancel the whole series if you ask me.

**Jason:** Well, Gary Coleman would win because he is bitter and has (or had) a much deeper voice. As for the 'trend' of the tiny black sitcom star: Coleman's show was first, and I think that the casting director hired Coleman simply because he was unusually short for his age and able to utter his street-wise quips much more adroitly than an actor the same height as the television character would be able to do. As the character became older but the actor playing him stayed the same size, the "realism factor" (as I like to call it) became suspended. Lewis' show was similar to Coleman's save for his wisdom (significantly reduced), and the socio-economic disparity between the white parental figures and the adopted black(s) (also significantly reduced). Coleman's show, poor as it was, was much better: it had a chick, and the Willis was cool.

I have a few comments to make about the racial politics of these shows. They could hardly be called flattering for black people, and a sitcom with a similar plot would have less appeal today as views on race in our society are continually evolving (though not always for the better). As I said before, the white characters on *Diff'rent Strokes* and *Webster* were parental to the black youths. The paternal connection was not one of blood but adoption out of pity and/or charity, rooted in white guilt. The dependence of the black American upon affluent, liberal-minded whites for his sustenance is a vision I personally would hardly want conveyed to my hypothetical 8-year-old. The sight of the very wealthy Mr. Drummond accepting two black street kids into his Park Avenue home pulled at heart strings and garnered ratings. The fact that so many kids, mostly white, loved this show only indicates that young whites still believed that the proper place of whites was as legal guardians of economically less advantaged, vertically challenged blacks. To be honest, inane sitcoms such as *Martin*, *Malcolm and Eddy* or *Homeboys in Outer Space* create what is ultimately a more positive, realistic space for blacks on prime-time television.

**Nicole:** Gary Coleman would win because he's got a bigger chip on his shoulder and that would be in his favor during a fight. They likely wouldn't be able to have a fight, because Emmanuel Lewis is too busy establishing his music career in Japan with his album *Baby Star*. He has continued to milk his cuteness quotient for all it's worth. I think the trend of short, non-threatening, funny black man-boys has been replaced by characters like Urkel and the large number of children that pranced across *The Cosby Show* set.

**Jessibella:** Gary's got it all over Emmanuel. He's bigger in every way, he's got those amazing cheeks, he's got street cred, he's got Willis. What does Webster have besides a lot of cool toys? One cheek butt from Arnold and he'll be grabbing at those helium balloons in a hurry. (See also [www.cheme.cornell.edu/~slevine/old/coleman-webster.html](http://www.cheme.cornell.edu/~slevine/old/coleman-webster.html) for some gruesome fight commentary, highlight being "lower back rabbit punches" to the Gare's kidneys and the ensuing pools of blood and urine. Yes!) My theory, as you know, is that Urkel has replaced Webster, Arnold and Buckwheat as the black TV character an audience can feel superior to. Instead of being physically tiny (though sort of deformed), Urkel is belittled because he's a spaz. The audience needs the hi-jinx of zany/cuddly black folks to cancel out the rage of scary rappers. (See "Black as Dwarves" at [www.pomona.edu/repres/youth/blakk.html](http://www.pomona.edu/repres/youth/blakk.html))

**Sean:** Gary Coleman would totally win! Just imagine how pissed he must be just for being able to land roles in Monster Magnet videos and Fox TV shows. So much self-mockery would be maddening. At least Emmanuel has some self-respect.

**Jenny:** Gary would win, duh. He has such a fighter's spirit, having taken his whole family to court. I think that idiot Urkel the nerd is in the same category. He was shorter when the show began, but once nerds get past a certain height, they can become more threatening just because there's more of them.

**Amelia:** Gary would win hands down, 'cos he is a tougher nugget. As for the trend of short, funny, non-threatening black men/boys (in TV, etc.) I guess they all got kinda stepped on as they were walking to the audition.

**Vicki:** Thank God that was just a trend. People just got sick of it.

**Merilyn:** Well, didn't Gary Coleman have kidney problems? He's probably in worse health, but he seemed to be stockier, and have more bulk than Lewis. But Lewis would be fast and spry so I'll bet on Lewis.

#### WHAT WAS YOUR MOST HORRIFIC MEMORY RELATING TO YOUR SHORTNESS? THE BEST?

**Jessica:** My mom told me recently that when I was about 4, I asked her what the difference between a midget and a dwarf was, she told me and then I asked her, "So which one are you?" Also, have you noticed that when you get a bunch of short people in the same room, they will check out who is taller than who? I know I have driven both Noël T and the aforementioned Sean to the point of severe annoyance by demanding they admit I am taller than them. I do the same with my mom.

**Mari:** (a) Getting in fights with tall girls, although I have to say, I kept up my end in the scrap out of sheer rage. (b) Playing hide & go seek.

**Jason:** The day I realized that my size was a factor in my sexual attractiveness, my heart sank to a level from which it has never risen.

**Nicole:** The most horrific memory relating to my shortness is the fact that I used to wear a button in fourth grade that read: "Short People Need Love, Too." This is horrific because it represents the lack of taste and the lack of shame that I had as a child. I remember identifying with that song "Short People" as well. I guess I just needed to adopt a cause. The best thing about being short, when I was a child, was that I got to sit in the front row of all the class pictures and I got to be in the front line during all my dance recitals. This fed my child-star aspirations.

**Jessibella:** I really was not aware that I was short until my first grade teacher had us line up by height and it became obvious to everyone that I was the smallest kid in the whole class. No one let me forget it, either. My best memory is the scene in *Desperately Seeking Susan* when it's revealed that Madonna and Rosanna Arquette (or at least their characters) are within an inch of my height. It made it all better to realize that someone as hot and powerful as Madonna was short.

**Sean:** The one time my height really disgusted me was the one day I realized that my hairline had slightly receded. I could just imagine a 60

year-old, fat, bald, grouchy, short Sean Tillmann throwing up at the Knights of Columbus hall on Bingo night. I got over that though. The junior high dance was definitely the peak of all good things short. When the time came to slow dance I knew I had the figurative upper hand on all of the bean pole basketball boys. There is nothing like 3 1/2 minutes of pure bliss in the bosoms of some of the most well-endowed girls my 13 year-old eyes had ever seen. Thank you Richard Marx and Boys II Men!

**Jenny:** The most horrific time was when I was in 5th grade. We had to play basketball all winter in gym class. Of course, I had never made a single basket, even in years of playing, and on one of the last days of the basketball classes I finally made a basket and the whole class just stopped and stared and started yelling and clapping. I was really mortified. But maybe it was also the best time.

**Vicki:** When I was about 19, I was working as a cashier and one of these big ol' boys in line jerked his thumb at me and said to his friend, "You could just pick her up and go like this!" (Humping motions against his hands.) It was humiliating at the time. In retrospect, that was probably the best one, too.

#### ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SAY ABOUT SHORTNESS?

**Mari:** I like high heels because of the height I get with 'em on, plus certain outfits look better with height 'n' heels. I really don't feel debilitated or anything. I like being small, it's energy efficient.

**Jason:** Human beings as a species are getting taller as time rolls on. Over the last few centuries, as reliable statistics regarding height have been recorded around the world, researchers have found that the average length of the human body from top of head to sole of foot is increasing worldwide. And the implications? I guess I'm just a born loser.

**Nicole:** Sometimes I have trouble when I have to stand on the bus because I can't reach the bar that runs along the ceiling and sometimes that's my only option. Periodically, I have to get food out of cupboards or reach things on shelves that are too high. I like these challenges, though. They're reminders that you have to work hard to get what you need, I guess. Thank you.

**Jessibella:** I know a couple who are spending thousands on hormone therapy for their son, who's shorter than average, but not a dwarf by any means. They say they want him to have every advantage and in this society being tall gives you an edge. I sneer at them but if I was given the opportunity to genetically alter myself and gain the crucial four inches I imagine I need, I would in a second. We're so visually oriented and appearance-biased it's just dumbah. But let us give thanks for platforms.

**Sean:** Being short is definitely a blessing. I'd like to end this with the haikus that made me famous in both *Hit It Or Quit It* and *Mang* magazine...

wow i like short girls  
because i am just 5'4"  
yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah

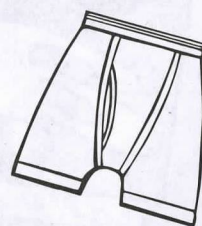
vertically challenged  
i don't care, i'm not PC  
short short build a fort

sean sean sean sean sean  
gary coleman says, "fuck yeah!  
webster is a good show"

mang, what's the func-Sean  
Prince, Liz Phair, Napoleon  
are all short little

**Jenny:** Some short people in New York are called "the midget Mafia". My one friend who is over 6" tall mainly sleeps with short little girls. Maybe if you are short you can pass as a youth on the bus and ride for 35¢. In the end, I really enjoy being short a lot more than I hate it. So hooray!

**Merilyn:** I once bonded with three other women 'cause we were all about the same size and height, and had finally found others we could empathize with. I was, for the first time, able to put on someone else's clothes and have them fit. ☼





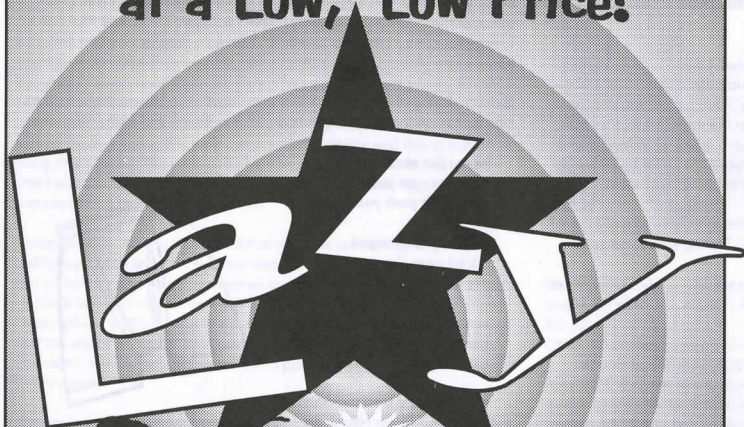
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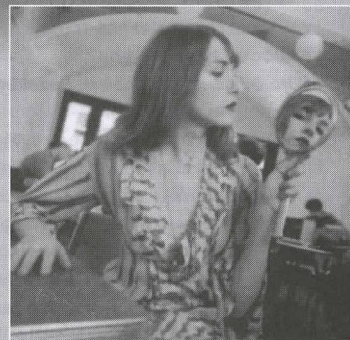


# DAME Darcy



I was hoping to snag Miss Darcy and drag her ice skating, or maybe go for a whirl on the Dante's Inferno ride at Coney Island. Unfortunately, her ill health (which I half-expected to be something tragic like influenza or tuberculosis) prevented her from going on an outing with me. I imagined her as a wispy apparition like one of her Victorian heroines, rolling her black-rimmed white eyeballs freely in their sockets, dangling striped ankles from underneath an elaborate frock. I expected to treat her gently, not wanting to disturb her sickly self. When I finally called, she answered the phone in vigorous—although broken—French, yelling that she was a horse with long, pointy ears, and whinnied to prove it. She even burst into song, serenading me with a personalized version of the theme song from the TV show "Fame": *Dame! I wanna live forever! I wanna learn how to fly, high!* I finally scabbled around for a tape and batteries and my recorder and caught the last few minutes of our initial conversation...

*"I don't know much about clowns... or outer space, but I definitely know about freaks."*





Dame Darcy: ...Oh my god, Mrs. Hambrecht! Look what he's doing!

**Wendy Bryan: Is he burning the soup?**

DD: He's wrecking everything! Don't put the butter in there, you're going to burn it! You've got to turn down the heat! Ya know, it was his cooking that sent me to the hospital.

**WB: You better watch out, going over to eat at Mr. Hambrecht's. It might not be right.**

DD: Actually, the soup and the sandwich were very good, Mr. Hambrecht. Mr. Hambrecht! It looks like you're going to have to call the fire department really soon. You know, you don't have a smoke alarm, or else it would be going off. That's not safe. We should cover our faces with wet towels and run out of the building. *Evacuate le chateau.* Mrs. Hambrecht made Isabelle some cookies.

**WB: Were they shaped like anything?**

DD: They were shaped like cookies, but they're really little. And they have mini chocolate chips, and they're mini cookies, and Isabelle's a mini lady! She's 28 inches tall. Do you have mini tea cups for a mini tea party? She has a small bed, a small hand mirror, small silverware, small jewelry...

**WB: How do you say 'blue' again? In French?**

DD: *Bleu.* (Singing) "*Bleu l'oleil. Tres belle l'oeil.*"

What're you doin'? That looks really bad! Don't eat that, because some of the pot came off inside it. Has your grandma ever given you eggs with little bits of black in 'em, and then you were eating it and then you realized they were a part of the pan?

**WB: My grandma didn't cook very well. She liked things out of boxes. And cans. She wasn't very big on pans. Or eggs.**

DD: My grandma said that if you eat that, you're getting extra iron.

**WB: It's fortified! That's great!**

(The next day...)

**WB: Hellooo? How are you?**

DD: (Decidedly less perky. *Ghum.*) I'm okay. I'm getting sicker.

**WB: Aw, honey. Was it the Croque, Madame?**

DD: Um, no, I don't think it was that. I have a flu that didn't go away and an ulcer. So the two of them combined is really...

**WB: Did the ulcer happen just recently, like when you ate that bad food?**

DD: Oh no, it's been an ongoing thing. I went to the hospital this week for that.

**WB: Are you too**

**sick to talk?**

DD: No, I'm okay.

**WB: I wanna hear more about your third nipple.**

DD: I was born with a third nipple and pointy ears, and I had my third nipple until I was about three, and then it faded away. It faded away into the night.

**WB: That's so sad. Were you ever aware enough about it to be excited about it?**

DD: Oh, no I was a baby. I didn't even know I had one until at dinner one night, Thanksgiving dinner, I don't know how that subject came up, but then [my family] was like, "You had a third nipple when you were a baby." I didn't even know. My whole family—even my brother—knew. I think the reason I was born with a third nipple and pointy ears is what makes me psychic.

**WB: I think I saw you outside of a psychic shop last week in Manhattan. You weren't going there, but you passed just outside of the psychic's.**

DD: I could've been going there, because I go to a psychic regularly.

**WB: What do they tell you?**

DD: I don't know if it's true. I see it as a cheap therapist.

**WB: Exactly.**

DD: Plus the therapist doesn't ever really claim to be able to tell you anything about the future. Psychics are definitely like a cheap therapist. I have always been interested in psychic phenomena, and circus/carnival show type things when I was a child. And I wanna be a sword swallower. But I don't think I'll be able to.

**WB: I don't think that would help your ulcer much.**

DD: No, not at all.

**WB: Je voudrez un whiskey.**

DD: I can't drink for a while. I can't do anything bad, I'm really sick. I can't play around anymore. It's sad.

DD: I currently have a TV show on channel 17 [*Turn of the Century*] every Tuesday night at 12:30. It's a variety, cartoon show. It's a kooky, spooky, Victorian-style variety show that I host. We show films and cartoons by myself and other artists. And I have a band called Planet Filly. F-I-L-L-Y, like a horse. We play all the time. And the comic book *Meatcake*, of course. And that's it. I'm working on some movie projects.

**WB: When was the first time you went to Coney Island?**

DD: The first time I visited New York I went to Coney Island. I read that book *Low Life*. Have you



Dame Darcy sees out a happy tune with her band, Planet Filly

photo by Wendy Bryan

heard of that book?

**WB: I'm next in line to borrow it from a friend.**

DD: I read it, and it made me want to move to New York. And then I moved here.

**WB: Was there anything specific that it mentioned?**

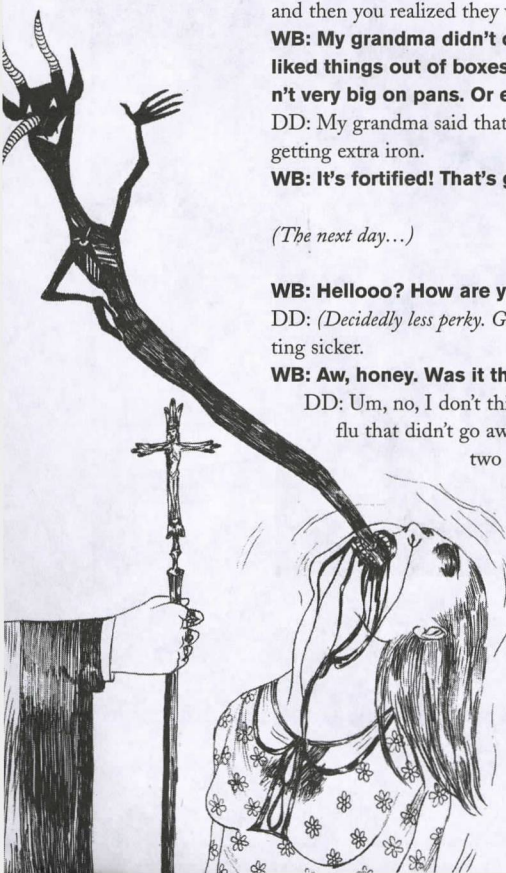
DD: New York was really rough and tumble, really gritty, but everybody had a lot of character. And I thought New York was going to be like that. New York was nothing like that. There's still some vestiges of it left. Everything's such a nightmare in that book, I don't know why I thought I wanted to be a part of a nightmare. I sure got what I was asking for cuz the first two years I lived here really was a nightmare. But now, everything's fine. Probably every horrible deed you can imagine, I witnessed in two years.

**WB: Was this just in Manhattan?**

DD: In Williamsburg and Manhattan. But now I'm okay and everything's great. I love New York City and it's great here. I wanna make my money and leave.

**WB: It's such a mythical city. The reality is totally different from the image in your head.**

DD: I'd only visited a couple of times before I moved here. I went to Coney Island to see Jim





Rose's Circus [about] three years ago, so they [still] had a really neat freakshow going on which I don't think they have anymore.

**WB: It's still running?**

**DD:** Well, they have a freakshow, but it's not the same. I remember the really great lady who came out with her fire and she's like, *(assuming an Eastern European accent)* "I loves my fire. I'm going to eat my fire! Mmmmmm, delicious lunch."

**WB: I wonder if she was a gypsy.**

**DD:** I don't know what she was. She was an actress. She was cool. She had a snake. She ate fire. It was pretty neat. The best act of all is the sword swallower. I wanna do that act so bad...

**WB: Have you been practicing?**

**DD:** No, I can't do it. I know a sword swallower, but he lives in Colorado. Maybe he'll teach me if I ever go to Colorado.

**WB: Maybe you can take a correspondence course.**

**DD:** I'm trying to get a correspondence course where I can teach [drawing] cartoons to people.

**WB: Did you ever turn in anything for one of those "Draw Tippy" contests?**

**DD:** What's that?

**WB: You know, they used to be in old Marvel comics—the contest where you copy the fucked-up parrot, or the fucked-up pirate. So you send it in and if you win you get to pay for these cheesy art classes. They'd just trick you into taking these art classes by telling you how talented you were.**

**DD:** Oh yeah! Right.

**WB: Maybe your class could be like that.**

**DD:** Oh, my cartoon class? Yeah, that's pretty good, people will pay a lot of money to do that. I'm thinking of calling a bunch of dumb colleges or wherever you call to get one of those classes, and signing up [to teach] a course. Starting with, you know, where do you get inspiration, how to write a story, how to make up characters. You know what I mean?

**WB: Uh-huh. Have you taught classes before?**

**DD:** Child psychology. And I taught preschool for two years in San Francisco.

**WB: I just moved from San Francisco.**

**DD:** Yeah, I liked it there. It's a nice place to live if you don't want to have a career. If you just want to have a great life, day to day living, and everything's fine, then that's cool. But if you actually want to have a career and get famous, I don't recommend staying in San Francisco. But most people don't want to get famous, so god bless 'em. Will you hang on a sec?

*(Returns...)*

**DD:** We went to the hospital the other day and he doesn't want to go back. My poor assistant. He was tortured in the hospital. I was tortured! They shoved a tube up my nose, and then they pumped all of the fluid in my stomach out of my stomach and into a bucket on my lap so I could look at it.

**WB: What'd it look like?**

**DD:** It looked gross.

**WB: Was this the first time you've had your stomach pumped?**

**DD:** No, I've had my stomach pumped before. And I went through like, hell... I'm trying to get Medicare and it's just impossible! I can't go back to the doctor.

**WB: That's dangerous.**

**DD:** The day I threw up, which was two days ago, I was really sick. I went into the hospital and said, "You know, I'm really sick. What should I do?" And the lady said, "Wait 'til you're actually throwing up because you'll wait in the emergency room forever and ever and ever otherwise." Later on we go home and I'm just throwing up so badly. Finally we go back to the hospital and they put an IV in my arm and take out all my blood. I mean, it was really horrible, they stick this needle in your vein and keep it in there. It hurt so bad. And they didn't even give me any medicine... It was a nightmare.

**WB: That sounds awful.**

**DD:** *(Coughing)* What were we talking about?

**WB: We were talking about the juices in your belly.**

**DD:** That's right, we were talking about freaks. Freaks are very fabulous and special to me. They are special to me because um, they manifest the outcast part that everybody has inside their self. Maybe that's why some people can't look at freaks because they can't recognize that part of themselves.

**WB: Like that side is being overamplified and it's uncomfortable.**

**DD:** I think they're really intriguing. I've always wanted a twin, a lot, a lot, a lot, but I'm glad I'm not a freak per se. If these people want to go into show business then they should definitely do it. If you want to bill yourself as The Worm Lady or something, then more power to you. What would you rather be if you had no arms and legs? Would you rather just be sitting around your house all day, totally depressed, or would you rather be The Worm Lady that everybody goes to see? I don't think it's a bad thing... I just thank God that I look the way I do, I'm really happy. I'm not vain or anything, at least I don't think; I'm trying not to be, trying to be humble. I would never get plastic surgery or any of that. Never... Even if I got old and my

face started to sag. I wouldn't do it. I would never get breast enhancements or anything... I wanna be taxidermed when I'm dead, stuck to the front of a ship, and be the bow spirit. I want to have my eyes replaced with glass eyes, and be stuck to the bow of a ship.

