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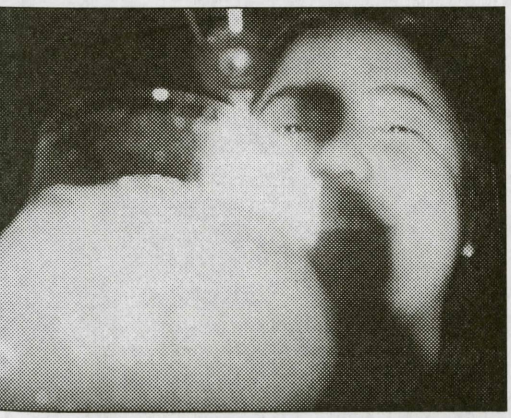

DRINK DEEP P.34

PP37

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the risks

INTRO

One of the hardest things about editing articles is figuring out when to put them to bed. It's especially hard when you're putting out a magazine that only comes out every two months—no matter what, you're dated. But at some point in the production cycle, you have to say "We can't rewrite anymore, new information be damned." Usually, the big news that you're covering has already happened, and the only thing still to come out are small details, so you're more or less safe. That isn't the case for this issue's three cover stories.

Since deciding that we couldn't add anymore information to Kari Lydersen's excellent article "War in the Streets," two more unarmed black men were killed by police in New York City and a homeless man armed with a fork was shot to death in Chicago. We couldn't hold the article to include their stories and for that, I'm sorry. But the reality is, if we were to wait until there no more deaths at the hands of police, "War in the Streets" would never run. These latest tragic deaths are part of a seemingly never-ending path of bodies left laying by the police.

In the last 10 years, 2,000 people have been shot, beaten or pepper sprayed to death by the police. Very few of their stories get the kind of coverage that Amadou Diallo's killing received—most go unnoticed after a brief mention in local news. Diallo's killing, along with the recent shooting death of LaTanya Haggerty in Chicago, received much more media attention thanks to pressure put on the media and the police by people like yourself. Standing by silently is no longer an option—make your voices heard.

One place where people have found their voices is in California, where organizing around Proposition 21, which among other things allows prosecutors to try kids as young as 14 as adults, brought youth all over the state into the streets. While the measure unfortunately passed, the lessons learned about youth organizing and the power of protest will be felt for many years to come. Robin Templeton's "No Power Like the Youth," the second story in our three-piece cover story, documents the struggles in California.

The sunshine state is also the launching pad for Christian Parenti's "Crisis and Control: the Prison Industrial Complex," the final part of our cover series "Crime and Punishment 2000." Parenti takes a look at the growing prison system in California and across the US, and paints a bleak picture of money, power and classism.

It's not all bleak in this issue, however. There are a number of inspiring interviews, a look at the US presidential election process (not as bleak as it sounds), and an article that brings hope that the recording industry will self-destruct out of its own greed. So some things are looking up.

Please enjoy this issue as much as we did putting it together. Our cover stories paint a harsh reality, but sometimes reality is exactly that. Let them inspire you to find your voice and call for a more just society.

See you in the streets,

DAN

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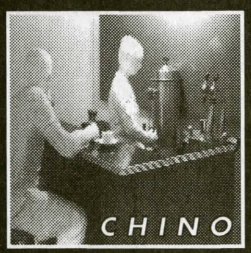

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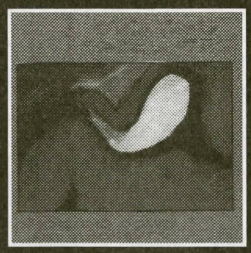

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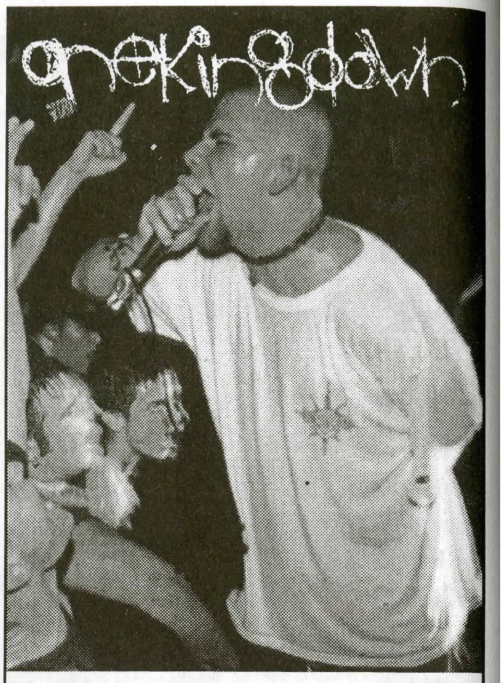

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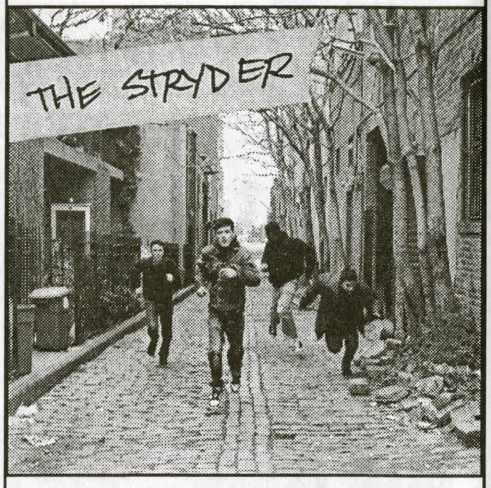

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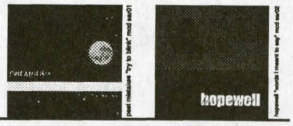

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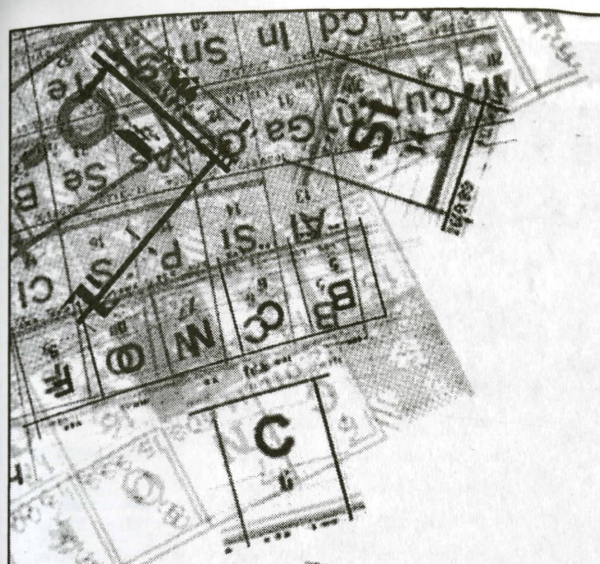

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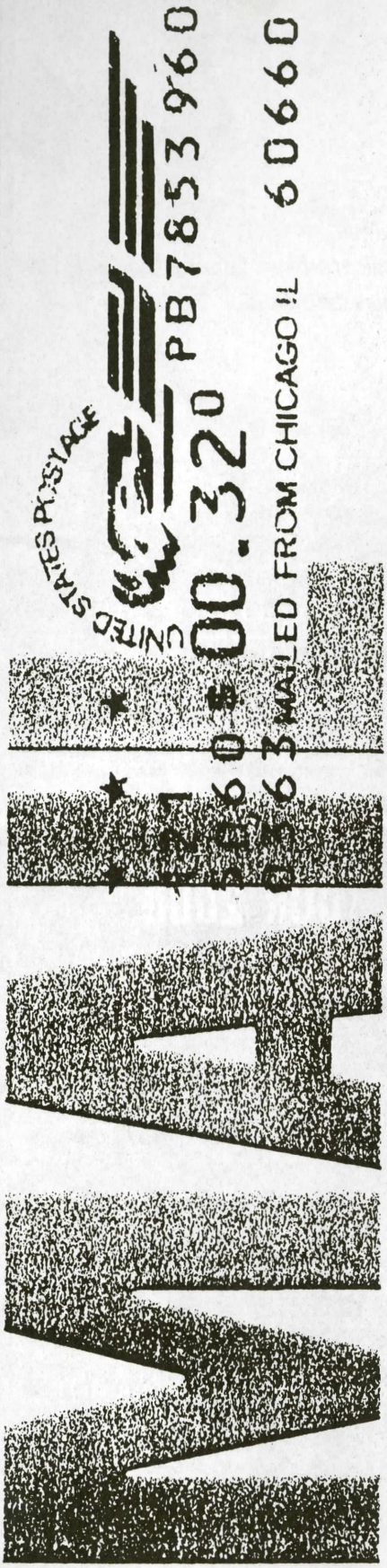

More Information Needed.

Dear PP,

I have a big problem regarding your policy on not publishing contact information alongside your interviews and articles, as outlined last issue [Mail, PP36]. I can understand completely your wish not to appear to be a marketing vehicle for the people and bands that you cover, however there are other, far more important, issues which come into play in this area. Firstly, you must realize that for many people, *Punk Planet* is a very important resource for independent activities. This may not always be the case in North America, but for a large proportion of your readers in the rest of the world, a large, well-distributed independent magazine such as *PP* is an invaluable tool in discovering bands, writers, activities, etc. Intriguing fanzine interviews and articles compel people to search out a band's record, to write to like-minded people, to book shows, and to foster relationships.

Let me give you an example. A number of years ago I picked up a free newsletter-style 'zine (a freesheet) in a local record shop. It was through its reviews and interviews that I first learned about the existence of an underground music scene in the city where I live. It was only because of the fact that addresses of local bands and distro's were published, that I was able to send away for demo's and records of the bands I'd read about, and copies of other fanzines. When the records came back, flyers for other zines, releases, and most importantly, for upcoming gigs were included. Since then I haven't looked back. If I hadn't been able to contact the bands and people that piqued my interest in those initial few 'zines, I would have been stumped as to where to go next, and chances are, would have forgotten all about it in a couple of weeks. By not publishing addresses for the bands you interview, you elevate them onto a higher level than your readers, than the people who go to their shows and buy their records. You give the impression that these people are too important to be contacted directly by Johnny Punk on the street. For me, that has always been one of the crucial distinctions between the mainstream and underground music press. Fanzines encourage communication and community, while *Rolling Stone* and *Spin* create Rock Stars.

Punk Planet carries a barcode and is distributed through Tower. Why? Presumably to reach a wider amount of people than would otherwise have been possible, to open a window into the underground for all those who have no idea that it exists. Don't throw up a brick wall at their first entrance point, and don't continually frustrate those who wish to get more information about the people and subjects you cover.

Yours,

Damien Connell
Dublin, Ireland
thon@gofree.indigo.ie

Damien–

You raise a lot of good points in your letter. Unfortunately, glancing through this issue, you won't see much of an improvement, as your letter came in too late in this production cycle. However, I hope to include a new feature in our next issue that will be a page for further information. The contact info you're looking for still won't be at the bottom of an interview, but it *will* be on the info page. The page will also be a section where we can put recommended books/resources for more information on articles we run, and a basic clearinghouse for information and ideas related to that issue. Thanks for the criticism and I hope you like the changes come next issue.

Dan Sinker

Don't just sit there and read, write us a letter! We want your opinions, your ideas, your hopes and dreams. Hook us up and get writing.

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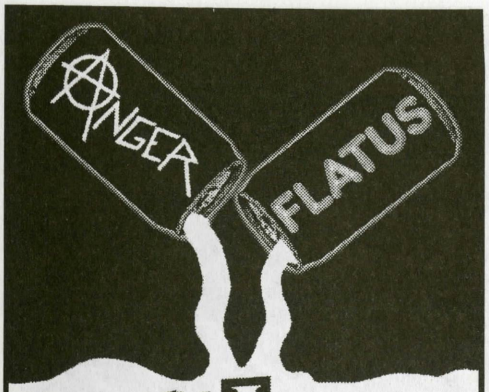

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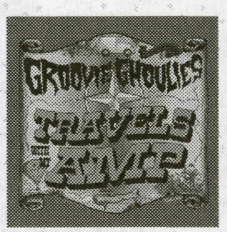

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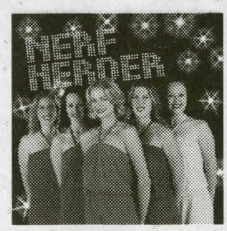

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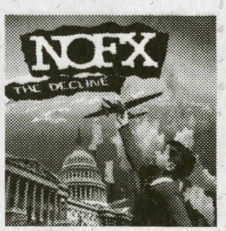

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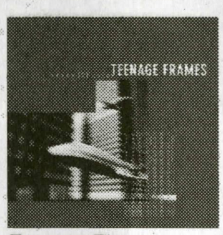

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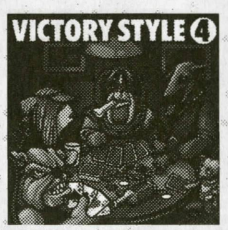

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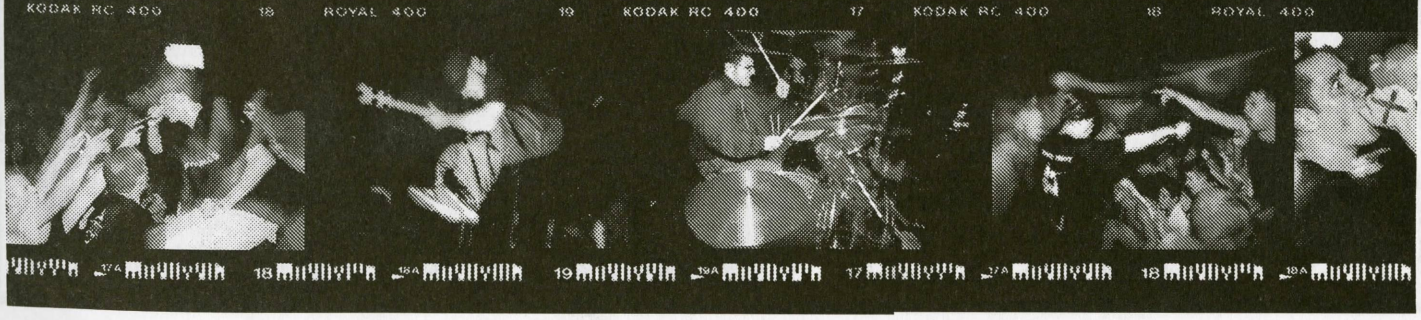

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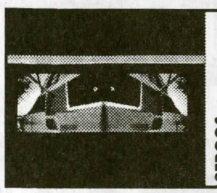

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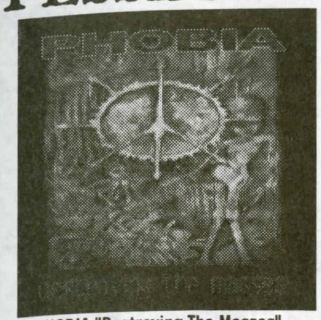

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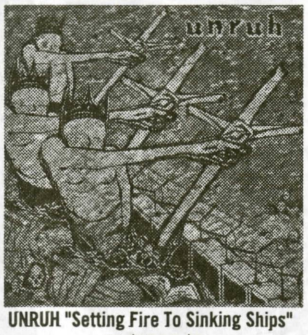

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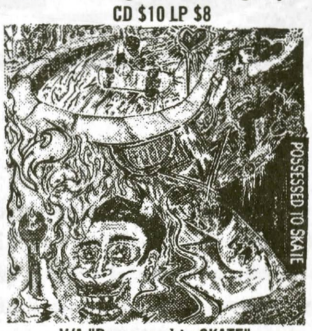

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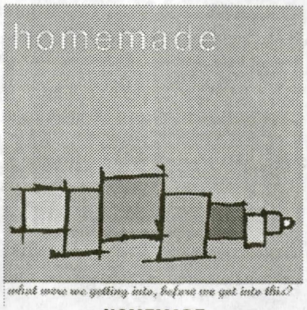

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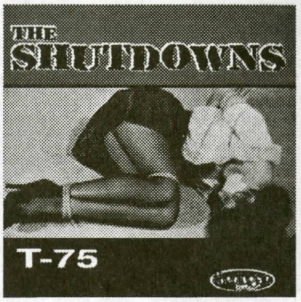

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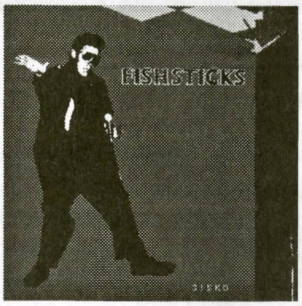

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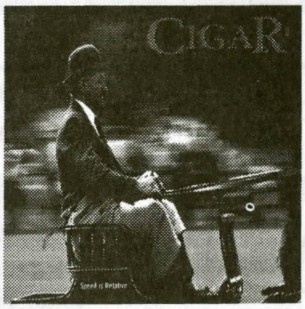

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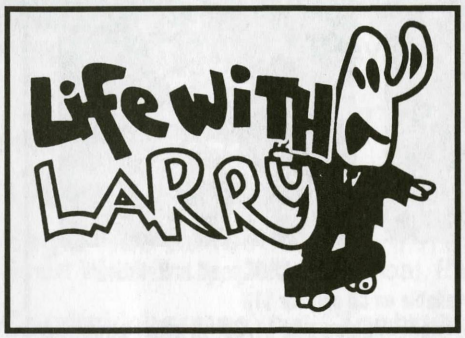


Death to the '70s

I finally got to see *Summer Of Sam* the other day—the bloody-minded American corporations who have a stranglehold on the English film distribution network often don't let us see new films until six months or a year after they come out in the States - and when I got home, I found that *Sid And Nancy* was being shown on TV, so I stayed up and watched that, too, even though I'd seen it before.

Sid And Nancy was still a crappy film about crappy people, but I quite enjoyed *Summer Of Sam* (may I be the first to suggest an Academy Award nomination for the makeup artist who succeeded in making George Tabb look almost human?). But the overwhelming effect of both films was to remind me of life in the late 1970s, or, more specifically, to remind me of just how shitty it was. Not necessarily for me personally; I had a lot of good times in the '70s. It was the decade that delivered on many of the hedonistic promises of the 1960s: sex, drugs and rock and roll in abundance. Even disco, waterbeds, polyester flares and "swingers' clubs" can be recalled with only vague distaste if you bear in mind that every era has its quaint and bizarre aspects.

But what was really wrong with the '70s lurks constantly in the background of *Summer Of Sam*: for most Americans (the same was even more true in Britain), the basic structures that make society and civilization possible were falling to bits. Electrical blackouts, garbage strikes, rising crime, racial balkanization: everywhere you looked, it felt like the Sex Pistols were right on the money to sing about "No Future."

It was on that feeling that Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher rode to power. While punks, radicals and various millenarians reveled in the prospect of ever-mounting chaos, most people were frustrated and scared, ready to hand their futures over to anyone who promised to re-introduce an element of stability and security into public life.

In addition to launching the careers of innumerable political punk bands, Reagan and Thatcher presided over a massive restructuring of politics and the economy. Today, many consider them the bastard offspring of Hitler or the saviors of Western civilization.

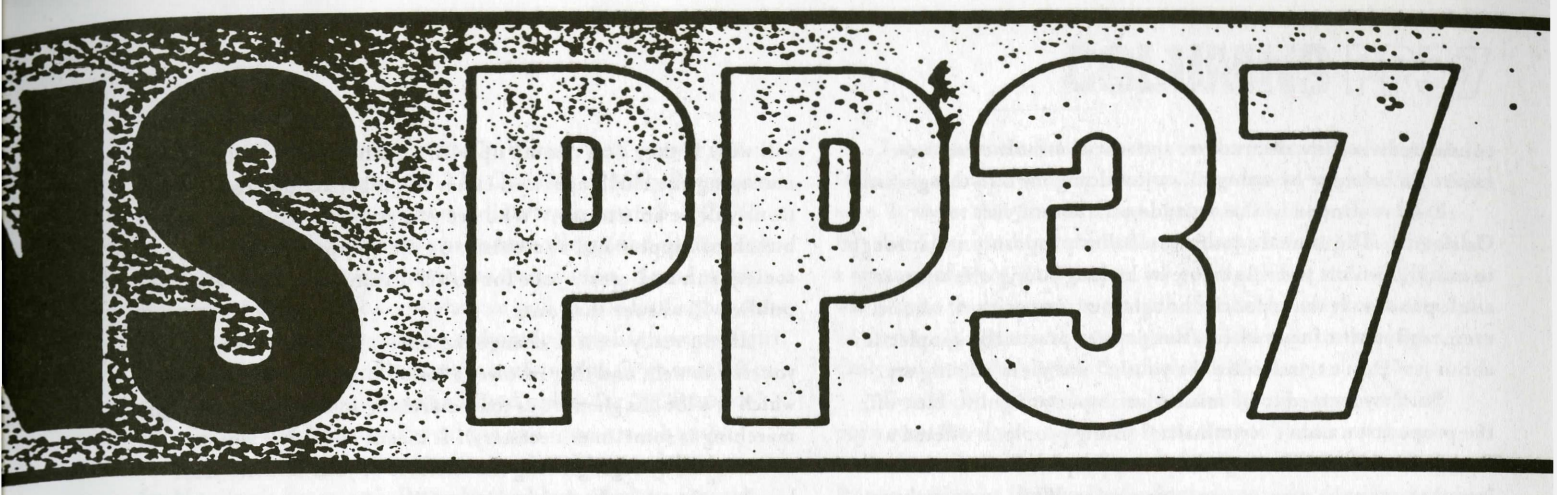
Regardless of how you feel about them (no prizes for guessing the reaction of this magazine's readers), Reagan and Thatcher were the almost inevitable result of the '70s. There was a political vacuum—what was left of the '60s protest movement had splintered into ever tinier factions, some of which were genuine nutcases like Weatherman or the SLA, and more mainstream liberals were in full retreat, reduced to supporting the likes of Jimmy Carter—and there was a palpable sense that the left had proven itself completely incapable of leading or governing.

Perhaps even more important than the political vacuum was the social vacuum, the feeling that everything that once held people together as a society was vanishing or falling apart. This wasn't entirely a bad thing, or at least it didn't start out as one. The '60s were all about questioning and challenging traditional values, and some of those traditional values—segregation, the subjugation of women, the stifling of non-conformity and dissent, for example—not only needed to be challenged, they had to be eliminated.

Unfortunately, as old institutions fell away, they were not replaced by new, more healthy ones. Instead, there was a general rebellion against institutions of any kind, an almost anarchistic sense that if anything could be remotely connected to "the system," it needed to be disregarded or destroyed.

To those of us coming of age in the '60s and '70s, "the system" was not only fatally flawed, it was obviously doomed. We were so sure that the whole thing would soon be coming down that we assumed we could just give it a few kicks and then head off to pursue our own interests and desires. When the system proved to be far more resilient than we had imagined possible, when it began to reconstruct and restructure itself in the '80s and '90s, many of us were left out in the cold. Having been unable to see a future, we left it in the hands of the Reagans and Thatchers and those they served.

And not much seems to have changed. Today's radicals seem



intent on living out a textbook definition of a crazy person: performing the same action over and over and expecting a different result. Instead of reasoning, "Well, geez, a lot of that stuff we tried back in the '60s and '70s just didn't work out very well, so maybe we'd better look for something new," the predominant thinking seems to be, "If only we could get back to the spirit of the '60s and '70s, then we could really accomplish something."

Such were the thoughts going through my head as I read a recent issue of *The Baffler*, a book-like magazine that came highly recommended. The issue's theme was "backlash," i.e., the cultural, political and social retrenchment that marked the latter decades of the 20th century, and involved a lot of people blaming all of society's ills on the excesses of the 1960s.

The Baffler is elegantly and eloquently written. Its contributors are almost uniformly brilliant and well-informed, and it makes for fascinating reading. Through nearly all the articles, however, there was a distinct whiff of nostalgia for the good old days, and a stubborn refusal to recognize that the good old days might not have been quite so great after all.

I know the feeling. Like many veterans of the hippie era, I spent much of the '70s moaning over the fact that it wasn't the '60s anymore. What I didn't understand then was that the '70s, in all its bloated awfulness, were the logical result of the illogical '60s.

Whether you're talking about the social revolution of the hippies or the political revolution of the New Left, there was a self-destructive dichotomy from the start. On one hand you had the idealistic lovers of humanity who were convinced that through cooperative effort we could make a better world for everybody. On the other, you had self-absorbed, angst-ridden misanthropes who blamed every failing in their own lives on the machinations of society and "the system."

Since some of you will undoubtedly ask, I was probably a bit of both. So was the whole movement, for that matter. Its biggest problem was that it wasn't was equipped to deal with reality outside of its own private and incestuous universe.

It's no coincidence that the '70s became known as the "Me Decade." Though the '60s are remembered as a communal era, there was always a heavily solipsistic element. When it became obvious that society wasn't going to immediately reshape itself to suit the visions of a few hundred thousand starry-eyed young people, those young people quickly splintered off in different directions. Some went off to build bombs and rob banks, some went off to meditate and find their navels, and the vast majority went back home and got jobs.

But nearly all of them took with them a different sense of self. If the '60s represented America's hyperactive adolescence, the '70s marked its awkward transition into young adulthood, tempered by the awful realization that mommy and daddy weren't going to pay our way anymore.

Oh well, we rationalized, if the revolution had failed to materialize, at least we could get high and have a lot of sex. The bills from the Vietnam War came due, the oil started running out, the economy went kablooey, and our reaction was to party harder. The dwindling number of leftists veered off into ever more quixotic directions, mostly involving mindless terrorism or equally mindless identity politics. The right wing saw its chance and took it.

Today's minuscule leftist movement loves to blame all our recent ills on the clampdown of the Reagan and Thatcher eras, but America and Britain's rightward drift can be just as easily blamed on the failure of the left. And it wasn't just a political failure; more importantly, it was a cultural one.

The enormous increase in anti-social behavior—everything from violent crime to vandalism and littering to begging and sleeping on the streets to hulking young men refusing to offer their seats on the bus to crippled old ladies—played right into the hands of reactionary, "law and order" politicians. But while the left would have you believe that such behavior is an understandable reaction to a failing economy and institutional racism, that's only part of the story.

Crime and other anti-social behavior began to increase in the '60s, when the economy was still healthy and great progress was being made in civil rights. A great deal of it was due to cultural changes rather than economic ones. Where once there was a consensus that certain things just weren't tolerable in a civilized society, many of us began to feel that it wasn't our place to judge other people. "Nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted," went one popular slogan. The guy who a few years earlier would have been

considered a selfish, destructive, anti-social asshole could now excuse his behavior by saying, "I'm just doing my own thing, man."

I was reminded of that attitude on a recent visit to California. The issue du jour was a ballot proposition that sought to crack down on juvenile crime by locking young offenders in adult prisons. It was a poorly thought out proposition, idiotic, even, and most of my radical friends were practically apoplectic about it. "Don't criminalize the youth," was their rallying cry.

But they seemed to be missing an important point. First off, the proposition didn't "criminalize" young people, it offered a new, harsher way of dealing with young people who had criminalized themselves by, um, committing crimes. While it was right to oppose Proposition 21 for being inflexible and vengeful, what none of the radicals were offering was a more constructive, more humane way of dealing with the very real problem of juvenile crime.

"Oh, it's not as bad as it used to be," they offer, or, "Given the injustices in society, we just have to expect that there will be crime." But try selling that viewpoint to the average American, the one who votes, the one who thinks he or she ought to be able to walk the streets without getting beat up or shot at.

While some radicals think we should be willing to put up with a certain amount of disorder (and others positively welcome it, because they think it will hasten the arrival of "the revolution"), they're a tiny minority. I don't think Americans as a whole are nasty people, and I don't think they're proud of the fact that we lock up more of our citizens than any other country in the world. But at the same time, they're entitled to expect something to be done about a crime rate that is one of the world's highest.

So, they're faced with a choice: either grin and bear it, or vote for extremist politicians who promise to lock up everyone who looks at them sideways. There in a nutshell you have the bankruptcy of the left: still wedded to the "let it all hang out" libertarianism of the '60s, they become ever more isolated from millions of potential supporters who have supported progressive causes in the past and would again if there was indeed anything progressive about them.

Unfortunately, the "progressive" movement in recent years could more properly be called reactionary. Instead of proposing, it protests. Instead of building bridges, it tells us we should learn to be happy staying on our side of the river. Instead of questioning itself, it clings to traditional beliefs with the same dogged tenacity that fundamentalist Christians cling to theirs.

It's hard to believe that there was once a time when leftism and socialism and anarchism were about proposing new solutions, new ways of organizing society. In recent years they've been primarily about saying "No" to anything that deviates even slightly from their time-honored catechism.

Yes, they'll have occasional victories, even if those "victories" involve little more than playing speed bump to the right wing juggernaut. Yes, they'll probably succeed in stopping Proposition 21, and yes, they inconvenienced the WTO for a day or two in Seattle. But if they don't come up with a better, more humane way of reducing crime, there will be more propositions, perhaps even more extreme, and some of them will win. If they don't come up with a reality-based method for managing the challenges and crises of globalization, corporations will be able to say, "Who are you going to listen to, a bunch of hippies and anarchists, or the companies who make society run and create jobs for you?" I think you know how the public will answer that one.

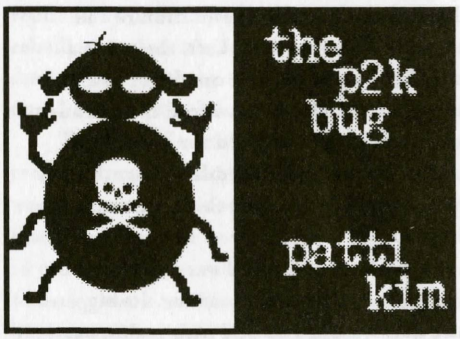
If you really want to change the world, it means changing yourself as well, and that involves a lot of long, hard work, work which is a lot less glamorous than marching in the streets (though marching is sometimes necessary). It means educating yourself, and not just by regurgitating the rhetoric of your favorite crust band or '60s throwbacks like Noam Chomsky.

It also means learning about politics and economics and culture from a variety of viewpoints. It never ceases to amaze me how supposedly open-minded people won't even look at an argument that deviates from what they think they already "know." It's like the Christians who won't read anything criticizing the Bible because it's "the work of the devil."

The greatest legacy of the '60s was its idealism and openness; its worst legacy was a rampant anti-intellectualism that too often substituted emotion and passion for reason and thought. Today in some ways, we're left with the worst of two worlds: the consumerism and conformity of the 1950s combined with the selfishness and self-indulgence of the 1970s and '80s.

But on a more positive note, we're also left with the best of two worlds: the prosperity of the 1950s and '60s (without which there never would have been the leisure time to pursue social change and personal development) combined with revolutionary new technology that allows people to send new ideas caroming around the world in seconds, a process that in the past might have taken decades or centuries.

So I'm not being Mr. Negative here, at least not entirely. People my age are generally expected to live in the past and fear the future, whereas I'm downright enthusiastic about the future. Ironically, it's now the young people—some of them, anyway—who seem to be wallowing in the past, who seem determined to devote their lives to bringing back an era that didn't work the first time, and would be an absolute disaster the second time around.



Dressed in my mom's old black and purple polka-dot polyester dress, glittery silver tights and girly Le Crapeau footwear, I left my apartment in anticipation of frenzied fun and perhaps some softcore debauchery should the opportunity present itself. The knapsack on my back was stuffed with wine, cheese, crackers, chips and ginger ale for the aftermath. I also brought a

couple of videos from work: *Alice In Wonderland*—survey says watch this one while high, and *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*—girls with pigtails in full-on blue Adidas track suits = S-E-X-Y!

My first stop was Brooke's pad where she greeted me in a foxy little number that left nothing to the imagination. Hoo! I think Brooke is the only girl I know who can pull off the feather boa/tube top/short shorts/fishnets combo without looking like a workin' girl. So I snapped a picture of her estive outfit and then we were off to our final destination—Joanne and Brad's place for "PCP 2000:" Pop, Chips, and Porno to kiss off the end of an era, oh yeahh.

Joanne and I had talked about what the hell we were going to do for New Year's Eve in early December and how, ideally, we would both like to go out with a bang—both literally and figuratively, har-har, nudge-poink. Our dirty conversation became even more soiled with the joint-effort cultivation of our "Wanna Sex You Up" invite list. In retrospect, we agreed that we must have sounded like a bunch of horndog boys in a locker room, despite the fact that we've never listened to any boys in a locker room before. Welp, it doesn't matter anyway because our initial sex party was quickly demoted to simply a sexy party (truth be it told, hedonism and my posse go together like red wine and a tray of ice cubes). But boy, we sure looked good trying.

Brooke and I arrived at Joanne and Brad's early and I immediately began my photographic quest to document everybody's sassyass outfits before they got spilt upon, ripped ("Puffa G" seems to be particularly capable of busting out of one's clothing at all the opportune moments, hehe. Woop, let's hope I still have this person's friendship after this column), and/or removed for the evening. I think I got everybody, and then some. Tits, tats, butts, drunks and yours truly in there somewhere rather ceremoniously flipping the bird. Yes, my poise in front of the camera eye hasn't progressed much since about Grade 5. Meh well.

We had a fairly comfortable sized crowd going on. Not bad what with all of the competition for the big hodown. My libation for the evening would be yummy red wine (typical), which I sipped from my glass at a consciously modest pace. 1999 was not a good year for me in the "let's-see-if-I-can-raise-my-booze-tolerance" department. Memorable yes, good no. So much so that I was not going to anticipate biley yumyums just because others were decidedly going headlong into the hurl.

We watched the *Alice In Wonderland* video, which was good for a few laffs. Two words: porno musical. This juxtaposition alone suggests something humorously BAD. Ooh, I'm having flashbacks to arty jump-cuts of a scantily clad Alice and the gang running through a field of greens. Yikes.

Moving along to better erotica, or rather erotica period. Sue and Jonathan brought with them a projector and a few old black and white film reels from the '50s or so. Each short was of a different woman in some totally fabulous outfit strutting her stuff, teasing the viewer relentlessly, but never parting with anything beyond a bikini top and bottom. And always making eye contact with the camera, as if to say "Hey baby, I put on these fake eyelashes just for you." All amusingly set to our own soundtrack of The Ramones and Sleater-Kinney.

I thought these grainy women on the screen were beautiful. Infinitely more interesting than any modern day porno, that's for sure. It was at that juncture that I began to feel very aware of the fact that I was watching erotic films with my strictly platonic pals of x amount of years. And despite my getting all hot and woojy, there was no one there for me to get with. Special holiday sex is overrated anyway. It's gonna be just as good or bad as any other night. Only you might be slightly drunker with the former. Anyway.

Eventually, sitting there in Joanne's living room watching porn went from wet to dry and it was time to spruce up the party with a little shakin' of the glitter-laden booty. From Deee-lite to Prince to Marvin Gaye to De La Soul, we tore up that living room floor as if the world really was going to blow up at the stroke of midnight. I felt like I was twelve years old again, jumping around to Twisted Sister and Billy Idol. Except now I am huffing and puffing by the third or fourth song in, and by the fifth song I'm down for the count. That coupled with the fact that entire polyester outfits, albeit usually synonymous with cool, hip, retro styling of yesteryear, are the complete antithesis to pragmatic dancing gear. I don't know how people did it in the '70s. Did they just *not* sweat? A decade of robots in bellbottoms with bad hair? You may as well wrap yourself in saran wrap and lay down on a hot beach to die, you miserable worthless sonuva.....er. Ahem.

Polyester—the ubiquitous and frighteningly wrinkle-free wardrobe ingredient of decades gone by. And what do we have to show for it nowadays? Twentysomething year old bratgirls (possibly named Patti, or not) shuffling around town in their mom's old wonky outfits in defiance of...of...? Well, in defiance of spending money on real clothes. Nyah.

Somebody thought it would be funny to give everyone a porno name for the evening. Brooke was something like Tube Top Porn, Joanne was Ballroom Porn, Brad got to be Producer Porn, and I was given the questionably coveted nickname of Housewife Porn. Yay. Warranted because of my flip hairdo I suppose. I hope.

For the countdown we turned on the television to watch the extra fancy millennium ball drop in New York. Such a cheezy longtime tradition, but hey, if it's a sure thing, why not eh? Joanne brought out the champagne and we clinked, kissed, hugged and hollered in unison with all of our fellow Eastern Standard Timezoners.

We ran on over to the park across from Joanne's house to get a better view of the very expensive fireworks going off down by the Harbourfront. Silly me grabbed only a hoodie and my glass of champagne when leaving the house. And so I stood there, teeth chattering in the cool Canadian winter air, waiting for the grand finale explosion of fake stars in the sky. How fitting that when it actually came, the accumulated congregation of bored and drunken youth in the park had already dispersed amidst the cold streets of Toronto.

Scurrying back to warmth and comfort, the final bang resounded behind me. But by the time I turned around, there was nothing there. Just a smoky grey skyline and clusters of shifty-looking teenagers. Happy 2000 everybody.

When I was 20 and working in a used bookstore, I can remember daydreaming about the year 2000 with my soon-to-

be-best-friend co-worker. For some stupid reason, we had only acknowledged each other's coolness after bumping into one another at a Yo La Tengo show. Yes, we are lame. Regardless, we were daydreaming about where we were going to be life stuff-wise, how old we would be, who out of the people we knew would be hitched by then (I managed to uphold my end of that prognostication), etc. That feels like it was eons ago. Yet here we are now, a little further along with life stuff, but more or less the same. I guess that's just one of life's funny paradoxes.

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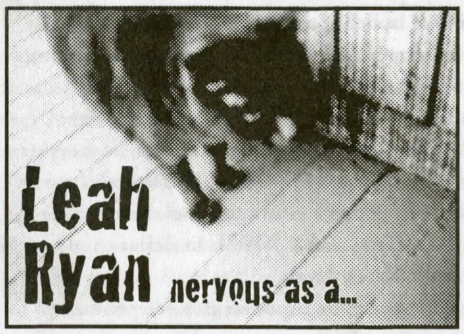
As I was finishing off this column, I heard the sad news that Charles Schulz passed away early this morning. He was 77 and gave the world 50 years of the lovable Peanuts gang. His strips and animated specials always manage to make me smile. And although he is no longer with us, there is no doubt that the spirit of Peanuts will live on forever.

Feel free to share your love of Schulz's work with me at: Patti Kim, Box 68568, 360A Bloor St. W, Toronto ON, M5S 1X1 Canada or fhabzine@interlog.com



I recently saw some old friends in the small college town where I used to live. Most of them, people in their thirties like me, are working with their hands to pay the rent, which is what I did when I lived there. They work as cooks or house painters, some in retail or in social services. They experience a constant financial strain. There really aren't many jobs in that town, outside the service industry, which is fairly typical of many American towns. We hear a lot about the booming economy, but for parts of the country which once thrived on farming and manufacturing, there is not much booming going on. In a college or tourist town, it's all about service. When I lived in that town, I worked in a lot of restaurants and in retail. I worked jobs that made my fingernails dirty.

I live in New York now. My friends here in the city are also feeling the financial strain, for different reasons. The cost of living here is very high. But the employment options are more varied. I often have clean fingernails at the end of the day. More doors are open to me since I got my Master's Degree, perhaps. But in a small town, that wouldn't amount to much. As we say, that and a buck fifty would get me on the subway. Here, there's a lot of big business going on that I would never have known existed. I temp for a consulting firm that runs high-priced think-tank sessions. The work I do for them breaks every labor law in the book and pays me enough that I can work for a week and live on that paycheck for the rest of the month. I could just as easily be slinging burgers for electricians and college students. Now I'm drawing pictures and taking notes for CEOs and CFOs of major corporations. It doesn't matter. My question remains the same - will it pay the rent, and how much time will I have left over to do the things that are really important? I don't have kids to feed or poor parents back home to send my paycheck to. I'm just trying to support my writing habit as painlessly as possible. Of course, I don't begrudge myself the occasional CD or pair of faux tiger pants, but I don't live a particularly opulent lifestyle. I live pretty close to the edge most of the time. So long as today's bills are paid, I leave tomorrow's bills to screw themselves. Compared to a lot of people, though, I'm living large.

New York is known for attracting a lot of new immigrants. Conveniently, it also attracts a lot of people who are apparently too important to do certain things for themselves. Here, a lot of people my age and younger are making lots and lots of money. One of the ways they like to spend it is to have stuff done for them, and delivered to them. As long as there are plenty of new immigrants desperate for work, there will be people to deliver Chinese food and do the laundry. When I first moved to New York, I was stunned to see how many of my friends had food delivered from a restaurant that was two blocks away, or dropped off their laundry to be washed, dried, and folded and picked up the next day. Now I do both of those things all the time. If I have any attacks of commie conscience (which can strike at any time) I remind myself how well I tip. Yes, I'm a good tipper. I tip everyone, and maybe I tip too much, but then, who's to say how much is too much? Last week I tipped a delivery guy two bucks and he was stunned. He said, "You are very nice." Of course the bleeding heart liberal in me just ate this with a spoon. But am I really "very nice", or am I just "very guilty"? If this guy is thrilled to get two bucks, then what does he usually get? I shudder to think. And what's so nice about a person who's too fuckin' lazy to walk two blocks?

Part of the guilt comes from my 60s liberal upbringing and part of it comes from a long personal history in the service industry. There is a kind of Zen in doing the same mindless task over and over, methodically, while your mind wanders to a better place. If you have to peel 50 lbs of potatoes, you have to avoid thinking about reaching the bottom of the bag. For sanity's sake, you have to find a way to break the numbers down. There's something to be learned from this. Not to romanticize. It's easy for me to wax philosophical about manual labor, while my hands are clean and my feet don't hurt and I can go to the bathroom whenever I want (no small thing). I was very lucky in my first job. Don't get me wrong—the physical conditions were horrible and I never made more than minimum wage (which was, at the time, $3.10 or $3.35 an hour). But the people were amazing. They took me under their wings and they taught me a lot of stuff. Most heroically, though, they put up with my bad attitude. I was young, half-insane, I had dropped out of school for various reasons, not the least of which being that I could not handle being told what to do. I remember the idea settling in, the idea that this is what people did. People went to work every day and took orders and got dirty and went out and got drunk and went home to bed and then got up and did it again. No

matter how much you see this going on around you, it's not real until you're doing it yourself.

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If you've stayed with me this far, here is your challenge: I'm working on a book; a collection of stories, essays, interviews, comics, and what have you, on the topic of the service industry. My intention is to steer away from everything that one would consider white-collar. The focus will be the type of work that makes your feet hurt and your fingernails dirty, the kind of work that is often performed "under the table," where benefits are a joke and people treat you like a lower life-form.

My aim is to collect a variety of pieces (a variety of subjects, styles and textures) to create an informative and hard-hitting yet completely enjoyable book. So far, I know I want to do a series of short interviews with some of the more invisible members of the service labor force (bike messeneers, restaurant delivery guys, laundry workers). I'm also collaborating with a photographer friend to create a photo essay on all-night diners and the people who work in them. An anthropologist friend suggested that I do some kind of covert operation to get the perspective of The Man, and I think that's a really great idea. Ultimately, I will get someone to crunch some economic numbers for me and give me some stats on what this "low unemployment rate" that America is so proud of really means. But the over-all feel of the book, ideally, will be fun, zine-like, and easy to look at. I want it to be part insider's manifesto and part expose, and also a work of art, of sorts. Whatever the hell that means. The book has no title or publication date yet, but it does have a publisher. I'm under contract with Garrett County Press, who brought us *The Best Of Temp Slave* and *Ivan Petrov: Russia Through a Shot Glass*. This means it will be a cool book with independent distribution. Check out their website at http://www.gcpress.com.

Please send all submissions to Leah Ryan, PO Box 2228, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108. I also have a new e-mail address—elfez9@earthlink.net.

About ayear and a half ago I ventured out of my then resident town of Newcastle, England, to go on a month long trip throughout Europe. I sat on my pages and pages of text and hundreds of photos so instead of doing a big feature story on it with photos I am resorting to doing a series of columns. Here's the first installment.