**WB: Any particular ship? Where would you want to go?**

**DD:** I don't know. I would really like that, but I don't know if they'd let me do it. I want my hair lacquered into curls. It would be lovely. That's totally what I want.

**WB: What color eyes would you choose?**

**DD:** The color they are now. Like a dark blue-green. Dark aqua. Cuz they're not light, but they're blue.

**WB: Would you wear a mermaid outfit, or just regular clothes?**

**DD:** The mermaid tail would be carved into the front of the ship and they'd slip my legs into it. And then laquer my arms onto the side of the ship, and laquer my hair into curls, put a peaceful expression on me. Paint me really pretty. Maybe paint my skin paper-white, that's what I always wanted. To be paper-white like a clown or a doll and have perfectly pink circles for cheeks, like the way I paint my dolls.

**WB: Would you have pearly nails?**

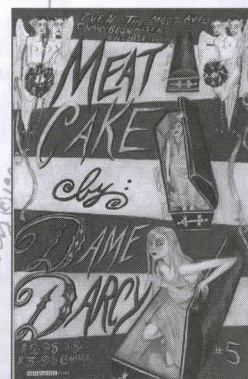
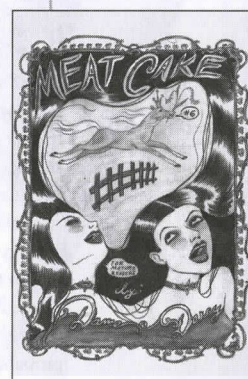
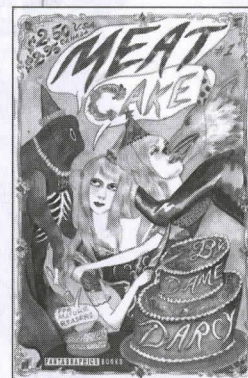
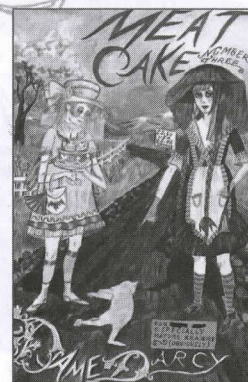
**DD:** Sure, pearly nails. And I can read the future. In my own palm and other peoples. I had two chances for death in the past, which I survived, but it was hard. I have two more chances for death. One is when I'm 29, one is when I'm 88. Most people don't have that many chances for death, but they do have more than one. But I do not like to tell people. The next movie I'm gonna be in is called *The Elaborate Empire of Ache*; it's going to be premiering at the Anthology of Film Archives. It's directed by the lovely and talented Princess Mortal Princess.

**WB: So do you have three creases on your wrist? Somebody told me that meant you were psychic.**

**DD:** I have three chances for death and I'm supposed to get married between 26 and 27. I just got out of a two and a half year long relationship six months ago, and it was really a horrible breakup and I'm still kinda broken up over it. But I want to get a new boyfriend, so if anybody likes a kooky, spooky, Victorian lady, and if they're tall, dark, handsome, and like old-style stuff, they should write to me. It doesn't matter what occupation they have.

**WB: Should we put in a personal ad for you?**

**DD:** Just tell them to write to me if they're interested, cuz I have a lot of friends who are







*When I'm dead, I wanna be  
taxidermed, stuck to the front of  
a ship, and be the bow spirit.*

boys, but you know how it goes, you know what I mean?

**WB: Yeah. Do you usually date normal people or freaky people?**

DD: What do you think?

**WB: I don't know. I would think you'd want to be with someone who was like you. But some arty people really need that normalness to balance things out, or to feel more creative by comparison.**

DD: I try to date people who are normal / not normal. I usually date people who are, I guess, very eccentric. They've all been very eccentric. But I'm not looking for trouble. I'm not looking for eccentric, I'm looking for somebody to marry because I'm 25 and I want to have a normal, stable life... If anybody wants to be the husband of a television star and live in a big, beautiful Victorian house and fly all over the world, then they should call me. But if you don't want to do that, then don't call me, cuz that's what I want to do. And I don't want to ever have any kids. Plus, I don't think anyone should have kids unless they have a ton of money, because I don't want to put any kid through being so broke that they're totally sick like I am and can't even go to the doctor. That's bullshit. There's no reason to have kids if you can't be responsible for them. But most people on this planet, I think more than half the population of the world is probably an accident. But that's the divine intervention of God. I go to church every Sunday, actually, I try to go every Sunday. I'm a practicing Catholic.

**WB: Where do you go to church?**

DD: I go to St. Francis Xavier, but I go other places too. I've been to a lot of churches in New York. I really love them. The thing I like about being a Catholic is that they have dolls, dolls, dolls! Tons of dolls, and I love dolls. I started making dolls when I was a little kid. I've been selling dolls for over two years now and I've made over 200; they've been sold internationally. They have hand-sewn dresses, hand-made sculpted bodies, painted faces, they have real hair, different colors.

**WB: Are they voodoo?**

DD: No, they're little cute dollhouse dolls, they're

five inches tall, modeled on Victorian dollhouse dolls that I used to play with. I'm hand-making all their dresses, and they have real human hair, if anybody wants to order one of my dolls they can send \$50 check or money order to Dame Darcy, P.O. Box 730, New York, New York, 10009. Five dollar discount if you send your own hair, and materials. Specify if you want blonde, redhead and/or brunette and how many you want. Two dollars shipping and handling. I've sold so many of them. People are doll-crazy.

**WB: They're wacko for those dolly dolls.**

DD: They take a long time to make. But you know, I believe in art for poor people, and that's how come when I do a gallery show or something, I have my paintings, the paintings are always expensive, you know, paintings are always hundreds of thousands of dollars. You know I really like some artists' work but I can't afford that, so I make all kinds of different things for all different price ranges, so if somebody really likes my work they can still buy something. One of the beauties of being a cartoonist and having a comic book is that you can make your book and distribute it cheaply. You still get your art out there and people can afford it, it's not some big, schmancy kind of thing. I think comic books should be read and used and dolls should be played with and I think nothing should be revered like that, you know? Will you hold on a second?

*(Returns...)*

DD: I always wished I had a twin.

**WB: Why?**

DD: Well, I think part of it is because I'm a Gemini, but I think part of it is for some other reason.

**WB: Because you just need more of you?**

DD: Yeah, like if I had a twin, I would just love to have a twin and dress the same. You know, play tricks on people that way or, whatever else.

**WB: I think I'm supposed to have twins. My grandma was a twin and they used to play tricks on boys. They'd swap dates and stuff.**

DD: That's cool. I could read your palm and tell you for sure if you're gonna have them or not.

**WB: Isn't it the part of your hand where your**

**pinky bends? The number of folds is the number of children?**

DD: Yeah, that's how I tell. That when you make a fist, there's two creases, and then between the two creases you count how many extra lines it has. If it splits into a "Y" it's going to be twins... I've been reading palms since I was ten and I've read thousands of people's palms all across the nation.

People can send me a xerox of their palm if they want to, either the hand that you write with; palm side down, back of hand, and fist, pinky side down, three separate xeroxes. State your age and any specific questions along with a check for \$10 to my p.o. box and I will read your palm. I do that through the mail, through my comic book as a service to my fabulous readers that I love.

**WB: Does the middle crease straight down your palm mean that you work a lot?**

DD: It means different things. I can't see your palm, so we can't really talk about this.

**WB: Oh I'm sorry.**

DD: But like, the shape of your fingers determine your character... (directs attention offstage to Mr. Ham) Mr. Hambrecht, I'm feeling really sick and dizzy and my hands are freezing. I'm feeling really sick and I'm not kidding. Can you tell? I feel like I'm freezing to death. I'm almost done with this, look. Do they look really pro? You wanna watch the kitchen show? I made this kitchen show where I'm making these cookies...

MH: Very nice!

DD: I'm making these things, these cookies in this show and I'm making them so ineptly and it takes me like an hour and a half to make some oatmeal cookies. Mr. Hambrecht's wife made some really beautiful cookies last night and it only took her two seconds. And me, it was so pathetic, this show. It was the most retarded thing ever. ✱

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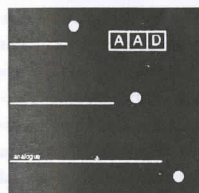
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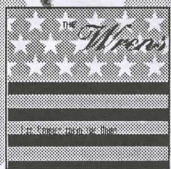
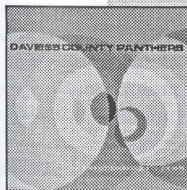
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# INCREDIBLY STRANGE MAGAZINES

By B. Douglas Robbins

A whole class of magazines has taken on the heavy burden of reporting to the public what the CIA, the government, the PTA and the Freemasons would rather you didn't know about. The issues are too shocking and incredible for the mainstream publications to handle. Only a brave and elite cadre of editors and writers dare to ask the real questions, to delve into the ugly and sometimes terrifying heart of the matter, and to reveal the truth.

This is how I imagine these Magazines of the Inexplicable think of themselves. They are a unique collection of publications that see the etiology of everyday occurrences differently from the rest of us. They are obsessed with the strange, but true: *UFOs have landed, they have abducted humans for experiment. Some unlucky abductees have been impregnated, others implanted with otherworldly technologies. Bigfoot is real. Fish have spontaneously fallen from the sky; people have come back from the dead; a doctor has decapitated his wife and is keeping her head alive in a machine of his own design; the anti-Christ is among us; the wolf-man is in America; a demon may be your dentist.* On their face many of these

magazines seem ludicrous, but to cast them aside as meaningless aberrants is to seriously underestimate the public's predilection for the strange and the fantastic. These magazines tell us much about the sort of world we live in and the sort of society we are advancing. Philosophically, a division is evident: some magazines are concerned with the possible, and some use the rhetoric of "possibility" to foster an insidious dogmatism of denial.

*Fate Magazine* exemplifies the prototype with equal parts skepticism, equal parts ersatz science, and a generous dose of the mystical. The

scientific and the religious come together in an article in the February '97 issue that attempts to rationally argue for past life regression: "Skeptics, especially those who pride themselves on their rationalism, must come to terms with the fact that advanced physics and nonlinear dynamics are now accepted scientific theory. Concepts formerly ridiculed as 'metaphysical'—multidimensionality, simultaneity, even reincarnation and

karma—now have a scientific foundation." The skeptical-mystico amalgam is again featured in a series of four expositions on the Philadelphia Experiment, the modern legend of the World War II Navy destroyer that traveled through time. The first article recounts the story of the USS Eldridge's flight through time and space from the Philadelphia Harbor in 1943 to Niagara Falls, 3543, and then to a number of different eras and locales including Texas' Amistad Reservoir, 1954, Utah's Great Salt Lake, 2043, and eventually to Nevada's Lake Mead, 1983, where 19 "timeliners" from the military boarded the ship to halt the out of control experiment and guide the crew back home.

The subsequent article suggests that the Philadelphia Experiment is a hoax forwarded only by individuals with "mental problems." The third article, conspicuously lacking any reference to the mystical or the fantastic, concedes that the USS Eldridge may have disappeared for a short period, but that the cause was not that of falling out of time, but an optical illusion created by ionizing generators and the "resulting electro-magnetic field." The motive for the military: "An invisible ship would be a boon to any Navy: [sic] It would be the perfect weapon, undetectable on radar and invulnerable to enemy attacks."

The last author likewise indulges in government conspiracy theories. This former government worker in Oregon claims that, in an attempt to render the Eldridge invisible, the Navy accidentally cooked her crew in "what may be considered the world's first and possibly largest microwave oven."

*Fate* achieves a balance between the rational and the paranormal. While some articles argue that, "Elves live everywhere, in cities and countryside alike," there is a complimentary regard for a scientific conception of the world. *Fate* tips its hat to the panoply of explanation, from the acutely rational to the fantastic, and often explores an interesting synthesis of the two. It is this diversity and fusion that offers the reader authentic possibility.

The granddaddy of deviant magazines is the *Fortean Times*. It is by far the slickest, best researched, best written, and most moderate publication on all things odd and inexplicable.

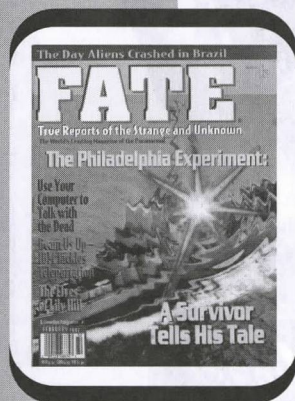
Within the genre, the term "fortean" has even come to mean strange and curious. In the October '96 issue, *Fortean Times* columnist Patrick Harpur writes that UFOs have taken the place in our imagination once held by religion and mythology, and that specifically, it was the scientific paradigm of exploration under the earth and into the skies that permanently banished fairies and dragons from their traditional habitats. In their place, space aliens have been substituted: "As the earth was explored and the wild places domesticated, the daimons (fairies for example) shape-shifted into extraterrestrials." UFOs were the only thing durable and powerful enough to escape the claws of the scientists and the capitalists, because they lived where no one could get to: other planets. And as rocket and telescope technology advanced, the aliens emigrated, Harpur explains: "The aliens of the fifties from Venus and Mars had to re-locate to distant star systems as soon as these planets became better understood."

The *Fortean Times* is also into fruit. Lots of fruit, and animals and trees and other weird natural stuff like the weather. In September '96 they report that fish fell from the sky in Hatfield, England. Says witness Ruth Harnett, "It was not raining and the air became suddenly very chilly," and then—fish. Other issues have explored rodents in the rectum, a 187 pound sweet potato, an aubergine that when cut in half had seed markings that spelled out "Allah exists" in Arabic, weird snakes, and ice spikes—which are sort of like stalagmites that grow from a stationary water source, such as a cat dish, and no one knows why. Along with all the natural-world oddities, you

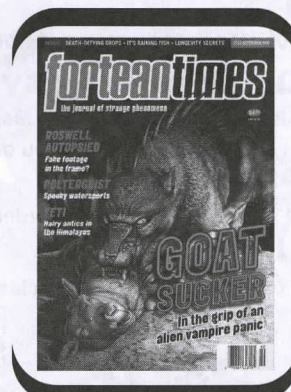
get the straight-ahead stuff, such as a Japanese SM porn star who volunteers to be nailed to a cross, and a 21-year-old who takes over a New Zealand radio station demanding they play "The Rainbow Connection" by Kermit the Frog ad infinitum.

The fascination with "natural" peculiarities in the *Fortean Times* has a link to the attraction to UFO phenomena in general. It is an attempt to re-mysticize the natural world, to suggest that

we don't have all the answers, that the fantastic and wondrous is still all around. Modernity has de-ritualized and subjugated the natural world, not only in



*Fate*



*Fortean Times*



## Strange

terms of pollution and acid rain and plastic-gorged landfills, but in its general disrespect for the ostensible simplicity of vegetable and animal life. Phenomena such as weird fruit and ice spikes remind us of the infinite all around, and suggest a higher power at work. The same applies to UFOs. In a world full of automation, people are starved for the possibility of wonder that at least, on its face, doesn't out-and-out contradict all we know from science. There's that, and the archetypal fantasy of being immersed in an endless radio loop of the "Rainbow Connection."

*Nexus* is the liberal answer to a predominantly conservative genre. An interview with Harvard

Medical School's Lister Greenspoon hails marijuana as being "among the least toxic substances in the whole compendium" of the United States' pharmacopoeia. Another piece bashes the use of estrogen for women from a feminist perspective. After the serious stuff is out of the way, there is an interview with a guy who claims to have had contact with beings from Andromeda, but even there an anti-government, left-leaning slant is evident: "[O]ur government was told by the Draconians to trash our environment totally, in order to bring the people to their knees... The bottom line is that we, the people, need to stand up and take over the leadership roles on our planet." Interestingly, for all its politicking, many of the articles are critical of paranormal phenomena, and even the Andromeda article is at least forwarded by the caveat to "decide for yourself."

Instead of being obsessively focused on the "objective" truth of the matter, *Nexus* takes a middle road. It is interested in possibility. Its publisher, Duncan Roads, writes: "Regularly double-check everything you believe. If it is working for you (i.e., you are happy), then stick with it a while longer. If it is not working for you (i.e., you are not happy), then change what you believe. What is the point of maintaining a belief system that makes you miserable?" In the Shakespearean vein of no good nor bad, but thinking making it so, *Nexus* provides the requisite foil of skepticism to invoke the credo with safety and honesty. But as we shall see, in its more radical form, believing what you like at the expense of everything else tends to induce delusion.

*Strange Magazine* wants to invoke the choose-or-lose belief system as well. For example, an article on

Fellini's dreams says, "Fellini demonstrated the fluidity of reality by recreating and changing the past." He was concerned with a good story, not the "pedantic" details of everyday life. Neat idea. *Strange* isn't into politics as much as *Nexus*, and is far more critical of hoaxes. They run a piece in the Summer 1996 issue about how John Chambers, an important Hollywood make-up man (responsible for such films as *Planet of the Apes*), is in fact responsible for the hulking fuzz-ball in the Patterson Bigfoot film. The Patterson film, shot in October 1967, captured an alleged

Bigfoot in action, leaping over fallen logs or whatever Bigfoots do in the wild. I think the fact that *Planet of the Apes* was such a big deal in the late Sixties and early Seventies is way more weird than the possibility of a Bigfoot. At any rate, it's a conventional strangeness, and for some that's less titillating.

The delineation between the weirdly fantastic and the strange but mundane is a basic form of denial. For example, a poll conducted by Ohio University and the Scripps Howard News Service

(as reported by *Strange*) suggests about 50% of Americans believe the government is involved in a UFO cover-up. *Strange*, like *Fate*, exploits the villainous government-conspiracy motif. The danger in such prescriptions is that it encourages the reader in escapist fantasy. Government conspiracy, much like the "devil made me do it" mythology in the Middle Ages, becomes the culprit for personal problems. *Strange*, luckily, does little to encourage this sort of thinking, unlike...

*UFO Universe* is all about implants. Three separate stories claim to report on implants in the Fall '96 issue. Implants are tiny devices that space aliens put in people's bodies, either to run experiments on them or to control them. Ever get the feeling that you're being watched or your life is out of your control? Check for implants. The idea of implants isn't too far removed from the idea of a gov-



ernment cover-up: both suggest the existence of superior power beyond observation, and both suggest that these powers are controlling the public, watching the public, or in some furtive way ruining everyone's life. In every case, evidence is always thin at best, which only further supports the author's idea of a "cover-up." It's this kind of tautological thinking that can deny all indication of self-induced fantasy. For example, Sean Casteel

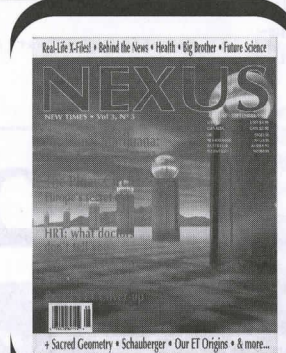
reports that one subject's mother and brother each show similar evidence of implantation, "which serves to indicate that abduction may run in families and along genetic lines, as many researchers already believe." Mental illness also runs in families, but remember, as the publisher of *Nexus* remarks: there's no sense in believing something that isn't going to make you happy.

The *Weekly World News* is a freak among freaks. If the other magazines bend credulity, the *Weekly World News* shatters it like a rock through glass. While *Nexus* may lean left, the *Weekly World News* arcs right. Far right. Homophobia is expressed in terms of nefarious invasion: "Horried Hector Bria, 34, told authorities the gay space alien visited his isolated mountain

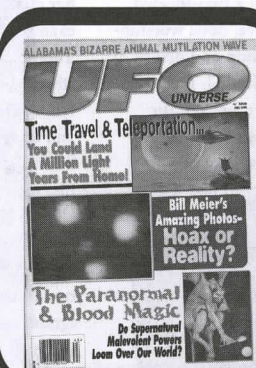
home and tried to romance him. When he spurned the space fairy's advances, the creature burst into tears." An article in the August 20, 1996 issue exposes further evidence of fag villainy: "An expert in ancient Hebrew literature and art says he has uncovered evidence that there was a Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse—a gay man who rode side-saddle like a girl!" Death, Famine, War, Deliverance, and the Gay Guy Who Rides Side-Saddle. Other ridiculous fundamentalist chatter includes pieces on animal rights activists who sell

pet clothes made of human skin, eco-nuts who want to recycle corpses, and my personal favorite, a piece that advocates banning foreigners from the Atlanta Olympics because "foreign athletes and spectators...

## Nexus



## UFO Universe





## Weekly World News



[will] defect [to America] just to collect food stamps and welfare."

The Far Right expresses its living contradictions in repressed sexuality by condemning sex: "You can find out if your teenage computer buff is up to no good on the porn-riddled Internet by watching for five telltale signs that PROVE he's drooling over adult material and maybe even engaging in cybersex with online perverts behind your back." Meanwhile, misogynistic pornography is only pages away. In this

particular instance, two pages away from the "Dirty Nerd" article is the "Page Five Girl." The "Page Five Girl" is a regular bikini-clad pinup always found on page five for easy reference. The irony escapes them. Other sexually titillating articles include a stun gun to the groin cure for impotence and women reportedly raped by space aliens. The repressed sexuality oozes like Confederate molasses. Condemning rape—especially interstellar rape—is an effective guise to control sexuality and still partake in the vicarious, if not imaginary, thrill of forced alien sex.

Two other main story formats appeal to the *Weekly World News*' conservative readership. The first is the *I'm okay, you're fucked up* story, and the second is the *I'm fucked up and it's your fault* story. Pieces that fall into the *I'm okay, you're fucked up* category include: doctors remove the wrong head from a two-headed baby; space alien cuts off woman's face; devil worshipper, age 14, boils seven-year-old in soup and drinks it; and your co-worker may be a Neanderthal. Examples of *I'm fucked up and it's your fault* are more prolific: parents kill kids because of "parent burnout," Satan causes bad hair days, and your dentist may be a demon (that's why your teeth are fucked up). Of course, there is the space alien motif: having a space alien's baby, how to tell if you've been abducted by space aliens, your pet may be a space alien, and your best friend may be a space alien. Space aliens seem to be responsible for a lot of heartache and misery.

The *I'm okay, you're fucked up* angle appeals to the conservative's innate sense of superiority—normally indicative of jingoism, flag waving, or racism. The *I'm fucked up and it's your fault* philosophy takes the next step: namely, if right wingers possesses innate superiority, their problems must necessarily originate in the Other. It's the Jews, it's the commies, it's the hippies, it's the blacks, it's the Mexicans stealing jobs and living off welfare, it's the intellectuals in far-off ivory towers. The *Weekly World News* sensationalizes the

sentiment: it's Satan in my hair; space aliens up my ass. Denial and delusion? You bet.

*The Anomalist* imagines itself as the scholarly journal of fortune issues. It is bound in glossy cardstock, each article is footnoted to death, and it comes out quarterly like a periodical. In general, the authors begin with mild skepticism toward their subject matter, and by the end of the article suggest the supernatural is definitely culpable. Unfortunately, most of the pieces are boring as hell. Between trying to be scholarly and skeptical, not too much happens. In three issues, only one article is worth discussing: it's about "spontaneous human invisibility."

Donna Higbee explains that on occasion some people spontaneously become invisible. She writes, "There is a big difference between a person purposely not interacting with you because of some cultural or personal reason versus a person not interacting with you because he can neither see nor hear you." Just so you're clear. Ironically, the bulk of the anecdotal evidence that Higbee presents seems exactly like the kind of invisibility that occurs when, for cultural or social reasons, someone is being ignored. In one example, a woman's coat is taken from her chair as if she wasn't even sitting there. In another example, a woman is ignored at the post office. In Tucson, Arizona, a woman says she's been ignored in stores and restaurants, asking, "You wouldn't think a tall woman with red hair, high heels in a purple dress and dangle earrings would be invisible, would you?" The moral, we are to suppose, is that if you're invisible, you're invisible—no matter how badly your clothes clash with your hair. My favorite example is of "Peter" from Gloucestershire, England, who suspects he has experienced spontaneous invisibility: "When he questioned his friends and girlfriend as to why they ignored him, they all swore that they had never seen or heard him." For Peter, it is easier to believe he was spontaneously invisible than to admit his girlfriend was ignoring him.

The significant issue for magazines of the inexplicable is the existence of possibility. For some, like Charles Fort, possibility means, "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while." For these types, possibility is a liberating reality. It concomitant-

ly admits of mythology and science, and is able to reject them both. It is the infinite possibility that allows for wonder and mystery, the crucial nourishment absent in so much of modernity. But for others, the existence of possibility isn't infinite, it's just possible. When the publisher of *Nexus* suggests that we

should only believe in things that make us happy, some take this as a mandate for one more possibility and occlusion of the rest.

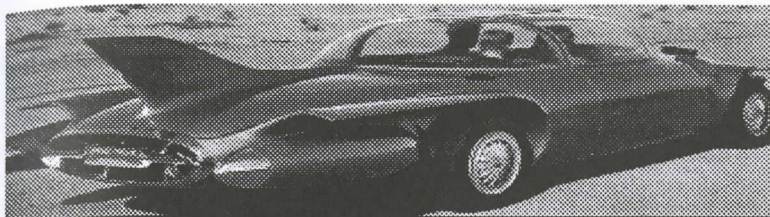
The result is often just denial. If your girlfriend is ignoring you, it's not because you're boring or rude—it's because forces beyond your control have turned you invisible. If you're paranoid, or forgetful, or have insomnia, it's not because of personal problems—it's because "you may have been kidnapped by extraterrestrials at some time in your life." Once denial sets in, it becomes a self-referencing prophecy. For

example, in *The Anomalist*, hyp-

notherapist Donna Higbee theorizes that people who are afflicted with spontaneous invisibility are people who have been abducted by space aliens. When the hypothesis does not pan out ("I could see no direct link between [abduction and spontaneous human invisibility]") she continues to hold onto it for dear life, "There is the possibility that those reporting to be non-abductees simply haven't remembered their experience and are, indeed, actually abductees." For Higbee, "possibility" means the possibility to hold onto whatever twisted and bizarre reality she might care to believe in, no matter how self-deluding, no matter much evidence exists to the contrary. That is not "possibility," that is dogmatism.

The difference between authentic possibility and ostensible possibility is the major philosophical dividing point among these strange publications. The later, such as *UFO Universe*, *Weekly World News*, and *The Anomalist*, advocates close-mindedness, fear, and paranoia. The former, most notably *Fate* and the *Fortean Times*, foster a healthy sense of exploration through the doors of perception, to peer at things as they truly are: infinite. ✱





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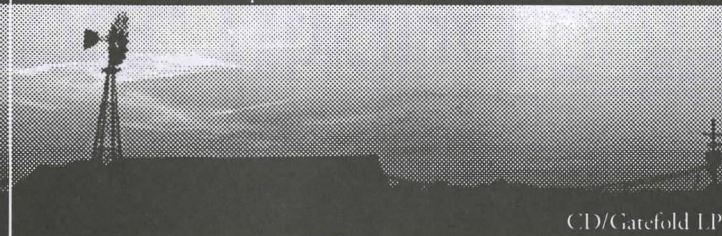
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**Thumbail**

[CD/LP]

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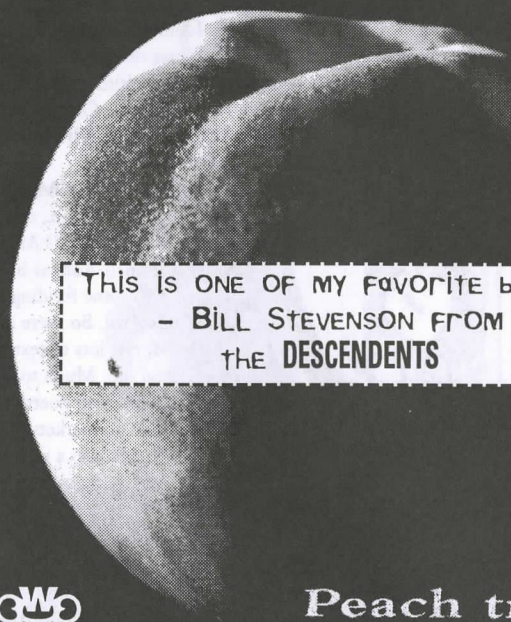
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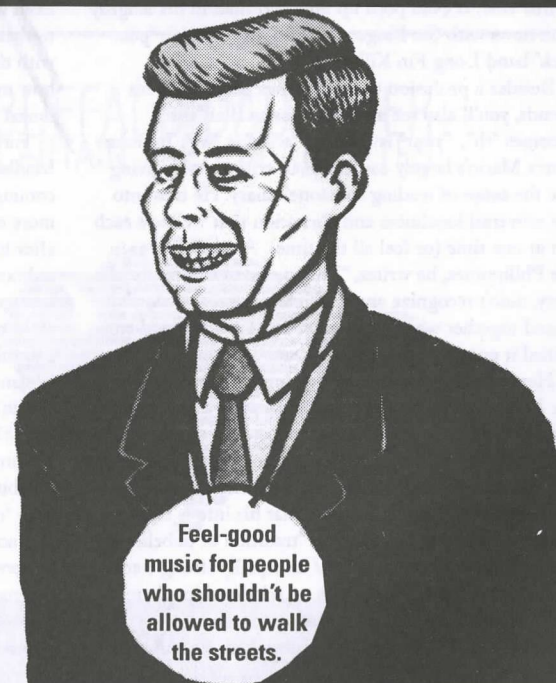


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# print reviews

## Black Hole Lipstick #1

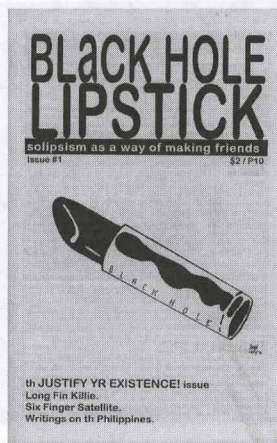
(5½" x 8½", 72 pp., xeroxed)  
Pretty much a one-man effort by Mario Alipio, who previously worked on several issues of *The Scenester* with some friends during a one-year stay in the Philippines. Now back in the States, he has created *Black Hole Lipstick* #1.

As explained in this maiden issue, a "black hole" arises from a contradiction in emotion or thought. One example is when your job is the worst, but not having a job would be even worse. Or, having a memory so sharp, it takes the place of actual living. "Lipstick" is an influence from Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces: a Secret History of the Twentieth Century* and is defined as a bit of forgotten history. Dwelling on the ironies and ephemera in our lives is the foundation of this zine. It even pops up now and then in his lengthy interviews with Six Finger Satellite and Scottish "post-rock" band Long Fin Killie.

Besides a profusion of code names adopted by his friends, you'll also see abbreviations so that "the" becomes "th", "your" is "yr" and "with" is "w/". It underscores Mario's largely confessional writing style, giving one the sense of reading someone's diary. He taps into the universal loneliness and alienation that we have each felt at one time (or feel all the time). About his year in the Philippines, he writes, "I hopped into th middle of a story, didn't recognize any of th characters, and slowly pieced together what I had missed... It was a good story. I liked it enough to plagiarize it and call it my own."

Here and there are bits of information about life in the Philippines. The origin of the jeepney as a common form of public transportation, the fact that there are no bus schedules in Manila, and a briefing on a Filipino fast food restaurant, Jollibee. As someone who spent 17 formative years in Manila, I vouch that his info is dead on. His observation of the Filipino "tradition of unbelievably sentimental romance paired w/ an equally strong tradition of sexual repression" sums up relationships there better than anyone has ever tried to explain.

What other black holes and lipstick traces will he find next? Issue #2 should be out by April. (\$3 to Mario Alipio, P.O. Box 422, Great Falls, VA 22066-0422) — *Wella Lasola*.



## Cuckoo #2

(6½" x 10", 32 pp., offset printed)

There has always been a shroud of mystery and inaccurate perceptions surrounding the condition now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder (but still known to most people as Multiple Personality Disorder). There has also been a palpable lack of firsthand descriptions of what it's like to live with this type of condition: instead, most information about DID is filtered through the "professional" analyses of psychiatric specialists who never seem to really understand what it's like.

This lack of genuine firsthand voices is one of the driving forces behind Madison Clell's *Cuckoo*. Even more important is Madison's need to tell her own story about the horrific sexual and emotional abuse she endured as a child which led to her development of the disorder as a way of coping with unbearable traumas.

The stories in *Cuckoo* tend to illuminate one (or several) distinct personalities and resolve the experiences from which they were developed or the impetus that led to their discovery — a critical process in making peace with the past. While Madison does not explicitly state how many distinct personalities she is aware of, over a dozen are portrayed in this issue.

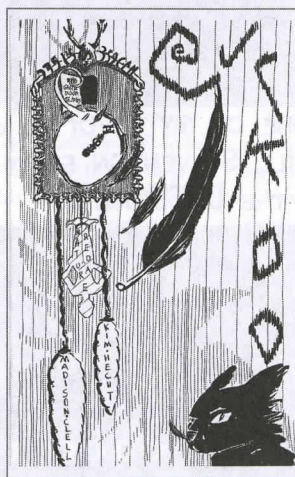
Fortunately, a recurring theme in this issue is Madison's process of making peace with — or at least coming to a better understanding of — some of her more emotionally-charged personalities. In one story, after having sex with her boyfriend, a heretofore unknown personality suddenly emerges from Madison — that of a child named Melanie. Slowly and painfully, the personality of Melanie divulges a brutal and painful episode of sexual abuse she kept hidden away for years. Melanie occupied a narrow world, inhabited only by "bad people", with "no toys, no games, no playing, no friends. Ever." Madison and her boyfriend find a simple yet poignant gesture to instill trust in Melanie: they give her a toy for Christmas, which gives Melanie a more positive and loving association to hang onto.

Equally gripping is Madison's

account of her experience at a women's self-defense class, which brought two other personalities into play: Krystal, a strong yet even-handed protector, and Max, an emblem of spontaneous and uncontrollable rage. The interplay between the three personalities (can't leave out Madison, of course) builds the level of suspense to dizzying heights as they face up to their fears and anxieties — and reach a point of catharsis as they pound their padded "attacker." They come out more self-assured and closer to making peace with the past and the future: "I wished we could go back and fix all our 'too lates' into 'nevers'. But 'never again' will do nicely."

Madison visualizes her alternating feelings of confusion, anger, and hopefulness with bold linework, liberally peppered with thoughts, musings, and casual (often humorous) asides. Scenes of extreme emotional import are rendered with heavy, expressionistic strokes that pack a serious wallop. Panels that express self-questioning or disorientation pack jumbled snippets of actions, speech, and thought to heighten the sensations. Each personality is portrayed as a different physical entity (at least one of them is male, and many of them are children), so sometimes it's hard to keep track of who's who — especially during emotionally complicated scenes — but the effect further reinforces the feeling of instability in the reader.

Madison offers a vital and articulate voice for those who wish to garner some much-needed insights into Dissociative Identity Disorder. Her depictions of her continuing process of self-discovery are devastating, overwhelming, and ultimately uplifting. (Issues 1 and 2 available for \$2.75 each. Order c/o Green Door Studios, P.O. Box 12150, Eugene, OR 97440) — *Seth*.



## Nancy's Magazine #13

(7" x 8½", 36 pp., offset printed)

Also called *N3 M*, it's put out by Nancy Bonnell-Kangas in Columbus, Ohio with some funding from the Ohio Arts Council. So there aren't any ads in *N3 M*; just lots of text and art, all cleanly laid out. Much to read here in #13, from comics and poetry to off-beat musings on supermarkets and birthmarks. There's also a recipe for cinnamon rolls! And, perhaps because Nancy works in a library, some of the pieces have information in them that is so hard-core, it brings encyclopedias to mind.

Issue #13 is the Mark issue, with articles such as "Marks We have Dated"



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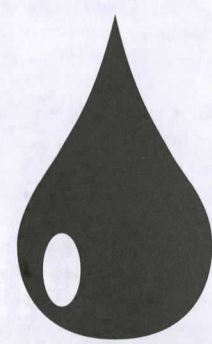
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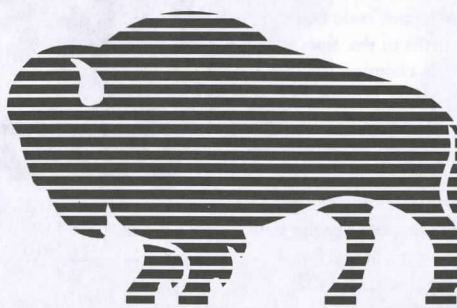
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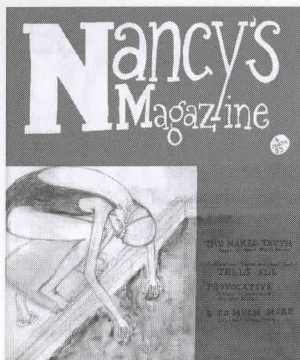
BUTTER 08



BUFFALO DAUGHTER  
 CAPTAIN VAPOUR ATHLETES





and a spread on what could be the original easy chair (patented in 1876) from the Marks Adjustable Folding Chair Company. Nancy admits that some articles are only tangentially related to Mark, but I cannot criticize her inclusion of the exposé

on K-Mart Blue Light Specials (markdowns, get it?), in which a former K-Mart employee gives us the lowdown on the psychological manipulations behind the store's five-minute sales.

The best reason to get this 'zine, though, is for Nancy's interview with the vice-president of Mark Correctional Systems, manufacturers of fully furnished modular prison cells. In the interview, Mickey Rosenberg presents a very thought-provoking theory for how the pharmaceutical industry has encouraged the drug culture of contemporary society, which leads to the sad reality that most incarcerations are for drug-related crimes. This zine has definitely made its mark on me. (\$4 to Nancy's Magazine, POB 02108, Columbus, OH 43202) — *Wella Lasola*.

#### **rürrnt #1**

(8½ x 11", 48pp, xeroxed)

The word "rürrnt" is an element of southern slang meaning "ruined." After Dorian-Michael and friends get through with their home-spun brand of humor, satire, art, and insights, quite a few overweight sacred cows end up "rürrnt," as well.

This issue of *rürrnt* is split into two utilizing the dual cover, flip-over method: the "Flippant" side takes up about three-fourths of the zine, with the "Pensive" side claiming the rest of the space. In practice, though, the serious commentary and humor overlap each other on both sides, often to hilariously poignant result.

Some of the better moments on the "Flippant" side are spent dealing with drugs and the war on drugs. For example, it's often been said that "Hugs are better than drugs," but Dorian asks the important questions, including: "Is hugging Rush Limbaugh better than getting high on Percodan?" Probably not. Of more practical use is the "Consumer Retorts" column, a send-up of those *Consumer Reports* comparison charts (you know, the ones that rate microwave ovens using all those funny, half-shaded circles) where various legal and illegal depressants are

exhaustively rated and categorized. I think I liked that one more because I loathe *Consumer Reports*... Similarly, one can look at the "Girls of Disney" spread as a rather juvenile exercise in drawing Pocahontas au naturel, or it can be enjoyed as a dead-on spoof of those anachoristic little text blurbs that accompany the pictorials in *Playboy* (sorry, Chip). Even the record reviews are done with flair, filled out in "Wanted by the FBI" forms with complete "criminal records" for the bands.

The bulk of the "pensive" side is taken up by a surrealist comic rant on the state of art, artists, and a modest proposal to reclaim the word "rürrnt" to signify the artistic outsider in a world where the likes of Hootie and the Blowfish and professional athletes are referred to as "artists." Point well taken, though lowest-common denominator "artists" on par with Hootie and co. rarely stand the test of time, anyway.

All in all, *rürrnt* #1 has everything you'd want in a good zine — analytical and searching without being too serious, flippant without being straying into banality. A very solid first issue, indeed. (\$2 to *rürrnt*, c/o Dorian-Michael, P.O. Box 985, Decatur, AL 35602) — *Seth*.

#### **We Like Poo #1-#4**

(5½" x 8½", 34 pp, xeroxed)

My introduction to *We Like Poo* neatly coincided with my first lesson about the rectum, given to me by a friend. An awareness of how my body prepares my shit for its departure readied me for a treatise about the joys of letting waste fly. *We Like Poo* is the cerebral stool of Tara Sin and is devoted entirely to scatological exploration. Her "poo diary" (from issue #4) is a testament to the lengths she'll go to for her readers. In this segment, she chronicles her shitting over a week-long period as she follows the directions of a fat-burning, body-cleansing, soup diet.

*We Like Poo* features bathroom ratings, toilet photography, shit fetish videos, a poo anthology project and crap, crap, crap. Does she know that, on average, the human body produces a liter and a half of flatulence a day? Does she care? You bet she does. (For a copy, send \$2 to Tara Sin, 3128 16th Street #125, San Francisco, CA 94103)

— *Nicole Armour*.

#### **Other fine reading material you need to track down:**

**Dishwasher #14** (5½" x 8½", 40 pp.) Get the side-splitting lowdown on how Dishwasher Pete and his friend Jess pulled the toupée over Letterman's eyes! Plus a detailed history of dishwashers' involvement in (and exclusion from) New York City's trade unions, and per-

sonal anecdotes about washing dishes in the Big Apple. (\$1.00 cash money to *Dishwasher*, PO Box 8213, Portland, OR 97207) — *Seth*.



#### **Jimmy Corrigan - The Smartest Kid on Earth #8** (7¼" x 6¼", 36pp, offset) Obsessive. O-bleak.

Objet d'art. Oedipal. Ominous. Onerous. Ornate. Out-of-control. Outside. Expect nothing short of breathtaking from boy wonder Chris Ware in this latest installment of meticulous misery. We should be so lucky to have him featured in our next issue. (Cross them fingers.) My vote for the Greatest Comic Book of All-Time. Need I say more? (\$4.95 from Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115) — *Noël*.

#### **Spleen #7** (4¼" x 5¼", 24 pp.) The self-proclaimed

"angry little humor zine" is all that, and then some. Pricks of the month, reasons to visit Montana, bizarre news, odd yellow pages headings, dissin' on Food Lion supermarkets, more. Small enough to fit in your coat pocket, enough laughs to keep you amused on the bus ride home. (\$1.00 cash to *Spleen*, PO Box 8122, Las Vegas, NV 89119) — *Seth*.