Friday 03 April 1998—London, England

Ofcourse I woke up late, cursing, sweating, and running about. I took the 3:10 bus to London, sleeping almost the entire way. After dicking around at Victoria station, I headed off towards Brixton, the so-called "rough" area of London. Although it was a bit dodgy walking around the last time I was here, at least I knew none of the thugs carry guns. Small comfort if you're dying of a stab wound but I don't really believe in letting paranoia guide my life. I arrived at one of the two squats I was told I could stay at and was greeted by a wide-eyed smiling punk with a red mohawk. I was shown to the living room, where I set my bags down, looking up to see a group of people staring at me. I introduced myself. They kept staring. I asked them if they spoke English and they immediately burst into smiles and started talking all at once. I ascertained that some of them were from Portugal, one girl was from Wisconsin, and the guy that opened the door was from Brazil. "Sorry if we are acting weird," one of the Portuguese guys said. "We just took mushrooms."

One woman showed me to the guest room, where a guy sitting on the ground was hunched over a paperback copy of American Psycho. His name was Riaz. I asked him where he was from. "San Francisco." We started shooting the shit and he told me they'd just dumpstered about 130 half-liter cans and about 30 bottles of beer. We sat back, drinking the beer and talking. He was a friend of my friend Dumpy and was supposed to meet up with him in Asia! What a small world. He had traveled pretty extensively in Morocco but apparently had a much different kind of trip than I did, when I was there. He was there for six months, living for part of the time in a cave with the Berber people up in the Atlas Mountains. I was floored. I wish I had read the article he wrote for Profane Existence about how to handle the Moroccan hustlers before I had gone. After a while he got up to go to the bathroom. "I'm going to brush my teeth. You realize it's 4:30 in the morning." I was astounded. We had talked for almost six hours straight. I pulled a pillow and two sleeping bags out of a pile of sleeping gear and fell asleep.

Saturday 04 April—London and Ghent, Belgium

Riaz and I walked to the train station and waited forever. When the train finally came, there were collectors aboard so we waited again. After some time we gave up and walked to the Underground where there were inspectors at the gates. Riaz headed back to give the train a go, I bought a ticket for the Underground and we agreed to meet at Trafalgar Square. Once I got there I realized with dismay that I had no film in my camera. Just then I felt a friendly pat on my back. It was Riaz. He held my "Suharto Wanted For Murder" sign while I ran across the street and bought some film. When I got back, the rally was underway.

Several leaders fromrepressive Asian governments were meeting oith representatives from the EU that day just a few blocks down from Trafalgar Square. There were several speakers at the protest including East Timor, free Tibet, and free Burma activists. For a time I stood on the base of the huge statue in the square where a journalist was also perched with his cameraman. It was hilarious to see him fix his hair, get all prepared for the take, fuck up, and swear and bitch while fixing his hair again.

The minute the protest was over I saw the people from the squat walk up. The Brazilian fellow said he wanted to look at some of my photos but I lamented that I was leaving that very hour to

go to Belgium. His face lit up and he called over this tall thin guy with blond dreads. "He is from Ghent." Small world again. I zoomed off to Heathrow Airport and made it there about a half an hour before my departure time. I was informed at the check-in counter that I would have to check in at the gate. When I reached the metal detector I went through the laborious task of removing all that was metal. A woman pointed to my wallet chain. "What's that?" I shrugged. "Just pepper spray." A stern portly official type grabbed my elbow. "Get your things and come with me." Fucking hell. I had 15 minutes to catch my plane.

It turns out pepper spray is illegal in the UK so I had to fill out this paperwork for confiscated property.

Of course theidiot behind the counter moved as if he were in a tank of water so it took him 10 minutes to fill out a simple one-page form and put my pepper spray in this sterile plastic bag. "OK, am I free to go now?" He looked up agonizingly slowly. He cleared his throat. His lips parted. His tongue touched the roof of his mouth. "No." I was taken to another counter only to discover that the paperwork he'd given me was for someone named Rheuter Nam. Thankfully the woman behind the counter said she'd just take care of it and I could leave. I grabbed my bag and ran as fast as I could to the gate. I rushed up to the counter 10 minutes late and gasped, "Is it too late to board?" The young man in the British Midlands uniform chuckled. "We're running behind. Don't worry, I have to get on the plane too."

My friends Micky and Karin from Newcastle had given me a contact number in Belgium for a fellow named Alain, but every time I called I got some weird tone I didn't understand. I had tried to call Micky and Karin several times but they were never home and I didn't have a phone so out of last-minute desperation I called my friend Sned in Bradford to see if he had Alain's number. When I told him my situation he laughed. "Everyone in the world except Micky and Karin knows that the phone codes in Alain's town have changed." I called Alain who gave me the number of a guy named Brob in Ghent. Phew. Talk about winging it. Much to my chagrin, Alain informed me that his band Unhinged (one of the bands I told myself I absolutely had to see while in Europe) were leaving to tour in the US the day I was planning on arriving in his city, Liege. What bastard luck.

The plane actually flew into Brussels and I took a train to Ghent. When I emerged from the station I was greeted by the sight of racks and racks and piles of bicycles everywhere. Brob was kind enough to come meet me there, not having any idea who I was, and we walked to his apartment. We stayed up until midnight talking about his disease (chronic fatigue syndrome), our life histories, my travel plans, and just about everything else under the sun. Before going to bed I read a book called Transient Ways, which was mostly about train-hopping in the US. There were some eyebrow-raising bits in there about murder and drugs that I hope were fictional. There was no extra bedding so I huddled up in my coat and passed out. Brob gently woke me up around 9:30. My first stop of the day was the Belfort (belfry). Aside from the amazing view of the city at the top there wasn't much of interest there so I quickly left. I tried to get myself lost but kept walking in circles and ending up in the same places. It was great to walk around randomly, turn a corner, and find myself in front of some elaborate medieval tower or church. Almost everywhere I went there were intricate reliefs or old stone architecture that were all at least three times as old as anything in the US. Eventually I ended up in a beautiful park with gorgeous trees, moss-covered stone steps, and green twists and turns. I tried calling Brob but he wasn't home so I headed to this other park to sit amongst the ducks and trees to write. At the risk of sounding new-age or hippie I have to say I hadn't felt so at peace with myself and the world in a long time.

An hour and a fifteen degree drop in temperature later I ventured back to the pay phone. Luckily Brob was home so I trundled back to his place. Upon arrival I discovered that he didn't have a stove but just a single small hot plate. It took us an hour to cook up rice (which was pre-packaged in this weird plastic bag that you cooked it in) and potatoes. I had hoped he had some spices but as he rarely cooked at home he had only salt. Inspiration struck him. He pulled a large tube out of his cabinet. "Pate!" I was a little wary but the red pepper pate with salted rice and potatoes was actually pretty good. We stayed uplate again talking about everything.

Monday 06 April

When we got up around 9:30 he told me he had to go to the library. I wandered off to find the Museum of Fine Arts which was, of course, closed on Mondays only. Walking in the area of the museum I stumbled upon the Citadel Park. It was a beautiful, shady park that was all green with little twisty paths and different levels divided by deteriorating steps. From the park you could see this enormous fortress sort of stuck in the middle of all these ugly, more modern buildings. On my way back to the museum I came across this tranquil little pond with a huge sculpture nicely wedded to the hillside on one end and a tiny little island with small houses for the ducks and geese in the middle. I sat there feeling quite peaceful, then Brob biked up. We went back to his place on his bike. I was perched quite awkwardly on a little ledge behind the seat but the rickety ride was actually pretty refreshing. He was pretty tired by the ride so we rested for about an hour, eating fruit and talking.

He took me on a rather lengthy tour of parts of the city I hadn't seen yet. We were talking the whole time so I didn't pay very much attention to the sights. Every once in a while during a pause in the conversation I'd glance up and suddenly realize that I was in front of an exquisite church or ancient edifice. He took me inside one of the cathedrals and I was absolutely stunned. While I gaped at the ornate decor he ridiculed the Catholic Church in a loud voice that echoed through the chambers. As we walked by this medieval medical school we were talking about pissing and shitting—one of the most universal conversation topics I've found. Brob commented that it's a real problem to find public toilets in Belgium and that it's quite a bit easier for men to relieve themselves. I agreed. "At least we have these things," he said as he pointed to a little roofless concrete shed that was covered with a mural of sperms. I was puzzled. "What do you mean?" He said matter-of-factly with a straight face,

"It's a urinal." I didn't believe him so he urged me to go take a look at it. Indeed it was a urinal. What a fabulous idea.

Around sevenwe left to go to a place called the Info Kitchen. Every week they serve a vegetarian/vegan meal and host a speaker to discuss anarchist and political matters. This week the topic was the MIA but unfortunately the presentation was all in Dutch. I didn't know much about the MIA but I from what little I gleaned from the presentation I gathered that it was some kind of economic agreement between Western and Asian countries. It seemed that eventually these Asian countries would end up becoming completely dependent on Western countries, in a nutshell, getting fucked the way Latin America did.

Back at Brob's apartment he asked me if I needed any more contacts for my travels. He turned on his computer where he had this huge database of punk contacts all over the world. He had everything categorized by country with sub-categories of show promoters, labels, bands, distros, zines, etc. He gave me a few numbers and addresses for people in Luxembourg and Italy before we went to bed.

Tuesday 07 April—Ghent and Liege, Belgium

I was moving really s-l-o-w that day. I didn't leave the apartment until noon. I went to this record store owned by the guy who does Genet Records and more or less cleared out the used section of old European hardcore LPs. I bought some food on the way back to Brob's and when I walked in the door he looked almost surprised. "Whoa, whoa, whoa, you didn't have to do that. It's not like I'm going to starve because you had a little of my food." Here is a key difference between hosts in the US and hosts in other countries—a desire to share and be hospitable.

Finally I left around 3 and got to Liege at 5 after a lot of fucking around. I had to wander around a lot before I found the squat. After some time somebody opened the door. "Um-bonjour-er-je m'appelle Kim-uh-parlez-vous englais?" A woman with short red hair came bounding over. "Come in, come in! Have a beer. We're going to make some food." Everybody looked up when I entered the room and greeted me with a friendly smile. I made some small talk with everybody and found out that two people were from France, two from Germany, and only two were actually from Liege. After much hullabaloo we started making some pizzas. The dumpstered veggies were pretty pitiful but we managed. I think we ended up with four pizzas in all with crap beer, some nice red wine, and a huge salad. We feasted like kings. Once people got more and more inebriated they were less inclined to speak English so toward the end of thenight I felt more isolated. I went to bed kind of early.

Wednesday 08 April

Every Wednesday the people at the squat cook up a huge meal and open up the place for people to all come and eat together. As soon as I woke up I started chopping up vegetables and lending a hand around the kitchen. Around 4 or so it seemed that there really wasn't much else to do so I decided to walk around and see Liege. I tried to get lost and succeeded. Unfortunately, I didn't see much of anything of interest and I got really fucking lost, ending up miles and miles away from the squat. Luckily I found the main train station and was able to find my way back. When I arrived things were already in full swing. Those of us that had cooked were in the kitchen serving out the food like mad. There was a donation jar that people were being pretty generous with and they even had cases of bottled beer to sell. They really had their shit together. Of course I remember seeing chalkdust falling into the salad while they were writing the menu up on a little chalkboard but who was really paying attention anyway right?

I ate the soup and some of the ratatouille which was surprisingly good for having been cooked en masse. I noticed that they had been "washing" the dishes by dipping them in a tub of filthy soapy water so I took over with a sponge. After tiring of spraying myself with ice cold water I wandered around the house wishing I could speak French. I ended up on the second floor with several people who were all completely hammered. Twenty minutes later everyone got up and left, leaving me and one other guy alone. I made a few feeble, awkward attempts at conversation before going to bed, sad that I couldn't talk to anybody.

Thursday 09 April * Luxembourg

I took the train into Clervaux, Luxembourg where the entire Family of Man photo collection was housed in a museum. At the station I looked on a map and, typically ignoring the scale, thought I was in big trouble. Ten minutes later I was on the other side of the map at the chateau/museum. It was time to get in touch with some photo history. At first I was disappointed by the crappy condition the photos were in but after two hours of exploring the space I was nothing short of amazed. I had been excited to see probably the most important piece of photo history still existing but really hadn't expected to be blown away. I emerged from the chateau determined to find a nice quiet spot in the mountains to have lunch. I spotted a tower off in the distance and began making my way toward it. After about an hour of flailing around and getting every form of plant life stuck to the mud caked on my boots I reached a small clearing and was greeted by the sight of an elegant abbey. I found an area in front of it which consisted of a low semi-circular structure made up of large slabs of stone. This curious little place was on the edge of a decline. I made my little avocado and tomato sandwiches there, drinking in the quiet air and staring off into the forest. I ventured around the abbey for a little bit before realizing that the people inside were preparing for a sermon, which explained why I'd been getting those up-down-fucking-scumbag looks. I found a narrow beaten path and began trekking down. It started to drizzle so I went off the path to stand under some trees. I felt like I was in some kind of poem—a pale grey sky, the still silent air in the woods, soft drizzle, and to top it all off the church bells started ringing. I leaned against a tree with cheesy romantic thoughts flowing through my mind.

I took my sweet time winding my way back toward the train station. When I arrived in Luxembourg City, I called my contact, Steve, who was in the first ever Luxembourgish punk band. "Hey, I was waiting for you to call. Do you want to go to a show?" Hell yes. I met some great people from several different countries who were all communicating with each other in English. It's amazing that to travel what

would be a relatively short distance in the States, here you'd have to cross two borders, exchange money, and speak another language.

When we got back to Steve's house in Dudelange, we cooked some food and him and his girlfriend Simone gave me a tour of their place. It was a three-floor house with about 5 rooms and huge kitchen, dining room, and living room. "Just the two of you live here?" They nodded. I was flabberghasted. "It's about a thousand dollars a month but we make way more than that." Brob had told me that Steve was unemployed so I was a little surprised. I guess the standard of living in Luxembourg is crazy high and even though Simone only worked part time as a social worker they could still afford to live in what I would consider luxury.

Friday 10 April

I woke up too late to go on my planned day of exploration of Luxembourg but I was glad. Seeing the country would have been amazing and beautiful but it was definitely more worthwhile in the end to simply sit around Steve and Simone's house and get to know them. I made some stir fry for dinner. When I finished cooking the vegetables they were amazed. "It's already done?" They said they'd never had vegetables cooked that way before. Steve wrote me a few months later to tell me that Simone had opened up a vegetarian restaurant and had named a dish after me, "Kim Bae's vegetables."

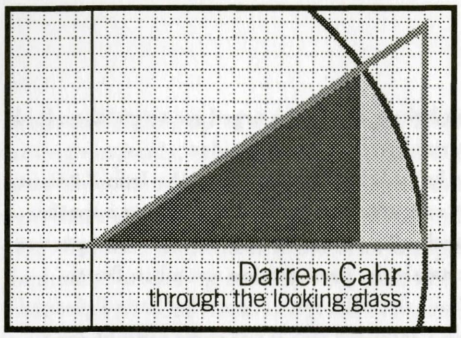
Saturday 11 April—Arnhem, Netherlands

Steve, the ever gracious host, drove me to Luxembourg City to catch the train. I took the 3 or 4 trains to Arnhem in a last minute move to go see His Hero is Gone and Seein' Red. I made my way to the show and basically sat by myself in a corner. I attempted conversation with several random people but no one seemed interested in talking to me. When I heard people speaking English I went up to talk to one of the guys. It was Yannick from His Hero is Gone. He introduced me to Todd. I asked if they had a roadie since they were watching their own merchandise. "No, we came here by ourselves. You're more than welcome to come with us." I declined as I was planning on spending two weeks inItaly.

As I watched Soberesponse I thought to myself, "Am I insane? I have to go with them." I told Todd I'd love to go with them if he wanted to make sure that was OK with everybody else in the band. As they were getting ready to play I sat on the edge of the stage. A guy with dreads leaned toward me, "Are you Kim? I'm Carl." I couldn't believe I was going to spend the next few weeks with these people that I had just met. They were great and the all-mighty Seein' Red were incredible. It Ras great to see a group of older punks still filled with so much energy and passion. A few kids in the audience thoughtfully translated what they said on stage to me and Todd.

After the show I heard someone else speaking English so I wandered up to him. He was studying abroad in an English-speaking school somewhere in the Netherlands. I found out later that he was the singer sf Palatka. We went to Jeroen's flat at Coalition records and eight of us crashed on the floor in one tiny room. Ah, touring. How I've missed you.

More to come next time. 2340 W. 24th St. Chicago, IL 60608 kimbae1@yahoo.com



So, my editor here at Punk Planet says he's sick, and I'm wondering, so, was Dan Savage licking his doorknob?

In case you haven't been following this (and it might be the most ridiculous media riot of all time) Dan Savage, the author of the syndicated "Savage Love" column and a prominent gay activist, went to work undercover at Gary Bauer's presidential campaign in the hopes of getting the hyperconservative, homophobic candidate sick with the flu. Savage licked doorknobs, sneezed on people, and did everything he could to spread the flu that had attacked him. He then wrote about it.

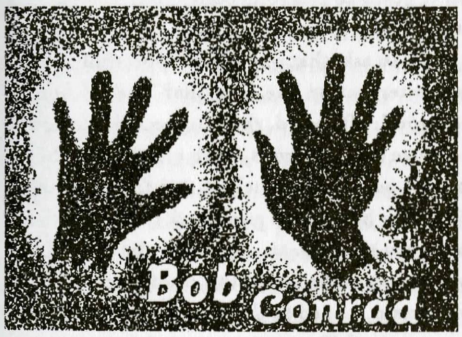
The Bauer campaign was outraged, calling it electoral terrorism. They threatened to file assault charges against Savage. Now, there are two ways to think about this: (a) as extremely funny; and (b) as extremely disturbing. Let's take (a) first.

The idea of someone trying to get Gary Bauer (the most milquetoast human being on the planet) sick with the flu by licking doorknobs is, quite simply, hilarious. The slapstick visual alone makes it worthwhile. Bauer— an effeminate homophobe—makes an easy target for this kind of biological warfare. It is very, very funny, and there isn't much that can possibly undercut that fact. Except...

Except for the fact that what Savage did probably undermined the gay rights agenda for a hell of a lot of people, and it was a disturbing example of someone illegitimately undermining an (already thoroughly undermined) democratic process. First of all, this probably just confirmed for a lot of people their irrational fear that gays spread disease. It makes them look crazy, irrational, and less "deserving" of equal protection under the law. It's also an example of the kind of electoral "dirty trick" that should cause steam to come out of your ears. If, by some miracle, a good candidate wins the presidency at some point in our lifetimes, it should be because they convinced America to elect her, not because her opponents were out sick with the flu.

Anyway, this brings us to a more important issue: the fact that each and every one of the presidential candidates presented for our consideration blows meaty chunks of goo. I'm not a big fan of our current political culture, but this may be a new low. We have (at the time of this writing) one candidate (Gore) who is such a hypocrite and such a preening liar that he claims to have invented the Internet; another candidate (Bush) who's sole claim to fame is that he has executed more prisoners than any other governor, many of whom were probably innocent; another candidate (McCain) who, while a brave guy deserving respect for getting tortured in Vietnam for five years, refuses to come right out and condemn the confederate battle flag flying over South Carolina's capital building and who still panders to the anti-abortion claque; we have Bradley, a good guy who has his head stuck so far up in the clouds that he cannot manage to actually deign to campaign; and we have Alan Keyes, who is, without a doubt, the funniest candidate of all time (unintentionally) and who did body surf to Rage Against the Machine at a rally.

This is why I am suggesting that everyone write in "Larry Livermore" on their ballots for President. He's over age 36, an American citizen, he actually saw the MC5 play a show, and he's probably as qualified as any of our other potential candidates—hell, more so! Plus, think of the bands that would play at the inauguration! They'd blow out the windows on Pennsylvania Avenue. So, write 'em in: Larry for President! I'm serious, do it for yourself, do it for your children yet unborn, and do it for Larry, who would probably get a kick out of the job. And remember, every vote for Larry is a vote not received by some underserving schmuck. Larry in '00! Tell your friends!



The class I took on human growth and development last semester really made sense. Ah ha! I thought when the professor explained how one researcher traced the cognitive development of Harvard (or Yale or some other prestigious institution) male undergraduates. What this researcher found was that undergrads at this university entered higher learning with a level of thinking that is called dualistic. This is where things are viewed as black and white. Right and wrong. Good and bad. This or that. Capitalism bad, communism good; indie punk good, corporate punk bad—to appropriate a couple familiar views. What happens in their development is that these students hear differing, valid opinions by professors and higher-level students that seem to contradict their earlier views. They are thrown into a conundrum. Should these students complete their programs of study, what the researcher found is that the students began to move into relativistic thinking, where they come to realize *seemingly contradictory truths hold equal validity.*

What happens in the real world is that, first of all, prospective Harvard (or Yale or some other prestigious institution) students are probably much better educated than your average student. This is for the obvious reasons; affluence could be primary among them. For Harvard grads to be relativistic in their moral and cognitive development may be true; for most, however, this is probably not the case, and, my professor surmises, most people are locked into dualistic thinking at that stage.

I hear dualism in every one of my graduate courses at the school I attend. I hear it anytime I'm exposed to most forms of public expression. Dualism is a cognitive and moral norm, and yet few are aware of how much of our culture operates in this way.

Why is this important to know? When reading Dietrich Dörner's *The Logic of Failure* or Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*, I am struck by the realization: When people with the best intentions attempt to help others' situations, they create more problems. A good example is Michael Maren's *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid*. Maren explores, from personal experience, the anecdotes of others and the documents of the organizations he criticizes, how international aid organizations (such as the United Nations, CARE, Save the Children, etc.) go into seemingly impoverished countries with the meaning to help. These organizations end up making things worse—far worse.

A problem is the dualistic approach to problem solving. People look like they're starving? Send 'em food; civilize them. What ends up happening is once reliance on this aid is created, populations grow, hierarchies emerge, the traffic of food becomes bureaucratic and people are worse off than before because now they're at the mercy of someone or something else that previously wasn't in the mix before. This one example is a familiar theme that resonated worldwide within a few thousand years resulting in the decimation of most tribal cultures in existence.

Why I can get away with calling punk rock reactionary is because it is literally reacting to things around it. Punk rock, then, is dualistic to its core. Schisms develop when external—often equally valid—variables contribute to a larger view of things that confound or contradict that dualistic nature of the punk values system. For example, when the larger punk magazines have ad policies that say something to the effect of, "no corporate, racist, sexist or homophobic ads," these magazines invariably run into the problem of having to define each of these characteristics *as if they are static concepts to begin with.* These policies are inherently fallacious and appeal to organizations because they don't allow for the gray areas that permeate such concepts. Rather than accede to the reality that there will always be corporate, racist, sexist and homophobic punks with ads, punk attempts to fight and/or deny what is real. For this reason, punk always gets into trouble.

Thus we remain. The problem of problems is a problem. That's where I'll leave it for now.

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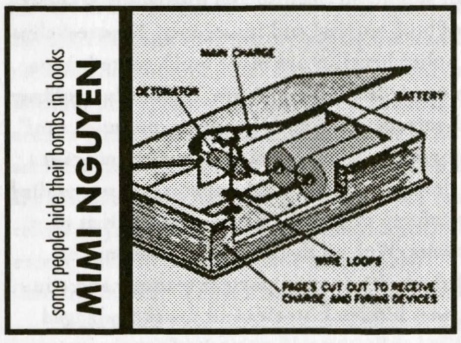


I have to recruit Floyd to carry the projector the three long blocks between my car and Mission Records, tearing him away from the game on the television above the bar. (I have about three muscles and the sum of these is not enough for the task at hand.) Sean had called from work to ask me to come by the *Maximum* compound and pick up the equipment for the screening. As Floyd cheerfully hoists the projector out of the trunk, I'm wondering how the kids will take to the punk rock pedagogy to come.

But the Mission Records screening is a rare occasion. For

once, for the first time in a long while, I feel comfortable with my punk rock surroundings. A dark, somewhat dank back room, furnished with ratty couches and much-scrawled walls? Perfect. With the store space quickly filling up for the show, Martin arrives and we weigh the options: VCR or projector? Shower curtain or—? The boy behind the counter is helpful and solicitous; he rummages in the back room and excavates from a seeming junk heap a working screen and jury-rigs the sound with a series of cords and power stripsr The room fills with punk and indie kids who settle in on flat cushions and concrete floors in front of the blank white screen, in this,ca communal living room.

Mas Alla de Los Gritos / Beyond the Screams is a half-hour video documentary about Chicano/Latino participation in U.S. punk and hardcore, a statement which hardly begins to encapsulate the project begun here. Bracketed by the early East L.A. punk scene (featuring too-short interviews with Alice Armendariz from The Bags and Teresa Covarrubias from The Brat) and '90s U.S. hardcore, Martin Sorrondeguy traces the historical trajectory of Chicano/Latino punk rock and more, its always-emergent body politic, with brilliant skill.

In voice-over (as boys in a pit mosh in slow motion), Martin outlines the premise of *Mas Alla*: "The Latino punk scene in the early '90s...really exploded because all of a sudden we had a hell of a lot to sing about. What started happening politically in the U.S. pissed us off so much, and we were feeling targeted and we were feeling cornered as a community that we began writing songs about it."

As such *Mas Alla* is incredibly moving and effective, and on a number of levels immediate and far-reaching. Well-edited interviews, stills and show footage make for a dense but riveting thirty-minute record of Chicano/Latino participation in punk rock, indexed here as a culturally vital and politicized counterpublic, a kind of punk rock "teaching machine." Members from Subsistencia, Kontra Attaque, Bread and Circuits, Los Crudos and Huasipungo discuss the political nature of their everyday lives and art, the implications of singing in Spanish and dialoguing at shows, and the mechanisms of both survival and insurgency. Newsreel clips of border patrol and police brutality are made much more harrowing by Revolucion X's snarl-delivered cynicism, the words scrolling across a funereal black screen: "*Killing Mexicans is too much fun!*" Latin American dictatorships, NAFTA, a slew of anti-immigrant measures fuel the gut-level rage and critical impetus; corresponding resistance movements inform this unabashedly leftist analysis of punk as passionate politics. With all the revisionist timelines of punk rock being published, this is an important recovery and contextualization of otherwise hidden histories and unacknowledged influences. The result is a collective self-portrait of art as activism with transnational ramifications and impressive vision.

But while *Mas Alla* posits punk rock as a potentially transcendent subculture from which radical politics easily find root and emerge, I'm not so sure. No, check that: I'm positive. Punk rock is not, after all, a "neutral" space and rebellion not a "neutral" quality; it is weighted with ideological underpinnings, cumulative histories and certain modes of operation and valuation, all of which bear close interrogation. The political connections made in the video, I think, have less to do with an inherent punk rock sensibility and more to do with the articulate, impassioned individuals making those connections. That is, and it has to be asked: what is it about punk rock that requires an intervention like *Mas Alla* in the first place?

Or as Michelle Christine Gonzales wryly notes in *Mas Alla*: "People in the punk scene are notorious for saying 'racism sucks,' but when it comes down to having friends of color, it's cool until they open their big mouths. There are desirable people of color and there are undesirable people of color, and if you're too brown or too down, then you're going to piss somebody off or make somebody uncomfortable."

And so is it too much to ask, that punk kids respectfully engage in an important intervention like *Mas Alla*? The Mission Records screening feels good; afterward, there is some discussion, much praise, and an update on dangerous youth crime bills, the struggle to establish a local queer youth shelter, and future benefit shows and rallies. It feels like how I wish punk rock would, all the time. But the night before at the Gilman screening, the band following the video began tuning as the last of the credits were rolling across Arwen's shower curtain, nailed to the wall, leaving no room for discussion. Did you get that? Too anxious to rock out, white boys climbed on stage and curtailed the possibility of dialogue with their noisy feedback and chord progressions. Had they been waiting for the end sequence, impatient and bored? How many others, too, arms crossed and unmoved? Smoking cigarettes on the sidewalk outside, Bianca and Chandra tell me they heard muttering, a few snickers, and make bitter comments about white people.

To be truthful, it might be too late to save me. Or more, too late to save punk rock for me.

I still have what I consider to be punk-rock reflex. I take unambiguous pleasure in xerox machines, raucous vocals, house shows and more; I can't begin to explain the why or how of it. It baffles and amazes friends and sometimes even me, in my more critical moments. So at the same time punk rock is *not* a home, nor is it a space from which I might take a stand.

That is, my identification is precarious, partial and proceeds at pace with my simultaneous deprogramming. (It's true, I talk myself out of it all the time.) I'm always one step away from walking out, like I did before. Once, when a straight, white punk boy wrote a song about wanting to rape me or now, thinking about *this*. And it is not a coincidence but a small part of a far-flung pattern that on the zinesters list-serv, a white girl with a zine and a mail order wants to know what's wrong with "white pride," and argues black nationalism is "just like Hitler." Worse, others agree and want to know, too, why people of color are always making whites "feel bad." (These missives invade the safety of my living room by way of my computer, and I can only feel as if I have been broken into.) And why would I want to be in a space in which such "opinions" are so blithely engaged, as if I didn't get enough of it everywhere else in the world that I need to argue too, in this more intimate space I once held so much closer?

Thumbing through my cache of punk rock propaganda

reminds me why I became an expatriate in the first place, why I continue to hold *it* at arm's length. This is not simply a comment on race, as if I could even imagine race as a discrete category apart from others, like cans in a cupboard (my usual analogy). There is an unmistakable continuum I could trace, like a spiderweb or a breadcrumb trail, winding (or blanketing, maybe) across the landscape of punk rock cultural and political production. "Disco is for blacks and homosexuals," a 1979 fanzine sneers; maybe it's no accident that it was called *Final Solution*. "The United Negro College Fund is a sublime absurdity," lambastes a *Hitlist* magazine columnist in this new year, and I remember that the same writer once argued feminists were too. There are the presumptuous disavowals of both racism ("punk is anti-racist") and race ("there is no race but the human race"), familiar reformulations repeated when gender or class or sexuality or borders are invoked. And once swastikas were worn as accessories, could the iconic manipulation of Third World suffering for record sleeves and gatefolds be far behind? (In this sense, punk rock follows in the tradition of the white European avant-garde and its foundational myth of originality and refusal of accountability, but that's a whole other story.) Indie rock girls ask why gays and lesbians want "special rights," punk boys rape or beat girlfriends and acquaintances, and in between there are the innumerable insults, the slips of tongues, and the violent gestures.

And it need not be an extreme example. Recently I interviewed Iraya Robles and Gary *Fembot* from the defunct queer-pop quartet Sta-Prest, nesting in my living room to dialogue about punk, performance, pop and politics; they arrive armed with a pair of leather pants (for me) and a tape recorder (Mark took his on tour). The Sta-Prest cadre has always been particularly astute when deconstructing liberal cultural politics, and Iraya makes with the stinging one-liners, her special skill. A queer Filipina mestiza with political consciousness tucked into her jumpsuit pockets, she makes a deprecating gesture and quips, "Beck 'discovered' mutations only a few years ago, I've been a mutation all my life." (I nod and giggle wickedly.) Gary describes doing the "white on white," the name they've given to a tactic of white accountability and consciousness-raising. I ask for a scenario and he gives me the simultaneously incredulous and frustrated stare that is *so* Gary and says, with force, "It's *not* okay for a white boy to pretend to channel a black slave picking okra in a field."

I tally the evidence like calculus; it gets to be too much to ignore, overwhelming. It takes something like *Mas Alla* to pull me out of the muck, even if just for a little while, long enough to catch my breath before wading back into the fray. And I do have allies who are white, straight, male or otherwise; I respect and appreciate enormously all their efforts to turn the tide, to argue for a more radically democratic subcultural space than what we've got now. Still, many have left punk rock somewhere in the dust and detritus, Iraya and Gary included, and who can blame them? For their political and personal integrity, I am infinitely grateful. (Thank you.)

Punk rock proves to be as contentious a cultural, political and social sphere as any other, including a national one. As such, punk rock is *not* an exception to the rule, to the so-called "mainstream," and neither are punk rockers. This (and I gesture widely) is yet another pop-culture battlefield on which struggles for power and meaning are fought, hardly an "alternative" but a subsidiary or more, a parallel public.

And neither do I feel community here: I used to believe but I don't any longer. After all, "community" is a double-edged sword, a formation dependent on a clear-cut perimeter, borders that can be defended and enforced. In a sense, a community operates with qualifications for inclusion and more, criteria for *exclusion*; so my relationship with punk rock is not like yours: we are not all "punk" the same and some punks are more equal than others.

Revisiting *Bikini Kill* zine, some things feel far too familiar: "And see, I have come to the conclusion that we are banging our heads against a big wall. We are trying to find that magic word that will change their minds, make them see. We are trying to fit through the doors of a clubhouse that is smelly and gross inside anyways. We only want in cuz we've been taught to want it. We change ourselves to fit, alter what we say, how we say it, just hoping, hoping they will change their rules."

(And the rules have not changed, last time I checked the book.)

It's not *just* a matter of demographics; or as Sta-Prest might have it, "Let's be friendly with our friends / I hardly know anyone who reflects / the population in my head." It's not that simple. Discourses focused on exclusion often push for "inclusion" as a solution, but meanwhile recruitment or "discovery" ("Look, there's a person of color!") is hardly an adequate response. Or as South Asian feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty argues, "The central issue...is not one of merely acknowledging difference," but *how* and *which* differences are recognized and engaged.

Does my presence necessarily or automatically critique punk rock hegemony? Did the presence of women in punk rock mean that riot grrrl did not fundamentally tear at the social fabric of unquestioned masculinity and privilege in punk? Does the fact of Latino or Asian American or black or queer participation within the span of punk rock history negate the mountainous evidence of racisms and homophobia? (Answer to all of the above: NO.) Without downplaying the complex acrobatics of identifying, what are the terms and logic of inclusion? What do I have to look like, act like, speak like, in order that I might become one of the gang? Or consider: do you read my presence as a reaffirmation (to your relief) of your punk rock (and Americanist) bootstrap ideology of exceptionalism and self-made individuals? "Oh, she's *different* than the others." (That's *not* my idea of a compliment.)

Iraya and I have gone over this before, a million times and even across thousands of miles. And while I continue to believe that the ways we took punk rock and translated it through our experiences and politics as colored queer girls had legitimacy, resonance, and meaning, our identification with punk rock was (is) an incomplete circuit. There is still the contradiction and the loss we experienced in translation, and what could make up for that?

So honestly, I'm tired of "discovering" myself in punk rock, over and over. It gets me nowhere. There is a difference between

affirming an identity *within* punk rock parameters ("I'm a bi-queer Asian girl *and* punk rock! You can do it too!") and thinking critically about the allowances and limitations of one's mobility through the world, and I'd rather the latter. The first gets too slippery, too unwieldy when uncomplicated, and the second allows me to wonder about power and hegemony and social and psychic space. Does it matter that I might be rare *or* does it matter more that I want to destroy punk rock?

There is something to the riot grrrl formula that still appeals, that needs reproducing, again and again. That is, if punk rock is not a "safe space" for me, why should it be for you?

• • •

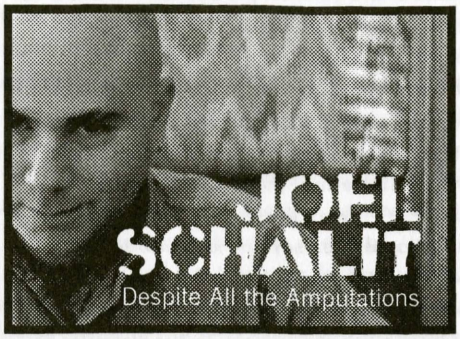
I wrote about some of these issues in *Punk Planet* 28 in an article called, "It's (Not) a White World: Looking for Race in Punk," in which I looked at those hegemonic strategies and attitudes that punk rock reproduces in addressing the issue of "race" and difference. I want to also thank the following friends and acquaintances for inspiration and fierceness: Martin, Jose, Carlos, Robyn, Sean, Arwen, Mark, Ciara, Ericka, Gordon, Kelli, Chandra, Bianca, Lauren, Helen, Vincent, Forbes, Gary, Iraya, Kerith, Katia, and Rachel S..

Berkeley punks rule graduate school, aw yeah. Robyn Marasco wrote a smart (and sassy) column in *HeartAttaCk* 25 deconstructing punk as lifestyle. She asks all kinds of questions that inspire some of my own about art, passion, and motive. Jose Palafox conducted a lengthy, two-part interview with Martin Sorrondeguy in *Maximumrocknroll* about the premise, politics and production of *Mas Alla de los Gritos/Beyond the Screams.* You can read it starting with issue 202/March 2000. You can also purchase the video from his Lengua Armada for twelve dollars. Send to Martin Sorreondeguy, 2340 W 24th St., Chicago, IL 60608 (martincrudo@yahoo.com). And I'm going to take this moment to plug two amazing queer Latina bands on different coasts, Las Cucas (San Francisco) and Las Nalgas (New York City), and Heartcore Records (http://www.heartcorerecords.com).

Flame On is available from Chris Ohnesorge, 299 Adelphi St. #301, Brooklyn, NY 11205, the Sta-Prest interview included. Helen Luu's compilation zine about people of color and subculture should also be finished, and so should Lauren Martin's by and about tough girls. Helen Luu can be reached at 22 Bridport Cres., Scarborough, Ontario, M1V4N8, Canada (re_volt@yahoo.com) and Lauren Martin at PO Box 596, Portland, OR 97207. Both of these will also be available from the more-fabulous-than-ever Pander Zine Distro, by way of Ericka Bailie, at PO Box 582142, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2142. A buck will get you a catalog, or check out http://www.panderzinedistro.com.

For real, this time I am done with the second issue of *Evolution of a Race Riot.* (Well, I think I am.) It is a descriptive directory of projects (mostly zines) produced by people of color, mostly in and around punk rock or grrrl, and lists about two hundred projects all together. But wait, it's got an alias as a compilation zine, with reprints from zines like *I Dreamed I Was Assertive!, Quantify, Photobooth Toolbox, Mamasita* and others, about race, gender, sexuality and even geopolitics, along with some original material. Why don't you pick one up?

As always, please don't hesitate to write: Mimi Nguyen POB 11906 Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 slander13@mindspring.com



Late last summer, a friend of mine who owns an experimental record company told me that her husband would be conducting an unusual orchestra at an annual avant-garde music festival in Austria featuring DJs, effects manipulators and PowerBook players. "You have no idea how much this means to him," she said, overcome by emotion. "He's bringing his art right into the heart of what is still a Fascist country." Though I didn't say anything at the time, my immediate reaction to her statement was entirely negative. "There's nothing politically radical or anti-Fascist about electronica," I thought to myself as I left our meeting. "It's classically avant-garde in the worst possible sense of the term. What was she thinking? Besides, Austria is not Germany."

I tend to get like that. I happen to be the kind of person who doesn't take the use of terms like Fascism lightly. As the youngest child of a generation of family members decimated by the Nazis during the Holocaust, and a student of Fascist politics, such statements make me incredibly nervous, if only because most of the times I hear the term invoked, its always really careless, if not downright inaccurate. Among American punk circles and the organized left, anything political that is not considered 100 per cent democratic is automatically suspect as being "fascist" or "authoritarian." Isn't "liberal" bad enough? How about "capitalist," "sexist," or perhaps even "racist?"

It's my suspicion that progressives tend to be nonspecific because they want something all-inclusive when indicting their opponents. They want to use a term that not only has recognizable historical resonance but also symbolic moral weight that everyone can easily understand. Nonetheless, having been a participant in progressive political circles for most of my so-called adult life, I'm not convinced that's why so many people employ the F-Word so readily. Rather, as I grow older I become more convinced that it's a symptom of sloppy political thinking, one that is particularly dangerous because it's important to be able to appreciate the moral and ideological distinctions between types of politics, regardless of whether we believe them to be bad or not. If we're able to understand

more precisely what it is that threatens us, we might be in a position to better combat such things.

Granted, not everyone is an expert in the use of political terminology or the history of modern politics, nor should they have to be. But a number of events as of late have convinced me to be a little less judgmental about such things. In particular, the recent election of Jorg Haider's extremely conservative Freedom Party to Austria's new governing coalition. While Haider is not Austria's new chancellor, his figure looms large over the country's new government. If you pay attention to the news, Haider is referred to so frequently that even though he remains a provincial governor, one would assume that he exercises moral leadership over the country. Inevitably Haider is always discussed as though he represents the return of Europe's Fascist past because he makes statements sympathetic to the former Fascist order: Austrian veterans of the Waffen SS are "decent people," Hitler's economic policies were "orderly," etc. Haider also uses Nazi-era terms such as "over-foreignization," to describe his objections to Austria's immigration policies. Just turn him on and let him show his Swastika tarred-feathers, Haider's that much of a one-dimensional stereotype.

In the meantime, the conservative political party that dominated Germany's post-war political order, the Christian Democrats, are in the throes of the worst political scandal to engulf the country since the Second World War, which is in some respects even more interesting. Former chancellor Helmut Kohl has admitted ignoring Germany's coveted democratic constitution by refusing to disclose the source of over one million dollars in covert payments to his party. He will not budge, because he sees the honor of keeping one's word as being more important than respecting the constitution. While this does not represent a return to Fascist politics in the same way that the rise of Haider's party in Austria does, the Nazi suspension of the Weimar Republic's democratic constitution in 1933 hovers in the background. In that sense, given Germany's recent history, it was an important transgression not to have made. But, unlike Haider's macho open professions of xenophobia and sentimentality for the old order, this aspect of Kohl's behavior goes unnoticed.

Nonetheless, Kohl, along with several other prominent CDU leaders trampled on the sacred core of Germany's post-Fascist, democratic political identity. This has created a remarkable power vacuum on the right, one which many political analysts contend is foreshadowed by the rise in mainstream popularity of Haider's Freedom Party in Austria as an example of a new pan-European conservatism. A discredited Christian Democratic party, it is feared, will have its place taken by a more extreme right-wing organization in the mold of Haider's organization. While Germany may currently be governed by an ostensibly leftist coalition led by Social Democrat Gerhard Shroeder. He, like many of the Third Way liberals of his era, is so remarkably conservative (read pro-free market, ambivalent about the welfare state) that in light of the CDU scandal, the transformation of German politics could not suggest a more serious moral crisis. In some respects, Austria's problems are nothing in comparison. Fears of an anti-democratic renewal in the heart of formerly Fascist Europe—such as those my American label friend harbored—finally became somewhat valid.

This all came to a head for me yesterday morning as I laid in bed, reading a story in *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* about Konrad Latte, a German Jewish conductor who survived the Second World War due to the kindness of anti-Fascist classical musicians in Berlin. The purpose of the article was to help deflate some of the more generalizing implications of Daniel Goldhagen's bestseller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Goldhagen essentially argues that the Holocaust occurred because anti-Semitism was a prejudice endemic to nearly every sphere of German society, not just the SS and Hitler's other fanatical cadres as many of us have been lead to believe. Pointing out the numerous musicians and conductors who helped prevent Latte from falling into Nazi hands, Schneider wanted to show that there were many Germans who did not fall into Goldhagen's less than forgiving political framework. In particular, members of the more moneyed, sophisticated class of individuals generally viewed as responsible for generating the kind of cultural consensus from on high that the masses need to do the dirty work of genocide.

As I read about a particularly gifted patron of Latte's who gave up a promising career conducting because he refused to play in front of the Nazi leadership, I was reminded of what my label owner friend had said the previous summer, and how I'd reacted to her. All of the sudden, I could see her husband wanting to be latter-day incarnation of that same conductor. Instead of directing an orchestra of woodwinds, strings and brass playing Strauss waltzes, he was supervising an ensemble of African and Asian American disc jockeys, Japanese noise merchants, European computer nerds and Jewish dub musicians creating collage-like sound representations of a more democratic, multicultural world.