#### **Suburbia #6** (8½ x 11", 42pp, xeroxed) Ceci, finishing

up her first year in high school, is already up to the sixth issue of her zine. What the hell was I doing with myself back when I was 15? This issue is jam-packed with good reading, from comments on maxi pads and the evils of melatonin to photos from the Santa Barbara Girls Convention to day-to-day snippets of growing up in you-know-where. Overflowing with intelligence and honesty, I give *Suburbia* an A+ (\$1.00 cash to Ceci Moss, 521 Golden Gate Ave., Pt. Richmond, CA 94801) — *Seth*. ✱



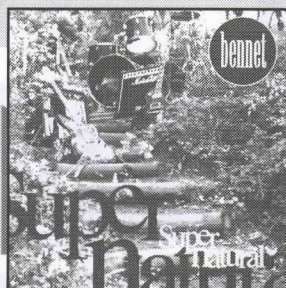


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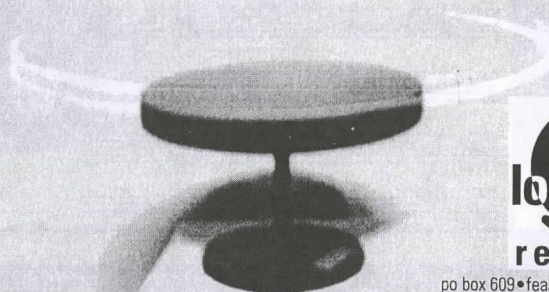
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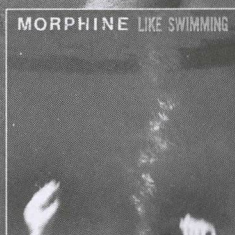
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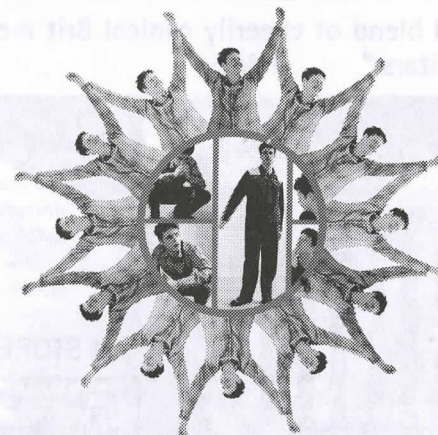
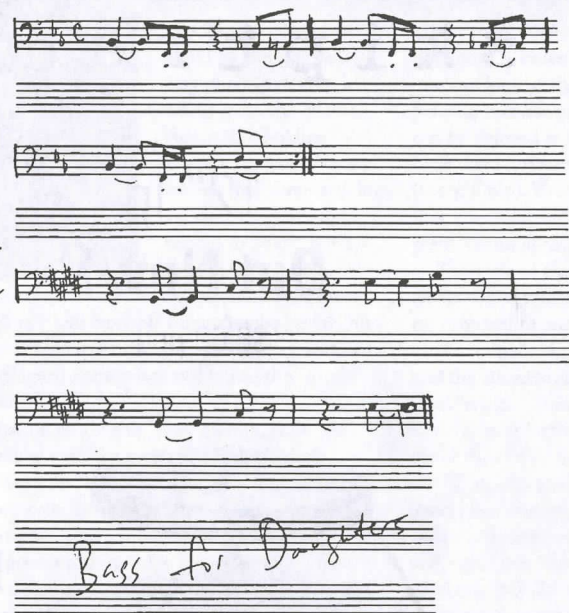




# Jonathan Fire Eater



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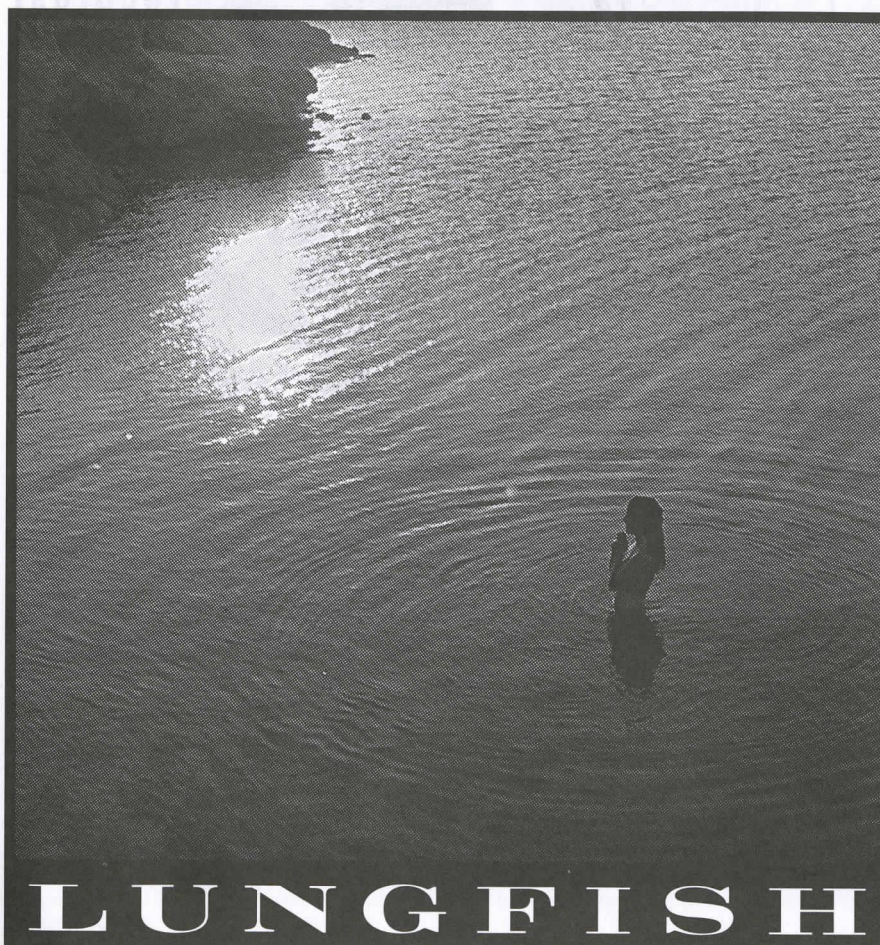


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*Cocktails With Joey*  
 Mancini tribute  
 Dig that Hammond organ  
 Cocktail Nation, babe  
 (Will) 🐉

**American Analog Set**  
*The Fun of Watching Fireworks*  
 Spiritualize me  
 Wide as the Texas terrain  
 Give me moody moog  
 (Trance Syndicate) 🐉

**Atari Teenage Riot**  
*Burn, Berlin, Burn!*  
 Breakbeat overdrive  
 terror for terminally  
 ill-advised lumpens  
 (Grand Royal) 🐉

**Bale**  
*Pearly White*  
 Slow, angry moth-men  
 Urban priests of sweet darkness  
 Could it be Satan?  
 (Parasol) 🐉

**Bedhead**  
*Beheded*  
 Floating down the stream  
 Quiet, soothing, drifting clouds  
 Life is but a dream  
 (Trance Syndicate) 🐉

**Benett**  
*So You're Not Coming Over?*  
 Casio keyboards  
 Cherry-flavored Lip Smackers  
 Hearts and unicorns  
 (WIN) 🐉

**Boss Martians**  
*13 Evil Tales*  
 Secret agent surf  
 with a rock 'n' roll cocktail  
 These fret boys can play!  
 (Dionysus) 🐉

**Bowery Electric**  
*Beat*  
 Hearts skip when flying  
 saucers attack on my blood  
 soaked Valentine's day  
 (Kranky) 🐉 ★

**Bright**  
*s/t*  
 Shimmering one-chord  
 mantras that lift us straight up  
 to krautrock heaven  
 (BaDaBing!) 🐉

**Calvin Krime**  
*Dress For the Future*  
 Short short build a fort  
 Leapin' lizards' last resort  
 Youth now, let's contort!  
 (Amphetamine Reptile) 🐉

**The Cardigans**  
*First Band On the Moon*  
 Oh how Swede it is  
 to see hopeless romantics  
 swagger catwalk style  
 (Mercury) 🐉 ★

**Cat Power**  
*What Would The Community Think?*  
 Solid truths that hurt  
 Lullabies on a hot night  
 You will want much more  
 (Matador) 🐉 ★

**Marshall Chapman**  
*Love Slave*  
 Sexy, country songs  
 Out on the porch, in the heat  
 Another sip please?  
 (Tall Girl) 🐉

## record review

# HAIKUS

**Autechre**  
*Tri Repetae* 2CD  
 Caution: Mechanized  
 artificial life forms may  
 be existential  
 (TVT/Wax Trax) 🐉 ★

**Az**  
*Music for Scattered Brains*  
 Circus geeks trapped in  
 rusty music boxes with  
 their ruptured innards  
 (Atavistic) 🐉

**Bakamono**  
*Long Time Cain*  
 The weight of the world  
 can't compare to this blast of  
 noise and vibration  
 (Super 8) 🐉 ★

**Bill Ding**  
*Trust in God, But Tie Up Your Camel*  
 These sultans of Ding  
 sure can smoke muthafuckers  
 like it ain't no thing  
 (Hefty) 🐉

**Bis**  
*This is Teen-C Power*  
 Teen punk meets disco  
 It's time to kill your boyfriend  
 Takes a strong stomach  
 (Grand Royal) 🐉

**The Black Watch**  
*Seven Rollercoasters*  
 Miasmic beauty  
 Love song to Steve Albini  
 Intelligent pain  
 (Catapult Records) 🐉

**Blonde Redhead**  
*Fake Can Be Just As Good*  
 Bad moods rising up  
 through flushed spinal columns of  
 today's damaged youth  
 (Touch and Go) 🐉 ★

**The Bomboras**  
*It Came From Pier 13*  
 Hawaii ballpark  
 Mai Tai's and hot links galore  
 Some surf to relish  
 (Dionysus) 🐉

**James Booker**  
*The Lost Paramount Tapes*  
 The man with fast hands  
 Downhome pianoforte  
 Rings across the room  
 (DJM) 🐉

**Bubby Girl**  
*My Own Pet*  
 Punk with a washboard  
 Like a big rock in your shoe  
 Sippin' the moonshine  
 (Boom Berneatha) 🐉

**Buffalo Daughter**  
*Captain Vapour Athletes*  
 The future shock train  
 lollipop death wish is here  
 Go 'round the outside  
 (Grand Royal) 🐉

**LTJ Bukem**  
*Logical Progression*  
 Spectacled lad spins  
 endless variations of  
 drum and bass motifs  
 (Good Looking) 🐉

**R.L. Burnside**  
*Mr. Wizard*  
 Bluesman may be old,  
 but not over the hill. Can  
 I hear U say "dang"?  
 (Fat Possum) 🐉 ★

**Cagney and Lacey**  
*Six Feet of Chain*  
 Perfect for the spring  
 Love songs that will make you sick  
 Dancing in the streets  
 (No6) 🐉

**The Chemical Brothers**  
*Dig Your Own Hole*  
 Discord and dance beats  
 sabotaging synapses  
 Bring on the Bomb Squad  
 (Astralwerks/Caroline) 🐉

**Cherubs**  
*Short of Popular*  
 Beyond teenage angst  
 Pummeling cacophonies  
 free of all restraints  
 (Trance Syndicate) 🐉

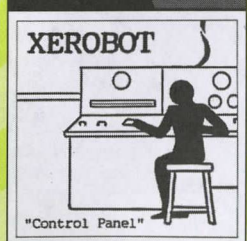
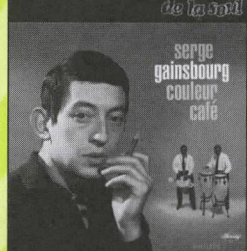
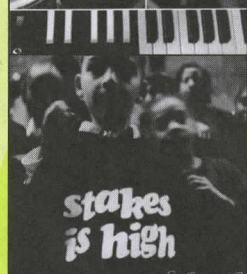
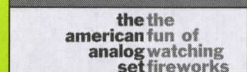
**Chimera**  
*Earth Loop*  
 For dreamy rockers  
 Similarities aside  
 Light candles and spin  
 (Grass) 🐉

**Chug**  
*Sassafras*  
 Queen bee mother buzz  
 Fly into your ear and stay  
 Eat up all ear wax  
 (Alias) 🐉

**Congo Norvell**  
*The Dope, The Lies, The Vaseline*  
 Pain rips at your flesh  
 Drowning in a martini  
 Go home with anyone  
 (Priority) 🐉

### KEY TO THE REVIEWERS

**Nicole Armour** = 🐉  
**Brian Brannon** = 🐉  
**Jennifer Brannon** = 🐉  
**Johanna Burke** = 🐉  
**Lisa B.** = 🐉  
**Jenny Gotwals** = 🐉  
**Mike Johns** = 🐉  
**Alana Kumbier** = 🐉  
**Elizabeth Lampert** = 🐉  
**Brian Lucas** = 🐉  
**Ken Miller** = 🐉  
**Seth** = 🐉  
**Carrie Sloan** = 🐉  
**Tristy Taylor** = 🐉  
**Noël** = 🐉  
**Catherine Tyc** = 🐉  
**Jason Yakich** = 🐉  
**Editor's choice** = ★





## Creeper Lagoon

s/t  
Broken hearts and names  
Falling down by the old docks  
Tender and so fierce  
(Dog Day) 🐾

## Cub

*Box of Hair*  
Girlie sugar punk  
better than the Go-Go's could  
ever imagine  
(Lookout!) 🐾

## Deadguy

*Screamin' With the Deadguy Quintet*  
The Devil always  
rings twice, but you're just plain FUCKED  
once you let him in  
(Victory) ☁️ ★

## De La Soul

*Stakes Is High*  
Needs a few listens  
to catch all that they're saying  
Lyrical ego checks  
(Tommy Boy) ☁️ ★

## Ani DiFranco

*Dilate*  
Grace and rage combine  
in Ani's funky girl grooves  
An indie goddess  
(Righteous Babe) 🐾

## Directions in Music

s/t  
Not just "Tortoise Lite,"  
a tight, fluid collection  
of sonic textures  
(Thrill Jockey) 🐾

## DJ Shadow

*Entroducing...*  
Pomo scissor whiz  
cuts no corners. Leaves punk ass  
bitches in stitches  
(Mo' Wax) ☁️ ★

## Doldrums

*Acupuncture*  
Improv space needles  
pierce through pressure points. Relief  
and mind expansion  
(Kranky) ☁️ ★

## Dutch Harbor: Where the Sea Breaks Its Back soundtrack

(an ensemble featuring members of:  
Gastr del Sol, Tortoise, Palace, etc.)  
Orchestral ebb and  
flow, northern exposure nears  
the vanishing point  
(Atavistic) ☁️ ★

## Eleventh Dream Day

*Eighth*  
Sweet insomnia  
Slowly drifting in my boat,  
trying to catch a dream  
(Thrill Jockey) 🐾

## El Vez

*Gl Ay, Ay! Blues*  
El groover loco  
Educating the gringos  
Shake your rump, baybeh!  
(Big Pop) 🐾

## Erasergun

*For What We Are About To Receive*  
Drunken love will hurt  
like a broken, old Chevy  
shipwrecked in my head  
(Silly Bird) 🐾

## Marianne Faithful

*20th Century Blues*  
Romantic, cold shards  
flying from her hot throat,  
throttling your ears  
(BMG) 🐾

## A Far Cry

(compilation featuring: *Babe the Blue Ox*, *Antietam*, *Dirt Fishermen*, *Behr*, *Fox & Manning*, *Danger Gens*, *Jarboe*, *God is my Co-Pilot*, *Juned* and *Ann Magnuson*.)  
All rockin' ladies  
Proceeds go to Rock for Choice  
Money that's well spent  
(C/Z) 🐾

## Fire Party

s/t  
Old songs that still move  
Chickens in the yard, scratching  
Watch out for the dust  
(Dischord) 🐾

## Flowchart

*Tenjira* EP  
A ray of bright sun  
rouses you from deepest sleep;  
inner peace lingers  
(Darla) 🐾 ★



Swans

## Folk Implosion

*Dare to be Surprised*  
After doing it  
for the Kids, a new batch of  
catchy, offbeat pop.  
(Communion) 🐾

## Danny Frankel

*New Thing on Jupiter*  
Molecular flights  
glide through beatnik netherworlds  
Out there, a minute  
(WIN) ☁️ ★

## Frogpond

*Count To Ten*  
MTV-style band  
except for her raspy voice  
which saves us from pain  
(TriStar Music) 🐾

## Edith Frost

*Calling Over Time*  
If Gastr Del Sol  
met Kendra Smith in fields of  
wheat and soft breezes  
(Drag City) 🐾

## Fuck

*Baby Loves a Funny Bunny*  
Pass the lithium  
and follow the breadcrumb trail  
You won't be sorry  
(Rhesus) ☁️ ★

## Diamanda Galas

*Schrei X*  
Mujere fuerte  
Swept up in the religion  
Going down screaming  
(Mute) 🐾

## Alastair Galbraith

*Morse / Gaudylight* (2 LPs on 1CD)  
Resonant kiwi  
chime. This one definitely  
straddles the extremes  
(Emperor Jones/Trance) 🐾

## God Is My Co-Pilot

*The Best of...*  
Sloppy, savage skronk  
of queers fucking each other,  
loving every sec  
(Atavistic) ☁️

## Serge Gainsbourg

*Comic Strip*  
Le Car would not be  
complete without hit and run  
wife swapping music  
(Philips/Mercury) ☁️ ★

## Serge Gainsbourg

*Couleur Café*  
He may be Jekyll  
and Hyde, but ze monsta sure  
can mambo, buster  
(Philips/Mercury) ☁️

## Serge Gainsbourg

*Du Jazz Dans le Ravin*  
As provocateur,  
one might not expect such smooth  
late night slinks from Serge  
(Philips/Mercury) ☁️

## Guitar Wolf

*Missile Me*  
Japanese rockers  
rock the wild retards with a  
fucked up noise fest  
(Matador) 🐾

## The Delgados

*Domestiques*  
High fructose dream rock  
Soundtrack for a silent film  
starring your nightmares  
(March) 🐾

## Demolition Doll Rods

*Tasty*  
Walkin' down drunk street  
with smeared lipstick and glitter  
boots, I'm fuckin' pissed!  
(In the Red) 🐾

## Descendents

*Everything Sucks*  
Time to get my skate!  
I only wanted to skate,  
now I feel too old  
(Fat Wreck Chords) 🐾

## Dos

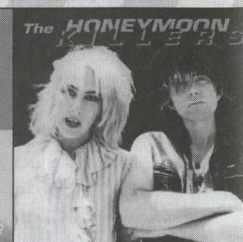
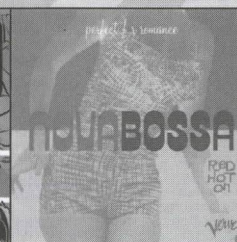
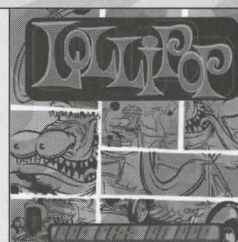
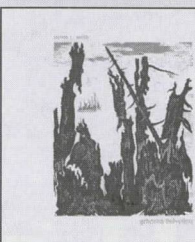
*Justamente Tres*  
Only two basses  
but sounding so beautiful  
slithering around  
(Kill Rock Stars) 🐾

## Double Nelson

*Le Grand Cornet*  
Stroboscopic loop-  
to-loops leave you bamboozled  
and then laughs ha ha!  
(RoomTone) ☁️

## Dura-Delinquent

s/t  
Corvette summer sucks  
if ya leave the car in the  
garage...problem solved  
(Echostatic/Space Baby) ☁️





**Gumdrops**  
*High Speed... Okay?*  
 It's all in the name  
 Not hardcore, like the others  
 Beautiful singing  
 (Grass) 🐾

**Guv'ner**  
*The Hunt*  
 Highly adroit pop  
 replete with off-key crooning  
 Relationship stuff  
 (Merge) 🐾

**The Heathers**  
*I Came, I Said*  
 Angry and confused  
 Slam him face down on the bed  
 Chicken boys like this  
 (Circumstantial) 🐾

**Hi-Fi and the Roadburners**  
*Wine, Women & Sin*  
 Tattooed my elbows  
 on the way to the sock hop  
 I'm ready to rock  
 (Victory) 🐾

**Hi-Fives**  
*...and a whole lotta you!*  
 Guitar boys in suits  
 Sweaty nouveau 'wavers sing  
 "Tainted Love" for you  
 (Lookout!) 🐾

**His Name Is Alive**  
*Stars on ESP*  
 From Warren's basement,  
 eclectic experiments  
 in pop religion  
 (4AD) 🐾

**The Honeymoon Killers**  
*Sing Sing (1984-1994) 2CD*  
 Legendary scum  
 fucks give you 56 ways  
 to leave your lover  
 (Sympathy for the Record Industry) 🐾

**Hovercraft**  
*s/t EP*  
 Studies show that sleep  
 deprivation may cause one  
 to hallucinate  
 (Repellent) 🐾

**Hovercraft**  
*Akathisia*  
 Mind-bending light shows  
 Aerial disturbances  
 The truth is right here  
 (Mute/Blast First) 🐾

**Thee Headcoats**  
*Knights of the Baskervilles*  
 Billy Childish sings  
 "What's wrong with me? What's wrong with  
 YOU?" through a tin can  
 (Birdman Records) 🐾

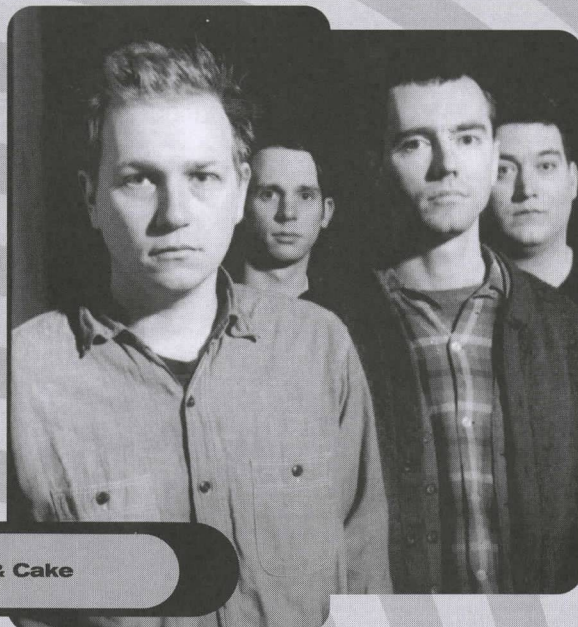
**Thee Hydrogen Terrors**  
*Terror, Diplomacy & Public Relations*  
 Pass the Rolling Rock  
 This garage party is out  
 of control big time  
 (Load) 🐾