For a long and painful second that seemed more like an eternity, I felt really stupid. I reminded myself that nothing is ever that simple, least of all culture's relationship to politics. When it's at its critical best, art generates images of better worlds that may not be historically real, but at least possible in the realm of ideas. That's a hell of a lot better than not having such thoughts at all, especially in a musical counter-culture whose professed radical politics are so superficial and cliché ridden. For a brief moment, I felt hopeful, indeed, inspired. These folks may not have a command of all the right buzzwords, I thought. But somehow they more than know what they're up to, and they're a hell of a lot more sensitive than most American leftists I know will ever fucking be. Even if it's all just a feeling, a metaphor trying to overcome its own impulsive and heartfelt abstraction, it is far superior to being wrong. In the end, that's the only thing that really matters. ◎

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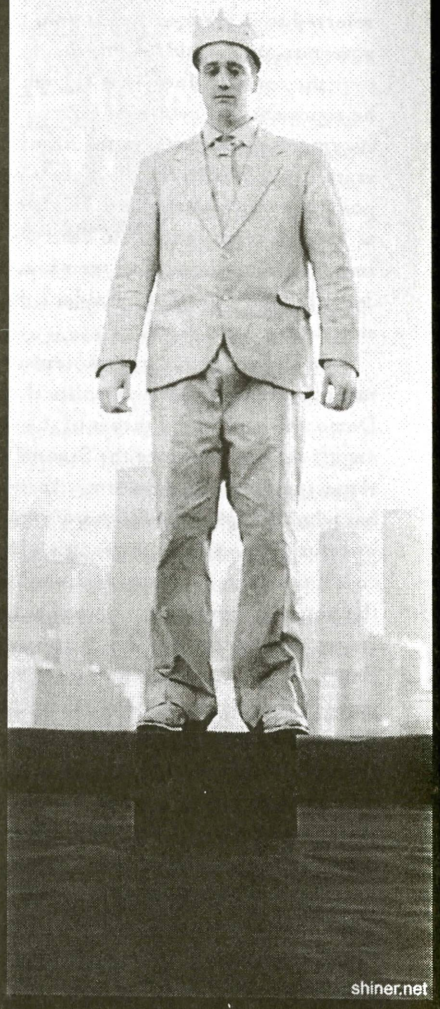

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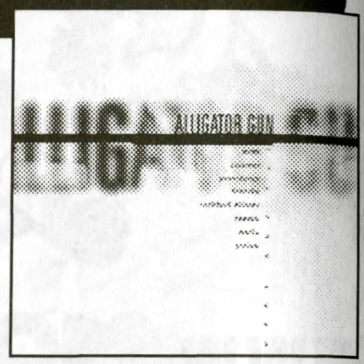

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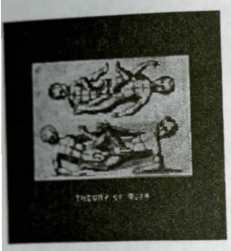

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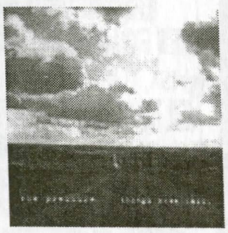

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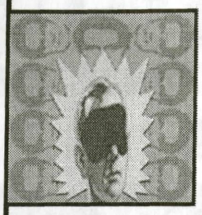

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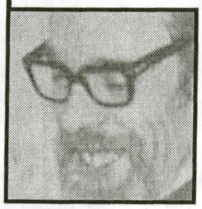

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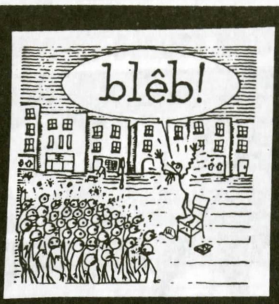

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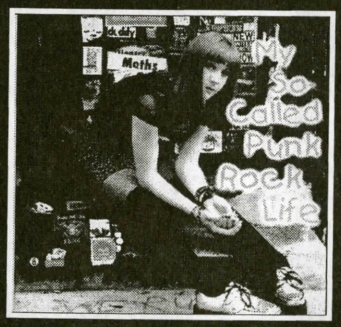

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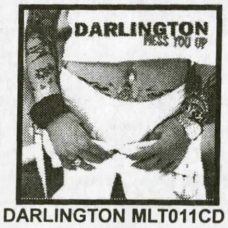

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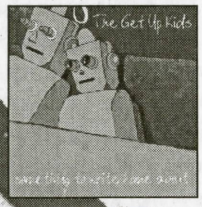

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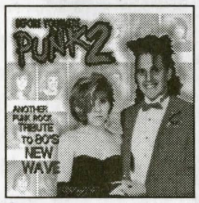

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For Lance Hahn, the '90s began with major label interest and ended in an emergency room. As a few of his close friends spent the latter half of the decade living comfortably as a result of punk's financial windfall, Hahn found himself closing out the millennium from a hospital bed, where he laid stiff and contemplated how he was going to pay his extensive medical bills after suffering from heart conditions. The last thing J Church's frontman thought about was his relevance within such a musically fickle decade—hell, he was just happy to be alive.

Six months later, when Hahn and I meet up in Downtown Berkeley, he seems filled with life. After we polish off a few rounds of Arnell's Pizza, he agreeably discusses his ailing heart and appears eager to reflect on the past decade—and his place in it.

The obvious starting point is J Church, who along with Jawbreaker, Monsula and, most famously, Green Day, helped define the often revered '90s Bay Area DIY scene. More than most of his contemporaries, Hahn was the prolific one: maintaing a staggering release schedule that would take his band's sound towards pop punk bliss—on a number of full lengths and a long list of 7"s. Hahn would issue some of those EPs on is own label, Honey Bear Records, along with discs by The VSS and Unwound. Somewhere along the way, Hahn also managed to work at *Maximum RockandRoll* 'zine while playing guitar for certified platinum collage demigod, Beck.

Most everyone Hahn surrounded himself with had walked such a line, whether it was Mac McGauhan or Billie Joe Armstrong, throughout the '90s. In one way or another, most of Hahn's friends had to wrestle with fame. Some signed to majors and were dropped or sold millions of records; others just broke up and joined him in a world of insecurities as it all came to a close.

It was an interesting time, certainly, and on the eve of the release of J Church's fifth proper full length, the ambitious *One Mississippi* (Honest Don's), Hahn set aside discussing his latest 26 song opus to discuss a decade he won't soon forget.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

What was the best thing about the '90s?

The best part of the '90s is that I didn't die. [laughs] ¶ Back in April or so, I thought I had bronchitis, so I went to the free clinic and they just freaked out. First, they thought I was either on crack, speed or cocaine. They kept asking me that over and over again before sending me to the emergency room over at San Francisco General Hospital. ¶ When I got there, they rushed me into the emergency room and started giving me all of this aspirin and stuff because they were so confused about what was happening with me. My blood pressure was out of control and my pulse was so fast they thought I should have been dead. They had trouble understanding how I could walk in my state. They started to immediately run tests on me. At that point, I was sure I was going to die. They thought I should have been dead. [pause] I really should have died.

Because of your pulse rate?

Partially. They said that in my condition, I should have had a heart attack and died. In fact, for the first day or two they were convinced that either I had a heart attack and didn't realize it, or I was on the verge of having one. So, they had me hooked up to all this machinery for about a week because they were certain that the heart attack was coming. It was really crazy. ¶ For a while there, I truly thought I was going to die. They couldn't figure out what was causing it—I'm a vegetarian and I pretty much quit drinking at that point, so it seemed like there was no reason for it. This is something that only happens to people in their eighties. So that caused them to go back to square one and test me for more stuff. They were sure I had one of two things: either full-blown AIDS or full-blown cancer—those were the only two things that would cause a condition like mine. So they ran tests on me and, thank god, they proved that I didn't have either of those things. But sitting in the hospital bed for a week thinking about those possibilities was just crazy. ¶ I was in the hospital for a little over a week and I still go to there now, at least once a month to get my blood done. I have to take medication every day. I'm still not over it. I don't know if I'll *ever* be over it.

What did they diagnose it as?

They said I have malignant hypertension and if I stop taking my medicine I'm going to die. They also noted that I have really high blood pressure. I don't have medical insurance, so I never go to the doctor and I never looked into it. They said I probably had really bad malignant hypertension for at least a year before I went to the hospital, but they said it could have been anywhere from four to five years and I just didn't know it. As a result of that, my heart got enlarged, and once it gets too big, it can't shrink down again. Once it does that, it'll be like that for the rest of your life. So, as a result of enlargement, my heart began pumping too fast, which caused it to push up against my lungs, thus, filling my lungs with blood—that's why I thought I had bronchitis. My heart was pushing up against my lungs, so I was coughing all the time. Then, because my heart was enlarged, it produced too much blood, which screwed up my kidneys. So I was pretty fucked all over! [laughs] Plus, I'm going to be in debt for the rest of my life. But I'm always in debt, so what can you do?

Jesus, that's awful.

Yeah, it's bad, especially considering that a day before—or even a year before—I could have dropped dead because of it, but it's at a point now that I have it under control. I can't go on a two-month long tour ever again, but we can still do stuff. We're still doing the new record.

***One Mississippi* will mark the 10th year you've done J Church, right?**

Well, nine years, because Cringer broke up in 1991, but J Church was even practicing before Cringer broke up, so it's been right around there. It's hard to even think of the band as even a year old, because there are always different people in it. In the 10 years I've been doing this, there have been 40 different lineups. [laughs] Really. There's no one in the band currently that was in the band four years ago, much less nine years ago!

Obviously, J Church is what consumed your life for a good chunk of the '90s. With that in

"At the very beginning we were putting out singles and people knew who we were. Which was good because on the one hand, it allowed us to never get caught up in any of the great trends of the '90s but at the same time, we could be *peripherally* involved."

mind, what do you think punk rock achieved in the past decade?

Everyone has argued back and forth about the major label thing and how punk went mainstream, thus, destroying it for a lot of people, but for us, we're not really a "punk" band in sound, so I feel more connected to the ethics. Someone like Bikini Kill or Fugazi was really important this past decade. 20 years ago, there were punk bands breaking through—people are still mesmerized the way Crass were a part of that. While they can seem really dated now, at the time Crass was really relevant and helped change people's attitude towards the music business. I think Fugazi achieved the same thing. Within the punk scene, they've been criticized a lot, probably more than even Nirvana or Green Day, which is really ironic, because if you know about J Church or you read *Punk Planet*, then your life is affected by what Fugazi did. Hell, there was a time when every punk show was $10. No one questioned a $10 or $15 door price. Going back as far as 1986, the idea of a $5 door price was ridiculous. When I first moved to California, there were very few people who were fighting the $15 door price. There were very few people who applied ethics to whatever they decided to do. Because of the anarchy crust punks, that idea got kind of ghetto-ized and Fugazi brought it back—they made these ideas seem more contemporary.

Also, they did it in a way that was really artistic and intellectual. They weren't just these street preachers who lived with their parents. It was a whole lot more.

I'm not trying to sound ageist, but they're all my age, if not older than me, and that *does* make a difference. Despite what anyone says, I'm 33 years old and there are not a lot of examples of people my age who continuously do this sort of thing. Most people my age are married or have kids and haven't been involved in a long, long time. Most of them would be floored to know that I still go to the Bottom of the Hill or that Fugazi are still together. In an age bracket centered around settling down, if you see people like Fugazi still sticking to their guns on this stuff and still doing things that are relevant, to me, that's really exciting.

No doubt, being able to produce music in the time period you recorded the bulk of your material, I think you got a really good vantage point on the way music operated in this decade, from both ends. There were people, friends of yours even, that took a really unlikely route for a punk band: signing to a major. And then, of course, there were bands like Fugazi. I would think that watching this community progress the way it did, would have only run second to the music.

Yeah, it *really* did. J Church has always been really lucky. Generally, people have always known who we were. There was never that struggle in the first five years to get our first single out. From the very beginning we were putting out singles and people knew who we were. Which was good because on the one hand, it allowed us to never get caught up in any of the great trends of the '90s but at the same time, we could be *peripherally* involved. Everything has its peak and if you've been *completely* associated with it, when the trend disappears, you will as well. That was never anything we had to deal with. We were always peripherally connected. It wasn't like anyone thought of J Church as a Riot Grrl band, but those were our friends. So when Riot Grrl came and went, we weren't lost in the trend, but we *were* somewhat involved in those ideas. Obviously, we live in the Bay Area and you can't help but be entrenched in that scene, but it has never been completely ours. I don't think people constantly associate us with Green Day. People may associate us with them because we live in the same area and we're friends, but we never had a huge hit. We never wound up on Warner Brothers or at Woodstock. [laughs] Nothing against those guys, but we were never a part of that.

A lot of bands around here were became a part of that though. Did you feel that at the time, when the curtain got pulled back and you were all invited in, that you got to see too much? Seeing your friends make millions and get on the cover of *Rolling Stone* had to affect you in some way.

Yeah, but for every friend I had on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, there was a friend that lost the rights to their songs or whatever. See, it's hard for me to say the curtain was pulled back and all of a sudden we realized that hopping in bed with the majors could be a big mistake. Before Nirvana, it never occurred to anyone that it was possible to talk to a major label. We didn't even know what an A&R person did! The concept of signing to a major was so far-fetched that no one even considered it. But, all of a sudden, when there's people standing around throwing money at you, I think you can't help but become curious. I've said this before, but I think that when it came to the Bay Area, every band was instinctively opposed to signing. Nobody thought it was great that Warner Brothers or DGC showed up. Most people just casually checked out what the majors had and were really quite hesitant to even do that. No one

Hopefully we're an example for people who want to do what they want. The fact that we're doing this and not announcing ourselves as anything, to me that's all I want people to pick up on.

thought it would be worthwhile. A lot of bands decided it was—some got lucky and others made a lot of mistakes. For us, getting lucky meant that we didn't sign.

Recently I interviewed someone who has gone through what Green Day went through and he said something that really stuck with me: In the case of his success, he thought how he climbed was important, but what he did when he got to the top was much more critical. To me, the majority of bands from around here, especially the ones who made millions, shrugged off such a notion.

Yeah, but that's not exclusively a Bay Area thing. That can be traced back to Nirvana. Nirvana really broke things wide open and because they came from more of a punk-inclined scene, they really proclaimed how relevant it was to struggle. Once they broke, that's when a glut of indie bands who would have never been in our community before, decided that we were the new way to super-stardom. After Nirvana, all these bands that didn't understand what Nirvana stood for, looked at them as a blueprint for how to successfully sell millions of records. Suddenly, you had people putting out 7"s who would have never even thought about it before. Most of these bands probably didn't know what a 7" was until their manager suggested that they do one. Suddenly these were the people we were surrounded by. Music *should* be about ambition, but after Green Day, that sort of thing lost focus here. Everything changed once there were millions of dollars to be had.

Aside from the tourists who stopped in, what was wrong with punk in the '90s?

There was a time when I first started getting into all of this stuff, that people would allow themselves to get into anything. It wasn't weird that you listened to the Buzzcocks and at the same time, one of the really weird Gang of Four records. Labels were putting out all sorts of records. There weren't specific labels for the emo side or the straight-edge side of things—it wasn't so specific. That was what disappointed me about the '90s. Certainly, it started in the '80s, but in the '90s, music become completely uniform-ized. Scenes became their own industries: there's no anarcho scene anymore, it's the vegan / crusty / anarcho "industry." ¶ People like Fugazi set an example and there's a very important reason for why they are doing all of this. Copy-catting music, these days, is not enough. Fitting a category is not enough. In fact, it's counterproductive.

It's funny, I think the thing to me about the '90s that really worked, was that there were tons of people who made themselves out to be great examples. But the thing is, no one picked up on that. At least not immediately. That's why you have Slint knock-offs, or whomever, still emerging today. Obviously, with Fugazi, people picked up on the ethics almost immediately, but with countless other musicians, their deference came much later. I think the '90s will mean a lot to a younger generation and its relevance is only going to come out in hindsight. Honestly, I think there's going to be a lot of inspiration supplied from the past 10 years, especially when people finally look back.

In the last 10 years, the most inspiring punk happening for me is a toss-up between the first time I saw Bikini Kill and the first time I saw Fugazi. For me, that's what I'll remember. Really, those are the only two times that I found a live performance to be completely shocking. I wasn't expecting how open both of those bands were on-stage. It wasn't like a punk show, they were doing something more than that. ¶ Being in a band, things can get really bad. There have been times when we've been playing and I thought to myself, "Why do we even play live? Why don't we just make records and stay in our bedrooms?" But, when you saw something like Bikini Kill or Fugazi, you felt like those people were making a difference. At the time, there weren't a lot of women involved in this scene other than the token bass player. [laughs] But Bikini Kill was controlling it all, while at the same time *creating* this scene. That's what made the '90s for me. Not that everything else sucked, but those are things that I think about most.

When other people inevitably have this conversation elsewhere, where do you hope to fit in with it?

I don't really know. I suppose—and I don't mean this in a token way—that I diversify what's happening in the underground scene. Obviously, on an intellectual level, a lot of what we're doing is different than any of the other scenes. I'm not saying we're this totally unique and different thing, because we're not, but we don't fit in with any of these particular scenes. We're not like Naked Aggression or The Promise Ring or like a lot of the bands we've been on labels with. But we're successful. We've been on MTV and first off, we're ugly and, secondly, I'm Chinese. When I was growing up, there were no Chinese people on MTV, except for the bass player for Rod Stewart. There were no examples of Chinese musicians, not that I'm a strong example, either. But I am *an* example. Hopefully we're an example for people who want to do what they want. The fact that we're doing this and not announcing ourselves as anything, to me that's all I want people to pick up on. Maybe that's what people will latch onto. For me, I'm just happy to be alive: hey, I *survived* the '90s! ◎

I first encountered Joseph A. Gervasi through *NO LONGER A FANzine*, the zine he published during the early 1990s. Not long afterwards, I began purchasing videotapes of hard-to-find films from his video service. A few years ago, he told me he was beginning to show horror and exploitation films at a theater in New Jersey. Exhumed Films has continued to grow since then. I talked to Joseph, Dan Fraga, and Jesse Nelson in late 1999 in order to spread the word about Exhumed Films and to hopefully inspire people to organize similar events.

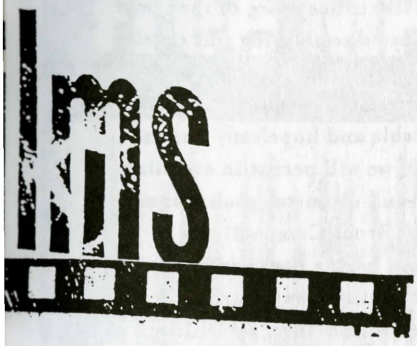
Interview by **Joel McLemore**

What motivated you to start Exhumed Films? When did you begin doing it?

Joseph Gervasi: Exhumed Films went from being four friends with an interest in horror films to a group dedicated to showing neglected genre classics in 35mm and on the big screen—where they deserve to be seen—in the fall of 1997. Jesse, Harry and I had gone to the Fant-Asia Film Festival in Montreal that summer and were very impressed that the type of films we loved so dearly could actually draw supportive fans

from across the world. We came back to New Jersey and Philadelphia inspired to do something. It was Dan's idea and enthusiasm that set us on the course we now follow—he can tell you more about that.

Dan Fraga: About a year or so before Joe, Jesse and Harry went to Fant-Asia, I had tried to organize a Halloween showing of *Evil Dead*, or any stinking horror film I could get my hands on. I approached several theatres, including the Harwan where we now show films, but couldn't make it happen because no theatre was willing to do the legwork of finding the film prints. I gave up on the idea due to my frustration with the theatres. ¶ But when the three of them came back from Montreal screaming about all the great movies they saw, I was re-inspired. The guys mentioned that Grindhouse Releasing in Los Angeles seemed to provide some of the prints they saw in Montreal, and I was able to contact them via e-mail and explain what we wanted to do. They rented us our



first film prints at a very reasonable price, and the Harwan also agreed to rent us the theater. This allowed our first show, a double feature of *Zombie* and *Gates of Hell*, to come together. We really owe our existence to Grindhouse in the sense that they were extremely helpful in getting our first shows off the ground.

Jesse Nelson: At first, we did not plan on this being an ongoing thing. We had hoped to get a decent crowd, have some fun and maybe do it again the next Halloween. But after that first show, we started to find other things to show and it just went on from there.

How do you get the films? I know many of them haven't been shown in the US for several years...

Jesse: You would be suprised what you can turn up when you start looking for it! You're right that many have not been shown in years, but that doesn't mean that they don't still exist. We get a lot of things directly from the studios and film depots—sometimes they don't even realize what they have until they start looking.

Joseph, I know you've been involved with booking shows in the area for years—are there similarities between promoting punk shows and showing films?

Joseph: I have been active in hosting hardcore punk shows in NJ and Philadelphia since around 1989. We started off doing shows at the very theatre we now host the films at: the Harwan Theatre in Mt. Ephraim, NJ. Since the Harwan was taking in almost no money for their films screenings—not much has changed since then—and bad local rock bands would sometimes perform before the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which was held their every Saturday night, we thought they might rent out to us so we could bring in some hardcore punk bands. They did, and soon we had local bands as well as bigger acts like Born Against, Sticks and Stones, Turning Point, Bugout Society, The Parasites and Neurosis playing at the Harwan. At the time, we were going to shows at Club Pizazz and Revival in Philly, but there wasn't really anything going on in South Jersey. For teenage kids without cars or rich parents, getting to Philly was difficult, so we needed to get some shows down here, too. Surprisingly, this worked fairly well, though it was comical to see these bands perform in a cavernous old movie theatre, with a rotten PA and punks slamdancing in the narrow aisles between the seats. Most of the bands had a really great time of it, though I can remember (much cleaner and scaled-down) Neurosis freaking out when they found out that my brother accidently opened a box of 7"s their label sent to them via us. They soon shut up when they got paid and saw the advantage of performing at such a low-overhead venue. ¶ After doing shows at the Harwan for a few years, we went on to move to Philly and began to do shows there as the Cabbage Collective. The Cabbage Collective hosted too many brilliant bands to begin naming, and continues to do so. The shows that we did in NJ and, more importantly, the shows we did in Philly under the Cabbage Collective moniker operated under very idealistic—but realistic—DIY standards. We rented from "right-on" churches or "socially-correct" groups like ACT-UP, we provided a smoke, alcohol and fight-free environment and encouraged audience members to bring vegetarian or vegan food to be shared by everyone. Tables were set up to sell things and disseminate information and we promoted an atmosphere of fun and working together. ¶ In coming into the Exhumed Films group, which has now superceded my efforts with the Cabbage Collective, I wanted to see the same sort of attitude. I didn't want four unapproachable demigods dictating what films would be shown from behind-the-scenes and never interacting with their supporters. I wanted to see a group scene that was open to discussion, criticism and filled with fun and enthusiasm. Door prices should never be inhibiting and the atmosphere at the theatre should be one in which everyone would feel safe. At the hardcore shows we dealt with skinheads and drunken fools who wanted to fight or harass others—it has been no different at the film screenings. Show a wild movie and you draw out a wild audience. Some people know how to have fun and others only know how to harass other audience members or even us—I have been spit on and nearly broke someone's nose at one film screening, a problem I *never* had at one of our hardcore shows. At either event, the solution is the same: Remove the bad element...sometimes forcibly. ¶ Exhumed Films shows are much like the hardcore shows in that there is a thrill that runs through the events that you don't feel when you are going to the corporate multi-plex to see the latest Hollywood cinematic abortion. These are not just movie screenings, they are events

Exhumed Films shows are much like the hardcore shows in that there is a thrill that runs through the events that you don't feel when you are going to the corporate multi-plex to see the latest Hollywood cinematic abortion.

with prizes, cool stuff for sale in the lobby—just like at punk shows—and friends getting together from across the area to see each other at the only place they can meet once a month or so. I've been very satisfied to infuse the attitudes and ideals of punk that still mean so much to me after 13 years in the scene into a whole new forum.

Dan: Boy, Joe has a lot to say on that topic! The only thing I'd add to that is that like Joe, I come a background in the Philly and New Jersey punk scene, though I was more often patron than organizer. It's very important for me that the shows retain the DIY ethic as much as humanly possible. This is why the door price is reasonable and has not gone up for the last two and a half years, although our rent has nearly doubled, and any profit made from the shows is reinvested in the group rather than divided amongst ourselves. Also, I like to try to keep the material we show accessible and egalitarian. This is tough when dealing with horror films, since so much of the genre has a tendency to be sexist. ¶ Inevitably, if you come to one of our shows you're gonna see a film in which one or more women are naked. However, I think we try our best to stay away from films that are overtly sexist or offensive. I know that personally I get queasy at films which become terribly misogynistic, like *Cannibal Ferox*, which we did show. I'm concerned about offending or upsetting the audience, particularly female patrons. Contrary to what some assume, horror is not exclusive to males, and we do get a good number of women at the shows. Now, I don't want this to be seen as a "We've got to protect the women-folk!" argument, which is sexist in itself; I just feel we're responsible for keeping the environment of the shows fun and positive, and I for one don't want to give some yahoo in the audience yet another opportunity to yell "Show us your boobs!"

How did you go about getting your venue?

Jesse: Dan has to be given most of the credit for this. He and Harry looked around at a bunch of different theatres. Some didn't want to rent to us and some pretended like they didn't want to rent to us by asking for a ridiculous fee. The Harwan just ended up being the most convenient for both price and location.

Dan: I used to perform at the Harwan as a "cast member" when they showed the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* in the 1980s, so the owners knew me pretty well. When I approached them about the theatre, they were dealing with someone they were familiar with and were maybe a little more willing to agree to it.

Do a walk-through of how you do a showing, from start to finish.

Dan: It's a lengthy process, but here's the Cliff's Notes version: First the four of us sit around and think about movies we'd like to show. We then start searching various sources, like studios, private collectors and Internet sites, for information on tracking down 35mm prints. Once we've booked or at least located prints, we book the Harwan Theatre for a double-feature. ¶ Then we advertise like crazy— we post fliers throughout Philadelphia; hit the horror newsgroups and websites on the 'net; send e-mail announcements to our list; and if it's a big enough show, we often do a postcard mailing to our mailing list of over 300 patrons. ¶ On the night of the show, we try to arrive at the theater by 9:30 or so. We set up a table for selling t-shirts, videos, magazines and assorted horror accessories—this is also a great way to attract people to sign up for the mailing list. ¶ As patrons enter the theater, they pay $7 and get a ticket stub which enables them to win a prize. At about 10:30-10:45, Joseph and I usually take the stage and do our shtick: We announce upcoming shows, warn the audience that if they're not good little boys and girls they'll be thrown out, tell everyone to clean up their own trash and end on a high note by giving away cool prizes like shirts, videos and CDs. Finally, the theater dims, the trailers roll, and—at long last—the show begins!

Do you have any advice for people who are interested in showing films?

Jesse: Find a nice, family-run theatre or perhaps a second-run theatre. Most of the big chains want a fortune for a theatre rental and then don't want to cooperate. We have gotten e-mail from people that have started doing this same sort of thing with success, so it can be done.

What do you have planned for the year 2000? What are some films that you want to show?

Joseph: I'd like to see more of the same! We are dedicated to showing cult classics and forgotten gems, and I think by continuing to present a fusion of the commercially viable and hopelessly uncommercial fare, we will persist in attaining our initial—and ultimate—goals. Since bringing out Bruce Campbell to a screening and having the talents behind the indie feminist revenge thriller *A Gun For Jennifer* at their screening proved to be such a success, we'd like to be able to bring out more filmakers in 2000. We'd also like to showcase more newer, independent films. While the classics of the late '60s to early '80s will always be our primary focus, we want to be able to cast a light on the talented new filmmakers who are still struggling to get their work seen. We really want to remove the pretension and stuffiness from repertory cinema and stick it to the man in the process! ◎

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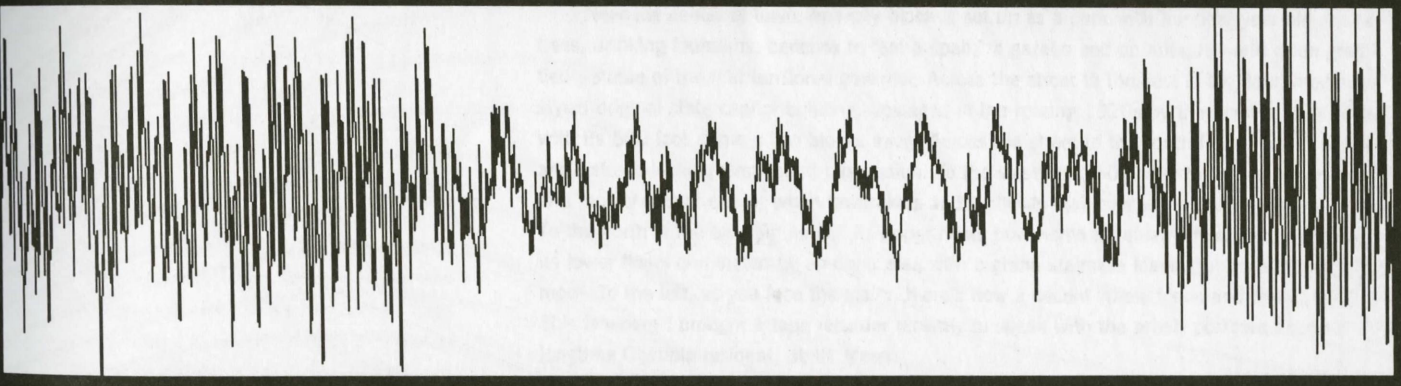

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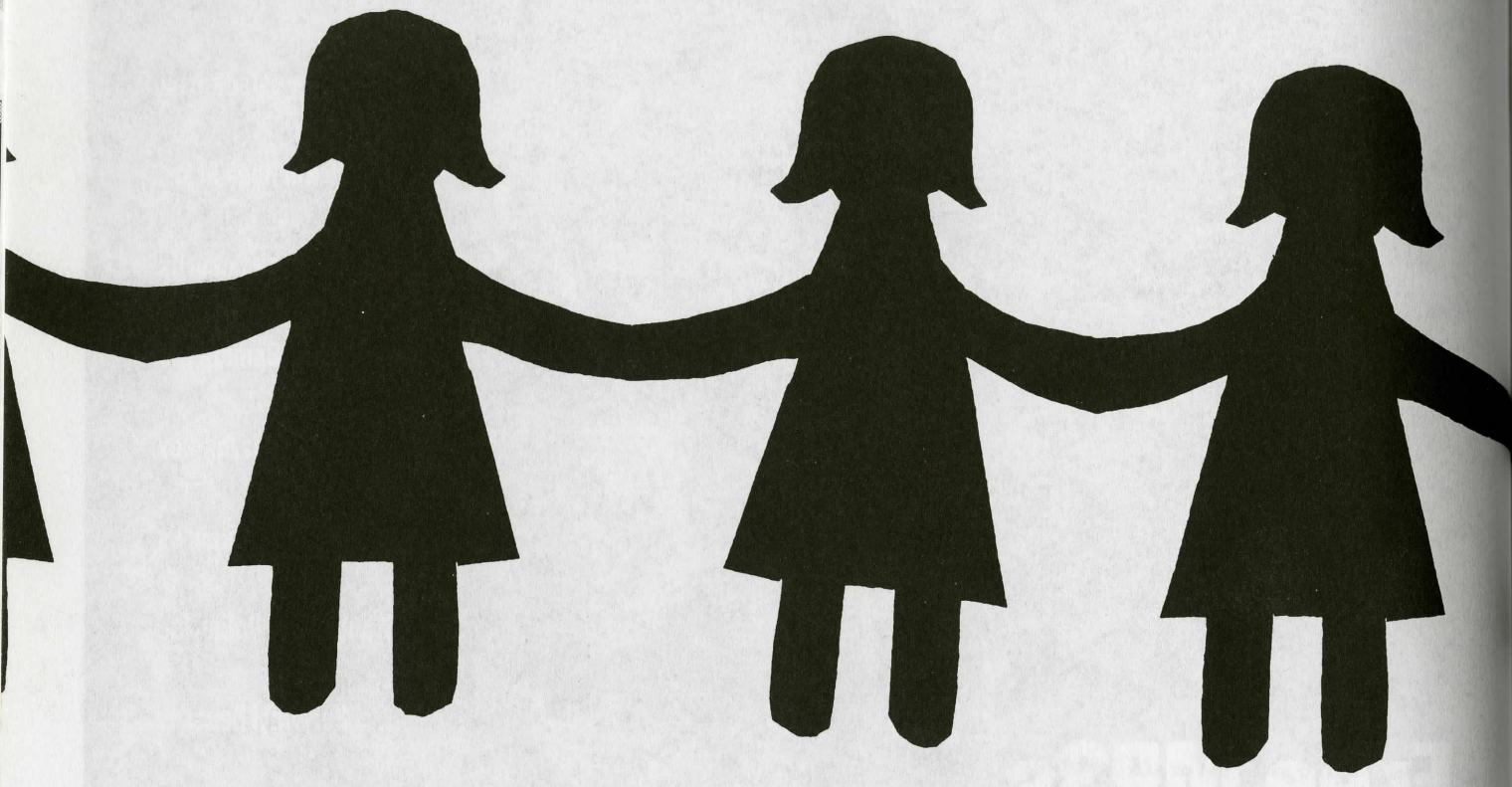

THERE WERE 100,000 IMAGES IN MY BRAIN OF WHAT GIRLS AND WOMEN LOOKED LIKE. HOW DO I RESOLVE THE FACT THAT POWDER BLUE, THIS PARTICULAR HAIR CUT, THIS PARTICULAR FABRIC AND THIS PARTICULAR DRESS SHAPE THAT ACTUALLY TRANSLATES FORM TO A CERTAIN ARCHETYPE OF FEMALE—WHAT DO I DO WITH THAT IMAGE HAVING BEEN EMBEDDED IN ME SO DEEPLY? *I had to redefine it.*

Stella Marrs

If you've ever seen Frank Capra's famous 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life* or Andy Griffith's *Mayberry RFD* television series from the late 1950s and early 1960s, you'll feel like you've already visited downtown Olympia, Washington. It's not a big place, just a dozen or so city blocks clumped around the intersection of two main streets.

Near the center of town, one city block is set up as a park with hundred-year-old shade trees, drinking fountains, benches to "set a spell," a gazebo and an antique—and often graffitied—statue of the first territorial governor. Across the street to the east is the dour, medieval-styled original state capitol building, upstaged in the roaring 1920s by the present state house with its 500 foot dome a few blocks away. Across the street to the south lies a forever rumpled and unfresh-looking Greyhound bus station. To the west, a 1960s hotel tower sits—over-priced and mostly vacant except when lawmakers and lobbyists stay over while the legislature is busy. To the north is the old "big hotel," its upper floors now home for elderly, fixed-income residents, its lower floors dominated by an open area with a grand staircase leading up to a fabulous ballroom. To the left, as you face the stairs, there's now a decent whole foods and pasta restaurant. This is where I brought a tape recorder recently to speak with the artist, postcard designer, and longtime Olympia resident, Stella Marrs.

Stella's work with large groups of young women in the 1980s provided the essential social and aesthetic link between the Womens Lib movements of the 1970s and the Riot Girl expressions of the 1990s. This not a big place. When she and her collaborators were in operation, they dominated the social scene for the town's resident population of creative young adults, both male and female.

The alliances, reactions and residue provoked by Stella's projects such as *Girl City* (1982), a female artists' boutique in a pink storefront downtown, and *50 Girls/50 States* (1986), an experimental revisiting of American debutante culture, continue to resonate in the cultural output of this community.

Interview by **Lloyd Center**

I was curious to learn that *Girl City* was controversial because of your use of the word "girl." It seemed like there was a generation of women for whom part of their political program had been to achieve respect. "Girl" was diminutive and that word to them was the undoing—it represented a big step back for the idea of women working to create power.

I always had this one particular relationship with the word "girl" that was very personal. It came from having lived in Japan because my dad was in the army there from age six to 10 and then moving to the Northwest and having this girlfriend that was my friend. Her mom was Japanese and her dad was American. I was in the fifth grade and we were best friends. We would walk around the playground with our arms linked and there was such an incredible taboo to that—it just pissed me off. I knew what the taboo was about but also I knew how really stupid and ridiculous it was that I couldn't walk arm-in-arm with another girl that was 11 years old in a public space. ¶ From that point on, I felt that a certain kind of innocent energy that girls have—the kind that has a lot of laughter and a lot of bonding, and a lot of happiness and a lot of friendliness in it—at some point, everyone tries to smear it out from being alive. That was my relationship with the word "girl." ¶ *Girl City* represented a place where that kind of energy could still exist. I was like, "Yeah, yeah. I know, you're supposed to use the word 'women,' but I don't care because that's not what I'm thinking about right now."

How is it that it didn't get reversed in that particular group?

I don't know. I think it's just that I had that kind of energy and I had certain relationships with girls, and we were giggling—that's what it was about. So we just did it. Yeah, there was a lot of flak from all over the place. But when anything is so taboo, you've got to really ask "what's that about?"

As opposed to having a program or an ideology, you've tended to just work from a particular experience and follow your intuition about what's right from that experience.

I guess the bottom line of what I know is that it has to make sense to me. If I'm going to make things in the world, it has to make sense to me 100 percent. I don't really know any other way to approach making work.

You did four "girl" projects in the '80s: *Girl Girl, Girl City, 50 Girls/50 States* and *Science for Girls*. I feel like in this community, your insistence on using that particular word and using it over and over again while manifesting the particular kind of energy that you were describing with that word—over time, it was like you were starting an engine. It has had a lasting effect.

I guess so. I mean I *hope* so. That would be great.

You were not being a rebel for rebel's sake. You had a sense of something that was right in a situation—in a system—that was wrong.

Yeah.

When did you become aware that there were different cultures of resistance? Like what year was that? What year would you have been 11?

1970.

Many people were resisting the Vietnam War, not to mention criticizing the American system at that time.

Well you know, my mother was Swiss. She spoke five languages. She left her family because it was too "Swiss"—too enclosed, too restrictive of her spirit. So I think having partially grown up with this woman who was European, who sort of just did whatever she damn well pleased helped show me that life is not a perfect thing that you just go along with. You have to do what makes sense to yourself.

What does it mean to you to be an American?

That's an overwhelming question. You asked me that when we spoke earlier too. I was thinking about it and thought about the 1940s. There is something about those images of women with their aprons on, in the garden or the kitchen, in the laundry, on the street, doing what they think has to get done to make the world good somehow. The thing about those particular '40s images is that in some weird way they're connected to European peasant imagery—ruddy cheeked, physical, earthbound, faces uplifted, the sun, the wind and sprit. Something about that is what drives me. Some kind of European idea about making things.

Do you mean it's European in that so many Americans are European if you go back to the old country?

Exactly. But I'm also talking about the way things are made there or the way food is dealt with. The best thing about it: To not be wasteful. That's like religion to me: to not waste.

Getting back to the question of the conflict surrounding the word "girl"—your sense of holding on to that term was strictly personal, it wasn't political. Was your position in some way advocating that those women organized around, for example, feminist causes, had left the concept of femininity out of their new culture and that they ought to recoup it? Now you're talking about connecting to women of the '40s. My impression from observing the trend of '70s feminism—to use a couple of totally generalized words—is that there was something about the way that they were approaching women's culture that denied a kind of traditional power in femininity that their mothers once held.

Sure.

I've looked at your project and your work and some of the work from people you've collaborated with as a way of connecting back to energy sources such as "girl" energy and "grandmother's home-made apron" energy. I wonder if you were conscious of that?

Sure I was.

I guess what I'm getting at is that you were more like, "C'mon you people, let's go this way—this is the way to go to connect with women, with the culture that's available as women." As opposed to just simply, "This is my personal objection."

It's not until now that I've ever even made that connection. Having been born in the late 1950s, the debris of femininity was my language to wade through. There were 100,000 images in my brain of what girls and women looked like. How do I resolve the fact that powder blue, this particular hair cut, this particular fabric and this particular dress shape that actually translates form to a certain archetype of female—what do I do with that image having been embedded in me so deeply? I had to redefine it.

How did you go about doing that?

I think *50 Girls/50 States* was a really amazing project. In 1986, to take the shape of the debutante dress form, (which is a triangle that starts at the waist and goes to the ground—a triangular shape that protects, pedestals and mimics the vagina inversely,) and then have fifty girls make their own dress based on it, and wear it for a whole day in public, has a certain kind of emotional resonance. And

then to go through these series of activities with that, it really hit the fan, you know? Boy, there was a lot of fallout.

Can you summarize what happened at *50 Girls/50 States*?

Over about a three-month period, there was this mounting rally of girls and women in Olympia becoming "states" for the annual Lakefair parade. They would make their own dress to their own specification of interpreting "world peace," and the idea of a "debutante." *50 Girls/50 States: Women for World Peace*—that was the whole title of it. ¶ As that idea was executed, these *50 Girls/50 States: Women for World Peace* went through all these activities—individually or in large groups; or as a whole group that made posters and outfits—they had garage sales, fundraisers, bake sales, learned how to dance, and found a place to do it. ¶ I raised money from all the local businesses to get Tim Brock to write a piece of music of all 50 state songs and then they all sold tickets for this fundraiser that happened in the ballroom upstairs here. ¶ It was pretty weird. But on a political level, what I think is so important and necessary is for women to work together and to learn *how* to work together. The whole time I was doing it, it wasn't so much that I was thinking we were doing this particular one shot deal, as we were laying down a relationship to do other things. ¶ *50 Girls/50 States* was a really great embryonic experience where I was able to be both the agitator and catalyst who figured out how to make about 200 people move; how to get resources out of a community; how to synch up people's energy; and how to have many different levels of activities happening and have it all done more or less for free. That was the bottom line. ¶ I'm happy to say I was able to do that. I was able to take an idea and execute it. It took a real physical toll on me. That's when I realized that there were a lot of things about doing work in the world I didn't know how to do and I had better stop trying to work with groups until I figure those things out. I retired from group activity after that. It was my blow out.

Your process seems to be to *transform* things, as opposed to just fencing them off by having a rule that says, "No we don't go there." Your process seems to be in order to transform something—to take it somewhere else—first you have to hold it.

Yeah I guess so.

What you've described sounds like a movie of a Sunday church jubilee or something which I think most people nowadays would only know through a movie unless they were Fundamentalist Christians. It seems like it was your own approach to the "Traditional Family Values" or "Traditional Community Values" that were dominating American culture during the 1980s.

I never had those kinds of values. I never personally experienced them.

You said it was weird. Are you glad it was weird? It wasn't funny or ironic. It seems to me like *weird* is your payoff for this kind of stuff.

This is why I'm using the word weird: because I'm not a queen and I don't think like a queen. I don't pull the power plays of the traditional queen—that would ultimately be evil. In this kind of a process, I'm pretty much egoless because that's the only way I know how to go about it. Consequently, there isn't a chain of command of someone being told exactly what to do. The problem is that it makes people feel like, "Oh my god, nobody's driving the boat! What's wrong?" People want the boat to be driven and they want to be assured that the boat's being driven *somewhere*. It was "weird" because they had to drive the boat themselves—the *50 Girls/50 States* had to drive the boat themselves, and they felt kind of pissed off about it. ¶ I felt kind of like, "There. Now you have to step into your high heels don't you?" So that's the funny part. At best it was really empowering and it changed people's lives. At it's worst, people got really upset because they thought they had participated in this thing that was completely disorganized and a disaster in their own minds. I was very pleased because I like open systems, where people have to figure things out for themselves and just do them. I think that the more people are comfortable with that kind of an idea, the better off everyone's going to be. ¶ Now here's a completely separate issue about *50 Girls/50 States* that I haven't touched on that *for me* is one of the most interesting parts about it: How can you be so mad at someone that you want to rip their fucking eyes out and learn how to have enough self-control and perspective to deal with them in a completely civil manner? In fact you have to be so civil that you're able to sweet talk them into doing what you want them to do. I had to learn really fast or the whole thing was going to explode.

That seems so turn the idea of "envisioning world peace" on its end, wouldn't you say? What do you imagine world peace would be like?

What I learned is that there is no such thing, nor could there ever be. If 50 girls from almost the same socio-economic and racial groups cannot get along through a simple thing like marching in a goddamn parade and making a dress and going to a dance, what hope does the world have? The best you can do is try to be really kind in each moment as best you can. That's the best you can fucking do.

IF 50 GIRLS FROM ALMOST THE SAME SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RACIAL GROUPS CANNOT GET ALONG THROUGH A SIMPLE THING LIKE MARCHING IN A GODDAMN PARADE AND MAKING A DRESS AND GOING TO A DANCE, WHAT HOPE DOES THE WORLD HAVE?

What have you done since that experience?

Well immediately afterwards I went in my room and I locked the door and I drank the rest of the champagne that was left over from the ball for four days short of visiting a friend. Since then I lived in nature and saw how it works in a more involved way than I knew about. I read a ton of books. Then I started making postcards that had ideas on them and marketed them. That became my economic base. I would go in and out of different ideas where I would read and research intensively and then some throw-off of those ideas would happen in the postcards. I got married and I had a little girl. Now hopefully I'm stepping into this next place where I can do more in-depth research and development of ideas and put them out in other formats. ◎

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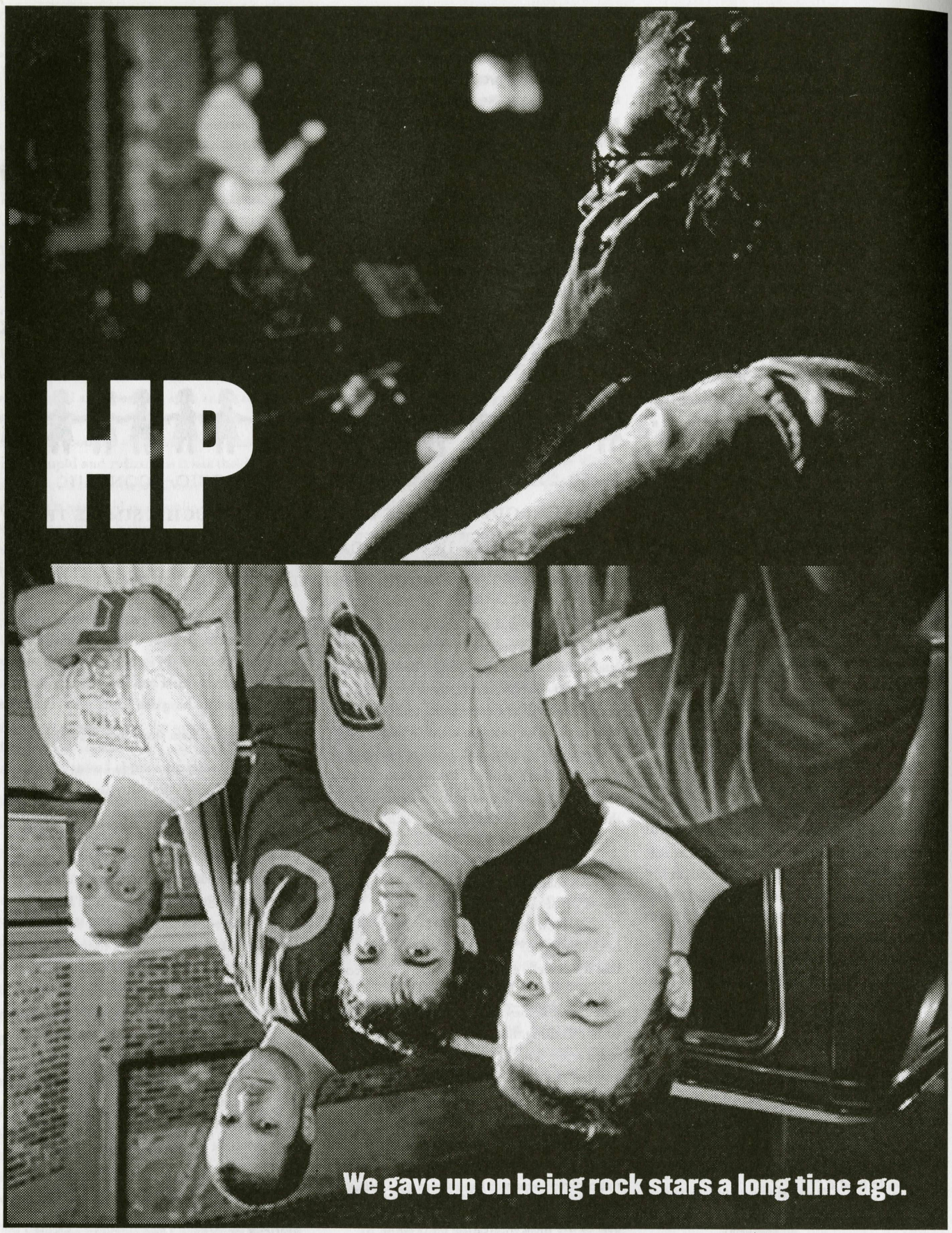

HP
We gave up on being rock stars a long time ago.

In an Internet chatroom somewhere are several nerds discussing the idiosyncrasies between the version of Jawbreaker's "Boxcar" on the *Old Glory* 7" and the version that appeared on *24 Hour Revenge Therapy*. As they prattle on about the hundred bucks they just dropped for a first pressing of *Whack & Blite* on eBay, the fanatics behind Jawbreaker's posthumous hysteria will talk about Chris Bauermeister, the newest member of Chicago's long-established punk outfit, Horace Pinker. And some silly person will label the band "ex-Jawbreaker."

It has already happened—nevermind that the band existed for eight years before Bauermeister joined. But a new line-up is only part of the new Horace Pinker Era.

Guitarist Matt Arluck joined the band in the spring of 1998, shortly before bass player Miguel Barron left the band. During the interim, Karl Eifrig from Lynyrd's Innards filled in and co-wrote and recorded the band's new full-length, *Pop Culture Failure*. Chris Bauermeister joined in the spring of 1999; it was his first musical foray since the break up of Jawbreaker.

After a four-year drought of any substantial releases, Horace Pinker has an onslaught of records out this year. Not that the deluge was premeditated—*Pop Culture Failure* has endured a long, complicated road to get released. Originally recorded for Onefoot Records, it is being released by Jump Up Records. *Copper Regret*, a CDEP released by Coldfront Records, was recorded nearly a year after *Pop Culture Failure*, but came out first. The band also plans to release *Seven Mile Road* in the fall, a collection of 7"s, b-sides, compilation tracks and new material.

There have also been geographic hurdles for the band to jump. Guitarist/vocalist Scott Eastman now lives in Boston, where he is studying for a PhD. Same thing, different city for Bauermeister, who goes to Purdue. With jobs, careers and marriages (Eastman's tying the knot this fall) on the horizon, never before have the members Horace Pinker had such demanding lives outside of the band.

Nevertheless, Horace Pinker has survived and evolved—and it might be just in time to test their mettle. In a scene still smitten with a three-piece from San Francisco, Horace Pinker has to shine as a four-piece from Chicago.

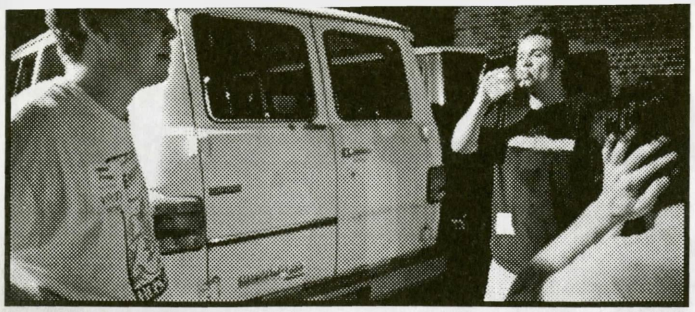
Interview with Matt Arluck (guitars/vocals), Chris Bauermeister (bass), Scott Eastman (guitars/vocals) and Bryan Jones (drums).

Interview by **Kyle Ryan**

How did the record end up on Jump Up? That wasn't where it was going initially, right?

Bryan Jones: We had an agreement in '97 to do our next record with Onefoot, but since then Onefoot had gone through a lot of changes. The owner of Onefoot, Rick Heyman, is a great guy. He does the label out of love for the music, and he and Onefoot have done a lot for Horace Pinker, but some of the decisions he has made about the operation of Onefoot have not been what we thought were in the best interest of the band. Everything is cool between us, and Onefoot has gotten back the investment that they put into the recording, so no one is getting screwed.

Scott Eastman: We twisted our old friend Chuck Wren's [from Jump Up Records] arm, and he cried, and he said, "Okay, goddammit, I'll put that fucking record out, now stop twisting my arm." And we're down with a cool band on the label called Telegraph, who also twisted his arm and made him cry. I think he runs a great operation, and he's cool, and he lives in our hometown, so we'll be able to work closely with him and not have to talk long distance to our label. And he pushes those units, if you know what I mean.



HP When Horace Pinker was at

How frustrating has it been to get this record released?

Bryan: It's always been this way for Horace Pinker. All of our records have taken forever to get out. We have never been a "signed band" for a recording process. We have always recorded the records without a label and then put the pieces together later. It sucks to have to do it that way, but we are used to it. I think that has been a big problem for the band though. We have never had a label constantly hyping us, and that's what it takes. Hell, we have toured 17 countries and released dozens of records, but we are still an unknown band.

The chronology of your records is confusing. *Pop* was recorded quite some time ago, but came out this summer. *Copper Regret*, recorded nearly a year after *Pop* and with a new addition to the band, came out in April. What happened?

Chris Bauermeister: I'm a new addition, huh? What am I, a new playroom for the kids or a guest bedroom for grandpa?

Bryan: We started recording *Pop Culture Fanatic* in September of '98. Due to schedule conflicts, we didn't finish the record until April '99. Then we had some issues with Onefoot, and that was not resolved until January 2000. So, it's been a long and weird process. As for *Copper Regret*, we decided to record this CDEP for Coldfront in October of '99. We booked three days in the studio and knocked the sucker out. There were no issues with Coldfront, so the record was pushed through.

Chris, how did you end up in Horace Pinker? How has the songwriting process has differed from Jawbreaker—if it has at all?

Bryan: Unlike Jawbreaker, we try to get him to sing!

Chris: It's sort of convoluted. I moved to Chicago because I'm going to grad school at Purdue in Indiana. I ran into the Pinker boys at a Jets to Brazil show last year and got Scott's e-mail. Lucy, my girlfriend, and I didn't really know anybody here in Chicago, and we were looking for someone to hang out with besides our schoolmates—few of whom know jack about punk rock. I think it was at last year's Super Bowl party that Bryan asked me if I wanted to join. I wasn't sure if I had the time, but then my roommate in Indiana, Mass Giorgini, who recorded *Pop Culture*, played me a few songs off of it, and I thought it was great. So, one thing led to another, and here I am—on weekends and school holidays only. ¶ As for the songwriting process, it's different in that there's a lot more equal input from everyone in the band; I feel like I'm part of the band rather than just playing bass for someone else's songs.

***Copper Regret* was an EP released late last year and it seems the prevailing sentiment among you is that it's the band's most ambitious release. Why is that?**

Chris: I think it continues with the kind of songwriting from *Pop Culture* that brought me to Horace Pinker in the first place.

Bryan: It just worked. We put this record together in two weeks and recorded it in three days, and it turned out to be the best thing we have ever done. I think we were very focused on the record, and that made it easier to pull it together. Plus, vocally the thing rocks. We tried a lot of different things vocally, and they all seemed to work out. Scott sang his little heart out!

Scott: I sang a lot, and we practiced very little prior to recording it—this equals ambition and/or stupidity.

It seems *Copper* was written and recorded in a somewhat hurried style because of geographical and time restraints. How does the songwriting process work now that you can't practice regularly and live apart?

Bryan: We are back to the way things used to be! When Horace Pinker was at its most active point, none of us lived in the same town. I think we work better that way. I think that is why we have been able to stay together for this long. It's like when you go home to visit your parents: Things are great for the first week or so, but then it's time to leave. Horace Pinker works the same way. I think that is why we have been able to stay friends and work together.

Scott: We write over the telephone; I sing a melody, Matt sings a guitar harmony, Chris hums a harmonious bass line, and Bryan adds the rhythmic mellifluence of his percussive instrumental stylings!

Chris for you, *Copper* was your first release since 1995's *Dear You*. You'd been away from the studio for five years. What was it like coming back?

Chris: It was surprisingly easy, especially recording with Mass. I actually prefer to work much more quickly—although that's apparently not Mass' usual technique. It worked out fine on this. I'm actually kind of unprofessional when it comes to recording. I don't sweat too much about perfection, I just try to play along with whatever's going on. Hey, I've got it easy—I only have to play one note at a time.

It's interesting because it seems that so far, there's been little fanfare about your joining Horace Pinker, at least not compared to the hoopla over Jets to Brazil—and you really don't seem to mind. You probably prefer it. How do you think Jawbreaker's legacy will impact your work with Horace Pinker?

Chris: I do prefer it. I think a band should be dealt with as a whole, not as individual celebrities. As I've said before, that's what I really like about Horace Pinker. That's one thing I really hated about the whole major label thing—they don't seem to know how to market anything but divas. I'm realistic enough to

its most active point, none of us lived in the same town. I think we work better that way.

recognize that *Copper Regret* is going to get a certain degree of "ex-Jawbreaker" marketing, but if that gets more people to listen to Horace Pinker, great. On the other hand, I think it's preposterous if that eclipses the band in any way—the band was around long before I joined it. Hell, we toured with them! That's where I know them from originally.

Bryan: I also think Jets to Brazil was pretty much signed from the get-go and had a pretty big label hyping the hell out of them before they ever released anything. Horace Pinker has not had that.

Chris brings up an interesting point: How do you feel when someone labels Horace Pinker "ex-Jawbreaker"?

Bryan: I could care less. The way I look at it is if more people check us out because of Chris, that's great. But I think it is the music that will keep them coming back, and that is what is important to me. And maybe these people will also get turned onto the old stuff too. I just want people to have access to the record. We gave up on being rock stars a long time ago.

Matt Arluck: I haven't had anyone label Horace Pinker "ex-Jawbreaker." Not kids, not friends, not fans or zines. I think people do realize the band has been around for a while and just accepts that we got a new bass player. It just so happens he was an integral part of one of the most inspirational punk bands ever.

***Copper* and *Pop* are pretty clear departures from the path Horace Pinker was taking with *Burn Tempe*, and they're light years away from *Power Tools*. What do you think is behind the change?**

Scott: I have to disagree with you. I think the new stuff is more like *Power Tools* in that the songs are dissimilar. Some are poppy, some are—dare I say—emo, and a couple are more like hardcore. I think *Power Tools* has songs that fit in all those categories as well, and it couldn't be pigeonholed. We never wrote according to the unisong theory—like a few West Coast bands I know—and maybe that's why some people don't like us. If anything, what separates the new stuff is that it's more refined and has clearly superior production but doesn't sacrifice the inner punk of the songs.

Bryan: I think we have kind of gone back to the *Power Tools* era of writing songs, with the main difference being that we are better musicians now. After nine years of playing together, we are writing better songs. We were doing this kind of stuff back in '94, but we got diverted with *Burn Tempe*.

Scott: One of the most important things is writing with and for two guitars. I really like writing songs with Matt, and the songs are so much better when we write as a team.

Now *Seven Mile Road* will be released on your label, Offtime. It also experienced a sort of rejuvenation as well, but it hasn't all been good stuff.

Bryan: Yes, after two years of hell, I am getting Offtime going again. I was so sickened by this emo band that was on my label, their management, and their LA record label, that I practically gave away their CD to another label. After all the threats and shit-talking—the owner of this LA label, a grown man, called me and threatened to have skinheads beat me up—I decided to take a break. It's a real shame when bands that you have known for years and thought were your friends turn out to be nothing but a bunch of music industry back stabbers. They talk all this shit behind your back but are your best friends to your face. All I know is what goes around comes around.

Brutal. With all of these releases, it seems as if Horace Pinker has been reborn this year—just when you all have busy lives outside the band. Do you have any concerns about your schedules?

Matt: I do. I mean, I work 40-something hours a week, play in Deminer and have other projects. Plus, I'm trying to get some time to take some classes to learn how to use my goddamn computer. So it can get tricky for sure.

Chris: Actually, one of the things I like about Horace Pinker is that we're all busy; I don't feel bad that I can't devote all my spare time. I've got papers to write, dammit!

Bryan: Yeah, I guess you could say we have been reborn. As for schedules, not really. I have a really cool job that allows me a lot of freedom—I'm a web developer—but at the same time I am not looking forward to living in a van again. The cool thing now will be to balance the two, which I think we can do.

What are you studying, anyway?

Scott: I'm working on a history MA, I'm a year behind Herr Bauermeister, who is my history mentor—I get all of the goods on Early Modern Germany from him. Just ask him about the issue of agrarian reform in the early modern period under the Habsburgs, I dare you.

Chris: Yeah, right. The people reading this will be thrilled to know I'm examining the development of the state in early modern Europe, particularly the interdependence of social, cultural, and political ideologies and practices in the Holy Roman Empire.

Now if these records do really well, how will it affect your plans outside of the band?

Bryan: I'm not counting on any of that. It's like I said, we gave up on being rock stars a long time ago. If people get into the record, it will be cool to play in front of some more people when we tour, but that's about it. Maybe we will be able to cover our expenses on the road. That would be a first! ◎

Q AND NOT U

"D-O-W-N and that's the way we get down." I glance around me at the crowd at the front of the stage in DC's historic Wilson Center show space. Any punk rock historian could cite the groundbreaking shows that took place here in the 80s—crazy, frenetic, mobbed shows with punk rock, passion, and community at dead-center. And it's here that I find myself, a 21-year-old punk chick in the Y2K, surrounded by the new light and energy of Q and not U.

The kids are all singing along—there is the vibrant sense of community, of ownership among the bodies congregated here. Onstage, you can feel that there is something more happening here than just kids and guitars.

With a single jointly released by Dischord and DeSoto Records in February, Q and not U now has a chance to reach out to new audiences all over the country. I spoke with Chis Richards (guitar), John Davis (drums), Harris Klahr (guitar) and Matt Borlik (bass) on the eve of their single's release.

Interview by **Katy Otto**

There has been a lot of interest and energy surrounding your band in the past year. What role do you think you play in the DC music community?

Harris Klahr: I don't think we have a special role, I just feel like we're a part of it. There are very few people that you can say have a specific role in the community. We are just a part of the community that we choose to exist inside.

Chris Richards: There has been this idea going around for the past couple of years that the younger bands in this city have been kind of blocked out by the older bands. I was definitely feeling that vibe two years ago, but now I don't feel it at all. If you try to play out and work at a band that you're really proud of, those kinds of barriers and generational divides start to dissipate. You just have to keep working and keep yourself involved.

Matt Borlik: Plus we have a bunch of people from the "old" DC busting their asses and helping us out.

How do you think that growing up and being introduced to music in this area has shaped your working and operating as a band, and as individuals within a band?

John Davis: If you listened to any of our band meetings or any of our fiery discussions about how we want to run this band, I think it is very clear that we were born out of the DC music scene. We were raised in a certain way; we want to always play shows that everyone can go to and we want to play in situations that we are morally comfortable with. That comes from com-

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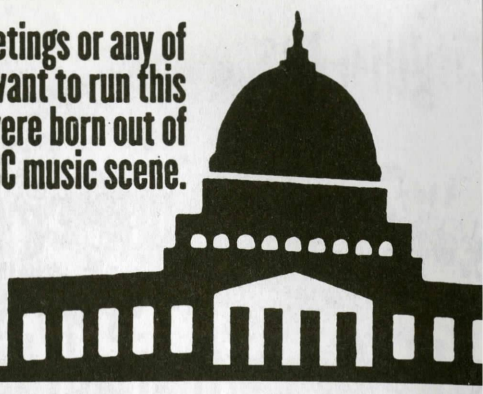


ing out of and being raised in a scene that is artist- and art-centered.

Chris: I think we are music-centered as a band. There is no higher purpose for our band besides music. It's not one-dimensional—it's about sharing ideas with other people. That's what it comes from.

What sort of statement do you hope to make with music?

John: As far as feelings the music might invoke, we leave that up to the listener. I may have my own thoughts on those, but I will never voice them. Obviously, there are basic tenets as a band that we have in common. We want to write good music and have our music be accessible. Aside from that, any goals we might have are ones that we want to keep to ourselves. There are a lot of bands that have other goals—it isn't that we don't, but I don't necessarily want people to think about those when they hear our music.

Chris: I was thinking the other day about aesthetics and how people surround themselves with art and have it in their lives—from the way you decorate your apartment to the clothes you wear. Recordings are neat in this respect because they are an abstract aesthetic that you take into your home. That is one of the most wonderful things about music. I want to give people something that they can integrate into their lives however they please. I also want to make sure it gets to as many people that respond to it as possible. I want to make it available.

How do you think your presence can be compared to the work of your DC predecessors?

Harris: When I think about the lineage and culture of bands that came before us, I see it in our world as well. It seems like there were all these bands back in the day, all these kids coming out to shows... But we exist in the same way now as they all did then. We are as valid as a band as any band before or after.

Are you conscious of how you think your aesthetic and the environment at your shows differs from that of other bands?

Chris: Playing a show and seeing a show are such different experiences that I don't even know if I am qualified to answer that question. I get this weird nervous energy the day we are playing a show. Sometimes I can't watch the bands we are playing with because my mind is in different places.

Matt: When I go to shows, certain bands make me feel certain ways and I respond in certain ways... As far as we go, I hope people like it. I wonder when I see people come out to our shows again and again what they get out of it. I hope they are getting something out of it.

Chris: I hope that our music would be interesting to listen to, challenging, fun...

Harris: And entertaining, even though that's become a dirty word. I know that when we are playing, I feel that the vibe I get when it is working is that I am a part of a community with the people in that room—more so than when I am not playing. We are communicating with them and they are communicating with us. Of course the easiest way to see this is in the clapping, but also if you see the way people are moving and the energy coming off of them.

Considering that all four of you come from other forms of media such as art, writing, film and radio, how do you think your band is affected? Does it have an impact?

Harris: It absolutely does for me. Outside of music, the way I was brought up to think artistically was as a filmmaker. Film is a collage art where you put things together and that gives them a certain meaning. That's the way I work musically as well. When we are writing songs it's all about asking, "Well, if Chris is playing this part, what do I have in me to make it better?" As far as songwriting goes, the way I react to other music is asking myself how I can respond to it. That is why there is no lead guitar player or no official lead singer in the band. It's all about how we can put everything together and make it better.

Chris: The one thing that I think is really interesting about this band, that constantly surprises me in terms of working on something artistic on an individual level and in a group setting is the fact that all four of us contribute equally to this band. It is something that I find very special and that I am excited about all the time. Sometimes you can see who the person in charge is, but it is cool to know that I can come to band practice and not necessarily know how things are going to go—it is a huge contrast from working individually. In essence, you are also compromising a lot of times too. Sometimes I will come in with a set idea that will really get shifted, often in a way that is really productive and in a way that I didn't see before. It is opening me up to new things more and more. ◎

When I asked Mark Gunderson of the Columbus, Ohio cut-up group Evolution Control Committee what attracted him to collage as an artistic form, he mentioned how powerful a mode of musical expression it was. Part of that power comes from the questionable legal status that collage-based music has. In sampling the work of others to create new cultural and political messages, radical collage artists skirt the boundaries between legality and illegality. But skirting boundaries also carries risks as ECC and one of the labels they work with, Eerie Materials, recently found out.

In 1998, the ECC and Eerie put out the 7" *Rocked by Rape*. It was a hell of a catchy, in your-face piece of work. Over obvious guitar riffs and rhythm section breaks sampled from AC/DC's 1980 pop-metal hit, "Back in Black," Dan Rather spews forth a frightening laundry list of violent imagery and events. In the space of five minutes, the single manages to expose the thread of violence that runs through "serious" journalism.

As spot-on as ECC's commentary was, CBS News was less than pleased when they got wind of the single. After nearly two years of the

to keep on putting it out. And we will do so until they tell us otherwise

record being out on the market, garnering numerous raves from both the underground and mainstream press, CBS threatened Eerie with legal action unless the label immediately ceased production and distribution of the single. However, signifying their willingness to carry on the fight, Mark and his band mates immediately assumed responsibility for distributing the record themselves—including having it freely available for download from their website, www.evolution-control.com.

While there are many precedents for the ECC's current debacle—witness the 1998 fights between DGC Records and the makers of the *Deconstructing Beck* compilation and Negativland's successful confrontation with the Recording Industry Association of America over an unlicensed Pink Floyd sample—the ECC's conflict with CBS comes at a time when the intellectual property rights debate has stopped being just about freedom of expression.

Instead, as the current lawsuit against MP3.com by the RIAA suggests [see article elsewhere in this issue], it's now about installing mechanisms for collecting unlimited amounts of royalties from instantly accessible online music collections. The ECC's situation should remind us that when it comes to digital music reproduction and corporate culture-think, concerns about intellectual property never go away. Because their bottom line is always the almighty dollar, such issues simply multiply.

God forbid AC/DC decides to go after the band too. The band's recent success in forbidding the Beastie Boys from including a single containing riffs from "Back in Black" on their recent greatest hits compilation, does not bode well for the ECC.

I spoke with Mark Gunderson about his band's case and its wider implications for the political role of experimental music in the mainstream mass media.

Interview by **John Brady**

Why don't you start off by telling me how things stand at the moment.

Up to this point, the story is that CBS sent a legal threat to Eerie Materials, which put out *Rocked by Rape*. CBS warned that if Eerie continued to sell or distribute the single, they could face legal penalties. So far Eerie is the only one to receive such a warning. We haven't gotten a warning, so we're going to continue to sell the single, to have it available on our web site and to push it. In fact, we have free MP3's of it on our site.

That's pretty ballsy of you guys.

Well we figure that as long as we have not received a warning, we're OK to keep on putting it out. And we will do so until they tell us otherwise. To be honest, I'm surprised we haven't gotten a warning yet. It could be because we've been able to generate some attention from the issue. We've gotten a lot of people to write to CBS and to voice their support for ECC. Perhaps CBS has realized that if they pursue this any further, it would mean bad publicity for them. They certainly don't need any more bad publicity considering the bad press they got over digitally inserting their logo into the background during some of their live news broadcasts.

Yeah. That's the thing about issuing legal threats. It has a tendency to backfire and generate more publicity for the issue.

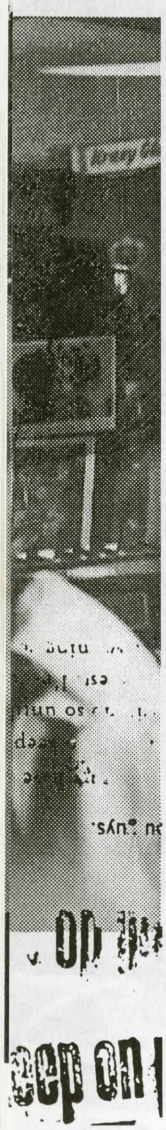
You know, it's a pity because I think it would be great to take this to court, make a court case out of it, and try and defend *Rocked by Rape*. I really think it would stand up as parody. But to be honest, I think CBS could easily exhaust my legal budget, so I don't think I will be trying the legal route any time soon.

Is there any kind of network of support out there for collage bands and artists?

Actually, there isn't anything really solid as far as sample-based artists is concerned. There has been some talk of things. There is a web site, detritus.net, that has been kind of a focal point for some sample-based bands. They've been somewhat active. But on the whole, there hasn't been a very strong support system.

Why do you think that is?

Well, there's been a splintering of sample musicians that has developed during the 1990s. At the beginning of the '90s, you had Negativland. They were doing this wacky cut-up stuff and there weren't a lot of people doing stuff like that. But now we have a number of groups and individuals that are doing music like Negativland, and we also have turntablists and DJs. There are really two sides to the sampling coin: collage and cut-up bands, and turntablists. Supporting one or the other demands a very different set of tools.



Could you give me an example of what you mean?

For example, DJ culture has a certain aesthetic of sampling built into it. There is a certain amount of sampling that is expected. It's also much better known than bands like Negativland. ¶ In contrast to DJs, the—I don't know what you want to call them—artistic appropriators have a much different framework. The stuff that they do doesn't have the support that turntablists do, which works both for and against them. On the one hand, you don't have a lot of people who are familiar with your work. But on the other hand, this relative obscurity means that you can keep your stuff below the radar screen so that the companies that might be concerned with what you're doing won't be filing suits all over the place. ¶ Of course, with the rise of DJ culture, even this has changed. Now you're seeing the more experimental side getting more attention, too. Take *Deconstructing Beck* for example. A few years ago, that project would have gone unnoticed. But because sampling is such a hot thing at the moment, the project managed to catch the ear of Beck and his label and they issued some legal warning of their own.

Let's talk about the single. What was the idea behind *Rocked by Rape*?

Taken as a whole, I think it's a statement against violence on television. More specifically, it was designed to raise the question about who the bad-asses in society really are. Is it bands like AC/DC who play this hard rock stuff and act really macho or is it Dan Rather who appears rather sterile but who also manages to seep into eight million households every night and spew this violent rhetoric. In other words, *Rocked by Rape* sets up a comparison between these two. The listener might say, "Hmmmm, AC/DC is pretty hard, but Dan Rather says some pretty violent shit." That was the idea. ¶ We started to watch the CBS Evening News. Every time Dan spoke, we would sample it, clip it and save it. During the commercials we would edit the non-important stuff and in the end we had a five or six minute file of Dan saying violent things. Besides the juxtaposition between AC/DC and Dan, we also were interested in the question of how long it would take us to build up this type of archive. We thought that would be a measurement of how violent TV news really was. We had our file full in about three weeks—it didn't take that long at all.

Was there any reason for picking Dan Rather, or was that a random choice?

Semi-random actually. He's a very recognizable figure. Other anchors would have been good, but Dan's been around a long time and has a very identifiable voice.

Do you have any evidence that he's heard it?

No, I don't think so. I hope he does, because I think he would get a laugh out of it.

When people discuss issues like this, they'll often point out that legal threats and lawsuits are harmful because of the chilling effect they have on artists and musicians. What do you think of this line of argument?

"Chilling effect" is a hackneyed phrase, but it's true. What we've done is make a parody as valid as anything that Weird Al has done. It's something that makes a good political statement. In a way, it's like a political cartoon. What people are going to see, however, is that they can put something like *Rocked by Rape* out, but that the corporations will slap them silly and make them shut up. I hate that. To me, corporations are one of the biggest evils on our planet today. If there's no way for people to speak their mind about the bad effects of corporations, you're asking for it—you really are. I don't want to see this become an instance where a corporation can shut an instance of criticism down.

How do you think this will effect you in the future? Are you going to be more careful?

I don't think so. We've never been too careful. Then again, I don't know, maybe we will think about it in the future. Looking at the full length that we will be releasing soon, we don't have a lot of stuff that uses really noticeable samples. So the issue might not rear its head again. But there are cases when you have to pick noticeable targets. If we had done a version of *Rocked by Rape* with a sound alike for Dan Rather, it wouldn't have worked—it wouldn't have had the same strength.

Does ECC have a particular political or cultural perspective that you try to bring out through your work?

We're not overly political, but we certainly do have our preferences, and there are statements and messages that we want to convey. If you take a look at our current logo, the ECC is spelled out with a sideways McDonalds M, a Nike swoosh, and a Coca-Cola C—that sums up the ethos of the band. We see a lot of corporate imagery in—and a lot of corporate turf wars taking place over—public space. We're losing a lot of things as people, especially privacy. We're also losing the silence in our landscape. We used to have places we could go to and not see a billboard or a wrapper for McDonalds on the ground. Now you can't go anywhere without seeing a corporate logo. I think that's a real shame and a really tragedy. ¶ I grew up during the 1970s and 1980s and there was all this yelling about how the government was going to totally fuck us over and invade our lives. And here it is now, and the real evil is the corporations. Surprise! The one thing about government is that it has a fatal flaw: it is subject to public opinion. No matter what the government does, it has to keep up at least the facade that what they are doing is what the public wants. Corporations don't have this fatal flaw. That's what people need to realize. How are we going to stop corporations from totally running our lives? If we have any philosophy, then it's concerned with that question. ◎

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND CHINO

1. When did your band form?

Fall '98 when Alex was coaxed out of semi-retirement.

2. When will it break up?

The day after AC/DC does.

3. What have you released so far?

The 6 song *Mala Leche* CDEP on Mag Wheel. We have a song on the Upcoming Montreal Compilation *Space Age Air Raid*, and will be releasing a Full Length CD on Mag Wheel in the Fall of 2000.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

Because Rock is dead. Long live Rock. Also because we can't dance like they do in the Gap commercials. Bring back New Wave.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

One time in Ottawa—big afro wigs, bad dresses, Tequilla and don't ask the rest...

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

The best shows are always the unannounced ones we play at our friends' neighborhood bar.

7. State your purpose.

Fuck rock, let's salsa. Just to play good music.

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

'Two Pot Screamer', 'Dead Sexy', 'Horns 'n' Porn'.

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

Latino Rock 'n' Roll sung in English.

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

That's a hard one. We just write some damn fine songs, and play hard. I guess we are more akin to what some of our favorite bands were doing in the '80s. Good music never goes out of style, so if you like that, you'll like us.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

Hockey and Baseball: Go Expos, Fuck Lindros, come back Mario, etc.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

Pretentious Rock, music with attitude; Will Oldham.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

Girls, good beer.

14. What is selling out?

Staying in at night because you have to get up early to shelp Motza for a living. Day jobs suck.

15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

What no Motza? Oy Yeh! Hell Yeah.

16. Where do you practice?

Across the street from the Molson Center, the home of the Montreal Canadians.

17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

The Clash, Steve Earle, and Elvis Costello. The Clash would headline, we would open, and Steve and Elvis can argue about the middle parts.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

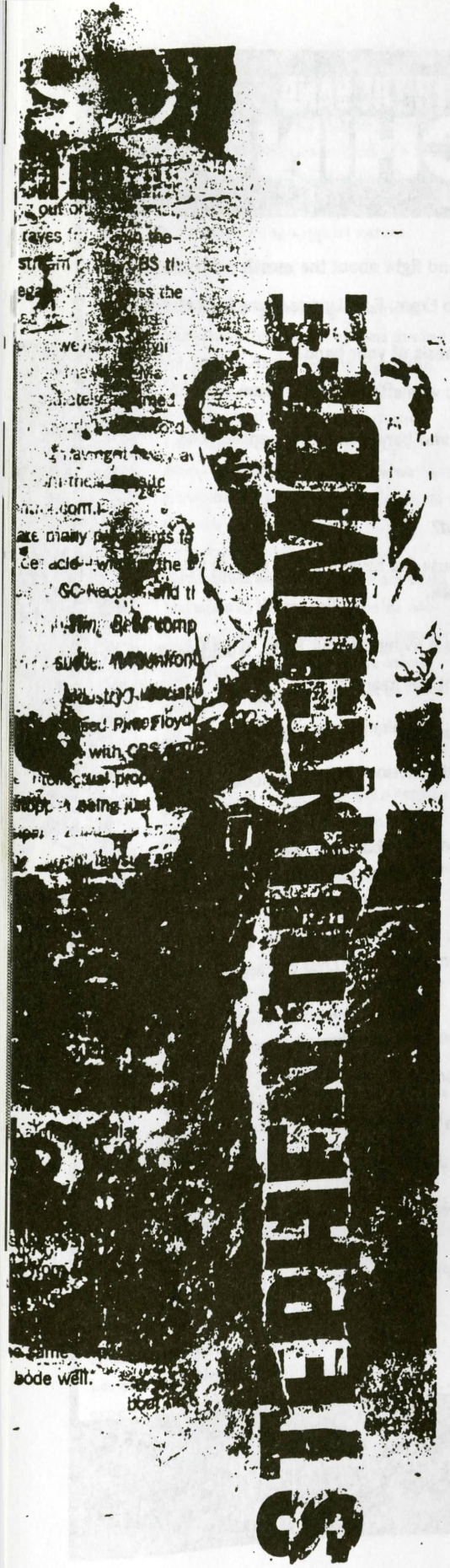
Make more records, tour the US, etc.

19. What makes for a good show?

Good beer, drunk fans, drunk bands.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

"New York" by the Sex Pistols.



Stephen Duncombe's book *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso, 1997) critically examined the extent to which zines had successfully articulated a politics of discontent through DIY culture.

Whereas the now defunct *Factsheet Five* used the term "revolution" to describe the explosion of visibility and zine acceptance after years of toiling in obscurity, Duncombe dared ask if the "revolution" was going to be photocopied. Himself a zinester, Duncombe combined a sense of awe and optimism about underground culture with a pragmatism and political savvy that few wished to acknowledge or confront. Perhaps it was coincidence, but his decision to challenge the seemingly implicit revolutionary potential of zines wasn't met with an avalanche of attention—his tome was lost amongst the spate of zine related books released during 1996-7.

Two years later, the zine revolution appears over and the Internet is poised to become the conduit of least resistance for cultural distribution—so it seemed like a good juncture to ask Duncombe to put the past few years of Xeroxing in context.

Interview by **Ryan Bigge**

Your book was one of the few to tackle the political implications of the medium unflinchingly. In it, you said, "Underground culture sublimates anger that otherwise might have been expressed in political action." Are zines doomed to remain pre-political? Do you get a sense that many prefer things this way?

Sure, "underground culture sublimates anger that might otherwise might have been expressed in political action," to quote myself, but I also pointed out that it provides a safe place to develop a voice and secure a footing to step into political action. And, I might add, I'd rather have righteous political anger sublimated into cultural creation, than into what most people do with it: go shopping at the mall. ¶ The point I was trying to make was that radical culture—by itself—constitutes nothing that challenges the powers that be. In fact, if it's brought onto the market, it becomes a cultural innovation that can replace last year's cultural innovation, thus ensuring endless consumption. My bone to pick was with all the Cultural Studies folks who equate culture and politics. They're not equal. They are intimately bound together, but cultural activity does not equate political action. It can lead to it, but it can also lead away from it—or it can do nothing: The sound and the fury signifying nothing. ¶ I was interested in zines politically because they articulated through culture a politics of discontent. My book was one long investigation of whether they lived up to that promise.

What major zine developments have you witnessed since writing *Notes From the Underground*?

The web is now the medium of choice for the sort of eccentric, idiosyncratic ramblings of creativity that zines once offered an outlet for. Partly because of this, the zine scene—if not terminal—is certainly a bit ill. Let me qualify that: there are probably almost as many zines out there as there were 10 years ago, but the feeling of the whole scene has changed. There is less of a sense of newness, discovery, innovation... of zines being a secret garden. This had to change—the garden isn't a secret anymore and it's no longer new. This happens to all cultural movements.

How do you see the death of *Factsheet Five* affecting the zine climate?

We'll see. There's no doubt that *Factsheet Five* helped create the zine scene by creating a sort of virtual community center where people could cross-fertilize between their various niche subcultures. It was also a place where you could see a concrete representation of what was a pretty ephemeral culture. ¶ But even before *Factsheet Five* tanked there were other zines of zines coming along to eclipse it—dragging zines back to their unrespectable, tangled, underground roots. Publications like Doug Holland's *Zine World* come to mind. ¶ To be honest, I'm more interested in what might develop on the Web to give that same sort of community feel that *Factsheet Five* once embodied. It may be impossible on the Web—it may be too vast, too democratic. Bohemia has always been elitist, even when that elite was a bunch of self-proclaimed "losers." But I'm still excited by the formations that might arise.

Now that we're post-zine revolution, do you think the removal of the spotlight improve the scene in any way?

Sure. People can go back to doing what zines were always best for doing: expressing your own personal take on the world, your dissatisfaction, your love and rage—without worrying—or secretly hoping—that you'll make it onto a page of *Spin*.

Do zinesters need to be more aware of their history? Do you expect a "Golden Age of zines" myth to emerge?

Ahhh... the "Golden Age of zines". Not only has it happened, it was happening two years ago, and four years before that, and six years before *that* and so on, going endlessly backwards through time. The myth of the Golden Age, like all nostalgia, is a search for some sort of innocence lost. We live in a dirty culture, where alternative cultures are forever being co-opted, where the values of the mainstream are forever intruding on the counter values of Bohemia. Nothing is pure, but bohemianism is about the desperate search for purity. Because of this, there's a strong temptation to look back a few years and imagine that it could have once been pure, and therefore might someday be again. ¶ If there was a Golden Age of zines, a time when "alternative" culture truly seemed to be an alternative—and this certainly seemed more true in the mid to late 1980s than now—it wasn't because of anything we did differently then. It was simply because we were, in the eyes of the mainstream culture, unimportant. As soon as we became important—that is, vibrant and alive—we also became a valuable property for advertisers, marketers and academics. That's the real tragedy of alternative culture: as soon as it succeeds, it dies. As the critic Leslie Fiedler once wrote: "Death is the only airtight Bohemia."

Critic Josh Glenn wrote that the death of *Ben Is Dead* is "the canary in the coal mine of the moribund 'zine revolution.' If it goes under, its compatriots probably will, too. Those few naifs who still think self-publishing has any value whatsoever are doing their thing online now, where production and distribution costs are low, and where one's chances of being discovered (and recognized for one's efforts) are even lower. As long as there are Xerox machines and glue-sticks, zines will always exist, but the few stalwarts who've struggled to raise production values by selling ads and printing glossy color covers are rapidly disappearing. Moreover, the dinosaurs who edit attractive and intelligent borderline zines like *Bunnyhop*, *Mommy and I Are One*, *Giant Robot*, and *Bust* just don't seem to realize how extinct they already are." Do you agree?

Josh is probably pretty right. Xerox copying was popular because it was cheap. The scruffy cut & paste aesthetics really followed the form on that one. Yeah, it was punk rock to make things look visually spontaneous and all, but a lot had to do with the medium. Now the web—with free home page sites and library access—is cheaper than papers and copying. I'm interested in seeing what aesthetics come out of the web—people are just beginning to find their visual voice. ¶ I'm not sure I call *Bust* a "zine stalwart" though. It was started as a proto-magazine and has now become a full—well, half—fledged one. It seems to be doing pretty well for itself too. ¶ I too was sad to see *Ben is Dead* die—but I would have been sadder to see it continue for another 20 years. It's time for a change, and I agree with Josh that it'll happen on the Web.

Mike O'Flaherty wrote in *The Baffler* recently about how indie rock smuggled a celebrity system back into punk rock. Did zines feed into this? How has the zine world negotiated and fostered "zine celebrities"—or tried to avoid them?

I never believe what I read in *The Baffler*. [laughs] I don't think zines created any celebrities—for the simple reason that the people writing them always wrote more about themselves and their feelings and experiences than any rock star's. Look who became celebrities: Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love, not Ian MacKaye and Kathleen Hanna, who were the subject matter of far more zines than Kurt and Courtney. ¶ The zine world despised its own celebrities. I rarely heard a nice word said about *Factsheet Five*'s Seth Friedman, even though he's a really nice guy; same goes for Tim Yohannen, who devoted his life to *Maximunrocknroll*. DIY can come to mean that you have to despise those who seem to do it better, or more widespread, or even more legibly, or whatever. There's something wonderfully egalitarian about this, but also something self destructive about the ethic as well. "Success," popularity of any sort, is often equated with selling out—even when it has nothing to do with money, or compromising ones' ideals, or doing the shuck and jive for the mainstream.

Do you think zinesters should participate in mainstream media as journalists rather than as interview subjects?

I've certainly made that leap and so have many other zinesters I know. But we shouldn't have illusions about taking the radical message of zines to the people. What is so radical about zines is not the writing, but the form. It's a form which says to anyone who picks it up: You can Do-It-Yourself, stop buying culture made for you and make your own. When I write for a mainstream magazine, I do it for the money.

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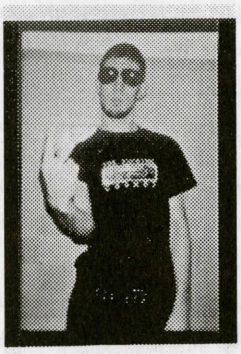
What purpose or role do zine books serve in the whole zine continuum?