**Irving Klaw Trio**  
*s/t*  
 Payaso loco  
 Scaring you in the nighttime  
 Kick you in the pants!  
 (Silly Bird) 🐾

**JB³**  
*Close Grind*  
 Minimal techno,  
 visceral, repetitive  
 the way it should be  
 (NovaMute) 🐾

**Jessamine**  
*The Long Arm of Coincidence*  
 Hooks, lines, and sinking  
 sensations open up a  
 whole new Can of worms  
 (Kranky) 🐾 ★

**Jon Spencer Blues Explosion**  
*Now I Got Worry*  
 Pelvic thrusts, growls, yelps  
 Funky chicken blues kicks ass  
 Fast, sexy dervish  
 (Matador/Capitol) 🐾 ★



**The Sea & Cake**

**Juicy**  
*Olive Juicy*  
 Happy go-lucky  
 "The Boys of Summer" cover!  
 They will make you smile  
 (Slow River) 🐾

**June of '44**  
*The Anatomy of Sharks EP*  
 Fresh blood drip drop drips  
 in the high-seas, great whites lick  
 their razor sharp chops  
 (Quarterstick) 🐾

**Kaia**  
*s/t*  
 This ex-Team Dresch goes  
 acoustic. Lifting vocals  
 so simple and pure  
 (Chainsaw) 🐾

**King Can**  
*Maximum Power Super Loud*  
 Meat and potatoes  
 fueled power chord madness, all  
 hooks and salty chops  
 (Earmark) 🐾

**Kittywinder**  
*Livre Des Monstres*  
 Wind up toys dancing  
 Put on your favorite song,  
 and kill your boyfriend...  
 (Zero Hour) 🐾

**Komeda**  
*The Genius of...*  
 Scandian caprice  
 cabaret calibration  
 and rueful fracture  
 (Minty Fresh) 🐾 ★

**Kraftwelt**  
*Electric Dimension*  
 Digital fireworks  
 and dementia spiraling  
 through the Autobahn  
 (Hypnotic/Cleopatra) 🐾

**Labradford**  
*s/t*  
 Maimed. Majestic.  
 Immense. Immersed. Immobile.  
 Brazen. Brooding. Bruised.  
 (Kranky) 🐾 ★

**The Ladybug Transistor**  
*Beverley Atonale*  
 Won't you please let me  
 take you down? 'Cuz I'm going  
 to Elysian Fields  
 (Merge) 🐾

**Le Mans**  
*Le Mans / Entresemana* (2 LPs on 1 CD)  
 So much sunshine, no  
 wonder the rain in Spain stays  
 mainly in the plain  
 (Grimsey) 🐾 ★

**Lilys**  
*Better Can't Make Your Life Better*  
 Kinks shaken and stirred  
 Apples fell not far from tree  
 Brian Wilson smiles  
 (Primary/Che) 🐾

**Lois**  
*Infinity Plus*  
 Counting nursery rhymes  
 enter our souls and stay there  
 Lois is the queen  
 (K) 🐾

**Lollipop**  
*Dog Piss On Dog*  
 Blood boils and blisters  
 blasting fuck 'n' roll tantrums  
 'til the Cows come home  
 (Amphetamine Reptile) 🐾

**Low**  
*The Curtain Hits the Cast*  
 Twisting, turning 'round  
 Voices fall from velvet sky  
 Singing psalms of stars  
 (Vernon Yard) 🐾 ★

**Luscious Jackson**  
*Fever In Fever Out*  
 Sticky grooves inside,  
 slipping and sliding all over  
 Can I have some more?  
 (Grand Royal/Capitol) 🐾

**The Machine Gun TV**  
*Touch*  
 Eye says: "shock pop...made  
 [from] colored fluorescent light  
 jello." And he's right  
 (Japan Overseas) 🐾

**Macro Dub Infection, Volume 2**  
 (2CD compilation featuring: Bill Laswell,  
 Alec Empire, Third Eye Foundation, Mouse  
 On Mars, etc.)  
 Take *The Upsetter*  
 to the top floor and try a  
 little THC  
 (Gyroscope/Caroline) 🐾 ★

**Make-Up**  
*After Dark*  
 The spirits of James  
 Brown, Prince and the Kingsmen can  
 not be contained, NO!  
 (Dischord) 🐾 ★



**Diamanda Galas**



**Mallermuck**

*Welcome Diaper Part*  
Fleshy, winged sheep  
Music to mass murder to  
For the whole circus  
(Silly Bird) 🐼

**April March**

*Paris in April*  
Part English, part French  
devilish retro girl pop  
adds spring to your life  
(Sympathy) 🐼

**Meat Beat Manifesto**

*Subliminal Sandwich 2CD*  
Have another byte  
of cold-cuts and computer  
chips on the house, kid  
(Nonesuch/Interscope) 🐼

**Microstoria**

*snd*  
Incidentally rich  
electronic abstractions,  
delicate and free  
(Thrill Jockey) 🐼 ★

**Milewide**

*s/t*  
Feeling it inside  
Grip me hard and make me sing  
Right here in the church  
(Unlikely) 🐼

**The Monorchid**

*Let Them Eat*  
Acerbic circus  
Rough and tumble somersaults  
all fraught with lupus  
(Simple Machines) 🐼

**Morcheeba**

*Who Can You Trust?*  
Sweet and so sticky  
Trance-like jams pull you under  
It's so nice and warm  
(China) 🐼

**Move Into Villa Villakula**

(compilation featuring: Sleater-Kinney,  
Kaia, Eileen Myles, Tattle Tale, Ruby Falls,  
and Azalia Snail)  
Slam the bogus boys  
It will grip you and rattle  
Very delicious  
(Villa Villakula) 🐼

**Jack Mudurian**

*Downloading the Repertoire*  
Duplex patient sings  
129 songs  
in less than an hour!  
(Arf! Arf!) 🐼

**Naming Mary**

*Kiki*  
Hit in head with bat,  
bunny rabid fuzzy wuzz  
goes swirly, spits grease  
(Wintermute) 🐼

**Nas**

*It Was Written*  
Running with the illness  
talkin' to da youth, like that  
if I ruled the world  
(Sony) 🐼

**Nerdy Girl**

*Twist Her*  
Feeling like a dork  
Baring the souls of all girls  
Shhh, these are secrets!  
(No Life) 🐼

**New Radiant Storm King**

*Hurricane Necklace*  
It makes me long for  
days of '92—I was  
young and it was new  
(Grass) 🐼

**Ninety-Nine**

*99*  
Darkly skipping through  
powerful one woman show  
marking you deeply  
(Villa Villakula) 🐼

**Novabossa: Red Hot On Verve**

(compilation featuring: Astrud Gilberto,  
Antonio Carlos Jobim, João Gilberto, Elis  
Regina, etc.)  
Brazilian genius  
Romantic pop that looked straight  
ahead, not at he  
(Verve/Polygram) 🐼 ★

**The Odd Numbers**

*A Guide To Modern Living*  
Modern mod delights  
Flow from the speakers in waves  
Carrying the jams  
(Eight One Nine) 🐼

**The Oliver Brown Trio**

*Kiss Someone*  
Ukelele tryst  
The prurient lovebird chirps  
chartreuse seduction  
(King Turtle) 🐼

**Orange Cake Mix**

*Fluffy Pillow*  
Sensitive Eighties  
technopop and pulled heartstrings  
Is Tin Tin jealous?  
(Fuzzy Box) 🐼

**Oval**

*'94Diskont*  
Beauty disguised in  
audio artifacts and  
digital jump cuts  
(Thrill Jockey) 🐼 ★

**Paddlefoot**

*s/t*  
Fiddles and whiskey  
Old cars and tiny houses  
Good old boys in skirts  
(???) 🐼

**Palace Music**

*Lost Blues and Other Songs*  
If you love your horse,  
just set him free. If he comes  
back, he's yours to keep  
(Drag City) 🐼 ★

**Panasonic**

*Kulma*  
Bare minimum blips  
Hypnotic analog trips  
Think: lunar eclipse  
(Mute/Blast First) 🐼 ★

**Pavement**

*Brighten the Corners*  
Cupid's arrows may  
stab thee in the back just to  
fill in all those blanks  
(Matador) 🐼 ★

**The Pendulum Floors**

*A Kicking Good Time With...*  
Shining sweet brilliance  
Truth slips through the Optigon  
Gripping your old soul  
(Villa Villakula) 🐼

**Pest 5000**

*(in-ter/a-bang!)*  
Meatloaf and twinkies  
Yummy yummy in tummy  
No more hungry bears  
(Derivative) 🐼

**Photek**

*The Hidden Camera EP*  
Machine gun beats and  
plucked bass strings. Who says you can't  
swing in the jungle?  
(Virgin UK) 🐼

**The Poppy Family**

*A Good Thing Lost: 1968-1973*  
Sacharine visions  
of a time best forgotten,  
but entertaining  
(March) 🐼

**Prince**

*Emancipation*  
Lots of baby talk  
that will make her want to spawn  
bad for one night stands  
(Paisley Park) 🐼

**Prince Paul**

*Psychoanalysis*  
Very dirty songs  
don't trip on PC bullshit  
Do the booty clap  
(???) 🐼

**Red Aunts**

*Saltbox*  
Better step back when  
sisters scream and shout, "Mama  
said knock you out!" Punk  
(Epitaph) 🐼

**The Revelators**

*We told you not to cross us*  
Gas up the hotrod  
We're goin' out to the farm  
tonight with some chicks  
(Crypt) 🐼

**Resonance Found at the Core of a Bubble**

(compilation featuring: Frank Heiss, DJ  
Spooky, Adam Pierce, etc.)  
Fluid, ambient  
transmissions just might blow up  
but it won't go pop  
(Bubble Core) 🐼 ★

**Romeo & Juliet**

*original motion picture soundtrack*  
Outfits by Prada  
and Dolce & Gabbana  
Music by them, too  
(Capitol) 🐼

**Microstoria****DJ Shadow**



**Roots**

*Illadelph Halflife*  
Multi-layered sounds  
you can't even imagine  
Harder edge this time  
(Geffen) ☁

**Ruby Falls**

*Heroines*  
Feminized math rock,  
greater than the sum of those  
others' equations  
(Silver Girl) ➡

**764-HERO**

*Salt Sinks & Sugar Floats*  
Love's busy signals  
Hang up, try again. Don't die  
of a broken heart  
(Up) ☁ ★

**Shonen Knife**

*Brand New Knife*  
Big, purple gumdrops  
Pink stuffed animals  
Shiny, happy knife  
(Big Deal) ➡

**Something Cool**

(compilation featuring: Tullycraft,  
Poundsign, Autocollants, schrasj, etc.)  
Hey, kids! Step right up!  
Indie pop ear candy in  
twenty new flavors!  
(Cher Doll) ➡

**Sonic Chimp**

*Volume 1 A Fun Trick Noise Maker...*  
Chaotic passion  
slips through the 'stream of my mind  
Fearless, sheer brilliance  
(Sealed Hotel) ➡

**BJ Snowden**

*Life in the USA and Canada*  
In Canada there  
are weirdos. Geddy Lee and  
BJ take the cake  
(Demilo/Venus) ☁

**Social Distortion**

*White Light, White Heat, White Trash*  
So glad that this slab  
sounds like Social D of old  
Why mar perfection?  
(Epic) ☁

**Space Box 1970 & Beyond: Space, Krautrock & Acid Trips**

(3CD compilation featuring: Amon Düül II,  
Harmonia, Kraftwerk, Harmonia, etc.)  
Primer for those who  
wish to color their lives with  
dazzling, vibrant hues  
(Cleopatra) ☁

**Space Streakings over Mount Shasta**

*Shakuhachi Surprise*  
What would it sound like  
if we dynamited a  
video arcade?  
(Skin Graft) ➡

**Speculum Fight**

*Highball*  
Infinite, distressed  
ambient clusters culled from  
tiny wooden box  
(WIN) ☁

**Spiritualized**

*Lazer Guided Melodies* re-issue  
Historic moments  
of piercing beauty and sheer  
psychedelic bliss  
(Dedicated) ☁

**Squirrel Nut Zippers**

*Hot*  
Minnie the Moocher,  
state fairs and cotton candy  
paint on pinstriped smiles  
(Mammoth) ☁

**Stereolab**

*Fluorescences EP*  
Shimmering, shining  
stars for you to see what your  
life could truly be  
(Duophonic) ☁ ★

**Stoned Booty**

*Ginger Leigh*  
Crazy freakshow  
Spaceman without a spaceship  
Donkeys ripped my flesh  
(self-released) ➡

**Sugar Plant**

*Cage of the Sun EP*  
In shiny black pool,  
sweet and sour dumplings float soft  
Water snake bites sting  
(Pop Narcotic) ➡

**Sukia**

*Contacto Espacial Con El Tercer Sexo*  
Sidesplitting sideshows!  
Intoxicated yahoos!  
Crass menageries!  
(Nickelbag) ☁

**Sun City Girls**

*330,003 Crossdressers from the Rigueda*  
501 cowboys  
with maximal Sanskrit blasts  
over sticks and strings  
(Abduction) ☁

**Swans**

*Soundtracks For the Blind 2CD*  
Killing one bird with  
two stones does no damage to  
these immortal souls  
(Atavistic) ☁ ★

**Sweet Pea**

*Chicks Hate Wes*  
Thick and gooey noise  
It will put you in a trance  
And ALL chicks hate Wes!  
(Trance Syndicate) ➡



**Demolition  
Doll Rods**

**Sauce**

*The Cake Bake Disaster*  
With a host of songs  
like "Penetration Tonight"  
you just can't lose, man  
(Hardtail) ☁

**Paul Schütze + Phantom City**

*Site Anubis*  
Silence swallowed in  
a trilogy of terror  
and sonic intrigue  
(Big Cat) ☁ ★

**The Sea & Cake**

*The Fawn*  
Dreamboats slicing through  
open seas of whipped cream and  
sequenced pleasantries  
(Thrill Jockey) ☁ ★

**Semi-Gloss**

s/t  
Not unlike Nico  
fronting the Groop covering  
Velvet Underground  
(Dirt) ☁

**SIANspheric**

*Somnium*  
Blue skies and sunshine  
for those who don't mind watching  
the red house paint dry  
(Sonic Unyon) ☁

**Sissy Bar**

*Statutory Grape*  
Sweet sugar headache  
Banjo duels with gin and juice  
The pink bunny gets laid  
(Sugar Fix) ➡

**Slow Loris**

*The Ten Commandments and...*  
The taut and the tense  
doused in martinis let loose  
moods of blue and red  
(Southern) ☁

**The Smears**

*Like Hell*  
Punk rock comedy  
good for your little sister  
or your ex-boyfriend  
(Cargo) ➡

**Steven R. Smith**

*Gehenna Belvedere*  
The darker side of  
an individual's psyche in  
sudden bursts of sound  
(Autopia) ☁ ★

**Smog**

*The Doctor Came at Dawn*  
Melancholy is  
not a disease, purity  
is. This just seems right  
(Drag City) ☁

**Paul Schütze**





**Towa Tei**



**20 Miles**  
*Ragged Backyard Classics*  
Judah Bauer shows us all that he can walk the walk and talk the talk (In the Red) 🐾

**24-7 Spy**  
*Heavy Metal Soul by the Pound*  
My ex-boyfriend's band Kind of wanted to hate it, but it's really good (WAR) 🐾

**Universal Order of Armageddon**  
s/t  
Reckless abandon  
Political shrapnel shards  
Smarting scars for life  
(Kill Rock Stars) 🐾

**U.S. Bombs**  
*Never Mind The Opened Minds, Here's the...*  
You can't fake the punk and the Bombs don't give a fuck about all the hype (Alive) 🐾

**Velour 100**  
*Songs from the Rainwater EP*  
Shimmering slivers  
All the worlds combined in one  
Making your heart hurt  
(Tooth and Nail) 🐾

**Rube Waddell**  
*Hobo Train*  
Liquored swampwater  
junkyard hijinx feels right at home here on the streets  
(Vaccination) 🐾

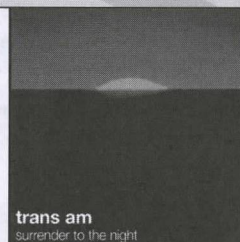
**When I'm Hungry I Eat**  
(compilation from *Gourmandizer* zine featuring: Sukpatch, Low, Cocktails, Land of the Loops, etc.)  
Non-fat and guilt-free musical smorgasbord ripe with all the fixin's (Gourmandizer) 🐾



**Windy & Carl**  
*Antarctica EP*  
Stark and shimmering, a thousand years of stillness locked within the floes (Darla) 🐾 ★

**Wipeout XL**  
(compilation featuring: Underworld, Daft Punk, Chemical Brothers, Orbital, etc.)  
The game is not quite over Press "PLAY" for musique non-stop techno pop (Astralwerks/Caroline) 🐾

**Steve Wynn**  
*Melting In the Dark*  
Melodies, pistol smoke, ghosts whispering, "If it's Come, they will *make it*" (Zero Hour) 🐾



**Xerobot**  
*Control Panel*  
A three-ring circus of clowns, Contortion-ists, freaks and fire-breathing geeks (Coat-Tail) 🐾 ★

**Yo La Tengo**  
*Genius + Love = Yo La Tengo*  
Compilation to Witness the evolution of harmonic truth (Matador) 🐾

**Zen Guerilla**  
s/t  
Ready for some fast gospel tent trashy blues? Look no further. Play loud! (Alternative Tentacles) 🐾

**Tarnation**  
*Mirador*  
True, brilliant heartache empties my soul in a jar just to leave it there (Reprise) 🐾

**Teddy Fire**  
*Fluxing Headset Man*  
Pre-teen boys who rock  
You wish you were this good  
Blow your little mind (Sealed Hotel) 🐾

**Towa Tei**  
*Future Listening!*  
Brazilian cha cha funk in the velvety lounge of space-age Deelites (Elektra) 🐾

**10¢**  
*Everybody Wins*  
Truth, sending a chill  
Helping us out of the pain  
This is the real thing (Angel Dust) 🐾

**Thrones**  
*Alraune*  
Slow cataclysmic thunder, all casualties  
Need more catacombs (Communion) 🐾

**Tipsy**  
*Trip Tease*  
Bouncy tiki torch songs and happy feet lead us into temptation (Asphodel) 🐾

**Tizzy**  
*Befriend Us*  
Hey Mr. Cool Guy  
Sugarcoated nastiness  
Girls you wish you knew (Pop Narcotic) 🐾

**Trans Am**  
*Surrender to the Night*  
If you're cruisin' for a bruise, you should ride shotgun down Milky Way (Thrill Jockey) 🐾 ★

**Tricky**  
*Pre-Millennium Tension*  
Dirtydancing with the Dark One. May we all be naked and famous (Island) 🐾

**20 Favourite Irish Pub Songs** compilation  
The songs and Bushmills  
Smooth, strong and melancholy  
A lot of spirit (Dolphin Traders) 🐾



**Komeda**



Good stuff,

no haiku:

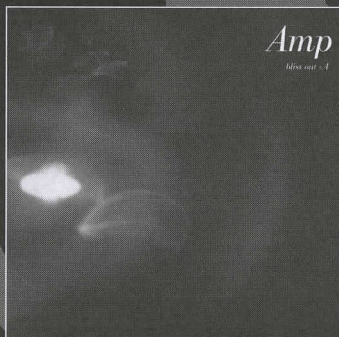
**The Notwist** *Only in America* (Zero Hour)  
**Creedle** *When the Wind Blows* (Headhunter/Cargo)  
**The Handsome Family** *Milk and Scissors* (Carrot Top)  
**Far** *Tin Cans With Strings To You* (Epic)  
**Martin Phillipps & the Chills** *Sunburnt* (Flying Nun)  
**The Psyclone Rangers** *Beatin' On the...* (World Domination)  
**International Language** *Where the Bands Are* (Sympathy)  
**Incredible Force of Junior** *Let the World Fall Apart* (Up)  
**Falstaff II** (Homestead)  
**No Knife** *Drunk On the Moon* (Time Bomb/Goldenrod)  
**Guzzard** *The Alienation Index Survey* (Amphetamine Reptile)  
**Ex-Action Figures** (Mafia Money)  
**Country Teasers** *Satan Is Real Again* (Crypt)  
**Fireside** *Do Not Tailgate* (American)  
**Able Tasman** *Store In a Cool Place* (Flying Nun)  
**Todd Newman** *Temporary Setback* (Barber's Itch)  
**The Cakekitchen** *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Merge)  
**Chrome Cranks** *Oily Cranks* (Atavistic)  
**Cut** *Songs for the Radio* (WIN)  
**DJ Vadim** *USSR Repertoire* (Ninja Tune)  
**Download** *Sidewinder* (Nettwerk)  
**μ-Ziq** *Urmur Bile Trax Volume 1-2* (Astralwerks)  
**Rod Poole** *The Death Adder* (WIN)  
**Skulpey** *Liz* (Pedigree)  
**Squirrel Bait** s/t re-issue (Drag City)  
**Squirrel Bait** *Skag Heaven* re-issue (Drag City)  
**Thingy** *Staring Contest* (Headhunter/Cargo)  
**Windsor For the Derby** *Metropolitan Then...* (Trance Syndicate)  
**Greengate** *Metaphysical Vibration* (Fuzzy Box)  
**Hash Jar Tempo** *Well Oiled* (Drunken Fish)  
**Tikako Minekawa** *Roomie Cube* (March)  
**The Mountain Goats** *Full Force Galesburg* (Emperor Jones)  
**Apples in Stereo** *Science Faire* (SpinART)  
**To Have and to Hold** Motion Picture Soundtrack (Mute)  
**Dirty Three** *Horse Stories* (Touch & Go)  
**The Feelings** *Dearling Darling* (Pop Secret)  
**Karate** *In Place of Real Insight* (Southern)  
**Las Vegas Grind Part 3** (Strip)  
**Alec Empire** *Hypermodern Jazz 2000.5* (Mille Plateaux)  
**Helium** *No Guitars* EP (Matador)  
**Red House Painters** *Songs For a Blue Guitar* (Supreme)  
**Mogwai** *Ten Rapid* (Jetset)  
**Can** *Sacrilège: The Can Remix Album* (Mute)  
**Dianogah** *Old Material, New Format* CD EP (Actionboy)

the

Sure, we all love our indie rock. But ask yourself: is it good for the soul? Does it really tap in to your higher longings? Does it bring you one step closer to inner peace?