What purpose did they serve? To make money and to get one's ideas read outside the zine ghetto. I'm including myself in this too, though I'm still waiting, and waiting, for the money and fame. Not big money—no one I know received a big advance or has reaped huge royalties. Most—including mine—were published with small, independent publishing houses. But some money... and some readers. Unless you have a massive trust fund, you are going to have to look for a way to make a living. If your life was spent creating zines, then zines are a natural place to turn to. Isn't this the dream of the zine world: a life of where work is creative? The problem is that the underground—because it's too small because it disdains money—can't support you, so you turn to the outside world. You sell out. ¶ But these days I'm less interested in the stance people take toward the world, and more interested in what they're actually doing about acting on that stance. For me this is the big challenge: how to turn ideas into action and culture into politics. Somewhere along the line, over the past 100 years or so, the line between thought and action got cut. You can write cleverly ironic barbs that mark your rebellious distance from mainstream culture. Or you can be earnest and authentic and write and think about how very bad the mainstream is. But these "rebellious" thoughts and words mean nothing these days. Acting rebelliously, now that still means something. ◎

STALAG 13



The following story is a familiar one: A city lacks all ages club, kids start having house shows. Everything is great for a while, but then they get shut down by The Man. Our story usually ends here. But not for Sean Agnew, who booked underground shows at a club called Stalag 13. If you are Sean Agnew, you fight the city and one of the largest universities in the country, you start a national letter writing campaign, create a media tornado, and keep fighting, every day for over six months—until you win. And you do virtually all of it yourself.

Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

Let's start at the beginning.

Starting around early 1994, Stalag 13 was a non-legitimate venue that was situated in the University City district of Philadelphia. It started out as a warehouse where punk and squatter kids were staying. Then it turned into a band practice space and then became a place with parties that had bands playing. Then that grew to regional bands playing, then national bands until there were shows there four or more nights a week. But the venue was never legally licensed. Then my roommate moved out from our house in 1996 and into Stalag and he started to put together more shows and clean up the place. It was pretty trashy and punk rock before—it was pretty much a squat. Then myself and some of his other friends started doing shows there.

Had you had any previous experience booking or doing shows before then?

Yes. I was booking shows at First Unitarian Church at that time. I had started doing ska shows, because no one was doing them anywhere around there. But there just weren't a ton of shows going on, so I started mixing the bills up—ska, hardcore, punk, punk and indie or "emo" type bands, all together. Musically, that's just where my interests were—plus it just made sense. So all this is happening at the same time as Stalag was doing shows, but they were more crust-style with bands like Assrash or whomever.

And what was the response from the scene? It seems like that these things going on were kind of the catalyst for what's virtually become a new-punk explosion out of Philly. Am I correct? Was there demand for a bigger all-ages scene and it just wasn't happening?

It was a slow build. There would be shows occasionally, before Stalag. But at Stalag, literally with every show, the scene got bigger—every show was pretty much bigger than the one before, so it pretty much was a catalyst. After Tony started cleaning up Stalag and making it less of a squat, our friend Andrew Martini came in and they started doing shows together there and formed something of a partnership.

Were they trying to make it more of a legit venue?

They just wanted better shows. They didn't want to make it more legit-legit, they just wanted to make it a respectable place.

The kind of place where you wouldn't catch scabies.

[laughs] Exactly. They built a stage, set up a PA, and just became the hotbed for Philly shows. Lots of times, 500-plus kids would show up for shows.

And what was capacity?

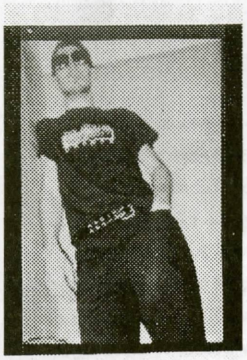
You could squeeze 300. It was a seedy area, so the neighbors didn't care. It was totally problem free. It built and built until about 1998, where there were five shows a week.

How long did this grace period last?

Until June of 1999. That's when Licenses and Inspections showed up. It was a week after the Philly Fest, which was a four day benefit for Voices In The Wilderness—50-some bands split between the church, Stalag and another warehouse called The Kill Time. So many people showed up for the Philly Fest and it was really unorganized—some shows were starting five hours late, so bands would be playing at 3 AM and there were still 400 kids on the block—it was really noticeable. Licenses and Inspections came in and talked to Tony. They said the club was being illegally operated. Tony tried to tell them that it was a not-for-profit, donations-at-the-door thing. They didn't buy it, and so they said there wasn't a license for shows or for people to publicly gather. They said the wiring and exits were not up to code... They put a cease and desist sticker on the door and told everyone to leave. They told us that if we did another show there, we would go to jail for 90 days and pay a couple thousand dollars in fines.

So then what happened?

We had about 20 shows booked, so we moved some shows to houses and to the church. Legally, there was nothing we could do to fight them—we were *completely* illegal. It would have cost us $100,000 to bring the building up to code—to fight that was not an option. We got pretty discouraged because we felt that as soon as we moved shows elsewhere or tried to open a new place, it would get shut down too. We started trying to think about our other options. ¶ I had this mass e-mail list, for shows, and I sent out an e-mail explaining what happened. On that list was a student from the University of Pennsylvania who was part of a newsgroup called Upenn.talk, which is a forum for students, faculty, alumni and people related to the school to talk about issues going on involving the school. The school is huge—they employ almost as many people as the city itself, roughly 40,000 people. They own tons of property—buildings, hospitals, all sorts of things. ¶ This kid e-mails my message to the newsgroup talking about how it was one of the few things near the Campus that students could actually go to and have fun at. A lot of people on the list started to say the same thing and eventually a vice provost from the university read about it. At the time, the school was having a lot of alcohol-related problems and so they created this task force. One of the main suggestions of the task force was to create a venue that was alcohol-free. So the provost, Jim O Donnell, puts two and two together and e-mails me to see what we are about. I e-mailed him a two page letter that explained what we did and what we were about. We met and he told me that it was perfect—we were exactly what they are looking for and he would put someone in touch with me who can help. ¶ I told Tony and Andrew and they are like, "Right, like the University of Pennsylvania is going to help us out." But a few days later, I met the provost and he took me to meet a man named Tom Lussenhop, who is the manager of real estate for the whole University. We got into his office and the first thing I notice is a he has a WFMU sticker on his cabinet. He's a pretty young guy—like 30—and he's



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really informal and cool. He starts talking about bands and how he loves Guided by Voices so much, and Robert Pollard this and that, about how he saw Butthole Surfers open up for REM in 1981, and Television...

Basically, you lucked out. He was borderline punker and now he has a real job and is in a position to really help you out.

Exactly. He was interested in helping us and he totally understood what we are about. So we talked more and I made a presentation about the shows—who goes to them and what we do. He said he'd be in touch in a few days. But we're still not expecting anything at this point. ¶ A few days later, we go to have another meeting and he hands me a folder—it's a thing on the property they were going to give us! ¶ We went to the building and there is a stage and a balcony, a ticket window, a sound board, two smaller room to have smaller shows, a loading dock, nice bathrooms, offices and dressing rooms. We couldn't believe it. They were giving us a place that could easily become one of the best places to see a show in the country. I should mention that this was pretty much the point where Tony and Andrew stopped being involved. I guess they were nervous about having to go do these meetings and presentations and dressing nice—they were afraid they were going to blow it somehow.

So you became a one man team.

Exactly. I agreed to do it. I was into it, I was excited about this. I was confidant I could do it because I had pretty much done the same little speech 800 times at this point. I understood how to sell us to them. We started meeting with law teams about legalities of it—the meetings ran through the gamut of who is important at Penn.

And at this point, it's all go, you are getting the big thumbs up from everyone?

Yeah, there is no resistance. Everyone thinks it's perfect. The student newspaper, which is the third biggest publication in Philly, picked up the story and it got a lot of students excited about Stalag happening. This was happening from July to August of last year. Meanwhile, I was busy incorporating into a business, getting legitimate with taxes and registering ourselves as "Stalag 2000." We got a *ton* of licenses—dancehall license, stage license, live entertainment licenses from the city. ¶ At this point, October was rolling around and we were done with our licensing work, everything is ready to go. The first show is slated to be Don Caballero, The Champs, Turing Machine and The Slaves. We do a bunch of press about it in all the weeklies and papers—we were the hot topic. Because we could have big shows, small shows, art shows. ¶ Two days before we go to sign the lease, I get this call from the Tom Lussenhop saying the lease signing wouldn't be taking place that week and he couldn't tell me why and he'll call me in a few days. He called me the next day and said that this all got a lot more attention than he ever expected it to and someone above him spent a lot of time investigating this and asking people what they thought and apparently, now, someone high up at the school didn't want us to open the club. He couldn't tell me who, he couldn't tell me why, but there was no chance to save the project. He tells me to meet him for coffee in the morning. Freaking out, I called Andrew and Tony and they are all like, "We knew it was too good to be true."

Meanwhile, you start crying tears of blood. [laughs]

I was scared. I slept restlessly...

And are you trying to come up with contingency plans in your head?

No, because I was pretty confidant that I could talk it into happening. I figured it was a month or two delay. I was not planning on a total shutdown. I got to the coffee place at eight and Tom is there with a University lawyer.

How does Tom look?

He's literally shaking.

So you know it's bad.

Yeah. He looks horrible—he looks like he's probably been getting bitched out by someone else. This is totally my inference, but he totally looked like he was going to lose his job. So I was suitably freaked out because I was scared that this person was going to lose their job over me. Tom and the lawyer—who was on our side too—basically said that this went to the absolute top, they had secret meetings about it, that secret boards met over it and that they thought it would be simple, but that someone really high up has problems with us and that he couldn't say why, but they had a problem with how we had run Stalag 13. I asked him and all he could tell me was about the clientele and how we operated there and how it was not suitable for the University. I asked him if he had explained about how I hadn't been the main person at Stalag and for the last four years I had been shows in a church base-

ment and that if we were good enough for a church, weren't we good enough for them? He said that pretty much everything was blocked, it was over and done with and it was just not going to happen now. For like 15 minutes, I just kept asking why. Finally, he said that someone at the University's daughter or son had gone to Stalag at some time in the past and had done drugs there and because of *that*, he or she became addicted to drugs—or so says this e-mail he got.

That's ridiculous.

Apparently, this person presented it as, "These people let people do drugs at these shows and they do not care." This high up person was trying to establish that how we got kids to our shows was by offering a safehouse for people who wanted to get high. Which was really dumb because before there were shows there, before Tony and Andrew had cleaned up Stalag, there were people who did drugs there, but after we started having shows, we wouldn't even let people *drink* there. We were all straightedge too. University officials had come to shows we had done and saw how they went down. They knew this was not the case. They said they were amazed that kids were respectful and just nodding their heads and standing there. [laughs] They thought when the band was done everyone would go smoke and drink and fight each other! What they got was a bunch of nerdy kids. [laughs] Tom was being really apologetic and acknowledged that he knows our shows are really good, and that there wasn't drugs there, but that he can not do anything more. He even offered to try and help us find a non-University of Pennsylvania spot for us, but that would take a while. So he told me that at this point, U-Penn had terminated their offer to us, taking everything off the table.

Did you cry?

No.

Did you get rage on the inside?

I was just in shock.

By that point, it's not like this was just some work down the drain. This is them taking away not only your livelihood, the Philly punk scene's livelihood, but potentially hundreds of touring musicians and bands outside of Philly.

Not to mention my professional standing—I had given my word to people about booking shows for them. I was going to have to go back and say, "just kidding" with two or three weeks notice. Plus, I had just quit my job doing tech support at the University because every day someone needed to go to these meetings, or apply for licenses at city hall or book the shows. I was just totally fucked.

So what did you do?

I thought, "There has to be something I can do to fix this." There had to be a way to show the University the character of people who go to our shows. I went home and sent out an e-mail to the whole list explaining what just happened and about what sort of people the University believed goes to our shows. I asked people to write me a letter about what Stalag meant to you, positive experiences you had at our shows, and how you behaved at shows. I was hoping that if we generated a decent response, that maybe the University would have to reconsider. I sent that out at like 3:00 PM, and immediately I started getting responses back. So I just started printing them as I get them. And more and more responses just keep coming in! By 4:00 AM the next morning, we had received over 1,200 responses. And it wasn't just people saying "I support Stalag," but kids, teachers, lawyers, people's parents, bands, label people writing page long letters saying "do not take this away." People like Ted Leo, The Make Up, the Jade Tree guys, Sonny Kaye—people from all over the country wrote in to support this. The phone was ringing off the hook, because I had press on my list, and the school paper did and interview with me that would run in the next morning's paper. I slept for like two hours that night. ¶ The next morning, I went to Tom Lussenhopp's office at the University and I told him I had something to give him. I go into my bag and hand him this stack of about 1,400 letters and told him that if one negative story was going to destroy all of *this*, then here is 1,400 positive ones to counter it.

That's a total *Footloose* moment right there. [laughs]

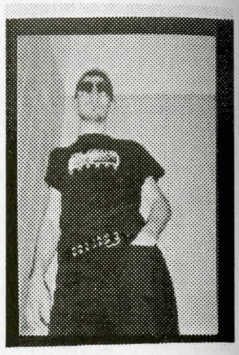
[Laughs] It was totally like in *Miracle on 34th Street*. Tom was so excited, because he always wanted it to happen. I showed him that there were letters from not just kids but parents, teachers, psychologists—even almost 100 from people at the University. At this point, the School paper found out that I had just delivered 1,400 letters in support of Stalag.

They "found out?" [laughs]

[laughs] OK, so I pretty much orchestrated the press stories. I got them copies of the more important letters, and said

LAG

I had just quit my job doing tech support at the University because every day someone needed to go to these meetings, or apply for licenses at city hall or book the shows. I was just totally fucked.



stuff like, "Can you believe *your* university is not allowing this to happen?" I agitated towards my advantage—I did the same thing with both the weekly papers. So all these negative stories ran in all the papers that week, brining a lot of heat on the University.

You were publicly embarrassing them over stuff they very much should be embarrassed by.

I didn't expect just the letters to work, so I started calling key students on campus—the head of student government, the head of the social planning committee, the head of the Greek life association. I told them that if Stalag happens, they could hold events at the place, because the campus was really lacking a place for people to hold events. I got them all on our side, and they start writing directly to the President and Vice President of the University supporting us and scheduling meetings with important people to tell them that Stalag is important to them too. Even the Greek Association, which is the frats and sororities, wrote to tell the University that U-Penn needed a punk rock club. [laughs]

Oh, the irony! [laughs]

Then we got together a bunch of students and went to Kinkos and made a bunch of giant black posters that said "Support Stalag 2000 on Campus" and we hung up about 300 posters all over campus. We hung them in administration offices, student buildings, storefronts...everywhere!

It was a total grassroots fight! So, you've gotten all this press, these posters, student organizations are involved and 1,400 letters. How are you feeling?

That even if it doesn't happen I really gave it my best. [laughs] It's actually pretty funny—not ha ha funny, but that I had now caused all this embarrassment and problems for the university.

How long after them telling you that the deal was dead is this happening? Maybe 36 hours?

Yeah. About a day and a half, two days later. Everyone was spazzing out. The University gets a hold of me and says they have to think everything through and they will get back to me. ¶ Two days later, they decide that it's in the best interest of the university to re-extended the offer to host Stalag 2000 in another location! For no real reason, we're going to have to find a new place, again. I am really stoked because in a matter of five days, I had—with help—gotten them to change their mind. But meanwhile, I was going to have to go spend all this money again on new licenses and permits and legal work. But I'm not complaining. The university that day issued an official comment after re-extending the offer, trying to say that the offer was never taken off the table and that I simply misunderstood them. They were trying to pin it all on the location!

Wow. That's shady shit. Trying to play you like an idiot and simultaneously doing a massive cover-up for their mistake.

Exactly! But because the press knew the deal all along, no one was buying it anyway, and all the papers ran something saying the University had their heads up their asses. ¶ About a week later, they decided we could have 4040 Locust street, which used to be an Urban Outfitters. It's a lot smaller, with no offices or anything, but nonetheless it's still a nice room. I tried fighting for the old space back, but they say no way. They did, however, say that 4040 was a temporary situation and that if things go good, they will let us have someplace else, after eight weeks. ¶ In addition to all the new licenses, we had to get the space re-zoned. It's December and everything is set at this point, we're just waiting for a zoning hearing. We also had to have all the neighbors sign a petition saying they were OK with us having a club there. We got the petition signed and it comes the day of the zoning hearing at it snows 16 inches—the meeting was snowed out! The zoning committee only meets once a month, so we now had to wait until the next month. ¶ And that's pretty much where we were yesterday. There was no opposition to our case—36 signatures from the block, a letter of support from city council saying this is a good thing for the city and a letter from the local civic association in support. By this point we are now in with the Licensing and Inspections people, so we got our permits pretty fast. They are pretty sick of me; they've seen enough of me. [laughs]

What I am curious about now is how you sustained yourself through all of this. How did you stay motivated in the face of all this opposition? This was almost eight months of your life that you fought this every day!

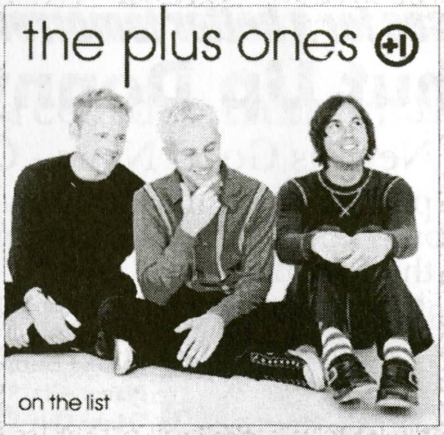
Basically, I saw this as an oppurtunity to be able to do something amazing—I want to be 22 and run a club.

So you were in it for your personal gain, not looking out for the scene—that's not the correct Punk Planet answer, Sean...

No, No, that's not what I meant!

I know. I'm just fucking with you, dude. ◎

As this issue goes to print, Stalag 2000 is finally putting on shows.



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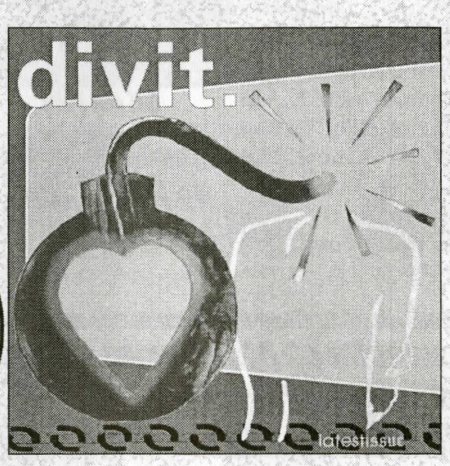

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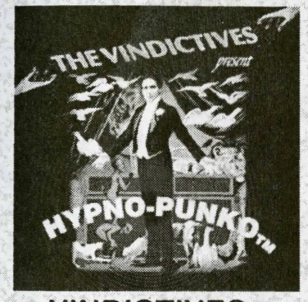

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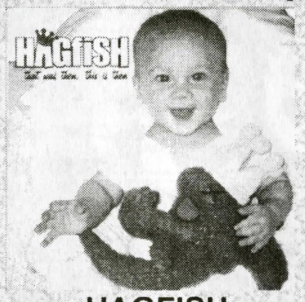

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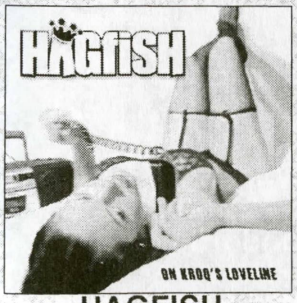

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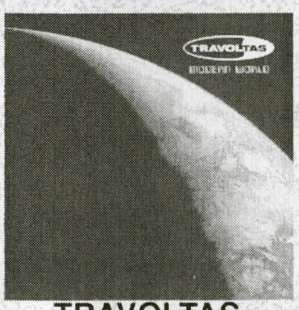

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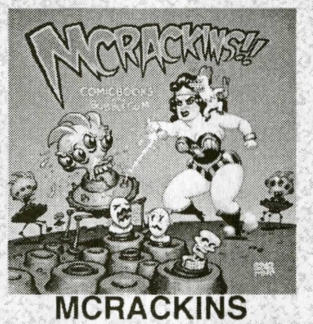

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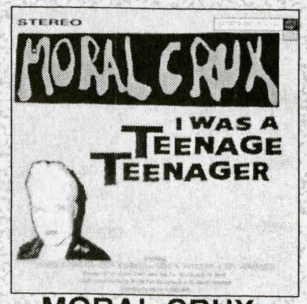

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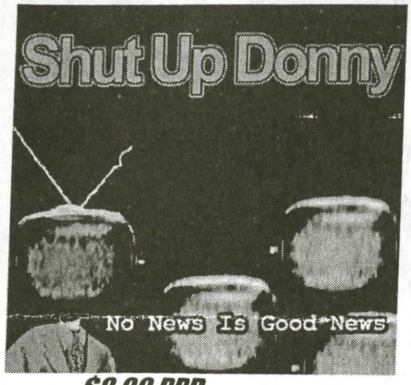

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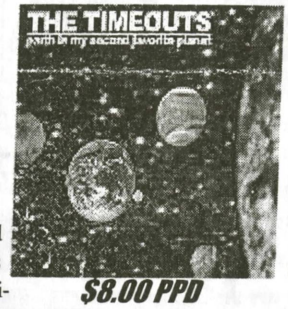

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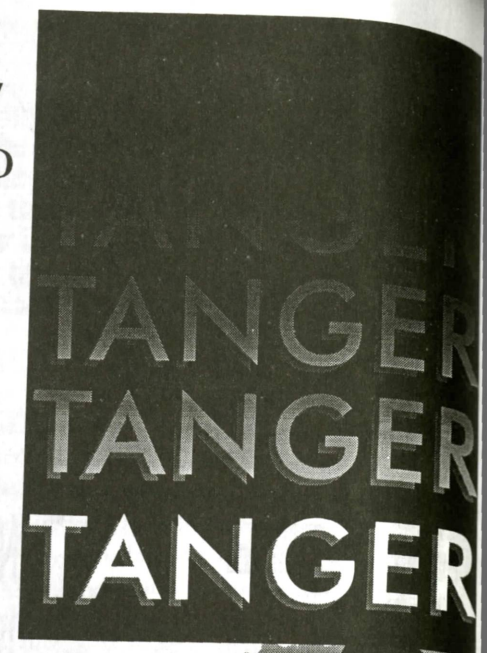

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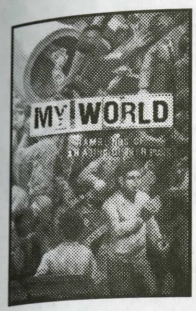

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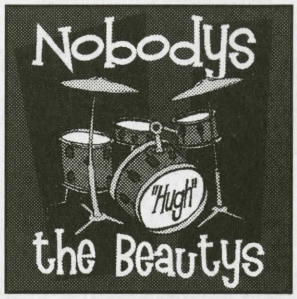

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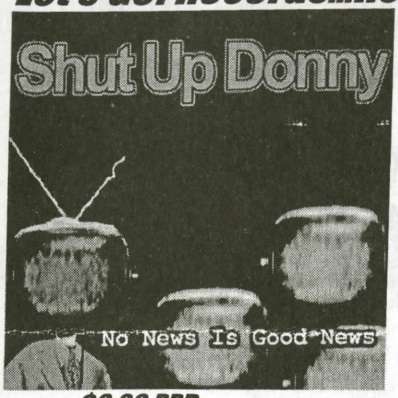

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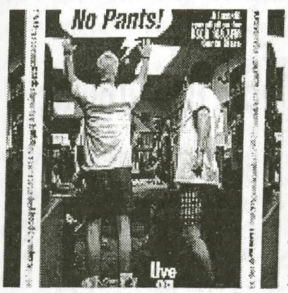

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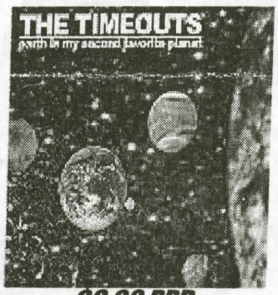

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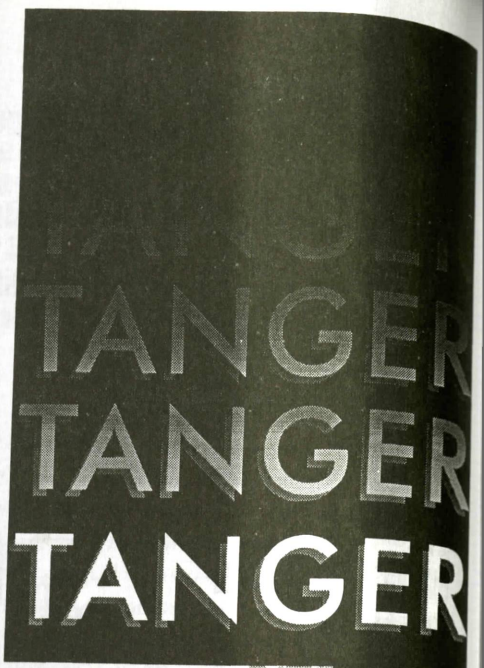

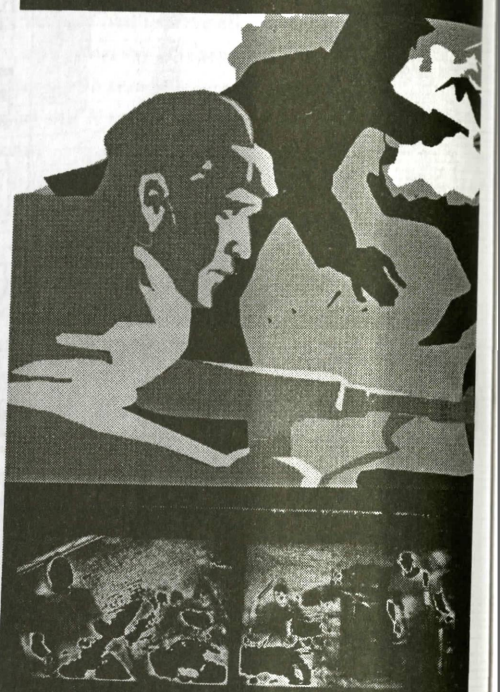

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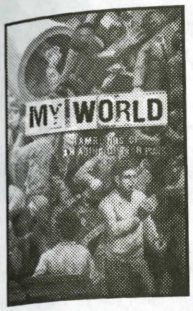

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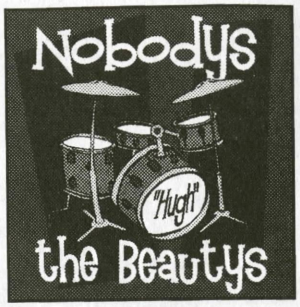

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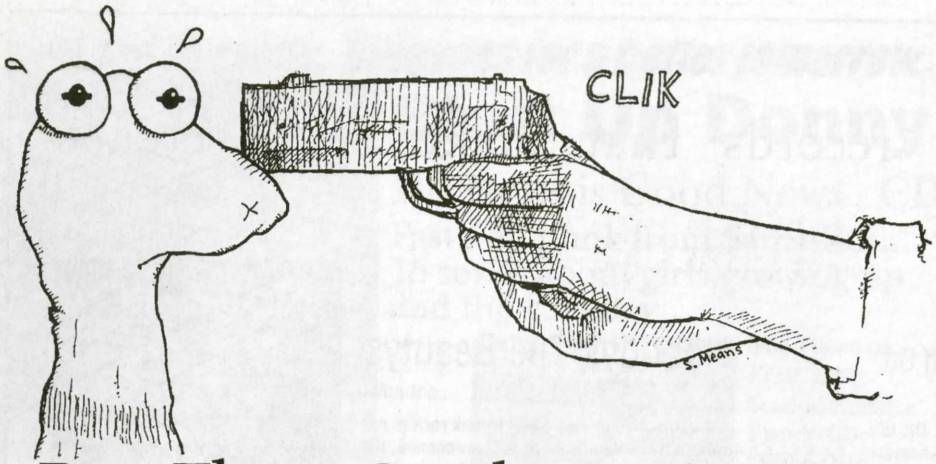

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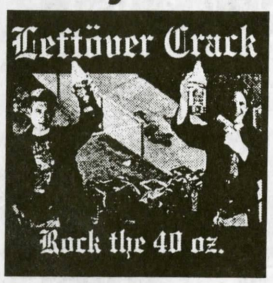

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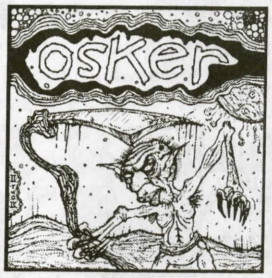

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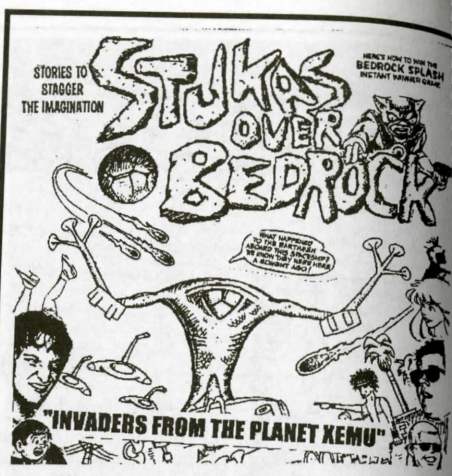

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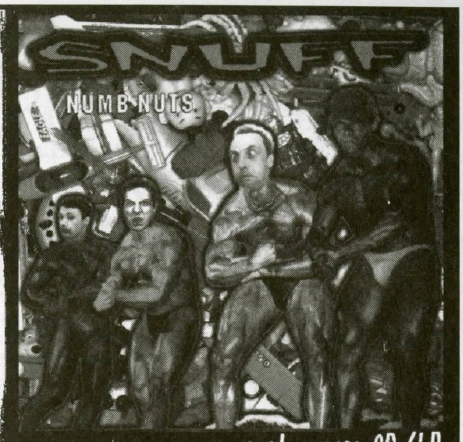

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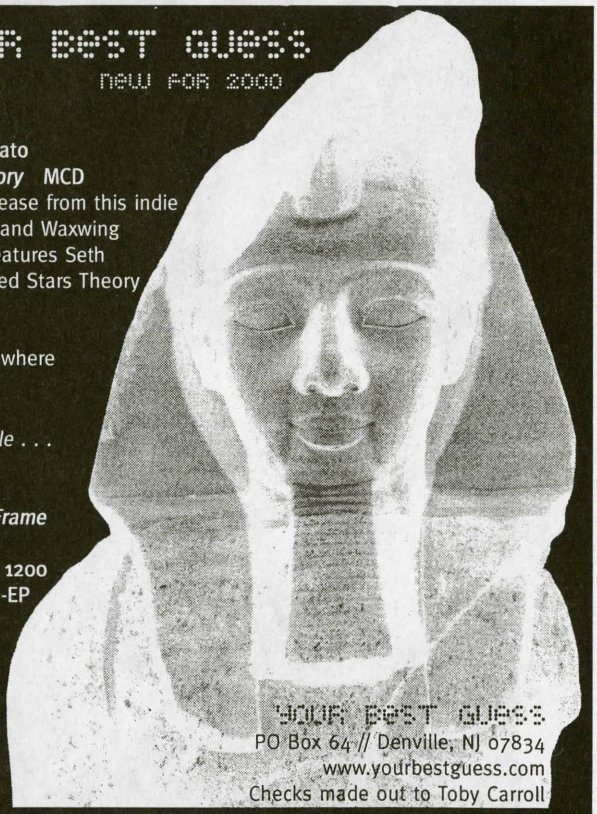

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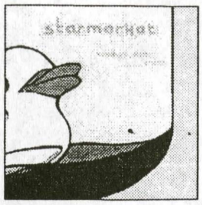

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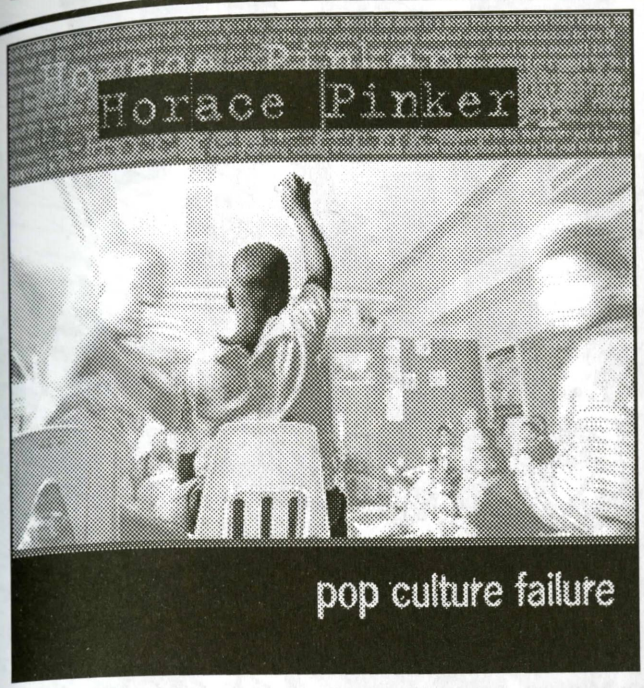

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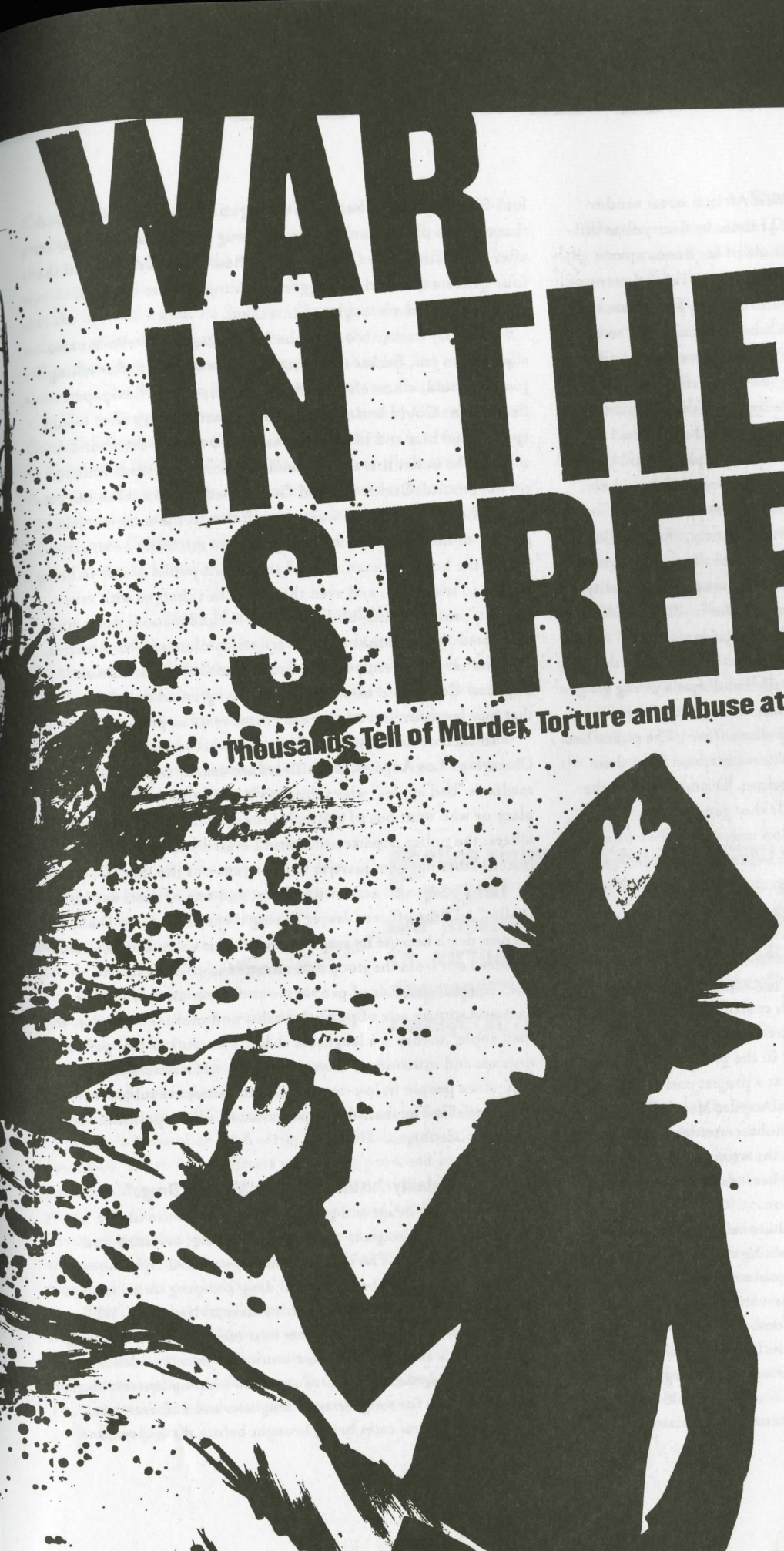
WAR IN THE STREETS

Thousands Tell of Murder, Torture and Abuse at the Hands of Men in Blue

by Kari Lydersen

illustration by Dustin Mertz



CRIME & JUSTICE

On Feb. 4, 1999, unarmed West African street vendor Amadou Diallo was shot at 41 times by four police officers as he stood in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment—he was hit 19 times. His autopsy showed many of the bullets entered at the bottom of his feet and at other angles that indicated he had fallen while bullets continued to rain down. Yet on Feb. 26, 2000 the four officers were found innocent of all charges, acquitted by a jury in Albany after the trial was moved out of the Bronx because the judge ruled that people there would have an "inherent distrust and even hatred of police."

The verdict drew massive protest from people around the country, including many who had protested for weeks and been arrested a year previous, just to get the officers put on trial.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, investigations of the Los Angeles Police Department are revealing its "biggest scandal in 60 years," a widespread web of corruption, brutality, murder and perjury that overshadows even the LAPD's debacles during the Rodney King and OJ Simpson incidents.

Information released in the fall revealed that in 1996, the drug-and-gang CRASH squad handcuffed and shot a young gang member named Javier Francisco Ovando, then planted a gun on him and framed him for assaulting a police officer. The police lied under oath as the innocent Ovando, in a wheelchair from their bullets, was sentenced to 23 years in prison. Ovando's wasn't the only case in which officers groundlessly shot gang members and then planted guns on them—a revelation uncovered when one of the police officers involved in Ovando's framing offered to give information regarding the cover-up in an effort to lighten his sentence after pleading guilty to having stolen $1 million worth of cocaine from a police evidence room. This information has opened an ever-widening probe of the LAPD that has uncovered widespread framing, brutality, false arrest and bribery, among other things. 39 convictions have been overturned since the investigation began, with many more expected before it is over. Hundreds of criminal convictions are in the process of being reviewed because of the investigation, at a project cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to taxpayers. Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riorden has suggested using the city's tobacco settlement money to cover the lawsuits that will result from the wrongful imprisonment. So far 20 LA officers have been fired because of the probe, while at least 70 more are under investigation.

The department has vowed to institute reforms, including an expanded oversight board and more training and screening of police. Similar "reforms" have been recommended by the police chiefs in New York and in Chicago, where the officers who shot a 22-year-old Northwestern University football player, Robert Russ, during a traffic chase recently got away with only a 15 day suspension.

Within hours of Russ's murder last June, Chicago police killed another young African-American, 26-year-old computer analyst LaTanya Haggerty. Officer Serena Daniels claimed a padlock Haggerty had in her hand was a gun. Testimony also showed that officers planted marijuana and drug paraphrenalia in the car after the killing. The Chicago Police Board has fired three of the four officers involved in Haggerty's killing, but no criminal charges have been brought against them.

Gregory Becker is one of the few Chicago cops who has actually gone to jail. Becker is serving a 15-year sentence after killing Joseph Gould, a homeless vendor of the *Streetwise* newspaper. Becker shot Gould at close range in the head in 1997 after Gould approached him and his mistress and tried to wash their windshield. The bullet literally left skull and bone fragments scattered on the ground. Becker claimed Gould tried to attack him, but evidence showed that Becker—who was off duty at the time—actually got out of his car and fetched his gun from the trunk before killing the homeless man. It took significant public outcry to bring Becker to trial at all, and even then he wasn't charged with murder—his sentence came under the Safe Neighborhoods Act, which mandated 15 year minimums for crimes committed with firearms. But that act was recently ruled unconstitutional by the Illinois Supreme Court, and now Becker has been granted a resentencing that may result in him serving only three years in prison.

In each of these high-profile cases, whether in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, the officers are usually treated by the media as "bad apples" who shouldn't have been hired in the first place or who went out of control. Often, as in the case of Diallo's killers, the police department doesn't even criticize the officers—instead labeling them martyrs to the stresses of the job.

"Five good men were victims here, and one of them was Mr. Diallo," said the officers' lawyer during the trial, blaming Diallo for his own death because he suspiciously held his wallet and "alternately peered out from the stoop and retreated toward the door."

To the thousands of people around the country who experience and witness acts of police brutality and murder every day, the "bad apple" theory is a laughable sham. The truth is that police violence and misconduct is systematic—part of a system where non-white people in low-income communities are subject to virtual martial law by their disproportionately white, politically connected police forces.

Brutality Justified by the "War on Drugs"

The war on drugs and gangs is used as an excuse to give police virtual free reign in searching, harassing, arresting and even killing people. The bulk of brutality and civil rights abuses are commited by the special tactical drug and gang units, such as the CRASH unit in LA and Diallo's killers in New York. While the New York and LA departments have recommended reducing the discretion and power of their units after these incidents, political and legislative forces continue to whip up hysteria about crime and push for tougher anti-drug laws and enforcement.

In fact, several cases being brought before the Supreme

Court as this issue went to press could be used to give police even greater search and seizure powers under federal law. In one case, the court is deciding whether Florida police were justified in searching a youth—and his companions—on an anonymous tip that the boy had a gun. As Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia notes, to allow this to happen would mean that police could then call in their own anonymous tips any time they felt like searching someone. The Supreme Court has yet to rule on this case.

The anti-gang loitering law recently passed by Chicago's City Council follows this same trend, allowing officers to arrest youth in designated "hot spots" if they don't disperse when ordered to. A previous version of the ordinance was ruled unconstitutional in 1997 after over 40,000 arrests were made during its several years of existence. California's Proposition 21 has a similar provision [see related article this issue].

Mass Murder in DC and NY

The results of a *New York Times* study published around the time of Diallo's killing proved what the police chief and Mayor Rudy Giuliani have tried to deny: that Diallo's murderers were hardly the exception. A sweeping survey showed that the vast majority of African-American people distrust and fear the police—for good reason. Police department figures revealed that New York cops killed at least 153 people between 1992 and 1996, and that at least 53 more died in police custody. Several high-profile horror stories—like Diallo and Haitian immigrant Abner Louima, who in 1997, was beaten, sodomized with a plunger and made to parade around a New York police station with his pants down as officers made crude and racist remarks —were just the tips of the iceberg, symbols of many more unreported incidents of torture, murder and intimidation.

In Washington DC, which leads the nation in fatal shootings by police, a November 1998 series in the *Washington Post* described "short-fused officers who either provoked confrontations or allowed routine encounters to escalate; men and women, young and old, black and white, Hispanic and Asian, jailed on flimsy charges that were promptly dropped; hostility between officers and residents...that sometimes involved brutal beatings with fists, nightsticks or blackjacks."

The DC police department recently instituted the use of new, super-sensitive Glock guns with hair triggers, despite the fact that fatal, unprovoked shootings are rampant, even in situations as mundane as traffic stops. Between 1993 and 1998, the *Post* reported, police shot at cars almost 50 times, often resulting in death or injury.

Sham Justice

Despite the brutality of Diallo's murder, it took weeks of daily protests led by the Rev. Al Sharpton and attended by numerous celebrities to even get indictments of the officers.

Hundreds of police protested as the indictments were handed down last year. The city even tried to smear Diallo by reporting that he had misrepresented himself on his immigration documents.