Enter the Bliss Out: a new series of original ambient-pop recordings designed to ease your way towards spiritual awakening. Released by San Francisco-based Darla Records, the Bliss Out is scheduled to include works by 18 different artists, released one per month on CD and limited-edition 12" vinyl. A deluxe box set compilation is planned for release upon conclusion of the series.

The process of creating the Bliss Out series was in itself an almost spiritual awakening for Darla founder James Agren. After spending long days running his bustling label and distribution company, Agren decided he needed a little something to help him relax in the evenings and on Sunday mornings. He made a mix tape of quiet, minimalist songs found on pop-oriented albums by artists from Brian Eno to Split Enz to Simple Minds. The tape had the desired relaxing effect, which led



Amp  
bliss out, vol. 4

above

AMP, *Perception*  
double 12" & double cd  
Bliss Out, vol. 4

right

Flowchart, *Tenjira*  
12" / cd ep  
Bliss Out, vol. 1



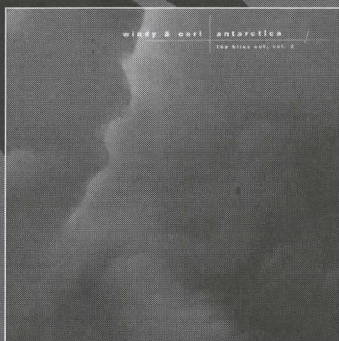
# bliss out

Agren and partner Chandra Tobey to conceive of a one-time compilation CD featuring similarly relaxing, ambient-flavored instrumental tracks by contemporary indie-pop artists. As he thought of all the artists he wanted to feature on the compilation, he realized there would be more than enough material to constitute a regular series of EP releases. The Bliss Out was born.

Judging from the first few releases, The Bliss Out promises to be a far more diverse set of recordings than one might expect. The first release in the series was Flowchart's *Tenjira* EP (January 1997), which saw the New Jersey band finally break free of their Stereolab fixation with a sunny, shimmering, gorgeous display of atmospheric analog synthesis. February 1997 saw the release of Windy & Carl's *Antarctica* EP — a 3 track, 45 minute epic of massive, eternal splendor. *Silver Lining Underwater*, by Orange Cake Mix, ended up being a full-length CD and LP, with the record containing a bonus 7" with still two more songs. Released in March 1997, *Silver Lining Underwater* shows off yet another side of the ever-prolific Jim Rao — this time he dabbles in the Vini Reilly school of light, airy, minimalist pop songs crafted with shimmering guitar and clunky old analog keyboards. April and May will see new releases by AMP (*Perception*) and Fūxa (*Venoy*). The rest of the series is being kept under wraps for now.

It seems to be more than coincidental that the Bliss Out series was launched at a time when the music industry was wetting its pants over

"electronica," but Agren quickly dismisses any possible connections. "[Electronica] doesn't have any relevance to what we're doing," says Agren, pointing out that none of the planned Bliss Out releases will come from artists associated with the flourishing dub, DJ, jungle, or trip-hop movements. Instead, the Bliss Out will continue to focus on independent bands who are more known for their pop acumen.



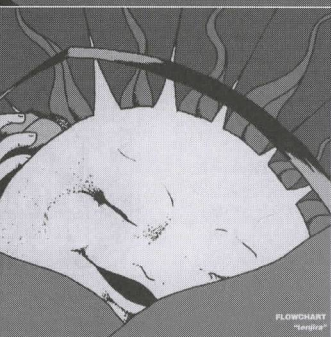
above

**Windy & Carl, *Antarctica*  
12" & cd ep  
Bliss Out, vol. 2**

Even though Darla is releasing a Bliss Out recording every month, they're still keeping up with their normal schedule of releases. Other upcoming Darla releases include new recordings by Grifters side project Those Bastard Souls, The Feelings, and New Bad Things. New volumes in their bargain-priced compilation series, *Little Darla has a Treat for You*, will continue to come out quarterly. With a hectic schedule like that, Agren and Tobey will definitely reap the benefits of the Bliss Out series — at the very least they'll have some great music to help them relax after another busy day.

— Seth.

For more information about the Bliss Out, contact Darla Records. 625 Scott St. #301, San Francisco, CA 94117. Email: [darlarec@sirius.com](mailto:darlarec@sirius.com)



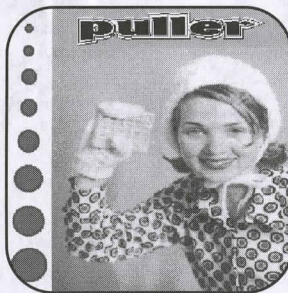




**MxPx**  
**Life In General**  
CD/CS/LP



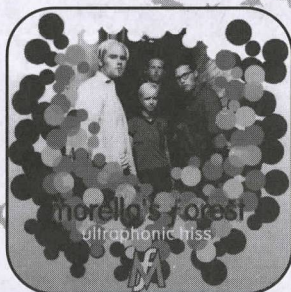
**MxPx**  
**Small Town Minds**  
7"



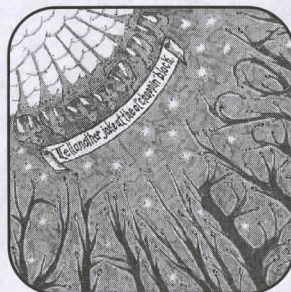
**PULLER**  
**Sugarless**  
CD/CS



**LUXURY**  
**The Latest & The Greatest**  
CD/CS



**MORELLA'S FOREST**  
**Ultraphonic Hiss**  
CD/CS



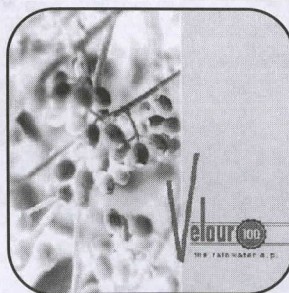
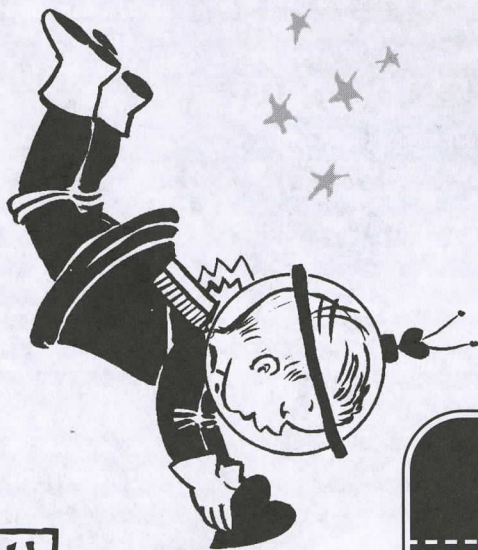
**DANIELSON FAMILY**  
**Tell Another Joke On The Ol' Choppin' Block**  
CD



**JOE CHRISTMAS**  
**North To The Future**  
CD/CS



**SAL PARADISE**  
**Furthur**  
CD/CS



**VELOUR 100**  
**Songs From The Rainwater EP**  
CD



**STARFLYER 59**  
**Americana**  
CD/CS



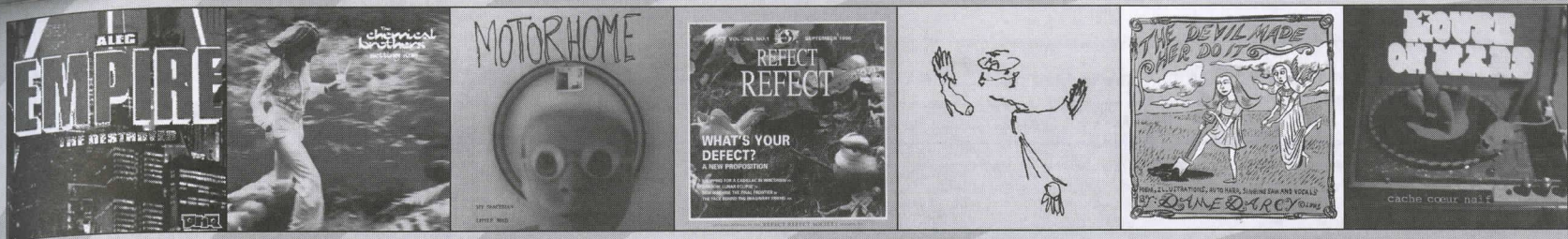
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### The Action Suits

"Fun Flies / Your Soft Light"

I think the only reason you would want this record is for the pure novelty of owning a record made by three Seattle comic book artists, including Peter Bagge of *Hate* fame. The promotional packet describes them as "mellow, summer, guitar rock," and that's exactly what they are. (Wiiiija) 🐾

### Another Girl

"Growing Cold"

Lynne Kellman engineered, produced, wrote all the songs and played all the instruments in her converted sweatshop apartment. Totally amazing, powerful stuff and I cannot wait for the full-length album. (BMG) 🐾

### The Black Watch

"I Feel So Weird / Steve Albini"

A complete and utter tribute to Steve Albini, including a marriage proposal. J'anna's Jacoby's voice is very beautiful as is Greg Adamson's cello is dreamy. (Eskimo) 🐾

### Ralph Carney

"Krelm" / "Backwards Werewolf"

Toothless dime chucks into damaged champagne glasses greasing Tulare County Fair midways. When's the album due? (Birdman) Brian Lucas

### The Chemical Brothers

"Setting Sun"

Yet another dose of verve and mayhem from this dynamic duo They can even make Brit-twits like Noel Gallagher sound glorious. (Astralwerks/Caroline) 🐾

### Cold, Cold Hearts

"Yer So Sweet (Baby Donut) / Broken Teeth"

This band consists of Alison Wolfe & Erin Smith of Bratmobile and Lora MacFarlane of Sleater Kinney and it is mean and nasty, right on the mark. It's high school punk rock girl power at it's finest and you can't miss it... (Kill Rock Stars) 🐾

### Lorette Velvette & Mick Collins

"Malted Milk" / "Come In This House"

Very strange, dark, country rock with a sweet tune. I think it is better to just sit back and try not to make sense of it. (Lamplighter) 🐾

### Dame Darcy

"The Devil Made Her Do It"

A kooky, spooky morality tale rendered with delicate strokes of autoharp, banjo, musical saw, and dissonant, sing-song voice. The lovely mini-comic books makes this a must for Dame completists. (Stickshift) 🐾

### Emily's Sassy Lime

"The Gusto Informants"

Once again, another totally excellent record from these insanely smart girls. The perfect soundtrack to some fucked up horror movie playing in a deserted trailer park. (Kill Rock Stars) 🐾

# SINGLES

### Alec Empire

"22:24" / "The Peak"

A-side takes the low road through haunting ghost town digs. But the flip is where Mr. Empire goes blitzkrieg gabber and takes no prisoners. (DHR/Grand Royal) 🐾

### Füxa / Bright split 7"

"City & Metro" / "How I Reached Home"

Füxa's happy-go-lucky bleeps and blips eventually give way to the vast reaches of interstellar space. Bright finds the way home with a slow, steady, soothing riff repeated as often as necessary. (Darla) 🐾

### Le Mans

"Un Rayo de Sol" / "Ama Hil Zaigu"

Something old and something new, one oh so bright, the other blue. All (in)ha(i)(l)(e) Spain's breathtaking wondermints. (Grimsey) 🐾

### Little My

"Paint That Tree! / National Park Style"

Much like their other stuff with a more country twang to it. What queer fishes, they are... (Silly Bird) 🐾

### Lost Goat

"Beware of Chupucabras"

I cannot begin to express how hard this rocks. Start your worship now, and maybe your life will be spared. (???) 🐾

### The Moon Seven Times

"Pre-Burnt"

While tugging a bit too hard on the heart strings, this is a powerful record that sweeps you off your feet up into the clouds. There is a powerful emptiness to it, that can easily amuse. (Parasol) 🐾

### Motorhome

"My Spaceman" / "Little Bird"

Very beautiful space rock with a silliness not seen in most. Good for watering your plants to. (Zero Hour) 🐾

### Mouse On Mars

"Cache Coeur Naif" / "Schnick-Schnack"

Devilishly buoyant, cosmically cartoonish colors from our alien friends. Laetitia and Mary of Stereolab top off the bubbling bouill-abaisse with sticky sweet sugar sighs. (Too Pure) 🐾

(Note: Thrill Jockey has just released the 12" and CD-EP version of this single with more tracks! Hooray!)

### Nerdy Girl

"Dime Store Hussy"

Although this is not as good as their full-length album *Twist Her*, it is still a solid dose of Cecil Seaskull's smart songs about dealing with boys and yachts. It is worth it, if only for the chaotic recording of Cecil breaking up with her boyfriend over the telephone, screaming "I'm not drunk, are you?" (No Life) 🐾

### Ninotchka

"I've Got Wings" / "Green Dream (Goodnight Scott Walker)"

Sensationally sensual pop that sounds a bit like Velocity Girl chirping Abba tunes. They'll be the wind beneath your wings as you soar over cloud 9, 10 and 23. (Grimsey) 🐾

### Will Oldham

"Patience"

Softly-strummed, half-mumbled confessions of love and longing. Why hide away in a Palace when you can stand on your own? (Drag City) 🐾

### The Pendulum Floors

"What Ever Happened To...?"

Two sisters who bought an Optigon Music Maker at a church thrift sale and recorded their intense, beautiful, sinister music in their bedroom with a Sony Walkman. Just about the most brilliant thing I have ever heard in my life... (Villa Villakula) 🐾

### Phantom Surfers

"Istanbul"

Delicious surf sound with a reto-global beat. On side A we rock in Constantinople, and twist in Tokyo on side B. (Lookout!) 🐾

### Refect Refect Society

"What's Your Defect?"

Like two frogs jamming on the porch. It's kind of groovy that way. (Kill Rock Stars) 🐾

### Shiva Speedway / The Cat Ion double 7"

Shiva Speedway is definitely the superior of these two bands. Very hard rocking girls that sound suspiciously like X. (Echostatic/Space Baby) 🐾

### Sixty Second Compilation

(featuring: Chris Cochrane, Don Caballero, Elliott Sharp, more)

### Second Sixty Second Compilation

(featuring: Borbetomagus, Godheadsilo, Ruins, Scissor Girls, more) Sharp, short-attention-span sonic structures slice, slash and slay. Don't delay, dawdle, diddle, or doodle you dunderheads! (Coat-Tail) 🐾



### Stereolab / Nurse With Wound

"Simple Headphone Mind" / "Trippin' With the Birds"

The 'Lab provides the goods while Nurse administers the cut 'n' paste punishment. Forty minutes of motorik, psychedelic heaven (think: early Kraftwerk) wonderfully wrapped in shiny foil. (Duophonic) 🐛

(Note: This is a limited release and available only through Rough Trade overseas. You can find out more by checking out their Web Site at [www.rough-trade.com](http://www.rough-trade.com) or writing to: Rough Trade Shop, 130 Talbot Road, London, W11 1JA, UK. Thank you)

### Syrup USA

"#3"

Well folks, this is the cat's pajamas when it comes to easygoing, gooey, sticky pop. Seana uses her Swirlies influence and Matt, from Azallia Snail and Sebadoh, plays the organ like it was an old friend.

(Tru Luv) 🐛

### Syrup USA

"Teen Death/Mysterious Dog"

This record is very sweet and thick, especially "Mysterious Dog" which is like flying through the thickest fog possible on ancient wings. I quivered a bit at the strange vibrations that emanated from my stereo.

(Tru Luv) 🐛

### The Vehicle Birth

"Limousine" / "Zero Work" / "Amsterdam"

Very low-fi, but quite nice, like slipping into a coma and waking up in a cold, dark basement where boys are screaming really loudly into old microphones that can't seem to stay on. I was surprised at how much I like it, the longer I played it...

(Lit) 🐛

v/a

"Stargirl EP"

This is a very intense record, jam-packed with amazing bands, including Led Byrd (Mary & Ash from Helium) and Kore. Very erotic and sad, like being eaten alive by dragonflies in a big marshy swamp.

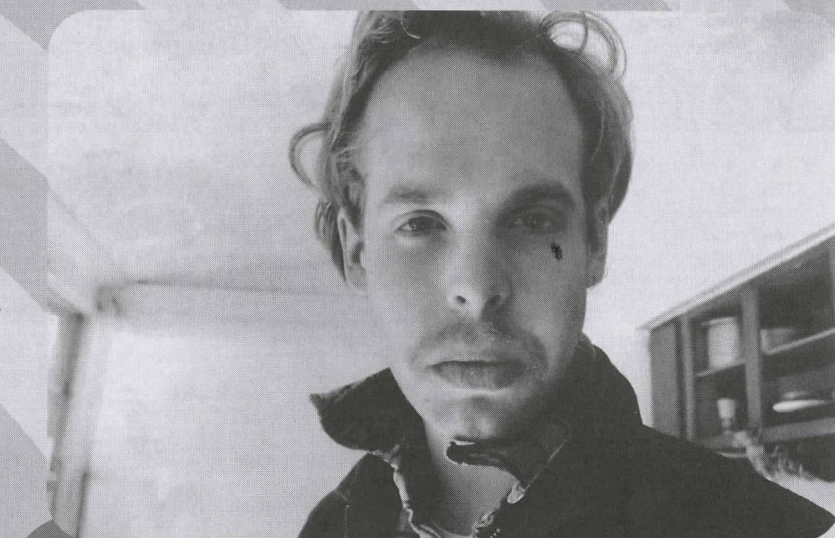
(Villa Villakula) 🐛

### Un Cuerpo Exquisito

"Te Quiere, Tu Amante Bilingue"

La Pussy Gata con todos los favoritos. Ella es fantastica!

(Villa Villakula) 🐛



Will Oldham (Palace)

Abduction Records, POB 9611, Seattle, WA 98109  
Alternative Tentacles, POB 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092  
Amphetamine Reptile Records, 2645 1st Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55408  
Angel Dust Records, POB 291534, Silverlake, CA 90029  
Arf! Arf! Records, POB 465, Middleborough, MA 02346  
Asphodel Records, POB 51, Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113  
Atavistic Records, POB 578266, Chicago, IL 60657-8266  
Autopia, POB 420541, San Francisco, CA 94142  
Big Cat Records, 67 Vestry #5C, New York, NY 10013  
Big Deal, POB #2072, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009-9998  
Big Pop Limited, POB 12870, Philadelphia, PA 19108  
Birdman Records, 1409 W. Magnolia, Burbank, CA 91506  
Boom Berneatha Records, POB 5873, Irvine, CA 92716  
Bubble Core Records, 250 Milton Road, Rye, NY 10580  
Cargo/Headhunter Records, 4901-906 Morena Blvd., San Diego, CA 92117-3432  
Caroline / Astralwerks / Gyroscope, 104 West 29th, New York, NY 10001  
Catapult Records, 215 A Street, 6th Floor, Boston, Massachusetts 02210  
Chainsaw Records, POB 42600, Portland, OR 97292  
China Records Limited, 2034 Broadway, Santa Monica, CA 90404  
Circumstantial Records, 408 W. St. Clair #318, Cleveland, OH 44113  
Cleopatra Records, 8726 S. Sepulveda Blvd. #D-82, Los Angeles, CA 90045  
Coat-Tail Records, POB 607032, Chicago, IL 60660  
The Communion Label, 2525 16th Street, 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103  
Crypt Records, 1409 West Magnolia, Burbank, CA 91506  
C/Z Records, 1407 East Madison #41, Seattle, WA 98122  
Daria Records, 625 Scott Street #301, San Francisco, CA 94117  
Derivative Records, POB 42031, Montreal, Quebec, H2W2T3, Canada  
Dionysus Records, POB 1975, Burbank, CA 91507  
Dirt Records, Knickerbocker Station, Box 1053, New York, NY 10002  
Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher Street NW, Washington, DC 20007  
Dog Day Records, 4432 Telegraph Avenue #72, Oakland, CA 94609  
Drag City Records, POB 476867, Chicago, IL 60647  
Duophonic Ultra High Frequency Disks, POB 3787, London SE22 9DZ  
Earmark Records, POB 23620, Minneapolis, MN 55423

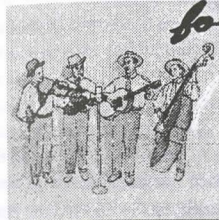
Echostatic / Space Baby, 2802 E. Madison, Suite 159, Seattle, WA 98112  
Eskimo Records, POB 361106, Los Angeles, CA 90036-9506  
Fat Possum Records, 1412 Pierce, Oxford, MS 38655  
Fat Wreck Chords, POB 460144, San Francisco, CA 94146  
Good Looking Records, 825 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10019  
Gourmandizer, 3010 Hennepin Ave. S, Cornucopia #154, Minneapolis, MN 55408  
Grass Entertainment, 72 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016  
Grimsey Records, PO Box 541, Stillwater, MN 55082  
Hardtail Records, POB 1616, San Pedro, CA 90733-1616  
Hefty Records, POB 597844, Chicago, IL 60659-7844  
Homestead Records, 150 W. 28th Street, Suite 501, New York, NY 10001  
In the Red Records, 2627 E. Strong Place, Anaheim, CA 92806  
Japan Overseas, 6-1-21 Ueshio Tennoji-Ku, Osaka 543, Japan  
K Records, POB 7154, Olympia, WA 98507  
Kill Rook Stars, 120 NorthEast State #418, Olympia, WA 98501  
King Turtle Productions, 821 California, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
Lampighter Records, 341 Lafayette Street # 585, New York, NY 10012  
Lit Records, 133 Peterborough Street #2, Boston, 02215  
Load Records, POB 35, Providence, RI, 02901  
Lookout Records, POB 11374, Berkeley, CA 94712  
Lost Goat, 2875 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94122  
March Records, POB 578396, Chicago, IL 60657  
Matador Records, 676 Broadway, New York, NY 10012  
Merge Records, POB 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
Minty Fresh Records, POB 577400, Chicago, IL 60657  
Nickelbag Records, 4470 Sunset Blvd. #205, Los Angeles, CA 90027  
No Life Records, POB 461778, Los Angeles, CA 90046  
No. 6 Records, POB #5037, New York, NY 10185  
Quarterstick Records, POB 25342, Chicago, IL 60625  
Paddlefoot, 186 Parmassus, San Francisco, CA 94117  
Parasol & Mud Records, 905 South Lynn Street, Urbana, IL 61801-5205  
Pop Narcotic Records, 1085 Commonwealth Ave. #339, Boston, MA 02215  
Repellent Records, 4742 42nd Ave. SW #616, Seattle, WA 98116  
Rhesus Records, 1124 Sutter, San Francisco, CA 94109

RoomTone Records, POB 747, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156  
Scamp Records, 114 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001  
Sealed Hotel Records, POB 603128, Providence, RI 02906  
Silly Bird Records, POB 14604, Berkeley, CA 94712  
Simple Machines, POB 10290, Arlington, VA 22210-1290  
Skin Graft Records, POB 257546, Chicago, IL 60625  
Slow River Records, 16 Nicholson St #1, Marblehead, MA 01945  
Sonic Unyon Records, POB 57347, Jackson Station, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
Southern Records, POB 25529, Chicago, IL 60625  
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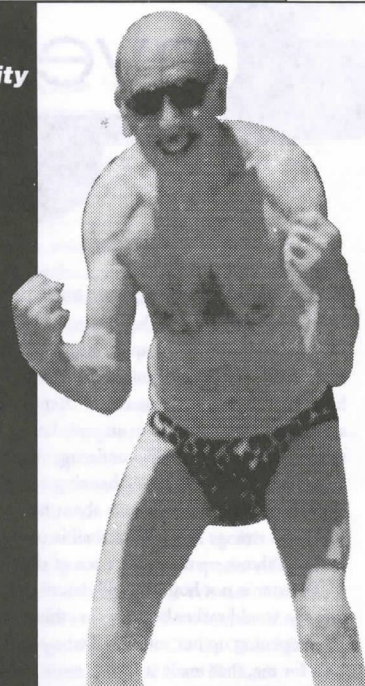
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# event reviews

## Cat Power

Bottom of the Hill – 1 October 1996

When I first heard Chan Marshall, who is Cat Power in its complete form, I was quite struck by her needy truthfulness. Her voice reached out of the stereo and pressed my heart eagerly, like she was an old friend telling me tales after a long journey. I wanted to sit with her, out on a rainy porch, telling stories and wondering at the world. Needless to say, I couldn't wait to see her sing and play those songs, live. The promotional packets about her promised an awkward and strange show: "Marshall isn't so comfortable with her own shows — nine out of ten of them are 'disasters.'"