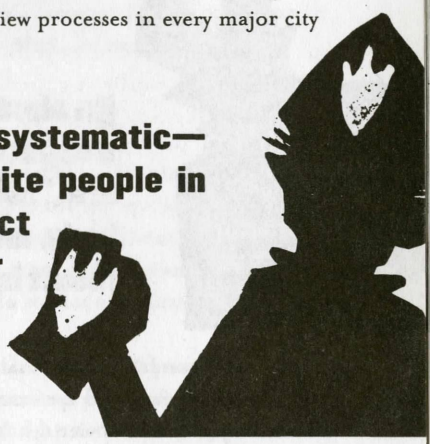
"This isn't about how he came to this country," thundered Sharpton in a Brooklyn organizing meeting in March 1999, addressing the charges that Diallo lied on his application. "This is about how he left this country—in a box with 19 bullets in his body!"

In hearings before the Chicago Police Board over whether the officers who killed Haggerty should be fired, the officers' lawyer Joseph Roddy tried to blame the driver of the car for Haggerty's death, and used a photo of him wearing a scarf as evidence of his supposed guilt.

"What in the world did he have to hide?" asked Roddy during the hearing, pointing to the totally unrelated photo of driver Raymond Smith. "The only good guy I remember with a mask on was the Lone Ranger. And he certainly isn't the Lone Ranger."

While the Police Board found that three of the four officers involved in Haggerty's death deserved to be fired, their ruling is the exception. Internal police review processes in every major city have been found to be invariably inefficient, slow and biased. Two to 30-day suspensions without pay are about the worst punishment cops will usually get, and even those slaps-on-the-wrist are vehemently protested by individual officers and the powerful Fraternal Order of Police.

Police violence and misconduct is systematic—part of a system where non-white people in low-income communities are subject to virtual martial law by their disproportionately white, politically connected police forces.



Some cities also have citizen review boards, but these are too often weak, token institutions stacked with members who are sympathetic to police. In Washington DC, the Civilian Complaint Review Board was disbanded in 1995 after becoming hopelessly backlogged. Now victims must file complaints against officers at the officers' actual station, which lawyers have alleged is intimidating enough to deter most complaints.

Chicago's civilian board can't hand down a harsher sentence than the department's own internal affairs division; it can only

relax or reverse the punishment meted out to officers—something it often does. And even after their cases have gone through the Office of Professional Standards and the Police Board, Chicago officers can appeal their fate directly to the commissioner and through the courts.

In almost all police departments across the country, only a small fraction of complaints are "sustained" by the internal reviewing body, and then only a portion of these cases result in actual punishment of the officer.

"In case after case when an officer shot a citizen in the 1990s, the Metropolitan Police Department's investigations were riddled with errors and omissions that make it impossible to sort out why the officer fired and whether the firing was justified...The poorly documented investigations protected officers who may have wrongly shot citizens or lied about the incidents," said a November, 1998 article in the *Washington Post*.

In Cincinnati, an investigation of internal reviews in 1995 and 1996 found that only one in 1,400 complaints investigated were ruled to involve "excessive force." 480 people were injured at the hands of Cincinnati police during those two years, with head, face and eye wounds leading the way and black men the majority of the victims. Yet "officers typically received little or no punishment," according to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. In fact, the paper found that some officers were later promoted.

In almost all police departments across the country, only a small fraction of complaints are "sustained" by the internal reviewing body, and then only a portion of these cases result in actual punishment of the officer.

Two of the many Cincinnati officers who were cleared of any wrongdoing after killing were Lorenzo Collins and Douglas Depodesta, who in 1997 shot and killed an escaped mental patient who was wearing pajamas and wielding a brick.

In most cities the past history of an officer is not allowed to be considered in evaluating or punishing him or her for individual incidents—obviously a different standard than that applied to civilians charged with crimes. Papers in New York, Chicago and Washington DC, to name a few, have reported on officers who remain on the force and continue to amass complaints even though many serious allegations have already been lodged against them.

Taxpayers Foot the Bill for Brutality

Taxpayers end up paying for this failure to monitor and discipline police: where departments are loath to personally punish an officer, most are all too eager to dish out city money to police brutality victims and their families in what many view as silencing or coercion attempts.

Chicago officer Rex Hayes has personally cost the city over $1 million in civil judgments, yet continues to serve on the force. Fellow officer Derrick Jerry was exonerated by the civilian Police Board after pistol-whipping a man in 1995 so severely that his front teeth were knocked out and his eyes had to be pried open—the department agreed to pay the victim $72,500, though it still admitted no wrongdoing.

Chicagoan Jorge Guillen's family was awarded around $600,000 to "compensate" them for Guillen's death. The Honduran man with a history of schizophrenia died at the hands of police who were summoned by his family to deal with his threatening behavior. They bludgeoned and strangled Guillen while supposedly restraining him, as stated by the medical examiner, and failed to provide medical help when they realized his condition. The officers received only short suspensions.

"There hasn't been justice for his killing—when cops do things on duty they're immune," said Jeff Haas, the Guillen family's attorney. "Police are almost never prosecuted for brutality."

"Not only is this guy's life stolen, but the people who stole it are not even held accountable," added Chris Geovanis of the Chicago group Neighbors Against Police Brutality.

While no amount of money could make up for the brutal murders and injuries perpetrated by police, sometimes the tiny amounts awarded are doubly painful. In Cincinnati, for example, Geraldine Jackson received only $3,500 after police fatally shot her 16-year-old son, and Michael Johnson's family received $5,000 after an officer "willfully and wantonly" ran him over with a police car. Darwin Miller of Cincinnati was awarded $44,997 after police kneed him in the groin so hard he lost a testicle during a stop for an improper lane change—but Miller didn't receive the judgment until seven years after the incident and he won't get the full amount until 2020.

In Washington DC, individual judgments over the past five years include $250,000 for the murder of a 31-year-old deaf man who died in police custody; $79,326 for a 73-year-old postal worker who was pulled from a park bench and beaten by cops who mistook him for a suspect; and $130,000 to four relatives who were maced, beaten and harassed outside their Jamaican restaurant.

In New York, Taquana Harris was awarded $50,000 after officers pepper-sprayed her, threw her to the ground and handcuffed her while she was walking to her job as a hostess at a trendy bar. The officers had pinned Harris against a wall as part of a drug sweep. When Harris learned this, she said, "Oh, I get it, you're trying to make a quota," they attacked and arrested her and charged her with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest, charges which were later dropped.

Punishing the Victim

Too often, victims of police brutality who are beaten, tortured, shot and wrongfully imprisoned never get the luxury of the second, third and fourth chances and the "benefit of the doubt" extended to officers—instead they are usually slapped with bogus charges even if they are guilty of nothing.

One June 10, 1999, Chicago teenager Junito Roman was hiding in the hallway of his public housing project when police entered searching for the source of gunshots fired blocks away. An officer shot at Roman four times—a bullet ripped through his intestines, arm and hip. The officer claimed Roman had pointed a gun at him (a gun was found on a far-away landing) but Roman's cerebral palsy means he couldn't have even held a gun, much less thrown it to the landing. Despite severe physical and psychological damage from the gunshot wound and the baselessness of the charges, Roman was charged with aggravated assault and unlawful use of a weapon. He continues to be held in jail awaiting trial.

Court dockets around the country include frail grandmothers and grandfathers or small children who were charged with disorderly conduct or "assaulting" a police officer after questioning an officer or interfering with their harassment of local youth. The charges are usually thrown out, but not until after a night in jail and emotional and financial hardship for the victims.

One victim of these completely trumped up charges was Keith Hines, a minister in Chicago. Hines was walking down the street when two white officers hurled racial slurs at him. Hines responded that he was a participant in community policing meetings and a friend of the local commander and asked for their badge numbers, leading the officers to place him in a choke hold and arrest him for "assaulting" them and resisting arrest. Hines is five foot six and the officers were both over six feet tall.

"If the person assaulted had been Cardinal George, Mayor Daley would have seen to it that his police department prosecuted the wrongdoers, not the victim," said Rev. Paul Jakes, a Chicago crusader against police brutality.

Police Brutality and Death Row

Aaron Patterson not only suffered sadistic brutality at the hands of Chicago police officers in the Area Two headquarters after being arrested and framed for a double murder in 1986, he has spent the last 13 years of his life on Death Row as a result of that brutality.

Patterson was sentenced to die for a 1986 double murder based almost solely on an unsigned confession and the testimony of a then-16-year-old girl who has since signed an affidavit saying she was coerced by the prosecutor. Patterson's father Raymond, a Chicago police officer at the time of Patterson's arrest and torture, said police brutality in Chicago and elsewhere is all too real.

"These are not stupid people," he said at Illinois Supreme Court arguments for Patterson in September. "They pick and choose who they brutalize and where, and who sees it. There are people in the department who have a reputation for this."

Patterson isn't alone. There are at least 11 people on Illinois's Death Row who allege they were tortured at Area Two by former Commander Jon Burge and his minions. Members of the "Death Row 10" claim they are innocent and that their confessions were fabricated or coerced after torture that included electric shock, beatings, "ear cuppings" and Russian roulette. Burge was fired in 1993 after an internal investigation proved he had overseen the systematic torture of at least 60 black men, yet the men on Death Row have yet to be awarded new trials—even though 13 innocent people have been released from Illinois's Death Row over the past decade. Burge, meanwhile, has suffered no criminal charges and is currently running a lucrative fishing operation in Florida. According to Chicago police, Burge was just a "bad apple" in a good system.

The Murder of Lamar Grable

Police departments are able to keep using the "bad apple" explanation instead of admitting to the systematic nature of their problems is because of the lack of publicity about scores of police brutality cases just as horrific as those of Diallo and Haggerty. One example of the many untold stories of police murder is that of Lamar Grable.

On September 21, 1996, Grable was 20 years old. The Detroit youth was a videographer and photographer with his own graphic design business, and he had started a youth entrepreneurship group called YES to help other local youth start their own businesses. He was a youth recruiter for the NAACP and worked closely with Detroit City Council members to organize a youth summit addressing black-on-black crime, police brutality and other issues. On Saturday, September 21 he had just gotten a new job in the photo lab at a suburban 24-hour K-Mart—he was hoping to use the photography connection to drum up clients for his own business. He headed out for work around 9:00 PM, according to his mother Arnetta Grable, but returned 15 minutes later because the muffler on his car had fallen off.

"The K-Mart was in a suburban area and he didn't feel comfortable driving there without a muffler," says Grable. "He felt he would be stopped by police."

Grable called a friend who had tools to fix the muffler, and headed out to a church party where the friend was to retrieve them. Less than an hour later, he was dead.

Eugene Brown, the Detroit police officer who killed Grable, said the youth was walking down the street holding a gun so he started chasing him. Brown said Grable then turned toward him and fired. He caught Grable and the two wrestled over the gun, with two shots being fired at Brown in the process. Brown shot Grable eight or nine times in the chest at point blank range, killing him.

Witnesses tell a vastly different story. They say Brown fired at Grable through the police car window as he was walking or running down the street, knocking him to the ground. Then Brown got out of the car, they say, flipped Grable over and shot him multiple times in the chest. A private coroner hired by Arnetta found evidence corroborating the witnesses' stories: he said Grable had not fired a gun, and that there were two gunshot wounds in Grable's back, which are unexplained in Brown's version of the events. The gun Brown and his partner allegedly retrieved from Grable had no fingerprints or other evidence linking it to Grable. The FBI and US Justice Department found the case suspicious enough to conduct investigations, which are supposed to be completed soon. Meanwhile, no action has been taken against Brown. Arnetta was offered $750,000 to let the matter drop, an offer she refused to take because "then it wouldn't go to court. I want the truth to come out," she says.

Despite the steep odds, victims and activists still have hope that justice can be meted out to brutal police and even the corrupt system that allows brutality to keep occurring.

Grable had no criminal record and "was not a violent person. He never carried a gun," says his mother. She notes that several of their family members are police officers, and that Grable "didn't hate police."

At the time of Grable's killing, Brown was facing five lawsuits from people who claimed he had brutalized them since starting with the force in 1993. After she was shown on the TV news talking about the case, Arnette Grable was approached on the street by another black Detroit officer who described being maced, beaten and arrested by Brown during a traffic stop.

Not only was Brown not disciplined by the department for the killing, shortly after the incident he received an award for wearing a bullet proof vest while killing Grable—the shooting came during a dispute between police and the department over whether they should wear the vests, and Mayor Dennis Archer publicly lauded Brown for wearing one, "saving his life" from Grable.

Arnetta has devoted most of her time since her son's killing to raising awareness of police brutality and murder. She visits Washington DC frequently to lobby the Justice Department and speaks somewhere "almost every day" about her experiences. Her activism has not gone unnoticed.

"I'm harassed constantly by police," she says, noting that the intimidation of her and her two children has been so intense that they have left their home. "Police stop me every time I'm going to a public function about police brutality. They stop my daughter all the time and tell her she shouldn't be walking alone or someone might snatch her. They have created a criminal record for my other son—he never had a criminal record before but since then they have arrested him so many times. This is what happens to people who stand up to the police."

The War Rages On

The police are a powerful force, with the weight of the law, local government, and society's fears of crime behind them. But despite the steep odds, victims and activists still have hope that justice can be meted out to brutal police and even the corrupt system that allows brutality to keep occurring.

"We need to make sure that the racist officers who have come into our communities and committed these racist acts never come in again," said Rev. Paul Jakes at a July, 1999 march through the Chicago South Side neighborhood where Haggerty was killed. "If we have to, we'll watch out for our own communities and our own children. We don't need racists with badges coming into our communities and killing our children."

"If they can get away with it, they will do anything," says Carl Dix, national organizer of the October 22nd Committee Against Police Brutality. "With Abner Louima, there wasn't a single anonymous call from a police officer saying something foul had gone down. The only way it came to light was through nurses and his family blowing the whistle. We need to bring what's actually happening to light, to keep waging determined resistance. There has to be mass resistance in the streets, where police see they are not given the OK to do this."

Dix's message is echoed by Arnetta Grable. "I feel we're in a war," she says, "and we have to continue to fight it." ◎

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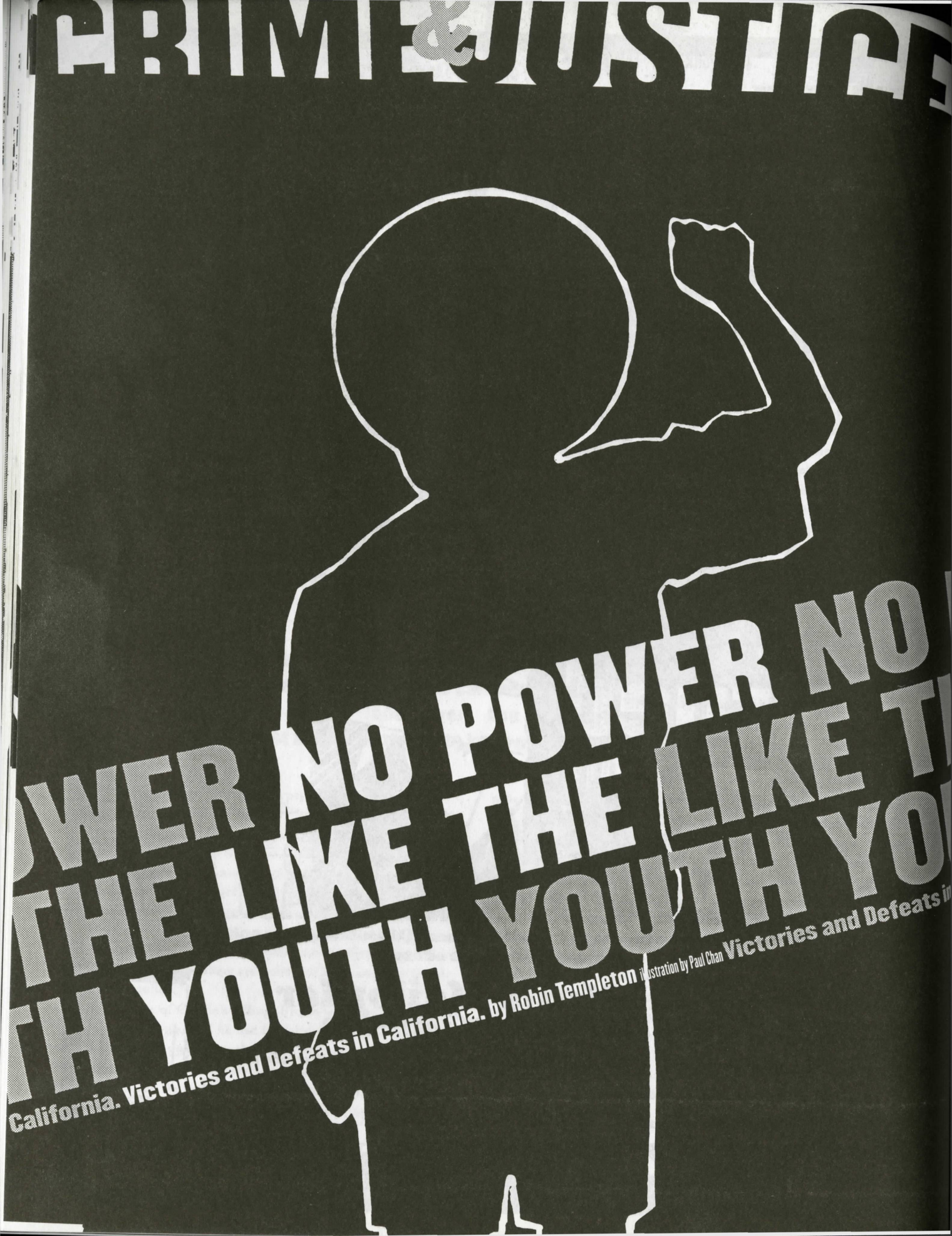


California. Victories and Defeats in California. by Robin Templeton illustration by Paul Chan Victories and Defeats in

The day after Super Tuesday, Bay Area teenagers demonstrated what it's going to take to get money out of politics. In the winter rain at 5 :00 PM, 500 youth—outraged at the passage of a California ballot measure that will spend $5 billion over the next ten years prosecuting 14 year olds as adults for as little as $400 in property damage—rallied in the belly of San Francisco's shopping district.

At 5:30 the assembly took to the street, on march to a site they'd targeted once before: a four-star Hilton Hotel, symbolic of the $10,000 W. Barron Hilton's spent to help pass Proposition 21. The most draconian juvenile justice law in the nation, Prop. 21 passed by a margin of 62 percent. Renamed "The War on Youth Initiative" by its young opponents, Prop 21 has galvanized a new protest movement determined to get money out of prisons and into schools.

If incarceration is today's analogy to Jim Crow segregation, then California is the Deep South of the prison problem. By 6:00 PM, the rowdy but disciplined protesters had converted the chandeliered Hilton lobby into one of the first sit-ins by the hip-hop generation. Around 7:00 PM, San Francisco police arrested 150 young people who committed non-violent civil disobedience in the name of their future. Not bad for a movement that, less than 24 hours before, got trounced at the polls.

"The by-product of the passage of Prop 21 is that we now have a stronger youth movement," says Pecolia Manigo, a 17 year-old student organizer. "We'll keep rising up until we overthrow the system that funds prisons instead of our schools." Mangio's organization, the Third Eye Movement, is part of Critical Resistance Youth Force, a northern California coalition that has swelled to include 38 youth groups united to fight Prop 21. Youth organizers with HOMEY and Olin in southern California also mobilized thousands of young people and accomplished unprecedented walk-outs from middle and high schools. A statewide youth summit called "Upset the Set-Up" is scheduled for early May. Organizers say they'll use the event to hatch a pro-active campaign against the prison industrial complex, one untangled from high-finance electoral politics.

Though it was defeated on election day, the new youth movement went up against Prop 21 with all its might. The law prescribes year-long prison sentences for 14-year old graffiti writers and felony charges for middle school students found guilty of any activity construed loosely as "gang recruitment." Prop. 21 undermines the concept of rehabilitative juvenile justice in California and could conceivably do national damage, given the role of the state's initiative process in spawning past tax revolts, "three-strikes" laws, anti-immigrant hysteria and the dismantling of affirmative action.

The youth movement against Prop. 21 bravely faced the Sisyphean challenges inherent in waging an electoral fight: how to "get out the vote" from an electorate that fears youth of color—and often buys into the demonization of them as "superpredators"—as well as from friends and family who think voting booths have all the relevance of rotary phones.

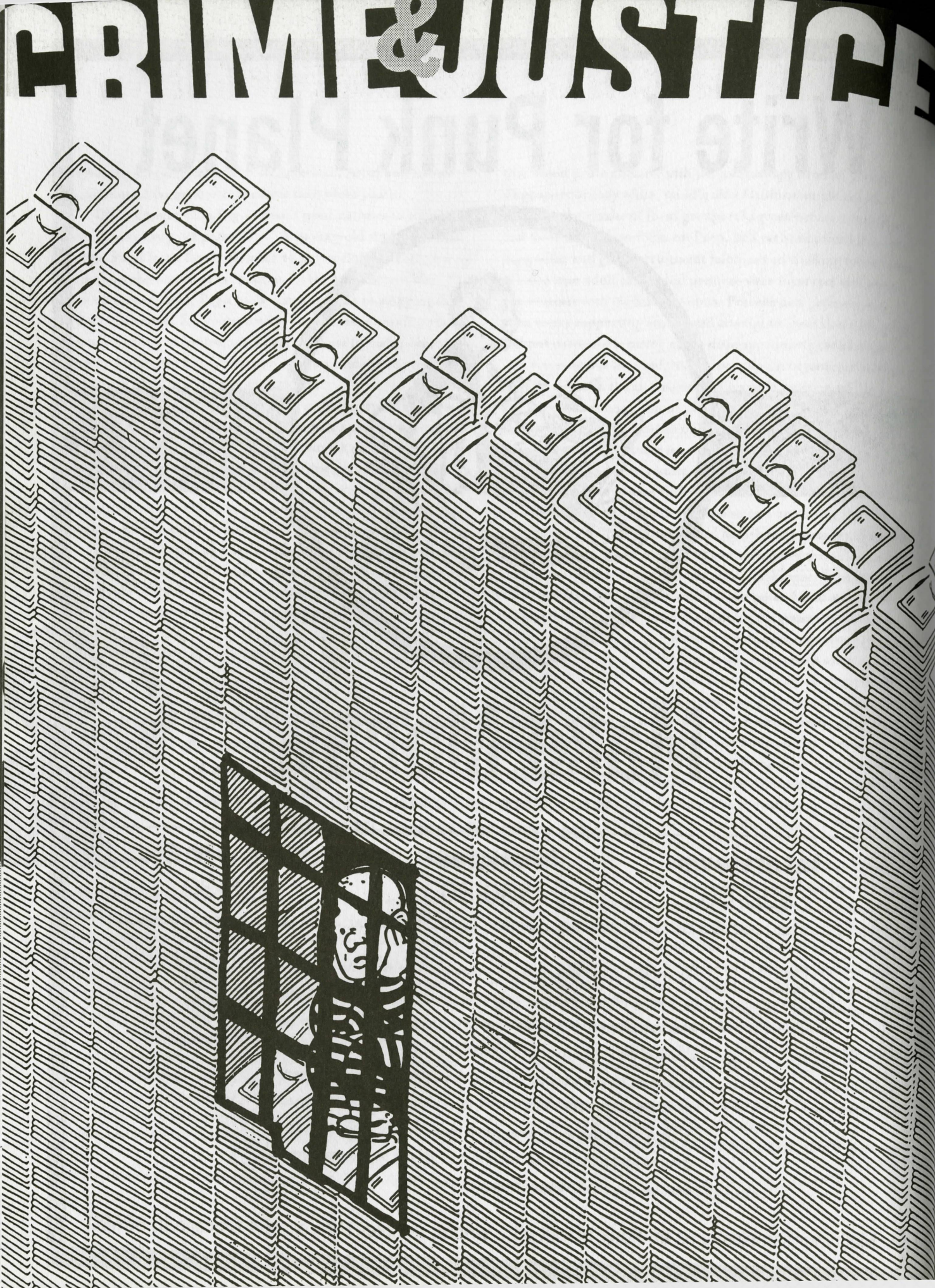
At the same time, anti-Prop 21 organizers redefined what it means to "win." The movement's leaders used Prop. 21 as an opportunity to build long-haul organizing drives and sustainable coalitions. According to Van Jones of the New York and San Francisco-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights: "History will record Prop 21 as a trigger. This is the beginning of an incredible movement that's going to change the face of politics in California and in the country." Jones underscores the power of the new civil rights movement and its capacity to win the hearts and minds of the public: "Prop 21 was only defeated in counties where the youth organized and protested. The youth know what they're doing. They won't stop until they break the back of the prison industrial complex. And they're starting right here in Calabama."

That "back-breaking" strategy—which centers on marrying long-term movement-building with short-term electoral fighting—was pioneered in the Golden State by an organization called Californians for Justice. This approach naturally attracts young people: over 40 percent of the volunteers in CFJ's last campaign were under 20. CFJ's army of young recruits attempts to mobilize those labeled "occasional," even "unlikely" on voter lists. "We take on issues that impact low-income communities of color and screen the voter lists for who's impacted by these issues," explains CFJ Co-Director Abdi Soltani.

California's ballot initiative process, designed to circumvent the state legislature, has historically attacked constituencies marginalized from the electorate. CFJ's counter-strategy is to build political power from the grassroots. Young people are crucial to this plan, but are disinclined to engage in a political process that has neglected and scapegoated them. With Prop. 21, CFJ saw the alchemy of youthful cynicism into potent outrage. Kim Miyoshi, the 27 year-old statewide director of the "No on 21" field campaign, suggests that the 2.5 million Californians who voted against Prop 21 would have nearly doubled had people under 18 been able to vote.

Over the past decade, 45 states have made it easier to try kids as adults (in some states, this means children as young as 12), but Prop. 21—because of the sentencing power it grants prosecutors; the limitations it places on juvenile probation; the death penalty it creates for certain gang offenses; the manner in which it defines and criminalizes "gang" association and the confidentiality it breaks of juvenile court records—is the most sweeping and punitive policy in the nation.

The 43-page initiative makes no funding provisions and, according to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, will cost state social programs over $300 million a year. In 30 years, Prop. 21 will require 22,000 new prison spaces at a cost of $1 billion. Though its proponents and the Columbine-fixated media report otherwise, Prop. 21 is not a response to a "juvenile crime wave." From 1990 to 1998, California's juvenile felony arrest rate dropped 30 percent; juvenile homicide arrests fell 61 percent. In


CRIME & JUSTICE

CRISIS AND CONTROL
The Prison Industrial Complex

By Christian Parenti
illustration by Daniel Sinker

In 1964, a tsunami swept over Crescent City, California completely destroying its downtown area. Only nine people died, but the town—nestled just below the Oregon border—never recovered.

In 1989 another tsunami hit, but this time the tidal wave was political. The California Department of Corrections rolled in and with little opposition, built the sprawling $277 million Pelican Bay State Prison, one of the newest, meanest super-max lockups in the system. The prison is also Crescent City and Del Norte County's largest employer.

The new prison's political and economic clout is exaggerated by Crescent City's extreme isolation and poverty. Only four of the area's 17 saw mills are still in operation, commercial salmon fishing is dead, and during the mid-'80s 164 businesses went under. By the time the California Department of Corrections came scouting for a new prison site, unemployment had reached 20 percent.

Today, Pelican Bay provides 1,500 jobs with an annual payroll of $50 million. Indirectly, the prison has created work in everything from construction to domestic violence counseling. Also cashing in on the action is a huge Ace Hardware, a private hospital and a 90,000 square foot K-mart, selling everything from toothpaste to Spice Girls paraphernalia.

The Prison Industrial Complex

The little town and the big prison: it is a marriage of convenience replicated in scores of communities in recent years. From Bowling Green, Missouri, to rural Florida, economically battered towns are rolling over for new prisons. Nationally the tab for building penitentiaries averaged about $7 billion a year over the last decade. One report has more than 523,000 full-time employees working in American corrections—more than in any Fortune 500 company except General Motors.

Is prison building the jobs program and vehicle for government economic stimulus in a post- cold-war, demilitarized America? Is the emerging prison industry replacing the web of civilian, government, military interests and private capital that Eisenhower dubbed the "military industrial complex"? This is the position held by a few on the left and even, to some extent, by writers at the *Wall Street Journal* and *Atlantic Monthly*.

But this perspective raises several questions. First, is the military industrial complex withering and being transformed piece by piece into a domestic war machine? A glance at the facts suggests not. The 1999 Pentagon budget topped $297 billion, the greatest in real terms ever. That's six to 10 times the total annual tab for incarceration. So while Hekler and Koch and other arms dealers

may be pushing their wares on America's cops and Wakenhut Corrections sinks more capital into private prisons, these expansions are not forced by a peace-driven Pentagon downswing.

Nonetheless, are specific corporate interests driving criminal justice policy, as is often the case with military policy? This "prison as Pentagon" argument generally cites three ways in which incarceration bolsters capitalism: government economic stimulus for stagnant communities (like Crescent City), the privatization of prisons and prison-related services, and the exploitation of prison labor by private firms. All of these facets of the prison industrial complex are important, but none of them—alone or together—explains why we are headed for what Jerome Miller, co-founder of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, calls a "gulag state."

This article explores each of the crucial points on the prison-business nexus, and then offers a different explanation for the lockdown economy: one based not on specific corporate interests, but rather on an analysis of criminal punishment as a class struggle from above.

Prison Labor

Critics of the prison industrial complex focus a great deal of attention on prison labor. Many say that incarceration is increasingly driven by big corporations looking for profits. They point the finger at Microsoft, Starbucks, Victoria's Secret and TWA for using cheap, well disciplined prison labor. In reality, most corporations use subcontractors who on occasion use prison labor, but more often use cheaper, more productive overseas workers. Nationwide, only 2,600 convicts work for private firms. Corporations don't like the invasive, controlled environment of prisons, where guards often interrupt production to strip search the employees. Nor are many big firms willing to risk the bad press associated with exploiting convicts. Montgomery Ward, for example, has a charter pledging that the company will not use child, slave, or convict labor.

Then there are state owned "prison industries." The federal government's Unicor employs 20,000 convict workers manufacturing everything from wire to office furniture. These are impressive numbers, and it might seem that there's a lot of money being made. In fact, Unicor—like other ventures owned by the state prison system—is heavily subsidized and would collapse in a few months if forced to compete with the private sector. Navy officials say that compared to the open market, Unicor's "product is inferior, costs more and takes longer to procure."

This is not to suggest that prison labor is unimportant. Politically and ideologically it is very important. And for the inmates who do the work, issues of fairness and safety are paramount. But in terms of explaining why policy makers are so eager to lock people up, prison labor is a sideshow.

Private Prisons

Another player in the prison industrial complex is the fast growing and powerful private prison industry. For-profit lockups currently control some five percent of all US prison beds. They make huge profits and spend amply to sway politicians and public opinion. The current round of private incarceration began with a Reagan sponsored experiment to house INS detainees at private detention centers in Houston and Laredo, Texas.

In response to the federal government's broad invitation to capital, a pair of Tennessee entrepreneurs using money from Kentucky Fried Chicken and the know-how of several public sector corrections veterans set up the first private prison company, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). For most of the '80s and early '90s CCA, like its competitors, concerned itself with cherry picking—seeking easy-to-handle contracts for minimum-security prisons.

But CCA and the others soon set out after bigger prizes. Corporate jailers now control roughly 100,000 prison beds nationwide, in 27 different states. CCA's market share is approximately half of all privatized America prison beds. Globally, its barely-regulated empire includes 78 prisons in 25 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Australia and the United Kingdom. CCA's record of inmate escapes and hiring untrained guards who brutalize prisoners is notorious.

Yet, financially CCA has performed handsomely. One investment firm dubbed it "a theme stock for the '90s." To maintain market dominance, CCA does things the old fashioned way: giving generously to politicians and buttering up the press. In recent years CCA's CEO has distributed more campaign money to Tennessee politicians than any other individual. The company also operates a robust lobbying operation in DC and in several states where it has operations.

The second largest private jailer is Wakenhut Corrections, with about 17,000 beds at 24 facilities. Named after its founder, former FBI agent George Wakenhut, the firm is a subsidiary of Wakenhut's private security service, which made it big more than 40 years ago by scooping up contracts to guard America's nuclear waste dumps and testing installations. Wakenhut also did some freelance spooking—by the late '60s, the corporation had dossiers on three million American "potential subversives." This was the largest collection of private surveillance files in American history and was later handed over to the FBI. By the 1970s and 1980s, the company had expanded into strikebreaking and guarding US embassies. George Wakenhut still runs the business from his castle-like mansion in Florida and from the deck of his yacht, Top Secret.

Behind CCA and Wakenhut is a hungry pack of some 16 other firms that run local jails, private prisons, and INS detention centers. Underwriting the growth of both public and private prisons are a battery of mainstream financial houses. Giant Wall St. firms such as Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch write between two and three billion dollars in prison construction bonds every year. Swimming alongside the big fish of incarceration are schools of for-profit caterers, prison HMOs, private transport companies, architecture firms and other subcontractors that feed at the margins of the prison industrial complex.

While private prisons are profitable, they don't lower the cost of incarceration for state governments. They merely gouge at the other side by taking all amenities and services from prisoners and by hiring often incompetent, unqualified guards. The private jailers are bad, but they only control five percent of all prison beds and they have not hijacked national corrections policy the way military contractors have. Besides they are increasingly unpopular—even with many Republicans. Therefore it seems that private prisons are not pushing criminal justice policy in the way that arms manufactures do with defense policy.

Class Warfare From Above

So what is driving the lockdown? At the heart of the matter lies a basic contradiction: capitalism needs and creates poverty, intentionally through policy and organically through economic crisis. Yet corporate America is also threatened by the poor. These so called "surplus populations" help scare working people into obedience, and keep wages low. Yet at the same time the poor (who in the United States are disproportionately people of color) make the upper middle class (who are mostly white) uneasy. At times they rebel and burn down the ghetto, or they organize and demand economic redistribution—which is even more threatening to the status quo.

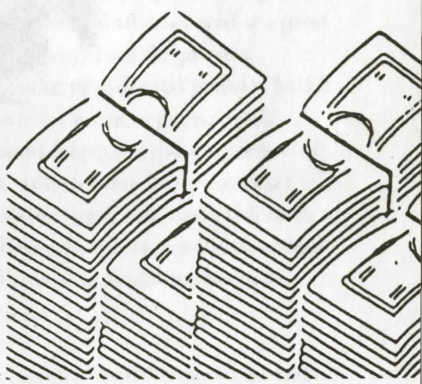
In the past, the poor were managed through a mix of social amelioration and repression. From the New Deal of 1930's through the 1970's an increasing portion of the system's cast off population were absorbed through a social safety net. People of color, particularly in the rural South, were largely excluded and managed the old fashioned way: via brut force. But America's incipient social welfare state began to cause trouble in the late '60s, when profits began to shrink and the economy slid into recession.

Crucial to that crisis was rising labor agitation. By the early '70s, wildcat strikes had shut the nation's postal system, coal fields, truck industry and railways. During one nationwide strike in which 12 unions whooped General Electric's ass, strikers reportedly collected $25 million in welfare. Despite recession in the early '70s, the ratio of quits to lay-offs was rising. Workers were no longer afraid of unemployment because there was a social welfare system supporting them. The war on poverty was subsidizing the war against corporations.

Reagan put an end to all that. A severe recession in the early '80s, conservative courts, and a mass assault on all forms of government subsidies to poor and working people—from low-income housing programs, to job training to welfare—helped to tip the scales back to capital's favor. So now profits are in recovery while the working public, particularly people of color, bleeds. But how to regulate the poor?

The answer seems to be clear: racialize poverty via criminal codes, such as drug laws and mandatory minimum sentences that disproportionately affect poor people of color. Then lock up as many people as possible for as long as possible. In this way, criminal justice regulates, absorbs, terrorizes and disorganizes the poor. It also bolsters institutionalized racism by disenfranchising and marginalizing large numbers of people. But unlike social welfare programs, the war on crime doesn't have the side effect of empowering, or at least cushioning, the poor and subsidizing their struggles. Nor does the new model of control set loose dangerous notions of racial equality or social inclusion, as did some War on Poverty programs of the 1960s. The prison industrial complex is containment the old fashioned way, via segregation, fear mongering, race-baiting, and naked force.

As for solutions: we need less. Less policing, less incarceration, shorter sentences, fewer laws governing individual behaviors,



The prison industrial complex is containment the old fashioned way, via segregation, fear mongering, race-baiting, and naked force.

and less obsessive discussion of every lurid crime in the news media. Two-thirds of all people entering prison are sentenced for non-violent offenses, which means there are literally hundreds of thousands of people in prison who pose no major threat to public safety.

There is already an over abundance of good ideas on how to handle troubled youth, drug addicts, impoverished sex workers, and spousal abusers. Many are quite inexpensive and effective. And since the need for work is at the heart of any real war on crime, we should create jobs that pay a living wage and meet human needs.

All over the country there are small pockets of dedicated activists fighting against tremendous odds and the deafening silence of the mainstream press. From Latino youth demanding more schools and fewer prisons, to inmates filing joint grievances against abusive staff, to Families Against Mandatory Minimums, these are the people pointing the way out from the waste, terror, and abuse of America's criminal justice lockdown. ◎

Excerpted from Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis *1999, Verso.*

Christian Parenti teaches at New College of California in San Francisco. His writing has appeared in The Nation, The Progressive *and the* Christian Science Monitor.

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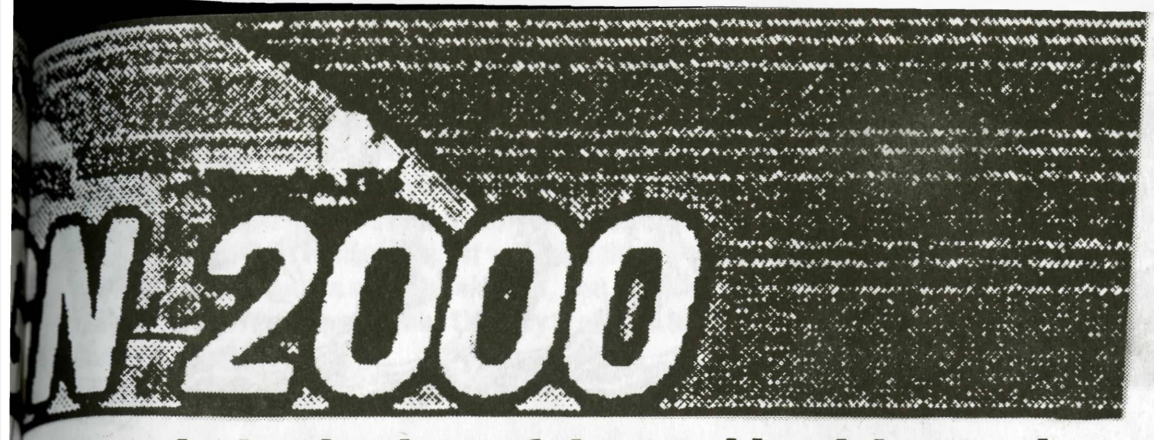


How the institutions of the presidential campaign close the process to all but a privileged few—and what we can do about it.

by Thomas Ellington

"The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread."
—Anatole France

The rules are never neutral. Super Tuesday may have finished off Democrat Bill Bradley and Republican John McCain, but the results of the 2000 nominating campaign were largely decided well before a single vote was cast.

Jim Taylor never had a chance. Neither did Heather Harder, Samuel H. Berry Jr. or a whole herd of other candidates. You've probably never heard of Taylor, Harder or Berry, and that's a large part of the story.

No nefarious cabal is at work here trying to exclude these candidates and thwart democracy. There is no need for a conspiracy. The rules and institutions of the presidential campaign exclude all but a few people from serious contention far more effectively than any concerted effort ever could.

Even in a perfect world, the average person would have a miniscule likelihood of being elected president of the United States—and probably should. In a nation where there are about currently 116 million native born citizens above the age of 35 and the average person will live to be 75, an average citizen probably has about 10 chances to run for president in their lifetime, putting the odds of winning at about 1 in 11 million. And that is a generous estimate. You might as well stake your hopes on Powerball.

What the current nomination and election process does is knock most people's odds down to zero and provides a lucky (but not necessarily deserving) few with realistic hopes of election. What we end up with ultimately is a choice between Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore—a choice which we are supposed to be grateful for.

Even in New Hampshire, where theoretically electoral process should be at its most open, the institutional structures of the presidential campaign begin to exclude many from the process.

It only takes $1,000 to get on the presidential primary ballot in New Hampshire. It takes a whole lot more to get noticed.

New Hampshire likes to present its primary as a showcase of American democracy at its finest, and in some ways it is. But the glare from the lights of 200 television crews can't help but catch the flaws in the process. If New Hampshire features the presidential campaign at its most accessible, it also demonstrates how meaningless that accessibility can be.

...

Leap years bring a motley mixture of candidates, supporters, reporters and other screwheads to the Granite State, and there's a fair amount of overlap between groups. This year the weather may have been icy, but all the groups were out in full flower in Manchester the morning before the primary.

The show started before the press bus departed the Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn for the New Hampshire State Armory where several candidates were slated to appear for the Bisquick Primary Breakfast and (Pancake) Flipping Contest.

Wearing a Bill Clinton mask and holding a plastic saxophone, Bill Donovan stood outside the bus waving a sign that said, "I believe Paula Jones." Donovan, who also showed up the next day outside Gore's campaign party, said he was hoping to "get attention and make change."

At the Armory, the jockeying for attention began outside. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals had not one but two people dressed in pig costumes in support of the group's "Tax Meat" campaign. Another group passed out fliers promoting a program alleged to make it possible to stop paying federal income taxes.

And that was just outside.

Although there were at least 20 television cameras and more than 100 members of the press corps present, the morning's

main event, the pancake-flipping contest, had very little actual political content. Candidates said perfunctory hellos to the pancake eaters—at least the ones who were paying attention and could see over the area cordoned off up front for the press.

No policy pronouncements were made, and even standard stump speeches were set aside in favor of pancake flipping. George W. Bush deftly flipped and caught his pancake, a feat made remarkable by the heckling he was receiving from Vermin Supreme.

"Roll up your sleeves, George Bush. Youthful indiscretion is no excuse for heroin abuse," shouted Supreme, as close to the stage as the uncredentialed rabble were allowed. "Go back to Russia. Go back to Russia, you commie. George Bush is a pinko."

Bush handled the situation with aplomb, smiling and gesturing toward Supreme, but his wife, Laura, seemed less serene, with the look of uncomprehending terror of a deer staring down the first set of headlights it has ever seen.

Gary Bauer fell off the platform in a heroic (and successful) effort to catch his pancake. Two days later he would drop out of the race after collecting just 1,640 votes for a fifth-place finish in the Republican primary. As Gerald Ford and Bob Dole showed before, falling down in public is the kiss of death for anyone seeking the presidency.

Alan Keyes was unable to appear because of poor weather conditions.

And that was about the extent of the official action onstage.

But in the crowd, a man calling himself the Most Holy Rev. Red Moses was spreading the word.

"I am here to predict the outcome of the election," he said. "At a selected time, I will reveal the information to each and every one of the assembled pancake eaters. And I have it from a very direct source, namely heaven above, that each candidate is blessed by Satan."

No one from *Punk Planet* was present for the reverend's final pronouncement, but his analysis of the situation was as cogent as any you will see.

Democratic candidate Jim Taylor and his supporters were there to protest his exclusion from the pancake-flipping contest.

"My First Amendment rights are being abridged clearly, sir," Taylor said. "It starts with the pancakes. Next they're telling you what TV shows to watch. Next they're telling you how many premium cable channels you've got to buy. Once it goes here, it's a slippery slope to complete domination of your lives."

Taylor's self-described "campaign and a parody of a campaign," which he was documenting for a film, included positions favoring national health care, a living wage and a 30-hour work week.

Taylor said event organizers had told him that the criteria for flipping pancakes were the same as for participating in a debate from which he had already been excluded. Taylor and a supporter carried signs reading "Let Jim Flip" and did some chanting between explanations to curious onlookers. The organizers did not relent, though, and Taylor ended up getting 87 votes and a 13th-place finish in the Democratic primary.

Up front, Supreme, wearing a rubber hip-wader boot on his head, flippers on his shoulders and a faux leopard-skin cape, was holding court with a rotating group of bemused reporters during lulls in the action onstage:

"My name is Vermin Supreme. I am a candidate for emperor. I am a friendly fascist. I am a tyrant that you can trust. And you should let me run your life because I know what is best for you. Accept no cheap, sleazy substitutes this election year when you can have the real cheap, sleazy thing. That is me, Vermin Supreme. All politicians are vermin. I am the Vermin Supreme, and that is why I am the most qualified candidate in this race at this time."

At one especially surreal point, one of the PETA pigs sat astride a man's shoulders behind Supreme while Bauer and Bush supporters chanted and jockeyed for position around them.

Outside, as several reporters waited for the bus back to downtown Manchester, Matt Guice, a supporter of Democratic candidate Lyndon LaRouche, continued to hand out literature.

"He's on the ballot in 25 states, but the media still can't seem to find him," Guice said with more resignation than irritation.

...

Why can't the media find Lyndon LaRouche? That, in a nutshell, is the 64 million dollar question.

And in a nutshell, the answer is because LaRouche doesn't have 64 million dollars.

Truthfully, though, the situation is more complicated than that. LaRouche probably doesn't deserve to be taken very seriously (A poster from his 1992 campaign hangs in one writer's bathroom. "Lyndon LaRouche," it says, "The only opponent George Bush feared enough to put in prison."). Aside from his past imprisonment, LaRouche is best known for his plans for Mars

In 1995, Jonathan Alter, a senior editor at *Newsweek* described the "fairly simple rules of the press pack" to Joshua Meyrowitz, professor of communication at the University of New Hampshire. "If we don't think you have at least some chance of being elected, you just don't get any coverage. Perhaps it's not the way it should be, but that's the way it is."

colonization and his claims that Queen Elizabeth II is at the center of the world's largest heroin-smuggling operation.

With limited space in newspapers and television air time exponentially more precious, coverage given to LaRouche is coverage taken away from someone else who might actually become president, or so the argument goes.

The bar is set low enough in New Hampshire and some other states that pretty much anyone who wants some attention—whether out of narcissism or a genuine passion for innovative ideas—can get on the ballot.

According to the New Hampshire Department of State, 30 people filed statements of candidacy for this year's Republican and Democratic primaries. If the average evening newscast were to spend just one minute on each declared candidate, there would literally no time left for anything else—whether it's water-skiing ponies or ethnic conflict in the Balkans. Plus, one minute is hardly sufficient time to explain a set of issue positions, particularly if they involve significant deviations from the status quo.

Picture for a moment a network newscast that does attempt to cover everybody on the ballot:

"Candidate X says she favors an abolition of private property in favor of an economic system that will not create and perpetuate injustice and social inequality. Meanwhile over at the Bush campaign ..."

After such a report, the viewers don't know much more than when they started, and Candidate X's campaign hasn't picked up any supporters because no one got to understand the arguments behind her program.

The print media have an advantage over their broadcast colleagues with regard to the space they can dedicate to news (the script from a typical evening newscast would not even fill the front page of a newspaper), but it still takes reporters to cover candidates and write stories, and the cost of covering 30 candidates is out of reach of all but a few newspapers and wire services.

Of course, it's not just the candidates who are seeking attention. Just as Willie Sutton used to rob banks because that was where the money was at, anybody with an axe to grind will go to Iowa or New Hampshire because that's where the cameras are at. Ultimately, what this means is that reporters and editors have to make choices about what to cover and what to ignore, and there is no guarantee their decisions will be satisfactory. Many readers of this magazine, for instance, would argue that PETA's campaign to tax meat should have received more coverage.

Reporters and editors tend to focus on who they think are "serious" candidates. While a lack of coverage means death for a campaign, the people who cover presidential politics tend to be sensitive about having their decisions questioned.

Bill Nigut, a reporter for WSB-TV in Atlanta, Georgia., spent more than two weeks on the trail for the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary.

"We're the only guys from Atlanta who are out here doing this," Nigut said. "Our competitors aren't here covering this at all. So because they're not here and I am, I'm the one you ask these questions about fair coverage. I don't want to play that game."

With air time a precious commodity, Nigut said, it has to be rationed carefully

"I've got, maybe, total three minutes on the air each newscast. I've got to work with the people who are the major players at this point," he said the day before the New Hampshire primary.

In his estimation, even some of the candidates who still were receiving national coverage—for instance, Republicans Alan Keyes, Steve Forbes and Gary Bauer—were below the radar. "Earlier on, it's great to get Keyes and Bauer, and we did. At this point there's really four people [Gore, Bradley, Bush and McCain] we've got to focus most of our attention on."

Every news organization covering the campaign makes the same kind of judgment calls Nigut talked about, and they make them in very similar ways.

In 1995, Jonathan Alter, a senior editor at *Newsweek* described the "fairly simple rules of the press pack" to Joshua Meyrowitz, professor of communication at the University of New Hampshire. "If we don't think you have at least some chance of being elected, you just don't get any coverage. Perhaps it's not the way it should be, but that's the way it is."

That's the way it was in 1995, that's the way it is in 2000, and that's the way it will be in 2004.

Journalists judging "electability" take into account things like fund-raising, endorsements, candidates' previous experience and coverage by other news organizations in a process that generally does do a fairly sound job of weeding out frivolous candidates. On the other hand, it's also an incestuous process and can create a self-

fulfilling prophecy. And once a contender is branded as a "minor" or "fringe" candidate, the label is almost impossible to remove.

Just ask Larry Agran.

In 1992, Agran, a Harvard Law School graduate, former mayor of Irvine, Calif., and former executive director of the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, sought the Democratic nomination for president.

Even after passing former California Gov. Jerry Brown in a poll of New Hampshire voters by the American Research Group, Agran was unable to get his candidacy taken seriously. ABC News reported Brown as trailing Paul Tsongas, Bill Clinton and Tom Harkin in the poll without mentioning Agran. Other organizations simply reported results for the top three candidates, rather than undertake the task of explaining how someone they ignored entirely had jumped ahead of a "major" candidate.

Even as other candidates dropped out, Agran was unable to get himself taken seriously as a candidate. In March, he was arrested at Lehman College in the Bronx while requesting to be included in a debate between Clinton and Brown. The New York media did cover Agran's arrest, but the coverage hardly made him look like someone who could be trusted with the presidency.

Indeed, there are two ways of getting media attention on the campaign trail. One is to be seen as a serious candidate. The other is to be too outrageous to ignore.

Vermin Supreme is a regular at New Hampshire campaign events, frequently carrying a giant toothbrush to call attention to his facetious demands for a mandatory toothbrushing law. According to a brochure he hands out, the United States "can no longer be a nation indentured." He is not irresistible to reporters, but he is close.

Says WSB's Nigut, "Vermin is an interesting guy. I love his costume. I was telling my photographer, I think it's a really creative costume."

While the same time constraints that pinch Keyes and Bauer, keep Supreme out of the picture for Nigut, he says, "If you're CNN, you want to do a feature story on all these interesting, fun characters because they're fun. I mean, why not? If you've got 24-hour news operation, you can do that."

Surely, though, if more than 100 reporters from across the country can show up for a pancake-flipping contest, one or two could cover the lesser-known candidates?

Supreme certainly has no trouble drawing a crowd of reporters, but if you are not one of these "interesting, fun characters," getting noticed is much more difficult.

Pro-hemp Democrat Heather Harder churns out reams of position papers and is obviously earnest in her desire at least to have her ideas heard.

Jim Taylor's proposals for national health care, a living wage and a 30-hour work week aren't that far off from what is already available in any of Europe's social democratic states, but he also wears a lei and declares in his campaign literature that "everything is crappy." Aside from having his own film crew, Taylor's caricature of himself makes him attractive to the curiosity-seeking reporter looking for a break from the serious campaign.

"Fringe" candidates can take their choice of a strategy like Taylor's or one like Harder's. Taylor's message gets lost in the flamboyance of his image (although he appears more serious about completing his film than about being president). Harder's message gets ignored because of her lack of flamboyance. Between the two of them, Taylor and Harder got 279 votes in New Hampshire, not even enough to fill a decent-sized high school auditorium.

The situation for lesser-known candidates gets worse once Iowa and New Hampshire are over. Other states have stricter ballot access requirements. As in New Hampshire, candidates have to line up slates of delegates, a process that can be maddeningly difficult. Even better-known candidates can have trouble with this all-important process. For example, in Maryland's March 7 primary, Maryland resident Alan Keyes had no delegate slate in the 4th Congressional District. Even a win there would have done him no good at this summer's Republican National Convention.

Campaigning via stump speeches and talking to voters in their living rooms is impractical in larger states with more spread out populations, especially with the time constraints of this year's front-loaded primary and caucus schedule. The only way to get into living rooms across the country is to get on TV. Advertisements require lots of resources (read money), and the news media are more spread out and less accessible than in the early heats of the campaign.

Surely, though, if more than 100 reporters from across the country can show up for a pancake-flipping contest, one or two could cover the lesser-known candidates?

Local media outlets, especially smaller newspapers do give a little attention to the Taylors and Harders of the world, and more specialized publications (like this one) offer some coverage, but that hardly compares to getting a front-page story in the *Los Angeles Times* or a story on ABC's *World News Tonight*.

The hordes of reporters that descend on the early primary and caucus states all come from outlets that want the campaign covered by their own reporters—that's the only reason to go to the expense of sending somebody. And to most media organizations, covering the campaign means covering the heavy hitters.

Some reporters are in a situation like Nigut, who was the only reporter WSB sent. For him, trying to cover seven easily recognizable candidates crisscrossing even a small state like New Hampshire was hard enough. Covering 30 would have been impossible.

Others have the luxury of a one-candidate beat. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*'s Ken Foskett covered Bill Bradley for Cox News Service. Making calculations about who else might be a sufficiently major candidate was not part of his job description. "Only at one event, on campaign finance, has there been another candidate," he said.

In deciding which candidates to assign reporters to, higher-ups at Cox surely used a decision calculus similar to the one Newsweek's Alter described. But even if they had made a conscious decision to cover everybody on the ballot, some beats are much more desirable than others. It might even be difficult to fill some.

Covering the presidential campaign is a prestige assignment, but if your candidate drops out, as most do, it's not a very long-lasting or satisfying one. There is nothing for Foskett now on the Bradley beat. The wheels have come off the McCain press bus. Now imagine how much more boring and dispiriting it would be to cover one of the lesser-knowns. Chances are that your are going to be back home covering the city council again in a matter of weeks.

The Cliff's Notes version of all this is that if you are seeking a presidential nomination from any position other than that of a well-connected political insider, you have no reason to hope for significant media coverage, much less electoral success.

Suppose you decide to pass up a major-party nomination and grab for the brass ring as an independent or third-party candidate.

Good luck.

If anything, the media are going to take you less seriously than if you were running as a Republican or Democrat. Not since 1860, when the Republican Party replaced the Whigs as a major party with Abraham Lincoln's election, has someone from outside the two-party framework captured the presidency—and the Whigs had been moribund for years.

The law of the press pack still applies: "If we don't think you have at least some chance of being elected, you just don't get any coverage."

Independent and third-party candidates also have to jump some extra hurdles that Republicans and Democrats do not.

Except for the Reform Party nominee, third-party and independent candidates face a struggle just in getting on the general election ballot in most states. Gaining ballot access is typically a Byzantine process consumes valuable time and resources that are also desperately needed for advertising, travel and other campaign expenses.

Go hit yourself in the head with a baseball bat. No, harder than that. Now go do it 49 more times. That should give you a taste of the pain and frustration of a nationwide ballot-access drive.

The Republican and Democratic nominees automatically receive ballot access in all 50 states.

They also receive federal money to match funds they have raised. The Reform Party nominee this year is also automatically eligible for matching funds. Other candidates can also become eligible to receive matching funds retroactively, but only if they receive at least 5 percent of the popular vote in the general election. Dollars received in December don't buy a lot of air time in October when it might actually help.

•••

All in all, it's an ugly picture. The question is can the process be fixed?

A few measures might help, but don't get too excited over them:

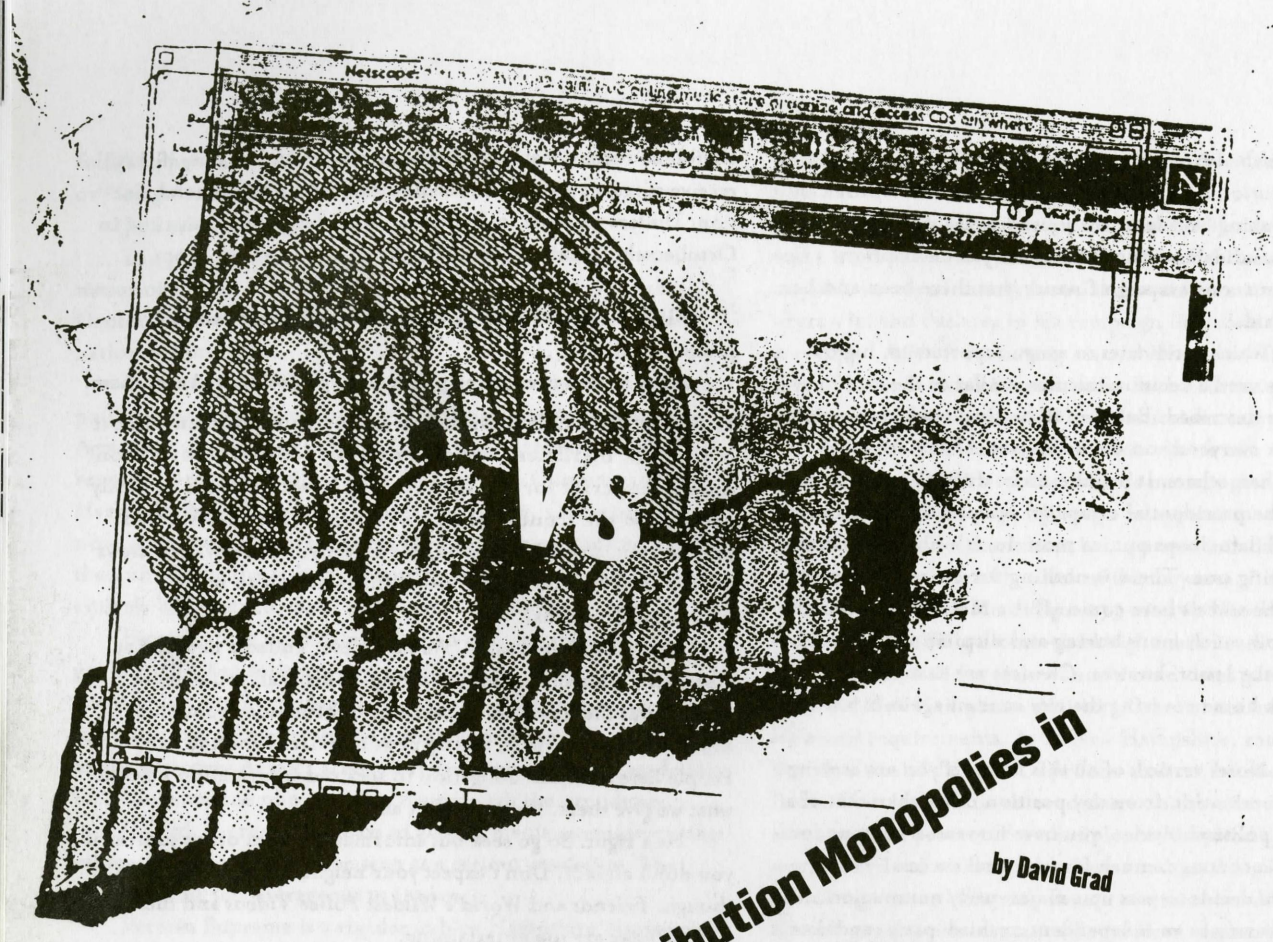
1) Turn off the TV. Television is great for entertainment, but it is a rotten, inefficient way of conveying political information. Again, the script for a typical evening newscast could be easily printed on the front page of a newspaper. If you have read this far, you probably realize this already, but television news cannot provide you with enough information to make informed decisions.

WSB's Bill Nigut said, "We have never ended a newscast at Channel 2 with an announcer saying, 'This is all you need to know about the news. Don't seek out information from other sources like newspapers, weekly news magazines and the like.' People have a certain obligation to seek out information beyond what we give them. We can't do it all."

He's right. So go seek out information from other sources if you don't already. Don't expect your neighbors to do the same, though. *Friends* and *World's Wildest Police Videos* and the 11 o'clock news are too entertaining.

2) News organizations should make a conscious effort to give lesser-known candidates a fair shake. That doesn't mean giving equal time or space to every yahoo who pays the money to get on the ballot somewhere. But it does mean at least giving each candidate one look, even if most don't merit a second. Obviously, a smaller operation like WSB can't take on this kind of responsibility, but it doesn't seem unreasonable to expect larger outlets like the Associated Press or CNN to assign a couple of people to an "other candidates" beat. It's not the same thing as assigning someone to cover Bill Bradley or George W. Bush full-time, but such a move might at least have rescued Larry Agran from obscurity. It would also give voters more confidence that they really are getting to evaluate *all* their choices.

3) Collective grassroots action could create alternatives to the status quo. Speaking to a group of about 90 people in College Park, Maryland on March 9, Ralph Nader, who is seeking the Green Party nomination, told the crowd that if one million people each spent 100 hours a year working for a new party and raised $100 a year, it would be possible to create a major party that is more responsive to the needs of the citizenry . His math is impeccable—$100 million and 100 million person-hours of work a year would create a formidable force. So go ahead and put in your $100 and your 100 hours of work this year. Just don't count on 999,999 of your neighbors to join you. They're too busy watching *Friends*, *World's Wildest Police Videos* and the 11 o'clock news. ◎



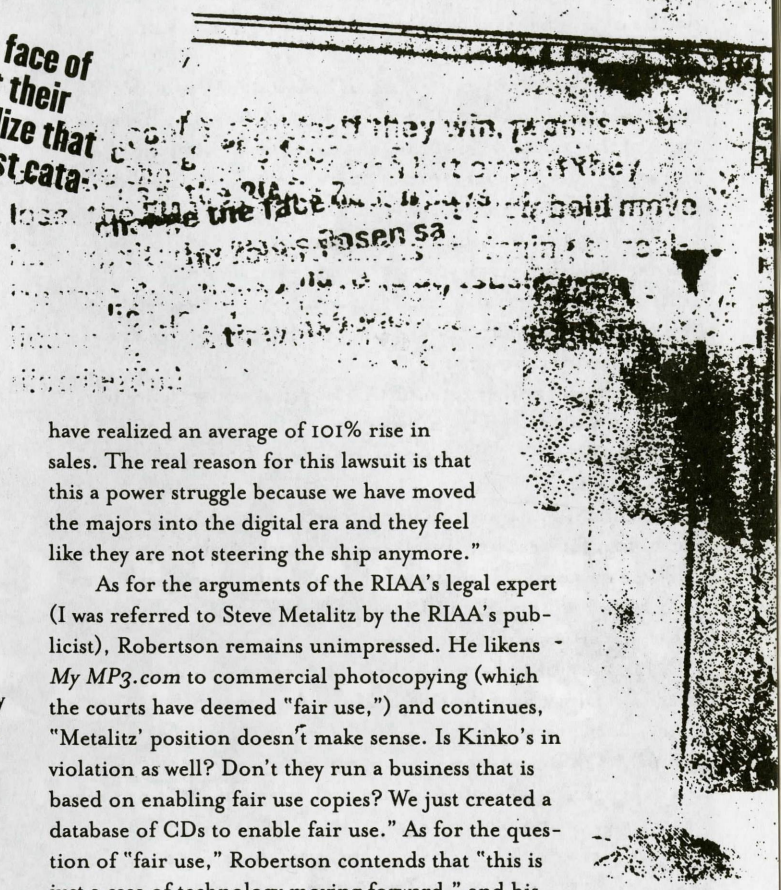
The Struggle for Music Distribution Monopolies in Cyberspace

by David Grad

In what is bound to determine the economic and technological contours of cyberspace for years to come, the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) and MP3.com are finally going to get serious and bash each other in the presence of a judge. The RIAA complaint, hastily filed in Federal Court on January 21 after negotiations with the MP3.com broke down a week earlier, alleges that the fractious Internet company's newest service, *My MP3.com*, violates federal copyright law. If the RIAA's lawsuit is successful, the resulting liability of the defendants (estimated by some industry analysts to be as high as 67 million dollars) should be devastating to MP3.com. It will also serve notice that the musical future of the Internet is very much in the hands of major labels, which already control 90% of the off-line distribution of music in traditional retail outlets.

At the heart of the case are several features of *My MP3.com* which allow users to store their music on-line and access it from anywhere in the world that has a net connection. Launched on January 12, the service contains two basic features dubbed *Beam-it* and *Instant Listening*. The former is a piece of software that lets consumers stock their *My MP3.com* account with previously pur-

MP3.com's gamble, if they win, promises to change the face of the web but even if they lose, the RIAA's Rosen says that their bold move has resulted in record labels beginning to realize that they have to seriously negotiate the licensing of their vast catalogues for Internet distribution



chased CDs after inserting them into their audio CD ROM drives for 15-20 seconds, while the latter gives them the capability of instantly listening to CDs bought on-line from three select on-line retailers (Cheap-CDs, Duffel Bag and Jungle Jeff) days in advance of the actual delivery of the hard copies. Both systems are based on a huge data base of at least 45,000 CDs (new ones are being added daily) that are stored on servers which then stream new or previously purchased product. The RIAA charges that by duplicating this copyrighted material without a license and for commercial purposes, MP3.com violated the law.

In their response to The RIAA's complaint, filed on February 10, the attorneys for the defendants acknowledged that "MP3.com transformatively created and stored on its computer server, MP3 files of the songs contained on approximately 45,000 CDs." But the defense contends that this is completely legal and in accord with the "fair use" provisions of federal copyright law. Supporters of The RIAA argue, however, that MP3.com have considerable difficulty getting a court to agree.

"I don't think that MP3 is denying that they duplicated copyrighted material without permission which is a clear violation of the law. If they are going to prevail in this case they are going to have to get a judge to really expand the exceptions to protection or in some other way make a radical change in the law," Steve Metalitz, former Chief Counsel of the U.S. Senate Patent, Copyright and Trademark Subcommittee and currently a Professor on Copyright law at George Washington University says. He explains that the fair use doctrine provides that copyrighted material can be used without permission in commentary, news reports or for educational purposes. Metalitz then continues, "MP3 has an uphill battle because they copied entire works and they are not claiming this is a charitable effort—it is part of a commercial service they offer."

But to hear MP3.com's CEO tell it, *My MP3.com* is almost a charitable effort. In a recent interview, Michael Robertson said, "Our contention is that all we are doing is letting the consumer listen to the CDs that he has already bought and we think that's the right thing to do. People shouldn't have to throw away their CDs and buy some digital version if they have already invested fifteen bucks."

Robertson, a longtime industry gadfly, insists that his new service is also a boon to the majors because it directly addresses their continued concerns about MP3 piracy, arguing, "The ironic twist of it all is that we designed a system that is dependent on the CD. The only way to get music into your catalogue is to have the CD. You would think the industry would be ecstatic over this because it encourages people to keep buying CDs and our retailers have realized an average of 101% rise in sales. The real reason for this lawsuit is that this a power struggle because we have moved the majors into the digital era and they feel like they are not steering the ship anymore."

As for the arguments of the RIAA's legal expert (I was referred to Steve Metalitz by the RIAA's publicist), Robertson remains unimpressed. He likens *My MP3.com* to commercial photocopying (which the courts have deemed "fair use,") and continues, "Metalitz' position doesn't make sense. Is Kinko's in violation as well? Don't they run a business that is based on enabling fair use copies? We just created a database of CDs to enable fair use." As for the question of "fair use," Robertson contends that "this is just a case of technology moving forward," and his service is nothing more than the cyber (and legal) equivalent of copying a CD onto a cassette or a hard drive. The CEO also takes comfort in his contention that, "if you look at the court's track record, they have decided with the consumer and new technology, whether that is in the case the Diamond RIO player, the VCR or the photocopy machine."

He takes even further solace in a recent case decided in the Ninth Circuit, *Sony vs. Connex*, in which the multinational electronics firm sued a software developer for creating an emulator for their Playstation console that would allow Macintosh users to run Playstation games. Sony argued that Connex had violated the copyright laws by copying the Bios (or brain) of their product. The court ended up siding with the defendants, even though it agreed that they had made multiple copies of the Bios, because it was to enable *fair use*. Citing this case Robertson crows, "Fair use trumps copyright every time."

The possible ruination of MP3.com aside, the stakes are also high for the majors, not to mention call into question the sincerity of Robertson's amazement at the ferocity of the RIAA's response. Robertson says the reaction from consumers has been "phenomenal." Though he won't release complete figures, Robertson claims that in its first thirty-six hours on-line, *My*

MP3.com had 10,000 users and that in its first two weeks, 4 1/2 million tracks were loaded into accounts. As if this was not enough, the cocky cyber entrepreneur predicts, "If the RIAA loses this case, consumers will have the right to repurpose 17 billion CDs that have already been sold, into their digital lockers with no royalties going to record companies. That's a quarter of a trillion dollars of music that consumers will have a right to load into their *My MP3.com* account."

Laura Betterly, the President of Visiosonics (a producer of electronic pro digital gear) goes even further, stressing the importance of the case in determining the configurations of the space and says, "This has a lot more to do with trying to control the industry itself then the technology. There is a smokescreen going on. There is a re-mobilization of the troops. The whole Time Warner-EMI thing is an attempt to figure out how they can capitalize and keep control. I think they want to own the digital arena and the best way to do it is take down the big players first and replace them with your guys."

Certainly another recent RIAA lawsuit lends credence to Betterly's claims. Napster, a program written by a 19-year-old that lets users share MP3 files over the Internet, has born the RIAA's wrath as well.

"The RIAA's aggressive posture isn't new—it has resisted new technology for decades," reads a recent article about Napster in *Fortune* magazine. "It squawked about cassette tapes years ago and later helped kill digital audio tape, each time on the grounds that recording artists would be deprived of copyright fees."

But most of Robertson's peers don't agree. Jon Potter, Executive Director of the Digital Media Association (DiMA), the trade association which represents the interests of digital media companies in Washington DC, angrily asserts, "You can't violate the copyright law, go into a bunker and come out shooting saying, 'You are prima donna's anyway,' or that the labels shouldn't mind because they would do this deal if they only understood it."

David Pakman, President of Myplay.com, which offers an online music storage system similar to *My MP3.com*, agrees, arguing that Robertson's motivations are anything but charitable. "He is attempting to use controversy to positively manipulate his stock price," Potter asserts. "As a public company you can't put your shareholders at risk like that unless you think you can win and I don't think they can win."

For her part, the President of the RIAA, Hillary Rosen, views the support of these new cybercapitalists as nothing if not logical and says, "I think they resent the level of unfair competition from someone who doesn't feel the need to get licenses that are dictated by law. Those guys are playing fair and MP3.com is playing unfair."

Robertson easily dismisses his critics. Going right for the jugular, he says about DiMA's Potter, "I understand that Jon is trying to suck up to the RIAA because right now he is in negotiations with them. I asked him three weeks after *My MP3* came out if he had ever tried it and he hadn't. He was making a public comment and he hadn't bothered to try it. He didn't understand what it did or how it worked. Jon is a lobbyist, not an expert."

Myplay's *Pakman* gets a similar slam-dunk critique when Robertson quips, "I don't know what stock ticker he is following. But getting sued for sixty million is probably not a good recipe to raise your stock price."

Robertson, however, saved his special ire for the RIAA and Hilary Rosen, and on February 7, filed suit against both parties in San Diego for Defamation, Trade Libel, Interference with Prospective Economic Advantage and Unfair Business Practices. The heart of MP3.com's case is that on January 18th, in an effort to wound MP3.com's stock price, Hilary Rosen called a stock analyst at one of MP3.com's investment bankers, discussed the impending lawsuit and suggested what kind of negative effect this would have. Rosen has issued a press release responding to the charges which labels them "Ridiculous," and a "Transparent attempt to silence criticism" of MP3.com alleged tactics of copyright infringement.

But where do the artists stand in all of this? Ron Stone, President of Gold Mountain Management (which represents Bonnie Raitt, Tracy Chapman and Ziggy Marley) is pretty clear about which side he is on. He calls Robertson "an arrogant little pissant" and then continues in that vein, "The people at MP3.com have this arrogance about what they are doing that is offensive to me and all artists. They think that just because the record companies have fucked us over that we are going to embrace them. The way I very graphically express this is that just because the record companies are fucking us over, MP3 thinks it's their turn. At least the record companies bought us dinner and kissed us good night. What MP3 did was ripped 45,000 titles onto the Internet, they didn't ask the artists if the wanted their material up there. They didn't ask record companies for permission."

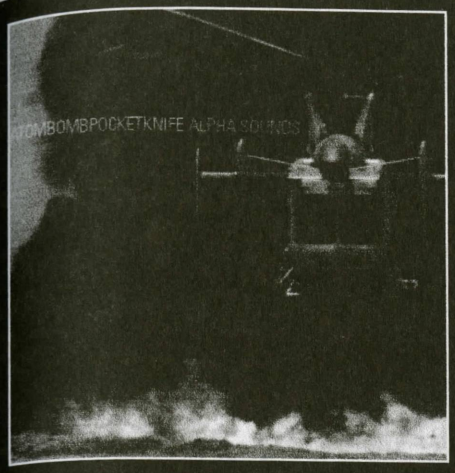
Despite Stone's ire, MP3.com has always maintained that it is the most artist-friendly of companies. Robertson defends this reputation by pointing to the over fifty thousand artists who work with the site. His position, however, seems to point to an ultimately irreconcilable conflict of artist and consumer interests. "Remember that consumers have ownership rights too," Robertson says. "That is a very fundamental question. We think that when you buy a piece of music, you have the right to listen to it on any format, on any device, anywhere you want for your personal use."

MP3.com's gamble, if they win, promises to change the face of the web but even if they lose, the RIAA's Rosen says that their bold move has resulted in record labels beginning to realize that they have to seriously negotiate the licensing of their vast catalogues for Internet distribution. And, she admits, "Everybody recognizes that the horse has left the barn. So it was necessary to find a way to make sure that people recognize this wasn't legal and litigation was the only way to assure both expedited licensing negotiations and a moratorium on the service."

Robertson says that despite the "rhetoric," the majors "haven't executed anything digitally except very limited marketing initiatives." He says he is willing to change that, sit down and negotiate "any elements of the system" with the RIAA.

Yet, despite the crash and burn potential Robertson seems to relish the fight and recounts that during a discussion with Rosen she asked him, whether this was the kind of issue he wanted to risk his entire business on. He boldly responded, "Is this the type of issue you want to risk your entire industry on?" ◎

A shorter version of this article previously appeared in New York Press



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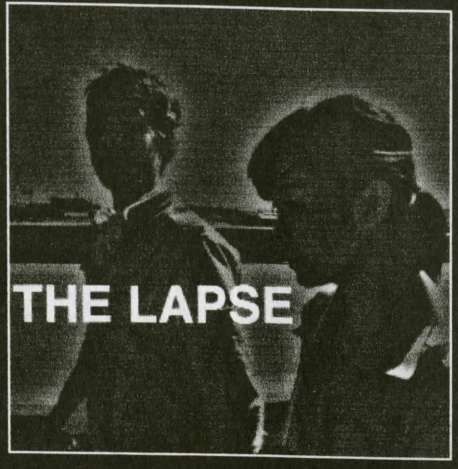

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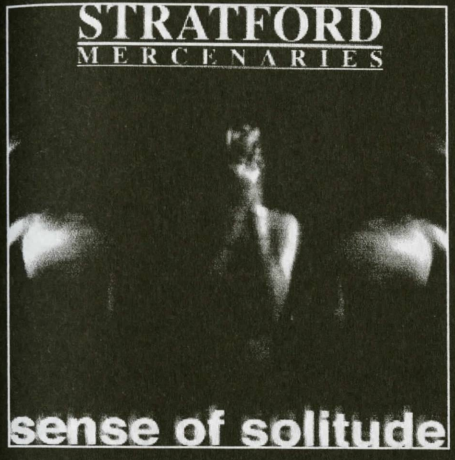

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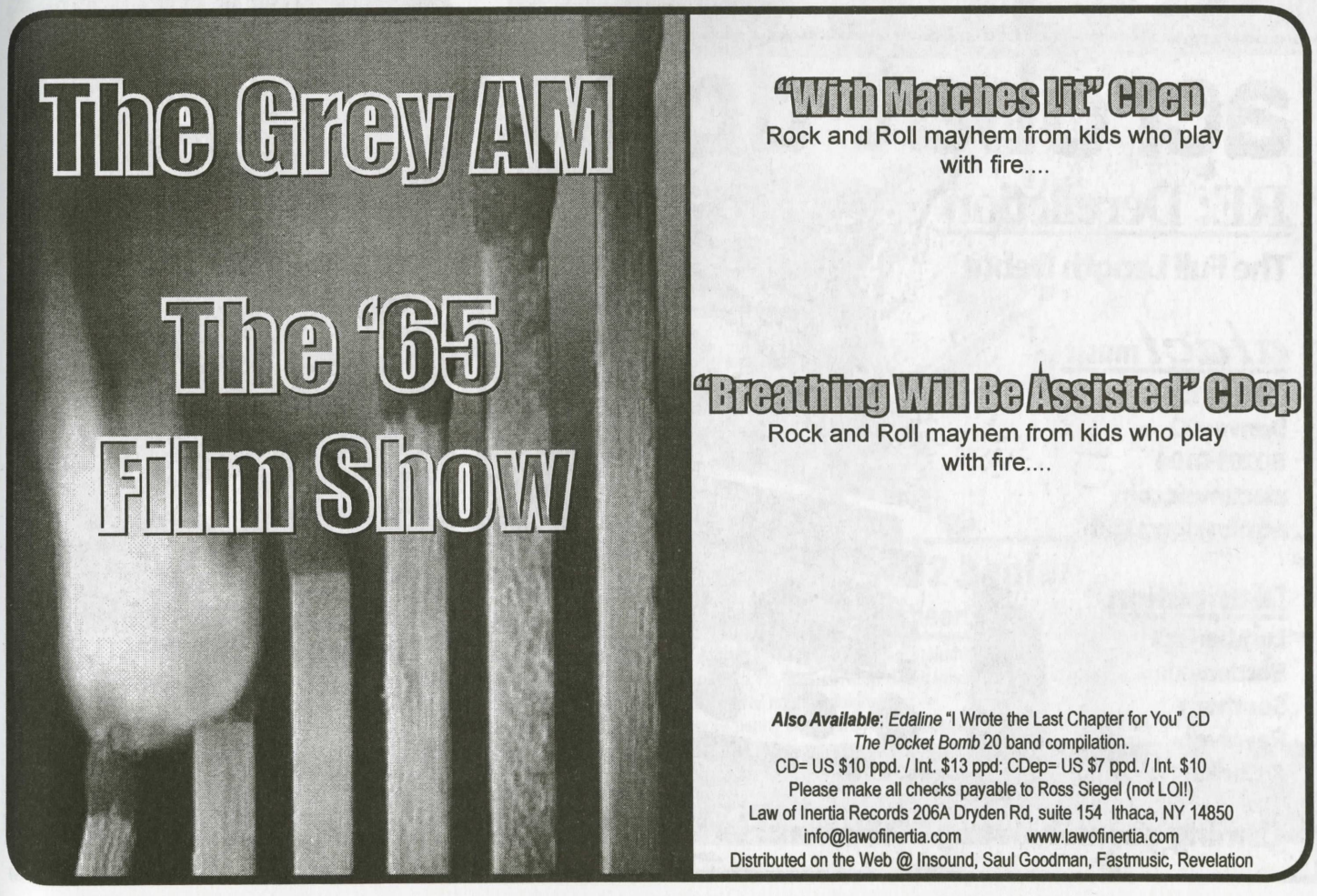
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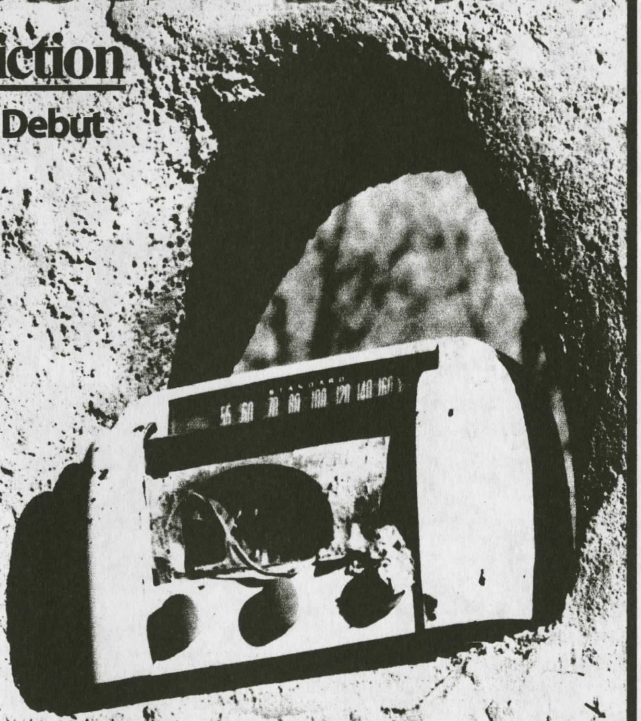

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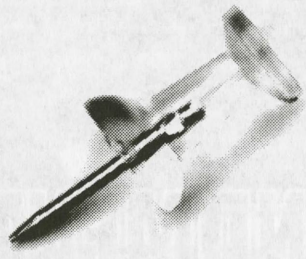

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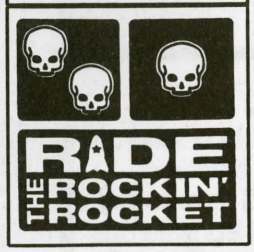

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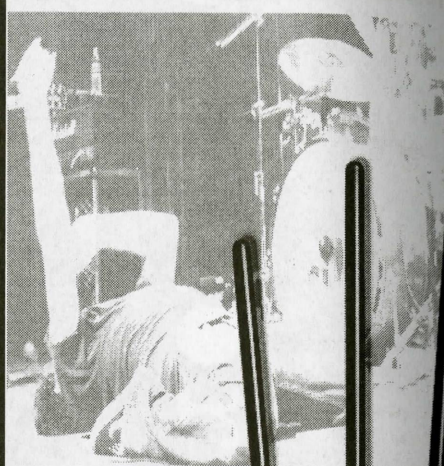

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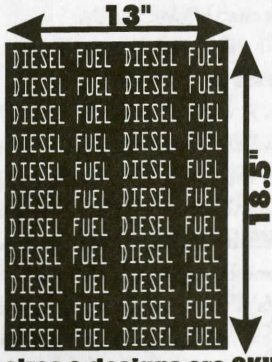

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The Manhattan Loverboy

by Arthur Nersesian

Long before love there was solitude. Solitude begat need. Need begat anguish, and anguish brought me to love. Before I was a proofreader, I was a solitary graduate student. Many years before I was a student, I was an orphan. A very tall and silent lady from the Bundles O' Joy Adoption Agency escorted me to my new home. My adopted father thanked her, led me into his study, and carefully explained his motives for having me brought there.

"We'll try to love you, Joey, but we should explain that you're something of a substitute."

"A substitute?" I uttered, barely able to pronounce the word.

"Mrs. Ngm." That was what he called mother. "She's not like other women." At this point, my new-found mother emerged.

"Sir?"

"She's barren." He pointed to her lower reaches.

"And Mr. Ngm," Mrs. Ngm put in, "he's...inadequate."

"What does that mean?"

Mrs. Ngm went to the fruit bowl and tore open a tangerine.

"Do you see any seeds in this tangerine?"

"No."

"This tangerine is Mr. Ngm."

Their sense of inadequacy was passed on to me. They treated me very well, but not like parents. And they never failed to explain that I was only someone picked at random to fill an irrational parenting urge. Yet even this parental urge was not very apparent. Mr. Ngm rarely came home after that day, and Mrs. Ngm kept dashing out of rooms as I entered them.

I'm not sure whether this is a syndrome for adopted children, or whether it was just my own reaction to adoptive nonparents, but as I grew older I became increasingly obsessed with the identity of my real parents. This obsession, unfulfilled, eventually manifested itself in an acute interest in histories.

Faulkner said that American Indians said that the spirits of their ancestors said something like, man can't own the earth because the earth owns man. Man's identity is suited to his parcel of earth. We are but a single cell in these long bloodlines of countries and cultures. People are the living earth, they are the terrain come alive: Arabs are the desert, unchanging yet turbulent; the English are the sea, humid and unfathomable; Russians, in a variety of ways, just go on and on; Americans are the youngest sons of the earth and act immature. But the American melting pot of integration isn't even hot yet. The twentieth century was the century of immigrants; we can still see our torn roots elsewhere.

I clearly remember the day my preschool teacher asked what everyone's heritage was. Young as they were, my classmates bleated out: "I'm Irish," "I'm Afro-American," "I'm Vietnamese," etc.

But I, little Joseph, was left dumb. I was the rootless orphan. As I got older, I spent more and more time in dark, deserted libraries, searching through history books for my face, my race. Though I never found myself within the photos or descriptions of these worldly books, this compulsion eventually left me with a vast knowledge of history.

Ignorant of history, you think that the world starts when you're born and ends when you kick. But me, I'm thousands of years old. I've survived wars, revolutions, intrigues, and catastrophes of all varieties. I can tell you intimate details of Pharaohs and Cataracts from both the Upper and Lower Nile, from Higher and Lower Civilization. I can give excruciating descriptions on how to get from one administrative building to another in early Byzantine Constantinople. I read, studied, became buddies with personalities on fire and confidantes of God. If I were to see William of Orange, or Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (who strangely resembled long-retired, New York TV community-chronicler Chauncey Howell), or any number of ancient potentates on the street, I'd be able to stop them and ask what they were doing alive in New York.

•••

I arrived too late for the dorm-room lottery during that first semester at Columbia. But I was intent on not missing an academic year. When I informed Mr. Ngm of the situation, he sent a memo explaining that my scholastic budget was pre-fixed. Life beyond that would be a test of self-reliance.

I searched the ads in the papers and fliers in laundromats. With a limited amount of money, and not picky, I finally narrowed it down to a choice between a cozy studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (one hour away from school), or a wide stairway in an upper West Side loft (a mere ten minutes away).

The stairway was a discontinued passage in a large loft building. The landlord, I learned, would have demolished the conduit, but there was a possibility that the

upper floors in the loft could be turned into commercial space. If this occurred, the owner would need the stairs to comply with building codes; so he left it intact.

The place was currently residential; so he renovated the stairway and advertised it as a "mini-triplex-studio." It wasn't as bad as it sounded. Like the body itself, the top landing of this stairway/apartment contained a nutritional gateway, my kitchen, the second landing a cushion of fat, my bedroom (my bed was a 4' x 3' piece of styrofoam—I had to sleep curled like a cat), and the final landing, the bathroom and exit.

In life, we are born and we slip from day to day until we die. Although there are signifying days and stages of life, there is no clear moment when we might say that we had only practiced living until now, and henceforth we shall actually live. After three undergrad years in that stairway studio, I realized that it was time to reach a landing, a new start. I decided to circumcise my adopted-family name. I planned to give myself a name with a national heritage that more closely resembled where I believed I came from, though where exactly that was was still a riddle to me. Realizing that I might never be absolutely sure, I felt I might as well give my allegiance to a culture worthy of my respect.

But were there any? Of all the great cultures that had ever flourished, of all the imperial civilizations, not a single one had stood the test of time. Their glory had faded. All that remained were crass, consumer societies, mere islands for corporate empires to bridge and tunnel.