Disaster is not how I would describe it. True, she seemed like she would rather be doing anything rather than be up there opening up her soul to all who cared to pay attention. But, for me, that made it all the more intense. Her pleading voice and shaking frame made me hold my breath and listen that much harder. Her soul shook and quivered right along with mine, and I easily entered her songs and felt everything they invoked in me. She barely ever stopped, instead running every song into each other, so that no one had a chance to clap. It made it sound like one long epic tale of pain and confusion in a life stranger than fiction. A modern story-teller giving us no moral, except to feel everything, especially the pain.

One of the most moving songs was "King Rides By" from her new album, *What Would The Community Think*. She started it so slowly and quietly and gradually built it up higher and higher until she was just about screaming at the top of her lungs, always using the microphone to her advantage, moving back and forth, so the calmness was never interrupted. As much as she seems to hate to perform, she is a master at it, making all her songs flow together in a haze of seriousness and intensity.

I couldn't tell you what other bands played after her, because they were just about non-existent, in comparison. Instead, I spent the rest of the evening studying cyber geeks on the patio that had an opinion about everything, and avoiding a boy I once knew. Cat Power's performance stayed with me and colored the rest of my night. I couldn't participate in the very mundane cyber-talks and just glimpsing the boy from my romantic past was like being stabbed with a thousand ice picks. Cat Power had ripped off my mask, and I couldn't shield myself from my true feelings. She made me want to scream at everyone around me, "speak the truth for once! Get over your sad showmanship and be REAL!" But that is a bit much to ask, I suppose, of anyone living in this jaded city, let alone hanging out in a nightclub.

After the show, Chan Marshall was almost bubbly, selling her CDs in the back. Not the shy girl on stage by any

means. When a person buying her new CD, asked her why she didn't stop while she was performing, she said, "I hate it when people clap at the end of a song. It almost feels like they are glad it is over." In a sense, she is right. Seeing Cat Power is not like a normal show, with the performers strutting around, making it a circus entertainment to watch. With Cat Power, it is quiet and intense, like sharing a secret with your best friend.

— *Tristy Taylor*

## El Vez @ Domain Chandon

My Own Personal Heartbreak Hotel

I guess the weirdest thing about the El Vez show was the nervous winery guy with the penciled-in goatee. There were a few scraps of bona fide chin hair, but for the most part it was a masterpiece sketched with a confident stroke and a thick, black eyeliner. Wielding his new role as assistant head cheese(ball), he cordially invited me to put my camera away immediately. As he squawked the no photography policy of the esteemed Domain Chandon winery, I silently asked him, "You silly little freak, what issue of *GQ* prompted your chin to take such a bold fashion step?"

The second weirdest thing was that El Vez was playing there in the first place. As the parking lot emptied of the workers' pickups, it was refilled with the BMWs and Mercedes of the crowd who had enjoyed the Vivaldi show so much the night before. Hey, we like Elvis! I thought back to my pal who had recently caught the Merry Mex-mas tour at Seattle's Crocodile Club. She said the place was filled with cocktail swigging hipsters and UW students, who I'm sure could pound out dissertations on the social implications of the reclamation of an American folk legend by a self-proclaimed "cross cultural caped crusader for truth, justice, and the Mexican American way." But this weren't no Seattle nightclub!

No, this was a winery, and the clientele was loaded. I wondered if these consumers of sixty dollar bottles of champagne deserved to be in the presence of the king. After ducking into the bathroom and being accosted by frosted mirrors covered with nudie ladies and wine (it's art!), the path to the lounge/wine bar led me straight through the gift shop. What a surprise, the gift shop was open, and staffed by the same Santa-hatted cuties who mingled through the lounge pouring champagne and wine. Does the Crocodile Club have a gift shop?

An hour before the show even started, the place was packed. Every table was taken, and every table boasted an ice bucket with champagne. They were also using that old trick of offering free salty pretzels to make you real thirsty. I wouldn't be fooled!

Right about this time, I got to meet Richard Miami, the puppeteer behind the show. I had spoken with him more times than necessary on the telephone during the past week, regarding the Domain's photography policy. The policy was ambivalently restrictive, and involved meeting with him two hours before the show at the wine bar "to scope things out." I told him I didn't need the photos that badly, but he seemed determined to bend the rules, just this once, and so he did. He also asked me which magazine I was from. I thought of telling him I was from *Wine Spectator* just to score some front row seats, but I could not tell a lie. I was hoping that Mr. Big Talker Miami would say he had heard of *Bunnyhop*, and that I could ask him how he had enjoyed reading "A Tale of Two Titties," but it didn't work out.

My dates for the evening were my super-hip mom and little brother, who were both jumping with glee when they heard that El Vez was in the building, so to speak. We were all looking forward to some cool, freaky fun, and speculative about what kind of party a place with limitless wine vats could throw. I've got to say, that even though we immediately began to scorn the crowd for their generous wine budgets, fancy cars, and glitter bitch fashion, I couldn't help feeling out of place, but, in a stupid way, was reassured by the fact that Mr. Moons Over My Hammy had been my phone friend.

Some friend he turned out to be. The first thing he did was kick our butts out of there, because after all it was a winery, and my poor brother, William, made the mistake of being under 21. Dick Myhammy was "very sorry" to have to ask us to leave, but there was just nothing he could do about it. I'm not one to gripe about the house rules, but I've been at much creepier drinking establishments which have found ways to accommodate all ages, and Richard looked pretty silly telling us his happy little wine bar was somehow a threat to my sixteen-year-old brother. My mom was unfazed, and stood there eating the free pretzels as we watched Richey-poo return to his command post by the stage.

The whole place had a grouchy feeling to it. I started to remember that old proverb about money not buying happiness, but was afraid that I might uncontrollably announce it to the room. Looking at the stage from the back of the room, I noticed a woman, the back of whose bubbly head apparently got flashed by my camera. She looked me in the eye, and in a stage whisper, commented to her friend, "That's not right, she took my photograph without asking my permission!" As if the backside of her blond bob was unique enough to be distinguished from the others which seemed to be everywhere.

She must have complained to Mr. Eyeliner goatee,



because he was the next to decide that I was causing some sort of huge disturbance. He started some monologue about policy, and I said thank you very much, but I've been booted out once already, and by the way, there's something on your chin...

Sorry, El Vez, you'll just have to wait. I'm sure we'll cross paths again some day. — *Jackie Hipkiss-Avery*

## November Quick Fix

Sometimes I just don't get out much, partially due to laziness, partially due to distance from all my friends clustered in other neighborhoods, partially due to Hale-Bopp. But the month of November 1996 was a rough and tumble time of year and we're not talkin' turkey, jerky. Here's a peek-a-boo of all the voo doo... November 2nd was the **Sleazy 'n Cheezy Post-Halloween Halloween Dance Party** hosted by the fine people at **Cosmic Apparel** and the residents of 201 Clara, with yours truly at the turntables and related audio gadgetry. As expected, hardly anyone dressed for the occasion (Note: T'was not my idea to have it after Halloween, thank you.) and there appeared to be an abundance of people who were too cool to shake their collective groove thangs. You must keep in mind that I was busy spinning a string of winners like "Xanadu", "White Horse", "Pac-Man Fever", "Freak-a-Zoid", and "99 Luftballons".

The best compliment of the evening came from **Glenn Donaldson** of *Mirza*, who, after inspecting my playlist and dealing with all the hullabaloo, asked, "What is this, some kind of wedding music?" I must say that **Jason Yakich**, **Alissa Mach**, and **Peggy Cheng**, (dressed as Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, and Supergirl respectively) were splendid, and **Ms. Kelina** and **Andrew Maxwell** were definitely in fine form that evening, dolled up like death angel UN Officials/Ebola virus consultants and handing out pamphlets that claimed, "The future needs heroes like the future needs us!" Once the beer was gone and the techno DJs took over, the party was more or less over... On November 7th, I was down in La La Land to witness the third wave of the Swedish Invasion with the lovely **Komeda** at Spaceland, whose infectious bossanova space pop stylings filled my heart with Kool-Aid punch. They appeared in all-white outfits (though not matching) and bopped around like your new cuckoos. What was most endearing about their performance was how they bowed to the clap-happy crowd in appreciation. More on this on the Web, so look for it... I despise the Fillmore, particularly that pony-tailed dweeb who stands at the top of the stairs greeting all the evening's patrons. But where else can you see **Johnny Cash** in the city? Certainly not at Epicenter or Brainwash, tough guy. On November 9th, Mr. Cash came into town with his patented black outfit, plucked his stings and gave the packed, hootin' and hollerin' crowd the 911 on the darker side of country music. I hafta admit, when I got to shake hands with the man, I noticed his skin color was flushed with a definite beet red. What's up with that?... November 10th promised to be a fine outing with **June of '44**, **Rex** and **A Minor Forest** doing their thang at the Kilowatt. Hot on the heels



**Andrew Maxwell and Ms. Kelina: official 1996 Sleazy-Cheezy pamphleteers**

of a very expensive packaging job with their Thrill Jockey debut, AMF did no wrong with their tight quiet/loud sound all those Chicagoans love so much. (Look for AMF's latest offering to the masses, *Flemish Altruism (Constituent Parts 1993-1996)*, at better record stores near you.) After them, **Rex** popped onstage and bored me to death, enough that I was more than content to stand outside in the cold until their racket was done for. But it was June of '44 who took top honors that night, comin' out swinging from start to finish like the heavyweight champions that they are. I was thoroughly amused that wiry, chicken-boy frontman **Jeff Mueller**, whose prominent Adam's apple can be seen from quite a distance, was so "Aw, shucks!" modest with the hi-fi rounds of applause from the crowd, clamoring for more. (see *Simone Sidwell's I ♥ Scorpios* zine for more on this) Please, no more guy-on-the-bandsaw next time around, okay?... On the 13th, **Palace Brothers** played at Bimbo's 365, which is a mere block away from *Bunnyhop* HQ. Sadly enough, I failed to attend. I was told that hand-holding indie rock couples could be seen in the front shedding tears of joy and sorrow for Pushkin's mustached musings... After a two-year hiatus, **Jon Spencer Blues Explosion** returned to the lime-light on the 19th with blues legend **R.L. Burnside** warming things up. **Ana Marie Cox** of *Suck* was next to me and pointed out all the silly boys with white-man's overbite, "immersing" themselves in the blues of Mr. Wizard and you can bet we had a good chuckle with that. **Spencer and Co.** kicked much booty, though the increasing presence of lame-o jock knuckleheads in the crowd does not bode too well on my person. And after a sort of ridiculous call-and-response duel with **Jon** and **R.L.**, local critic **Richie Garcia** asked me, "What was up with that high school rally bit?" Then, while

waiting for a ride home, **Miss Amanda Millet** of *Secret Nicole* zine had to embarrass me in front of others by commenting on my tight rock star pants. **Seth** and I eventually got a ride home thanks to my ol' boss **Marky Frisch-Carr** and friends. She gave me a can of *Geisha Fancy Smoked Baby Clams* (in cottonseed oil) and *Pepperidge Farm* table crackers as a post-house warming present, even though she knows I hate most mollusks... I don't really care for **Burger Joint's** burgers, but that's where I hooked up with **Jenny Gotwals** for the **Miss Murgatroid** performance at the Make Out Room on the 20th. While we waited for her to get with it, me and **Jenny** waited outside and took a ride on the musical frog for a mere 25¢! Fun was had, you bet. Then **Jaina A. Davis** of *Flatter!* zine popped by via taxi with Thai food in tow for **Miss Murgatroid**. At 8:45, **Miss Murgatroid** picked up her accordion and wowed the devoted few who came to see her. I liked the fact that the irony that had once plagued her music when I last saw her open up for **Combustible Edison** was gone. Her music speaks volumes, making me think of black & white **Wim Wenders** films, decaying buildings and the weight of the world snuffing you to death. And these are good things... On the 21st, I finally had the opportunity to check out local boys **Fuck** at **Bimbo's**, who taxi driver **Jason White** had been raving about for quite some time. I missed **Cars Get Crushed** and **A Minor Forest**, though, because I clumsily cut myself shaving and had to tend to open wounds. I don't suggest watching any episode of "Friends" or "The Single Guy" to pass the time, which is the doo doo I subjected myself to while the blood dried up. **Fuck**, on the hand, is good and all the dancing toys on stage agree. The covers of their single were yum, all unique and handcrafted. The backs of each cover displayed different black & white amateur porn scenes of this couple fucking, which makes me wonder how the band acquired them. Headliners **Chavez** also had interesting products, like the bubblegum machine **Chavez** football helmets. But products alone don't make up for a good performance and their emotionally disturbed histrionics just didn't ring with me... **Nicole** and I went to see the much anticipated **Chemical Brothers** gig at the Warfield on the 23rd. The Warfield is another venue that bugs, though I have seen several great performances there in my lifetime. I suppose my major hang-up about the place is swimming through a sea of adolescents sporting all the latest fashions, but people-watching on this occasion was a good thing. I wanted to give **Meat Beat Manifesto** another chance after witnessing a horrid performance weeks before, but they just kept on losing. The drummer on stage, whose surprisingly synthetic sound could just as soon be replaced by a drum machine, was the most annoying aspect, right up there with their lack of stage pizzazz. (Their last record is still worthy of your ears, though.) I was really there, of course, for the **Brothers** who tore the lid off the fuckin' roof. The din they created reminded me of **Bomb Squad-era Public Enemy**, urgent, passionate and worthy of wiggle, with a spectacular light show to boot. Truly impressive... Not-so-in-November notes: As of New Year's Day, I've discovered



Sanrio to be quite the hot-spot to meet future lovers. Also, the Swans final performance last January at the Great American Music Hall was HUGE. Absolutely gorgeous, stunningly visceral and possibly the best show for the rest of 1997. I was told, however, that this show was tame compared to their last show, but what would I know? I'm just a kid... Turntablist Alec Empire paid a visit to the fabulous Aquarius Records on a gray April afternoon, much to the delight of no-goodniks and jobless hacks with plenty of free time on their/our hands. Needless to say, the shit was LOUD and that gets gold foil stars from all of us. I was hoping to hear some of his quieter stuff as well, but I was denied. Curiously enough, there were several Asian celebrities there to witness Mr. Empire, namely Eric on vacation from *Giant Robot*, Miwa from Grand Royal, indie-filmmaker Jon Moritsugu and Lance of J-Church. Unfortunately, Windy Chien, owner of Aquarius Records, was away so she couldn't be part of the snapshot with us standing in front of her lovely store. Strange how all of us Asian kids didn't have cameras strapped to our persons... The good people at Starcleaners in the heart of the Mission put on yet another show for the entertainment hungry public, this time with the beautiful Mirza and others I failed to see. A local four-piece instrumental ensemble, Mirza continued where they left off, dazzling me with their hypnotically gorgeous sound structures that comfortably drift from minimally austere drips to ferocious waves of panic attacks. Trust me, you would be wise to look for their stuff, or at least write to them c/o Autopia, POB 420541, San Francisco, CA 94142... At the behest of Jessibella Güber Alles, I gave in to sin and watched "Ellen" for the "yep, I'm gay" episode with her friends Khris Brown, Matt Wood and Danny Colombo. Said event was at my pad and in appreciation, Khris brought over a fine chocolate cake, smoked salmon, champagne and chips and salsa. (I should have her over more often.) Danny brought over his Vac-Man for us to marvel over, but I imagine it should be sold at sex shops instead of toy stores. Even though Ellen Degeneres' revelation was no shocker, I did appreciate the prime-time outing for what it's worth. The show was as lame as I thought it'd be, but the dream sequence was well worth the price of admission. After that was over, much time was spent thumbing through copies of *Suburbia* zine and *Jimmy Corrigan* comics and talking about disgusting things for hours on end. Three days later, Khris and Matt got all fancypants and tied the knot on May 3rd. Congratulations, you cuckoos... Thanks for putting up with my babble. —Noël

## South by Southwest Music Conference '97

(or "Fun with Quintron")

After spending an exhausting few days amongst roomfuls of horny record industry folk at South by Southwest, I was a relieved to return to the world of the civilian, the groupie, to the universe of the fan rather than the critic. By Sunday, most of the media circus had jumped on jets and skeedaddled out of town, leaving all of Austin mine for the taking



The Quintron Crew (L to R):  
unidentified flying oddball, Mr. Quintron, Miss Pussycat  
photo Wendy Bryan

that night. I arrived at the Carousel to enjoy an evening at a place whose name alone promises an experience nothing short of goofy. It was empty except for four ladies seated firmly at the bar, suckling their Budweisers and telling jokes. I felt drawn to them, like it was my true calling to find permanent retirement on a barstool in Texas. Perhaps they sensed I was one of their kind because before I'd even eavesdropped the answer to, "How do you make an old lady say, 'Fuck'?" I was invited to join them at the bar.

The local gals had me entangled in a game of poker by the time Mr. Quintron arrived to set up his organ. He managed to charm the overboiled ladies with an exchange of a few bar tricks and more jokes, while his companion, Miss Pussycat, dolled herself up in a blonde wig and pink KraftFur bathing suit. An hour passed, we were belligerent and tipsy, and that's when the hipster invasion began. Stella, cocktail waitress by night, Avon rep by day and "Miss Vivacious" in '97 was the first to start grumbling about all the "weirdos" coming in.

The Quintron Revue began with a puppet show starring a short-eared rabbit with a high, synthesized voice who had been commanded by God (masterfully portrayed by Miss Pussycat's head) to build a spaceship. The bunny bounced around, recruiting a skunk, a tiger and an elephant to ride away with him. Eventually the little cardboard spaceship rode triumphantly across the sky, powered by a lit sparkler stickin' out of it's backside. Once the puppet show came to a close, Mr. Quintron took center stage at The Carousel with his organ while Miss Pussycat accompanied on maracas, cigarettes and nail polish.

Bobbie Jo was on a mission to verbally assault the musicians by screaming out, "You suck!!" after every single song. Bubbles and Martians and bunnies kept swirling past the circus murals until the locals were fed up with the invasion of their space and started to leave. They didn't understand why I chose to listen to a bunch of noisy kids rather than

join them in more poker down the street. They kissed me on the cheek before hopping into Bobbie Jo's El Camino, and advised me to steer clear of the freaks.

Bobbie Jo finally breaks the ice and summons me to hear the punchline for "How do you make an old lady say, 'Fuck'?". I hop right over and feel extra special, like maybe I can be a local at this place after all.

—Wendy Bryan

## Satisfact / Cars Get Crushed

The Chameleon — 17 October 1996

The dark, clown-fully decorated Chameleon is crawling with hipsters, all dolled up in this week's nouveau goth-mod trappings of indiedom. We sit enjoying a bowl of pretzels and a microbrew as the scenesters mingled, smoking and primping their patented Robert Smith ratnest hairdos. They're uncannily uniform, and gorgeous, if somehow intimidating; the rest of the more stoically-clad sit staring.

Oakland kids Cars Get Crushed creep onstage and plug in, plowing into their set of heavy, tangled post-rock. The two guitars unwind against each other at obtuse angles, while the bass and drums rumble onward solidly underneath; it's confusing trying to place them at first — they're equal and wonderful parts Olympia artifice, San Diego drive, and Brit shoegazer fuzz. There's math rock hiding in there somewhere, too, but it's woven into the catchy songs in a way that doesn't leave you adding up the time signatures. A clatter, a thump, and a whine spread through the tiny club, and the vocals rise to the pitch of the guitars, bleeding out over them. Moving through most of their two albums, they stop suddenly, leaving the unmoving faithful who're stuck to the front of the stage satiated.

Satisfact wear their synths pinned to their sleeves, right in time to lead a wave of bands who'll likely jump into reminiscing about their formative eighties experiences by committing lots of Duran Duran and Stephen 'Tin Tin' Duffy covers to eagerly consumed vinyl. The difference, as far as I'm concerned, is that Satisfact'll continue to do it better (and somehow, more sincerely) than the bands that will inevitably soon follow them. An Olympia supergroup of sorts (guitarist Matt is in Mocket, and drummer Jeremy keeps fine time with Modest Mouse), this is the last show of their national tour before heading back to the evergreen state — and they're totally on for the kids assembled, shooting a solid state synth sound straight out into the room. Their letter-perfect 80s pop songs plumb the keyboardy swooshes and down-low vocals of Joy Division, krautrock's herky-jerk machinations, and the fikka-fikka strumming of the Cure without faltering in the least. Dropping funky basslines while singing about calculator watches and get-



away cars is no easy task (see 'Escapism for the Future' from their *Unwanted Sounds Of* album), and threading in dreamy disses to perfect girls is an extra, if expected, benefit. Satisfact actually get the pomaded throng bouncing in the cramped club, and the hipster kids are right to shed their inhibitions under the Chameleon's Keene paintings just this once — an evening of canny, catchy, future-nostalgic pop songs: could we hope for any better? — *Ian Connelly*

## Defenestration

Installation and urban circus — 9 March 1997

San Francisco is not without its share of down-and-out neighborhoods. In an area south of Market St. along the notorious Sixth Street corridor, kids hopscotch between the drunks and the pushers. Resigned acceptance of such blight is the norm. Changing the ghetto is often seen as too difficult a task to attempt.

How does change start where solutions are discovered, discussed, and implemented? Change begins with awareness of the situation and the problems at hand, and a startling realization of the possibilities and solutions. Seeing the problems along Sixth Street is easy enough. Creating common understanding and visualization of the alternatives and solutions is hard, especially when the traditional problem solvers and local politicians are conspicuously absent.

Filling this gap, creating an alternative view, and showing that fresh approaches can be created is a large contingent of the San Francisco art scene led by Brian Goggin. Goggin's concept of "Defenestration" revolves around demonstrating alternatives to the accepted viewpoint and environment. Seeing the project as a projection of what is possible moves the viewer one step to a different frame of mind where possibilities exist.

The concept of "defenestration," a word literally meaning "to throw out of a window," is embodied by Goggin's site-specific installation. Sitting on the corner of 6th and Howard, a four story tenement—abandoned since the earthquake in 1989—observes the busy intersection. The building was known locally as an illegal shelter for the many neighborhood bums and addicts. Missing all of its windows and stripped of its wiring and gypsum board, the building is decrepit and ugly. Then Goggin and dozens of local artists went to work, using the building as a blank canvas. A few months later, the broken-down flophouse was transformed by sweat, creativity, and hard work into a monument of slanted angles and a unique viewpoint.

Approaching the building from the east along Howard Street, you first see the corner of the building with a yellow couch hanging out a fourth story window, its spine bent along its

midsection as if it were a caterpillar attempting to jump off a tree limb. Tables and chairs hang out of open windows and clamber down the walls on spindly, insect-like legs. A floating iron bed is caught launching through a window on its way to never-never land. A grandfather clock peers out a window, as if peering below to make sure the coast is clear. An old refrigerator with its door hanging open leans out precariously, or so it appears. All the items, in fact, are secured by non-obtrusive but highly sturdy bracing from within the building. The first story of the building is ringed by gaudy, brightly-colored paintings depicting fantastical freak-show characters.

If reality is defined by your surroundings, then the environment is the reality. And on the opening day of the Defenestration installation on a sunny March afternoon, the environment became all the more surreal with a gala urban circus featuring hundreds of colorful performers and thousands of assorted urban hipster attendees, all mingling on a closed-off section of Howard St.

The circus itself was a whirlwind of activity, with almost too many things happening around you to focus clearly on anything. Many performances were held right in the street, breaking down the pretense of separation between performer and audience. Gangs of mischievous Santa Clauses, clowns, and cockroaches wandered the grounds, occasionally fighting each other when they ran across each others' paths. A squat, burly man lifted a lawnmower over his head by balancing the handle in his mouth. A contortionist in red dazzled the audience with unbelievable feats of flexibility. Sideshow performers demonstrated their imperviousness to beds of nails and broken glass.



above  
Girl jumps rope on top of man lying on bed of nails. That's gotta hurt!

left  
John Law skirts down the side of the building during a performance at Defenestration

photos Maya Hayuk



The Defenestration site, Sixth & Howard St.

photo Seth

Meanwhile, above the crowd, the installation proved to be a vital element in the performances. A trapeze artist performed to the rapt attention of the crowd. A mock comic-book battle took place on the side of the building, with combatants crawling over fire escapes and netting hung off the side of the building, complete with people hanging out the windows who occasionally flashed comic-book signs that read "POW!" and "BAM!" A dark, bat-winged gargoyle watched silently above the fray.

Reaching through the mental, physical, and societal barriers are the performers, the local residents, the children, and all in attendance. Even though the urban circus was a one day event, the installation work is still there, reminding commuters who drive by the site every day that expectations were perhaps meant to be broken.

Society defines itself and reflects itself by the physical objects that it surrounds itself with. Inside the alternative plane that is Defenestration is the circus. The installation inspires the circus, and the circus reinforces the installation. Brian Goggin's Felliniesque 3(-D) ring street circus amused the neighborhood, bringing a much-needed ray of possibility into a

few of San Francisco's hardest blocks.

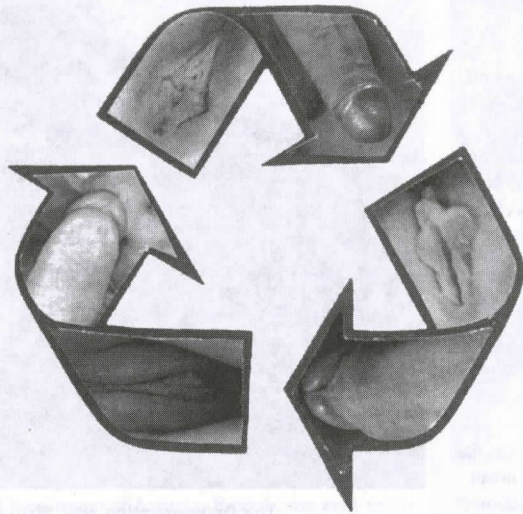
— Kevin Mathieu and Seth

*Defenestration will be in place through the end of 1997. 214 6th Street (@ Howard Street), San Francisco.*

*For more information, point and click at <http://www.defenestration.org/>*



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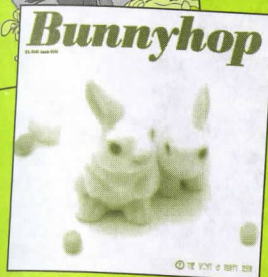
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Thank you (in no particular order): Our families and relatives, Sean Bokenkamp, Wendy Bryan, Nicole Armour, Jason Yakich, Jessica Gruner, John Phinney, Eiso Kawamoto, Michelle Richards, Molly Gallagher, Fritz Chesnut, Rob Reger, Cosmic, Bill Woodcock, James + Chandra Darla, Mark Holtz, Kim Hecht, Lorraine Mahru, Brian Brooks, Amelia Dalton, Dawn Hillis, Jenny Gotwals, Angie Blake, Kathryn Hayley, Ms. Kelina, Trismegista Taylor, Peggy Cheng, Jennifer + Brian Brannon, Lisa McElroy, Alana Kumbier, Callie Janoff, Kim Gasuad, Shamira Gratch, Kevin Mathieu, Robert Lord, Peter Becker, Sara Brucker, Ian Connelly, Adam Connelly, Joey Anuff, Sia Michel, Jack Boulware, V. Vale, Serena Herr, Ana Marie Cox, *Suck*, Nathalie Roland, Jennifer Fisher, Wella Lasola, Maya Hayuk, Scott Hamrah, Darby, Lisa Anne Auerbach, Jaina A. Davis, Sean Tejaratchi, Michele Vlasimsky, Carleton Curtis, Joshua Glenn, Jeff Hansen, Chip Rowe, Debi Bensiger, Brandon Spoons, Marny Spoons, Jenne Patrick, Marky & Aaron, Jackie Hipkiss-Avery, Jake Avery, B. Douglas Robbins, Jacob Estes, Jennifer Urban, Jason White, Billy Calienté, Jenny Smith, Merril Feitell, Catherine Tyc, Steve Smith, Brian Lucas, Kristine Poiser, Kerry McLaughlin, Shari Gordon, Matt Lynch, Lisa Mayer, Glenn Donaldson, Chris Aysta, Shanna, Guy, Stacey, Hooshy, Jamie Peterson, Peter + City Lights Books, Comic Relief, Naked Eye, Farley's, Leather Tongue, Cody's Books, Jeff Grimes, Jocko Weyland, Jeff Fox, Dave McGurgan, Jeff Kelly, Larry Disorder, Vaughn, Golden Apple Comics, Mark @ Foundation, Amok Books, Ken Oatman and family, Emo's, Patrick + Fringeware, *Kulture*, Johanna Burke, Sherman + Shangri-La Records, Barrister's, Christa Donner, Luna Lounge, Pink Pony, Jessica Hundley, Andy Hunter, *Mommy and I Are One*, Vaginal Creme Davis, Jacque's, James Stockstill, Urban Outfitters (sorry!), Peter + Dreamhaven Books, *Baby Split Bowling*, Scott & Sarah @ Atomic Books, Al Hoff, Steve Svymbersky (sp?) + Quimby's Queer Bookstore, Ed + Co. @ the *Lumpen* Lean-to, Jon Skuldt, Scott + Fuel Cafe, Robin Mullins, Meghan @ Empty Records, Vox Populi, Crocodile, Tammy Watson, Chris & Erik @ Fantagraphics, Daniel House @ C/Z, Jim Blanchard, Julie Wilson, Curt & Tammy, Chloe Frenzy, Heidi + Natascha @ Air Wair, Ryder + Green Noise Records, Tom + Ellen @ Big Top, Gihan Salem, Steven Martin, David Greenberger, Deborah Orr, Carrie McLaren, Bettina Richards, Khris Brown, Amedee Ito, Matt Wood, Allison Tarnofsky, Motormouth Meteorites, Bob Mack, *Grand Royal*, Renée Kische, Cece Stelljes, Geoff Cox, Cynthia Connelly, Alicia Rose, Chank Diesel, Miwa Okumura, KBLT, Jessica Hopper, Sean Tillman, Meri Brin, Mirza, Dale Flattum, A Minor Forest, WIN Records, SÄHKÖ, Kathy Keeley, Autotonic, Amoeba Records, Daniel Clowes, Adrian Tomine, Libby Lampert, Long Gone John, Molly & Chris @ Lookout!, Mike Anderson, Kranky, Jessamine, Susan Robb, Fuck, George Kuchar, Katherine Dunn, Dame Darcy, Ed Hall, Man...or Astroman?, Komeda, Gene @ Drag City, 24 Promotions, Evan Cohen, Barbara Mitchell, Alissa Mach, Wayno, Paul Lukas, John Marr, Girlie Action, David Cronenberg, Adam Parfrey, Ron @ Last Gasp, Mr. Twister, Cindy Ragin, Dan Young, Mari Kono, Christine Shields, Amy Davis, Jon Moritsugu, Robin Davies, Letty DNA, 201 Clara, Windy + the fine Aquarius Records staff, Portofino Italian Style Ice Cream, Sanrio, our beautiful advertisers, everyone who has sent us something, and all of our fancypants readers. Congratulations, Sean Bokenkamp.



# Bunnyhop Products...



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In a former life, we were known as **Waffle**. There are no back issues left except for **Waffle #3**: Beastie Boys, Bomb, Breeders, boobs, Erik Estrada, Making Love To A Man

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**Bunnyhop #5**: The "Geeks vs. Jocks" yearbook issue starring Mister Rogers, Pavement, Daniel Clowes, Kerri Kenney, Combustible Edison, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Anthony Michael Hall, death rockers, and Snapple's Detention Boy (DESTROYED!). **Bunnyhop #6**: "The Normal Issue" includes Esquivell, Steel Pole Bath Tub, Mentos, chickens, Lisa Carver & Boyd Rice, Gary Young,

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\*Please, if you simply cannot make deadlines (read: flakey) or possess an ego much too sensitive for editorial advice, don't bother door-bell ditching, okay?

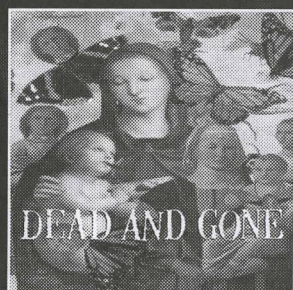


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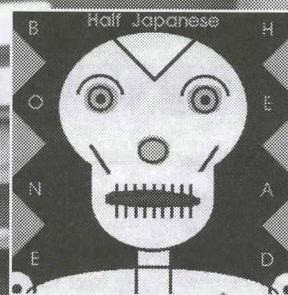
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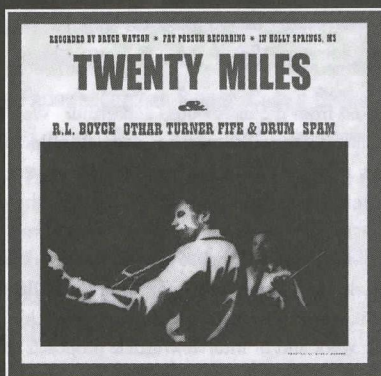
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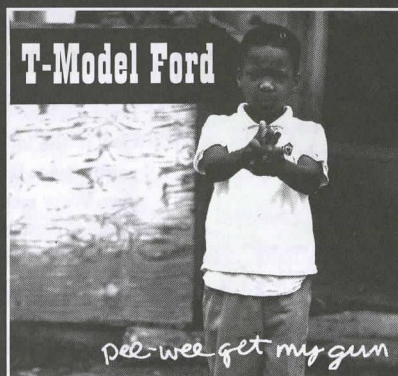
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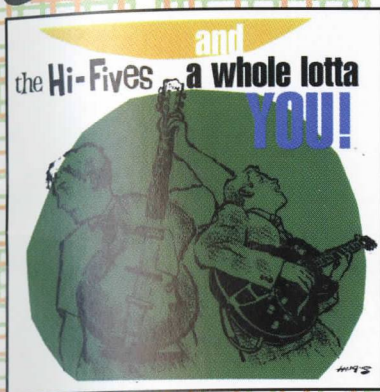
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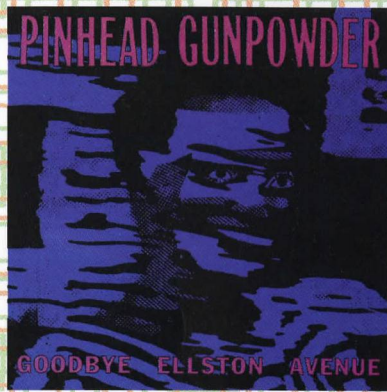


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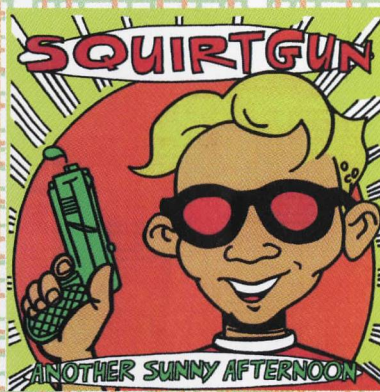
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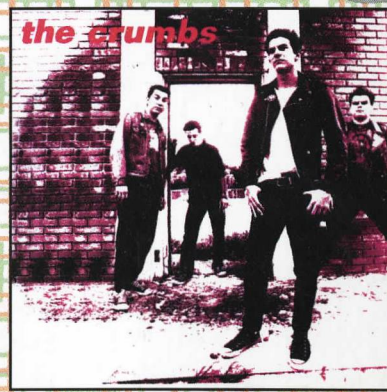
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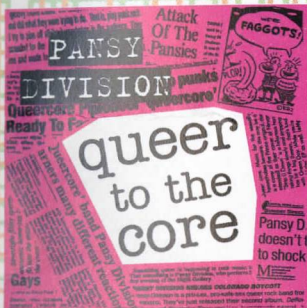
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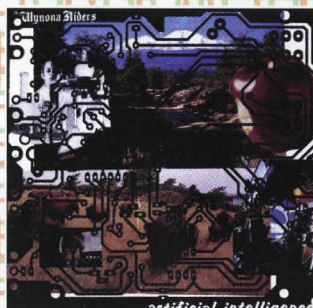
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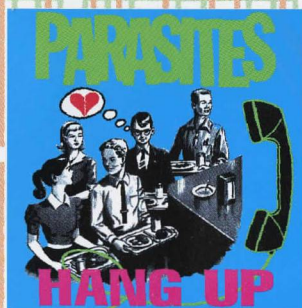
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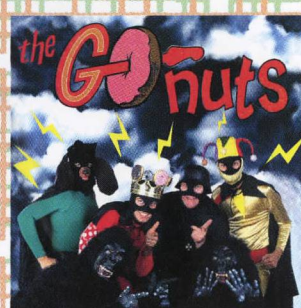
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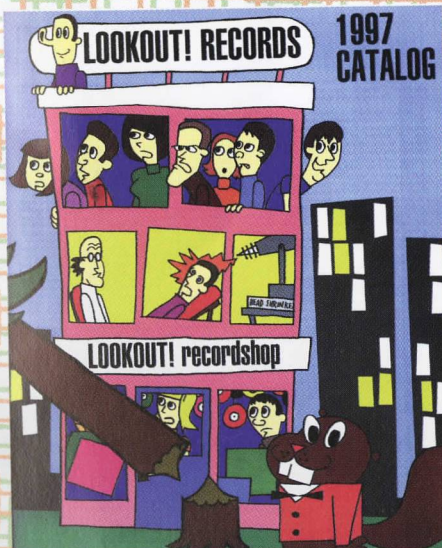


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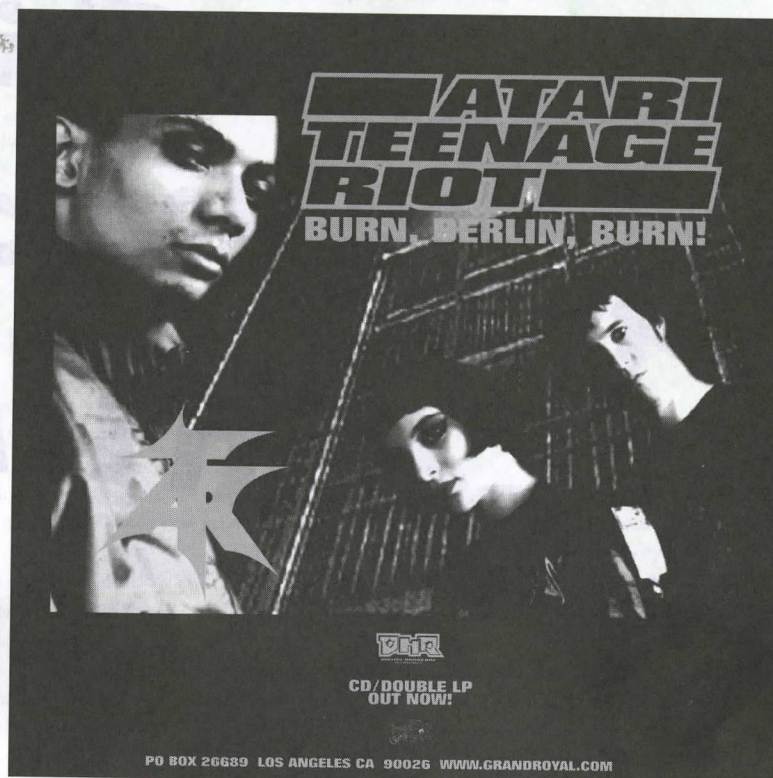
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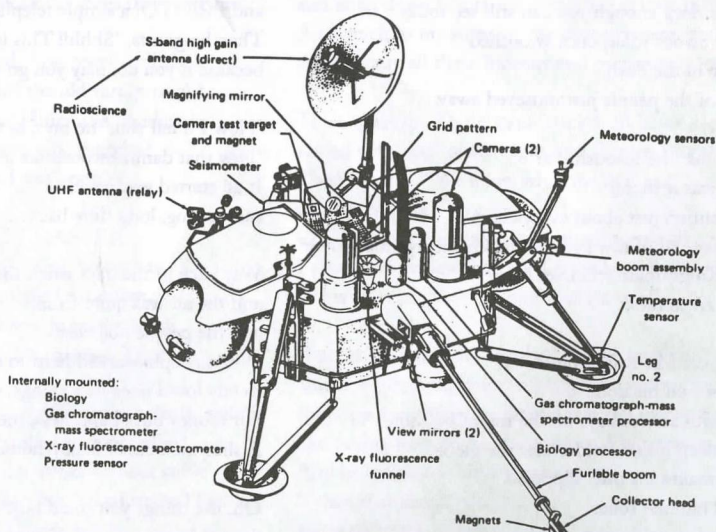


Figure 4. External features (schematic) of the Viking lander.