One night around this time, I was wandering around the exasperating East Village feeling depressed in the French tradition. I clearly remember a boy in his late teens hidden under a huge, floppy fedora and clad in a baggy, out-of-date suit, who rushed up and asked me if I were Jewish. I thought about it, and decided to play a hunch.

"Yes."

He hustled me off into an unwashed Winnebago and said it was time to reaffirm my faith. Together, we submerged into a Mitzvah tank. He asked my name. He asked again.

"Levi," said I, thinking more of the jeans than the genes. Rolling up my sleeve, he wrapped a leather thong around my arm and led me through an ancient chant. I mumbled, faking the words. I wanted, needed the cleansing. His chanting beckoned Hollywood trailers of ancient epics: Charlton Heston in robes and beard, Peter O'Toole in *Masada*, Richard Gere in *King David*. I saw the diaspora pass before me, and looking upon those wandering and beleaguered people, my eyes filled with tears. I saw myself in that sandswept caravan, my people, my past. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a large-headed, red-haired, red-faced Hasid appeared, and with a single sniff he started shrieking.

"Dos is a goy, a goy! Out with him!"

Even after being thrown out of the van and screamed at in public, I didn't give up the faith. There were little things, odd signs, that revealed to me my kinship with the thirteen great tribes. I craved gefilte fish, matzoh, and sickly sweet wines. Flatchki (tripe) and platski (potato pancakes) were delicious, and knishes were always a treat. Saturdays were a kind of natural sabbath. And I adored the tumbling sounds—*scholum, yehuda*, and *menachem*—like big drums rolling down a stairwell. Soon, I found myself wandering in this great Jewish mist, a hazy history that unfolded forever backward.

I knew a lot of baggage came with being a Jew, but I was good at carrying bags. I kept my Mitzvah name, Levi. I let my sideburns grow long and began to train myself. With most of my core courses complete, I switched my minor from philosophy to Hebrew and began studying the ancient laws and customs.

In the student dining room, there was a row of tables where Israeli exchange students sat. Without their permission, and although I didn't live on campus, I joined my happy friends. I tried to speak about historical and political matters with them. They were polite, but they seemed a little bewildered by me. They seemed suspicious.

I got a job that January at a kosher pizza place. It was my last semester before graduation, and I wanted to make enough money to visit the Holy Land. I wrote the parents that the 258 steps of the stairway studio was too much of a test. I couldn't hack it. From New York, I made preparations to join a kibbutz. After getting my BA, but just before departing, I sent out applications to several elite and exciting graduate programs. No sooner were they mailed, though, then I realized that my life was on a new and different course—Israel. ◎

This passage was exerpted from Chapter One of Arthur Neresian's new novel, Manhattan Loverboy *(Akashic Books). Nersesian's first novel,* The Fuck-Up, *was also published by Akashic Books. For more information, visit www.akashicbooks.com*

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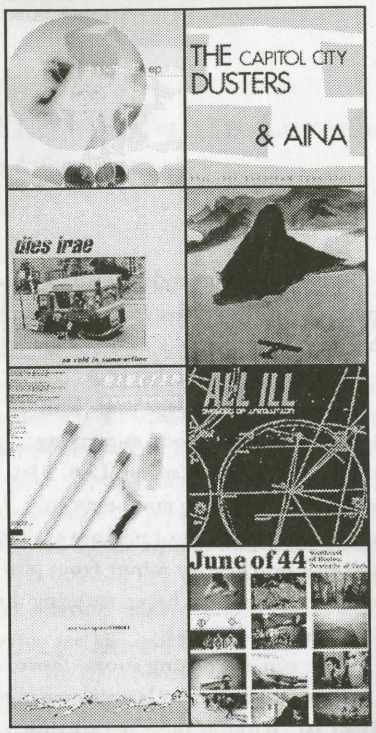

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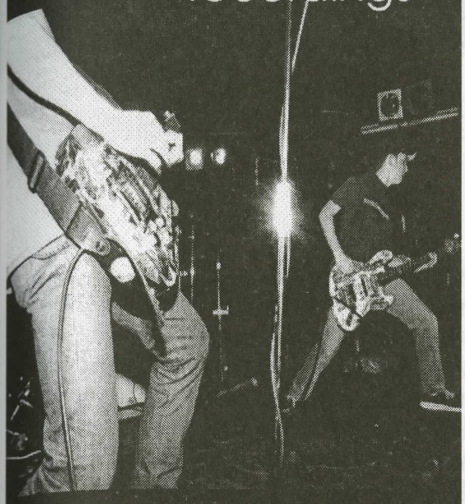

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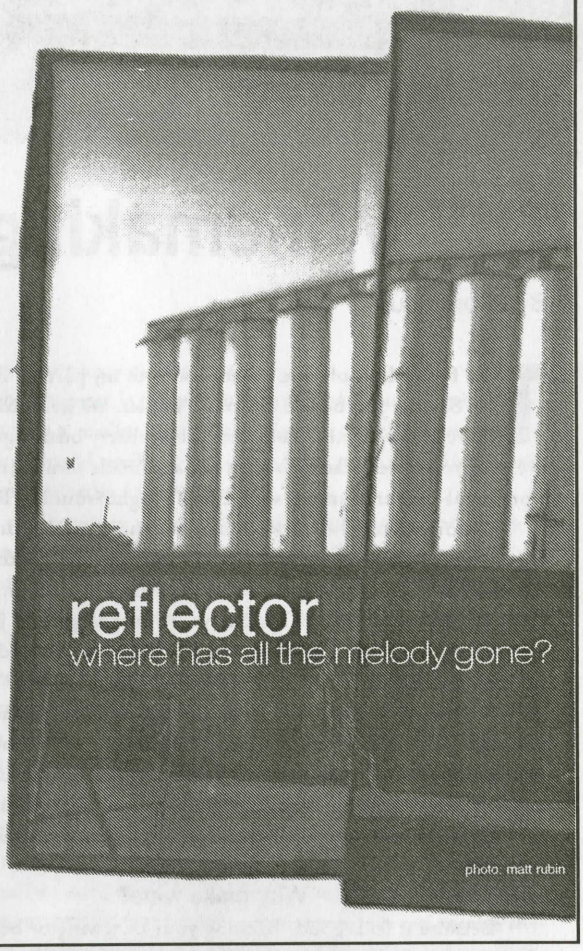

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DIY Winemaking!

By Robnoxious

The first gallon of wine I made was with my partner Shyla Ann in Seattle, just before the WTO battles. We were living in a part of the city that had tons of blackberry bushes growing everywhere, so we picked a bucket full and made some wine. It tasted wonderful—better than any wine I had bought from any liquor store.

Unfortunately, we did not understand the final processes for finishing the wine, so we bottled the stuff up and hit the road. After a few days traveling under the hot California sun, the bottles of wine detonated inside our van, spewing purple juice over everything. The warmth inside the van had re-activated the yeast and fermented us up a of couple wine bombs.

After we got done laughing and wiping up the wine, we decided to try making wine again when we got to Minnesota. We did, and so far have made a few good batches of wine using raisins, mead (honey), raspberries, blueberries, apples, citrus (oranges, lemons, grapefruits), cranberries, and tea leaves.

Why make wine?

Because it feels good. Brewing your own wine or beer is much cheaper than buying it at a liquor store, and going through the process of making wine yourself will give you a much better appreciation for the drink. You can even make wine without spending any money, if you have an easy source of fruit to make wine with, from bushes, trees, or dumpsters. Plus, if you are vegan, you will know exactly what ingredients have gone into the stuff, since some commercial methods of filtering wine involve animal parts.

Ingredients

Wine is made with four basic things: water, sugar, yeast, and fruit. In place of the fruit you can also use less common ingredients for flavoring such as: roots (ginger), stems (rhubarb), flowers (dandelion, rose petals), grains (barley), or leaves (sage, tea). The flavoring could be almost anything that's not poisonous, but it's easier and cheaper to use fruits that contain their own sugar.

The **water** you use is important, if your tap water has lots of minerals and chlorine, that taste is going to be in your wine. Some co-ops or grocery stores sell cheap refills of purified water, fill up there. Use a five gallon bucket or some one gallon jars.

The wine **yeast** that you need should be easy to find in a homebrew supply store, or some hobby stores. Brewers yeast is easier to find—you can get that at natural food stores. Dry wine yeast is cheap, it comes in a small packet that can brew up to five gallons of wine, and costs about fifty cents. If you live in a homebrew void, you can order wine yeast from the Liberty Malt Supply Co. in Seattle at (206) 622-1880. Any type of yeast will work though, with different effects on the ferment and different tasting results.

The **sugar** is regular white sugar. I haven't tried it but I don't see why you couldn't also use raw sugar or brown sugar.

The **fruit** or flavoring should be rinsed with water in a colander and have no mold on it. Also, make sure there are no maggots or fruit flies—fruit flies will turn your wine into vinegar. The availability of a certain kind of fruit in your area that you can get really cheap is a big help. A ton of fruit gets thrown out in grocery store dumpsters, an excellent source that is completely free.

Tools you'll need:

Stainless steel **kettle** to boil water in.

Cheese cloth and **rubber bands** to seal the mouth of the fermenting jug to let the gas inside escape but keep bacteria and mold from getting into your wine (you can also buy little plastic air locks from brew stores).

A stainless steel **spoon** for stirring it up.

A **thermometer** to make sure your wine is fermenting at an ideal temperature.

Four feet of **transparent plastic hose** for siphoning the wine.

One gallon **glass jugs** for fermenting the wine in.

5 gallon **plastic buckets** for mixing and mashing.

This is an ideal list of tools, you can substitute other things of course. But keep in mind that some things are difficult to sterilize, like wooden spoons for instance. Also, aluminum kettles will give the wine a nasty flavor—stay away from them. In addition, don't use plastic buckets that originally contained poisonous or spicy substances.

I found almost all of this stuff in thrift stores or behind wine bars (jugs and wine bottles) and restaurants (for the plastic buckets). The rest you can get at a hobby store or a homebrew supply store.

Sterilize your tools! Like some rude party crashers you might know, **mold** and **bacteria** try to show up in the wine and spoil everyone's fun. To protect against this, you need to sterilize everything that will come into contact with the wine while you are making it. Bleach is the most available way to sterilize your equipment. Mix about one teaspoon of bleach in with one gallon of water. After the implements have been cleaned with soap, dunk them in the bleach/water dilution. For your bottles, pour a little of your bleach mixture inside the bottle and put your thumb over the mouth, shake it up and drain. Rinse everything well with warm water until you don't smell the bleach any of the items. Making everything sterile is an easy part to slack off on, but if you fail to kill the bacteria you may end up with a couple gallons of vinegar salad dressing.

Also, be sure to keep your wine sterile as it ferments—fit layers of cheese cloth or an air lock over the opening to your fermenter.

A Few Simple Recipes

Blackberry, Raspberry, Loganberry, or Dewberry Wine: Take five pounds of berries and crush them in a sterilized bucket with a clean foot or a potato masher. Pour two gallons of boiling water over the berries and stir well. Cover and let it sit overnight. The next day, add enough yeast for two gallons of wine (half of a wine yeast packet). Put a lid on the bucket and leave it for five days, opening the lid to stir it once a day. After that, strain it through a sheet of cheese cloth or a nylon screen into another bucket, then add 3 1/4 pounds of sugar. Stir it all up. Then pour the mixture into fermenting jars and fit them with an air lock. Ferment according to the instructions below.

Apple Wine: Chop up 18 pounds of apples into small pieces, take out all the seeds that you can, and put into a sterilized bucket. Add one gallon of good water and the yeast (the water will not cover the apples). Put a lid on the bucket and leave it for a week, stirring once a day to bring the apple chunks at the bottom to the top. At the end of the week, strain out the apple pulp from the juice using cheese cloth or a nylon screen, squeezing the apple pulp to get all the juice out. For every gallon of apple juice you now add 3 pounds of sugar. Pour into sterilized jugs and fit with an air lock, ferment as below.

Cider: This is a good recipe if you don't want to use any added sugars. Take a bunch of apples, say a bucket full, and smash them in the bucket using a heavy timber. Then take a towel and put the mash in it, then twist it to get the juice out. A modern juicer would also work good. Pour the juice into jugs, add the yeast, and fit them with air locks. Ferment as below.

Perry: Same recipe as Cider, but use pears.

Tea Wine: Boil one gallon of good water, pour this over 6 tablespoons of tea and 2 pounds of sugar. Wait until it has cooled and strain out the liquid into fermenting jug, then add 3 teaspoons of citric acid (lemon, orange, grapefruit juice) and the yeast. Fit the jug with an air lock and ferment as below.

Fermenting

When you see bubbles rising up the sides of the jug and hear snap crackling when you put your ear up to the cheesecloth, or see bubbles coming thru the air lock, you know the ferment has begun.

Keeping a constant **temperature** is important. After you add the yeast, keep the wine at a constant 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit while it is fermenting. Any cooler and the yeast might stall the ferment, hotter and the ferment might go too fast and make the wine yucky. A slow and steady ferment is best, not a fast raging one. If it's too cold, wrap a blanket around it. If it's too hot, add ice cubes into the wine—it won't hurt.

After the ferment is done—no more bubbles are coming up—move the jugs to a cooler place if you can (a cool closet or something like that would work). Keep them here until the wine clears and sediment has settled to the bottom.

Then, you're going to **rack** your wine—have somebody help you with this manuver, 'cause it's tricky. Put the jug on a table and an empty, sterilized jug on the floor. Put the sterilized plastic tube halfway down into the wine. Have somebody help you. Now suck on the bottom end of the plastic tube and when the wine comes, direct the flow into the empty jug. A more sanitary method (because your mouth could have bacteria that would spoil the wine) is to fill up the tube with good water while holding the bottom end closed with your thumb, then putting the top end in the wine and letting your finger off the bottom. The extra water won't hurt the wine. Keep an eye on the jug you're siphoning from—don't suck up the sediment that is laying on the bottom!

Leave half an inch or more of wine and sediment in there—keep this to put in your **yeast starter bottle**. A starter bottle can receive the yeast from a previous wine, mixed with some fruit juice and sugar, it will stay active and reproduce itself so you can use it on the next batch of wine. If you do this you won't ever have to buy yeast again!

That is how you rack the wine. You have to repeat this process a few times. Let the wine sit again for a week or two. It's different for different kinds of wine, just wait until the wine has cleared so you can see through it and the sediment is at the bottom. Rack the wine about 3 times total, then you should be done. But should you drink it now? Or should you wait 60 years?

Wine can sit—unopened—for a long time, and it only get better with age. 60 years? I'm not that patient. It's even traditional for wine to be drunk while still fermenting, as a fizzy harvest festival beverage. I say the wine is ready when it has been racked two or three times and has cleared so you can see through it, when any leftover particles have settled to the bottom. This takes 2-6 months for best results, depending on the type of wine. Maybe one day I'll set aside a bottle and see what it tastes like next year!

So now that you know how to make wine, you might find that some may be too sweet or too dry for your taste. You might want to experiment with blending different types together. The blends I've tried that taste good are a 50% Blueberry/50% Raspberry Wine, and a 75% Raisin/25% Honey Wine blend. Mix a little bit in a small glass and taste it, if you like it, make a whole bottle of it!

But most importantly, you have just completed an ancient ritual, one that modern doctors say is good for your heart, in moderation. Cheers! ◎

in sickness and no wealth

HEALTH DAY

I won't bother going into the anatomy/physiology/medical/terminology/cause-&-effect/mumbo-jumbo of laryngitis. Yawn...BOOOORRRING. It's obvious you're all intelligent people, you're reading *Punk Planet*, so I'm going to assume that you all know what laryngitis is (hint: it's losing your voice). But, you may not know what to do when you get it—or how to avoid it happening to you.

Losing Your Voice

There are a few ways of losing your voice:

1) Misusing your voice by yelling, screaming, heckling bands, etc.

2) Upper respiratory infections from the common cold, the flu and/or allergies.

3) Certain medications may dry out the mucus lining of your throat and nasal passageways.

4) Dry air. As soon as winter hits and the furnace kicks in, my throat gets dry, I develop those annoying whistling boogers, my hair stands on end, and for the grand finale, I get a nice bloody nose on my new army green sheets. Winter sucks—I'm in the wrong state.

5) Stress and poor nutrition. That's self-explanatory: take care of yourself!

Recovering from Laryngitis

Be Quiet. If you have laryngitis, first and foremost, *don't talk*, or even whisper. You will want to give your vocal cords a rest and talking and whispering can further strain your voice. Don't answer your phone—let the answering machine pick it up. Curl up with a good book and take it easy. You can talk about your record collection at a later date.

Take Acetaminophen. If you lost your voice from misusing it, don't take any aspirin! Chances are you ruptured some capillaries, and since aspirin thins the blood, it will impede the healing. However, you may take acetaminophen, the store brand equivalent to Tylenol, to help with the pain and inflammation.

Get a humidifier. Dry air can cause mucus to stick between your vocal chords—thus laryngitis. To avoid developing laryngitis, buy a cheap humidifier, and run it all winter. I spent $15 on a humidifier and I love it! Don't get sucked into the hype: "Oh, this one has a hepa-filter and it's only $50." Fuck that! I'll put my humidifier up to the Pepsi challenge anyday. Also, breathe through your nose, your natural humidifier. If you need instant moisture, and don't have time for the humidifier to do its thing, you can boil some water, add 5-10 drops of eucalyptus oil and remove it from the heat. Test the steam first to make sure it's not too hot—you don't want to scald your pretty little face—and then put a towel over your head and create a tent to capture the steam. Breathe. Repeat as needed.

Drink! Consume plenty of fluids! Cold liquids just aggravate the problem, so warm to hot liquids are best.

Don't smoke. If you smoke, STOP! If you don't smoke, avoid smoky environments. Especially those of you who sing/scream in smoky bars—you're just *asking* for it!

Relief through herbs

Slippery Elm bark is a great remedy for sore, irritated throats. There are two different brands of slippery elm bark tea that I recommend: Throat Coat from Traditional Medicinals and Throat Comfort Tea from Ancient Healing Formula. Both cost about $4.00 for 16 tea bags. If you don't have time to sit down with a nice hot cup of tea, you can also purchase slippery elm bark lozenges in three different flavors: original, cherry, or tangerine. Most health food-type stores sell these and you can get 24 lozenges for $2.00.

Fennel tea is a great gargle to ease the inflammation. I recommend buying Alvita teas. They offer "simples," which is just the herb itself, unlike the slippery elm bark, which has other little goodies to compliment it. You can get 24 tea bags for roughly $3.50.

Lavender is also another good tea to use because it has an antiseptic protection to fight infections. I had problems locating Lavender tea, but you may have better luck than I. I

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

couldn't find it pre-packaged as tea, but I did manage to find it in bulk. A pound of bulk lavender will run you $18, but who needs that much? All you need is 1 tsp. of lavender per coffee cup—do the math. Boil some water, steep, and gargle. Repeat as needed.

Marshmallow tea you can drink—not gargle—to reduce inflammation and speed healing. This was another one I had a hard time locating. The health food store said they could order it on request, but who has the time to wait? I did find it in capsules. If you wish to use this remedy, you can boil some water, break open a few capsules, steep, strain and drink 3-4 cups a day. For 100 capsule of Marshmallow, it's roughly $8.50. Who knows, maybe in your neck of the woods, your local health food store may carry marshmallow tea.

Ricola is another favorite of mine. Ricola has many herbs, such as thyme, wild thyme, hyssop, angelica root, peppermint, linden flowers, horehound, sage, lemon balm, and elder. I love both the throat syrup and the drops. The throat drops will run you $2.00 for about 21 drops. The bottle of ricola throat syrup will cost around $5. Beyond the cost, there's very little difference between the two, except one you suck on, and the other one you drink.

Aromatherapy

For those of you are into **aromatherapy**, you may already have the ingredients to the following two recipes. If you're not, this might get a little costly.

1) Add two drops each of tea tree oil ($8.00), Spanish sage or clary sage (both $8.00), and thyme oil ($8.00), to a glass of warm water. Mix well and gargle. Repeat three or more times a day.

2) Combine 3-4 drops each of thyme, Spanish sage or clary sage, benzoin ($9.00), and sandalwood ($27.00), in 5 tsp. of olive oil. Apply to the chest and throat. Repeat two times a day.

Good Luck to you all! ◎

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Resources

1) *20,000 Secrets of Tea* by Victoria Zak.

2) *A Practical Approach to the Use of Essential Oils for Health and Well-being* by Julia Lawless

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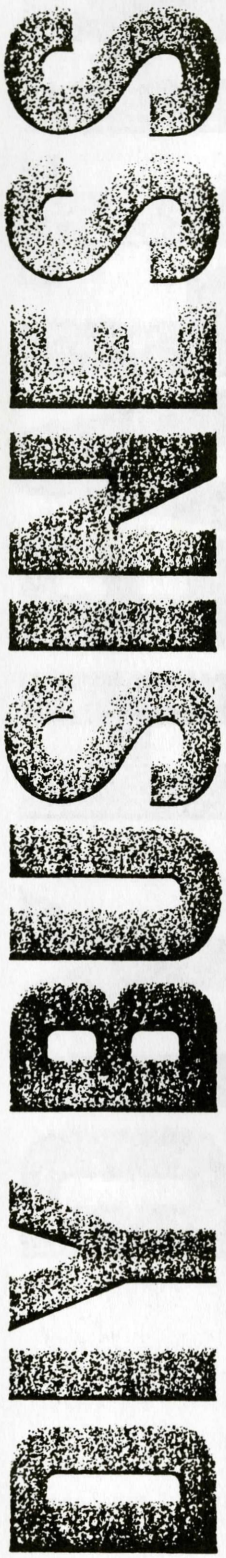
fuck work

by James Squeaky



For the last six months or so, this has been Srini Kumar's "Fuck Work" column. He has passed along the torch to me for the time being. I want to take what Srini was doing and move a half-step further by creating an article that not only instructs how a DIY business works, but illustrates it by interviewing people from the punk community about how their businesses work. Onward!

Sonny Kay—Bottlenekk Distribution

It's sort of a weird thing to claim, but in a way, Sonny Kay was partly responsible for my interest in punk. When I was 16 years old in Boulder, Colorado and thought Primus was the best band in the world, I somehow ended up at my first punk show. It was crazy, fun, exciting and I loved it. The headlining band was Savalas, whose lead singer was Sonny Kay. I was an instant fan of the crazy, theatrical Boulder punk scene. Later, I saw Sonny's band Angel Hair's first show and attended tons of shows that he booked at Club 156 on the University of Colorado campus. Later, the all-mighty, and now legendary The VSS formed and happened to move to the Bay Area about the same time I did.

Over the last six years, Sonny has managed to accomplish more than I ever will in my lifetime: He runs GSL records, his involvement in bands continues with Subpoena the Past, and he runs Bottlenekk Distribution. Now, he is starting a new venture, appropriately called Independent Music Distribution, which follows the Mordam Records distribution model and claims exclusive distribution of such impressive labels as Three One G, Skin Graft, Cool Guy, 702, and Know. On top of all that, Sonny finds time to DJ gloomy tunes at San Francisco's super hip "Beauty Bar" on Monday nights.

Sonny is busy, but he had a few moments to sit back with me and talk about the current backbone of his work—Bottlenekk.

Why did you start Bottlenekk? Did your label start before or after Bottlenekk?

GSL started first, when I lived in Boulder, around the end of '93. It limped along for a couple of years. The rest of The VSS had already moved to San Francisco and I stuck around Boulder to finish school and then followed them in January 1996. At that point, my degree didn't really hold much interest for me and I was leaning more and more towards somehow making the label my day-to-day work. Bottlenekk was, and has been, a means to that end. ¶ It is a means for getting my records into stores and around the world on my own terms. Of course back when Bottlenekk started, the label was far more marginal and invisible than it is now, and I was experiencing real difficulty even getting distributors to return my phone calls, let alone actually take and sell any of my stuff. And more often than not, "distribution" meant sending my records off somewhere, never to see or hear from the distribution company in question again. ¶ Much of what I consider to be the strength—or perhaps "leverage" is a better word—that Bottlenekk has developed over the last four years I can attribute directly to GSL. As the label has developed and the bands involved began to increase in popularity, Bottlenekk has been fortunate to be in the position of using that momentum to its advantage. Some of the other exclusively distributed labels have also contributed very greatly to this phenomena as well—namely Three One G, Satan's Pimp and Hopscotch. As Mordam's example has made very clear for everyone, there is a definite strength in numbers and despite all the griping and misinformed whining from the hardcore masses, "label groups" are far better off in the marketplace than they would be on their own.

What were the biggest challenges about running a business like Bottlenekk?

Early on, I experienced a great deal of apprehension from people in their willingness to deal with us, particularly at the store level. There was a bizarre suspicion for the first year or so that Bottlenekk was in fact some long-defunct distribution company attempting to gain people's trust in order to rip them off, or something to that effect. I still don't really know what that was all about, but it took a long time of simply just existing in order to gain people's trust and support. ¶ There is a great deal of competition within this industry, 99% of which is totally unnecessary, but such is the nature of capitalism, I guess. Exclusive distribution of specific labels via specific distributors is something that has contributed greatly and positively to our growth—as well as that of Lumberjack, Ebullition, K, No Idea, and of course, Mordam—yet I still find myself on the defensive from time to time over this issue. Swaying the kids' perception of this as something only greedy labels do to inflate prices and screw the consumer is something I consider to be a challenge, as that kind of opinion is not only misguided and naive, but it's also potentially damaging to people, such as myself, who invest a great deal both financially and psychologically into something I believe wholeheartedly in.

What sort of competition among distributors and why isn't it necessary?

Well, the distributors I mentioned each have their "stable," if you will, of exclusive labels. Pretty much everyone sells their exclusives to every other distributor, so the term "exclusive" really only goes as far as who the label

themselves actually offload their product to. The exclusive distributor normally has the best price and will offer a title first, before anyone else has it, in order to maximize their stores sales. After that, a record isn't really exclusive, by definition, as it'll be available from everyone. ¶ The thing is, if all the distributors—and when I say that I mean the ones who are at this level, not strictly corporate chain store, CD-only types—concentrated on nurturing labels and building up a healthy catalog of exclusives which they then sold directly to stores, there wouldn't be any competition. Everyone would have their little piece of the pie. ¶ The problems start occurring when stores—and this is universal—don't *want* to buy from every distributor but still want every title they feel they need. Then you start to have the situation where distributors are selling to one another. Pretty soon, they are competing with one another for sales on the same titles. In some cases, a distributor has a "niche" the others don't. For instance, Bottlenekk is able to get records into the hands of kids who have distro tables at shows, and who maybe order $60 or $70 worth of stuff at a time. Revolver and Mordam aren't really prepared to do that, so I buy their titles and sell them to those kids. That's all cut and dry, and everyone's happy. But when you take a large store account, say for instance Rasputin here in the Bay Area—if they get Revolver's fax the night before ours, and a lot of what is on theirs is on ours, then they are simply going to order from whoever offers them something first. Of course in other cases, buyers do compare prices and shop around. There goes our chance of selling the same title to Rasputin ourselves. Now, if we weren't all carrying the same stuff, there wouldn't be this sort of a problem. We could all just sell our exclusives and leave each other all alone. But obviously, that's not going to happen. ¶ From the viewpoint of many labels, an exclusive deal is really the most sensible option. Not only does it make a label's titles that much more visible to stores and other distributors, but there are the benefits of selling directly to only one vendor—much less paperwork, chasing money and shipping costs—and arguably the most important, the idea of safety in numbers. The likelihood of a label getting ripped off by some scumbag distributor decreases dramatically when said distributor risks not being able to get any more of Label X's titles if they don't pay for what they took from Label Y. See what I'm saying? I know for a *fact* that many, if not all, of our exclusive labels have come from precisely this sort of background, and as a result of "teaming up" with us, they are now able to rely on a steady, cashable check that reflects exactly what they have sold.

But for a distributor, is this competition all bad?

Not necessarily. Like I mentioned already, we routinely buy from and sell to No Idea, Ebullition, Lumberjack, Revolver and Choke among others. Most of us are able to capitalize on our regionality—for example, No Idea is in Florida and maybe stores out here in California would rather just get it locally from me. It cuts down on shipping time and costs, it keeps the stores re-stocked in a timely manner, and it really breaks down the barriers that distance creates in terms of local "scenes" and that kind of thing. Many of us just trade our titles back and forth and maybe settle up with a check for the difference once a year. That way, it keeps a steady flow of new titles through our shelves, allows us quick turnaround on money. ¶ At some point, sure, we compete with one another. But competition can be good, as well as bad. It's almost like a system of checks and balances, whereby no one is able to get away with selling something for too much. But really, there is enough of a "market" for this kind of thing to support everyone without the pushy sales tactics and tacky advertising a lot of distributors resort to. There *must* be, otherwise you wouldn't have all the traditionally-despised, pseudo-corporate scumbags—no naming names here—making the same living off of punk rock that they have been for years. If there wasn't enough of a market for everyone, then eventually they'd get forced out of business, and be selling pagers or used cars somewhere.

Are there ways that you feel that you have to compromise your values or ideas to make "good" business choices?

Honestly, no, I don't think there are—or at least there haven't been so far. I run both the label and the distribution on my own terms, according to my own instincts and my own values. I know Bottlenekk could have gotten bigger in a shorter amount of time, I know I could be far more secure financially than I am now, but I made the decision within myself a long time ago to ride this out for as long as necessary in order to see it done right. I definitely perceive my involvement with all of this as long-term, and I'd rather endure what I know are temporary discomforts in order to maintain the degree of control I have over what I'm doing. I could live without the stress, but unfortunately, that's the kind of person I am. I obsess and often have a hard time staying focused on the bigger picture, but I'm working on it.

How did you get your start with the distro—did you just start buying records wholesale and selling them at shows? When did you become a "legitimate" business?

Distributing records developed as the sort of undesirable side effect of releasing stuff that had a minimal amount of appeal on a large scale. In order to produce a record and have it be even remotely cost-effective, you pretty much have to press 500 or 1000 copies. I was maybe selling one or two hundred copies locally and—if I was lucky—about the same amount through the big distributors who'd never pay me. That usually left anywhere between 200 and 600 copies that I needed to do something with, and like most other fledgling labels, I turned to trading. Before long I was beginning to amass boxes and boxes of records from various other small labels, so I started putting together lists and hitting up places like Wax Trax [record store in Boulder/Denver] to take a few off me here and there. I actually never bothered with selling at shows until I moved to Berkeley, and it became a necessity to have that money coming in. ¶ Of

the two businesses, Bottlenekk is the legitimate entity, and GSL has, until now, functioned almost invisibly within it. I attempted to make Bottlenekk legal from day one, but that—as you may know—is a costly and extremely difficult thing to accomplish. I guess I should preface all this by saying that I have no formal business training whatsoever. I took an intro to business course my last semester in college and failed it outright—the book was overpriced and looked boring so I skipped it, and usually skipped class as well. As I mentioned above, I have relied only on my instincts and following the examples of other similar businesses to get this far. In my experience, there is very little government support for the individual launching a small business if you are not willing to play the game by their rules, so to speak. I basically started out by guessing at the things I needed to do in order to be legitimate. I guess I could have read a book, but you know what they say about hindsight. I stumbled through the basics, getting a resale license and processing the fictitious business name bullshit and all that, and even did my first year's taxes myself—which, I should point out, were thoroughly inaccurate and meaningless in the eyes of the IRS (never underestimate the value of a good accountant)! ¶ Anyway, had I known beforehand what kind of taxes and fees and red tape I'd be up against, I might have reconsidered attempting to get something like this off the ground with no capital. I guess I haven't mentioned that yet, either—with the exception of the trivial amount of "product" that Bottlenekk began with (GSL titles and random trade stuff), there has never been any considerable amount of money behind this company. I worked a 9-5 job for the first 8 months, and would get home and work another 5 or 6 hours every night packing orders. I skimmed whatever I could off my paycheck at work to pay for xeroxing and postage, but the finances have been 100% regenerative since the beginning. As proud as I am of that fact, I should also admit here that it's been the single most difficult aspect of keeping my head above water.

When did you hire someone to start working with you? What is the business arrangement—are they a partner or an employee? What do they do?

Bottlenekk was run out of my house for the first year and a half. During that time I was also going on tour with The VSS every few months, so I would hire someone to come and work with me for a week or two before I left, to just get a feel for things, and then leave them to it. Once I moved it out of my house and into the warehouse space, I was able to very dramatically expand the amount of stuff I was carrying, and consequently the need for actual full time employees developed along with that. Right now there are four of us working full time. My job at Bottlenekk consists primarily of bookkeeping—which I loathe—reviewing samples and ordering, designing ads, taking phone orders, answering e-mail and talking on the phone, which is the single biggest consumer of my time. There is a person who is responsible for all aspects of our wholesale orders to stores and distributors—packing, invoicing and shipping them. The mailorder is divided between two others, who handle packing orders, dealing with mailorder customers on the phone or via e-mail, entering data into the computer and going to the post office. Additionally, we all have respective duties when it comes to maintaining, updating and designing our website and print catalogs. The three of them are all paid what I consider to be above average wages for the kind of work they are doing, which is not particularly technical nor extremely specialized and requires no costly education or anything like that—just common sense. ¶ At this time, I am the sole owner of the company, but I have every intention of dividing profits amongst my employees once Bottlenekk has gotten to the point where there *is* any profit! That maybe sounds weird, but it is also the most characteristic dichotomy of this company: we have a healthy, growing customer base, a good reputation, a markup that allows us to cover our costs, and the potential to turn this into a very large and influential entity, at some point—yet I still have a hard time paying all my bills every month, and on paper things are still a bit of a mess. I know at least some of that is to be expected, and I know the situation will continue to improve. At this point everyone seems happy and Bottlenekk is *way* more efficient and productive than at any time in the past, so we're doing *something* right, I guess.

How do you keep the business interesting for yourself or your employees?

It's difficult sometimes, there's no doubt about that, but having good employees helps. People who can assume the responsibility for specific things and relieve me of that pressure; people who can take care of what needs to be done without being coddled and watched. A lot of it has to do with the kind of environment you're working in, as well. I do what I can to make Bottlenekk a relatively pleasant environment to work in. Granted, it's a dusty warehouse with a nasty carpet and boxes everywhere—not exactly paradise for anyone—but we keep it relaxed and even kind of informal. I feel as though I give the three people who work here a fair amount of discretion to come and go as they please and do what they need to do at their own pace, and I think that translates into them being happy with what they're doing. And as cliché as it probably sounds, if they are content with what they're doing, then I feel as though I am providing them with something worthwhile and possibly even fulfilling to do for eight hours a day. Which benefits all of us, of course.

Lastly, is there anything I forgot to ask?

Maybe only "why do you bother?" The answer is...I don't know. It has always felt like it's the right thing to do and anytime I've considered cashing in my chips, the alternatives just don't seem very interesting. Music and/or a music-related "lifestyle" are the only things I conceive of having any meaning to me. ◎

I no longer work for unamerican, but you can check out me new project http://misterridiculous.com or email me at James@misterridiculous.com

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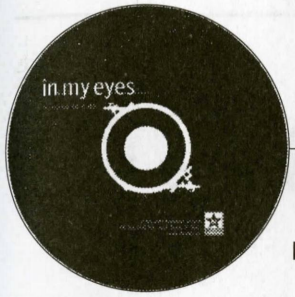

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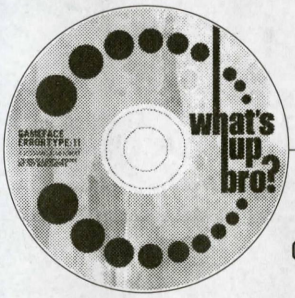

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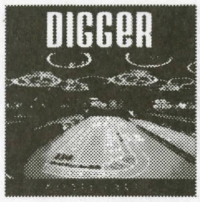

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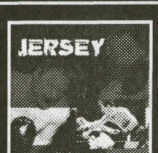

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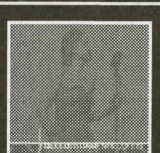
Pollen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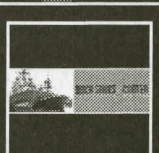
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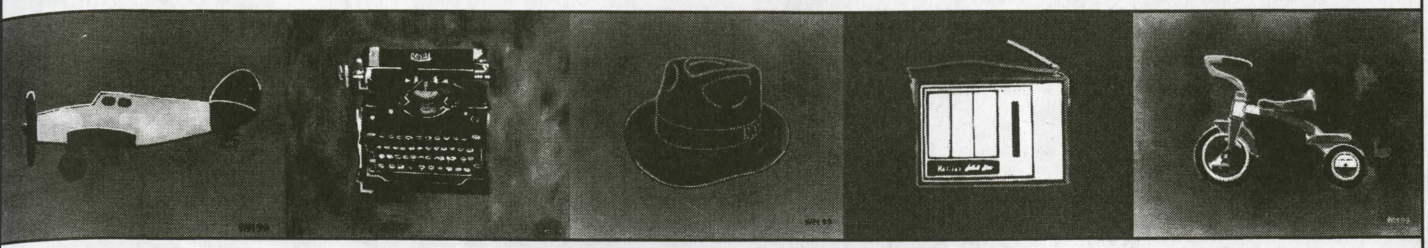
m.i.j. *the radio goodnight*



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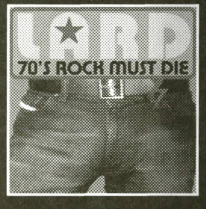

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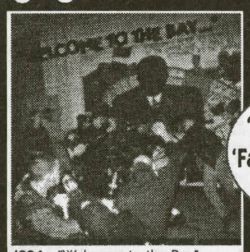

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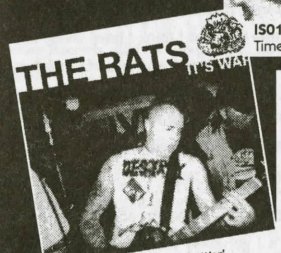
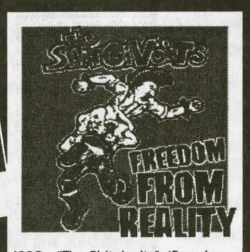
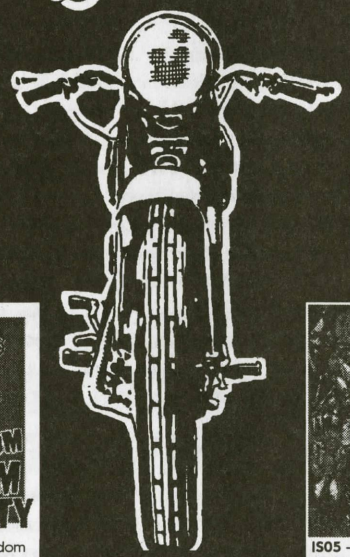
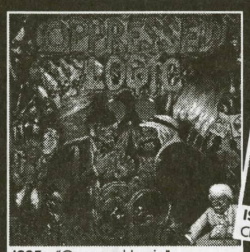


IS02 - "The RATS" 'It's War' 15 Song CD

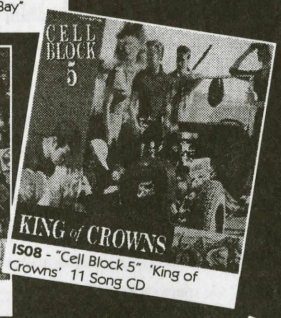


IS03 - "The Shitgiveits" 'Freedom From Reality' 22 Song CD





IS05 - "Opressed Logic" 19 Song CD



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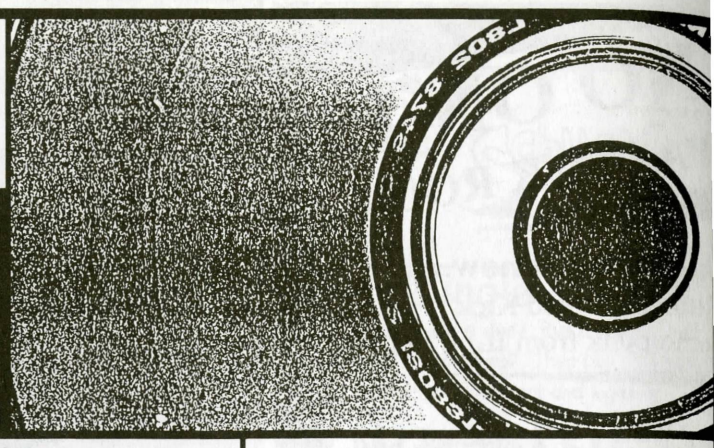

The 7-10 Splits - From Tall Corn Country, 7" Granted the music is simplistic punk rock (with just enough changes to keep it interesting), but damn this is one of the funniest, sincerely lighthearted EPs that I've heard in quite some time. And luckily it doesn't remind of Green Day or Screeching Weasel...hopefully that day has past. They just keep the music tightly kicking to their brand of catchy retardedness. Four songs, highlights which are "Yard Sale", an anthem about you guessed it - yard sales - and "I Love Your Mom" which could have easily fit on the first Sloppy Seconds LP. This one will stay on top of the stack, as I will be playing it for anybody who happens to walk through my door. (AS)
Big Neck Records, P.O. Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195

53rd State – Forward Motion, CD The first time I saw this band, I had no idea what to think. It took me by surprise and I really liked what I heard. Live, these guys have a sound that at times reminds me of a more chaotic cap n jazz with some definite DC influences. The singer's voice is always off key and hoarse sounding, but it works live. Somehow the thing that makes this album shine on stage, failed to come through on the album. I have a feeling it is the recording...but also because this band chose to put out a full album for it's first time out. Definitely this album could have been cut down into a couple well thought out singles. Musically, it seems like some songs are trying to pull off a DC/Fugazi feel while sticking to a Midwest post rock sound...this bad is definitely on the right track, but their next release needs to have a huge kick behind it for it to really make a dent. They are young, so they have plenty of time to refine their sound. If you are in the Pittsburgh area though, definitely go see these guys though. It's worth it. (RE)
Secret Ingredient Records, 733 Schley Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15218

A-Set – The way it used to be (it's got to be), 7" This band's sound hasn't changed much since their EP. They still play decent, but not really that good folk pop, but this time the singer sounds like he should be singing for a cheesy 70s folk band. In fact, the A side just feels like a bad 70s song all over. The B side is better because they incorporate a little more rock. Half of the song is really mellow, and then the fuzz kicks in and the rest of the song is rock. (RE)
Dogprint Records, P.O. Box 2120, Teaneck, NJ 07666

Alligator Gun – Over And Out, CD The Midwest Strikes Again, EMO WARS. The word "emo" leaves such a bad taste in my mouth now. When I first got into emo, I would be listening to catchy, melodic, and upbeat bands that were at times aggressive. Hell, the term post hard core even comes to mind. I wouldn't go that far with Alligator Gun, but I do have to give these guys kudos for playing some really rocking emo tunes that are even aggressive at times despite their name. This almost reminds me of 2 Line Filler and early Get Up Kids. Keeping the Spirit of 95 and Nerd Core alive! Hell Yes! (DM)
Off Time Records, PO Box 479176, Chicago, IL 60647

AM/FM – Audiot, CD This should have just been called "AM" because this is sleep inducing soft rock. I guess one of these guys was in Franklin, who I wasn't too fond of. Well, I'm not too fond of this either. Mellow, folksy, indie sounding stuff. I hear mellower elements of Archers of Loaf and less trippy parts of Neutral Milk Hotel. It's arranged and played nicely, with occasional organ and slide guitar parts, but it's just not my thang. I could see this being used as make out music maybe, but at only 21 minutes you better have some Barry White lined up in the CD changer. (NS)
Skylab Operations, P.O. Box 4376, Salisbury, NC 28145-4376

American Heartbreak - Postcards From Hell, CD Well they look like they should be members of a Three Dog Night cover band but you can't judge this book by its cover. American Heartbreak sounds like any guitar driven harmonizing punk band. But that doesn't quite say it because they aren't as stereotypical as all that, this has some nice almost traditional rock chorus parts and a fairly tight package paying homage to the seventies television hit "Love American Style". They have all these pictures of the band playing shows and one photo of the singer going crazy laying on the floor, but I can't find one song that is even close to fast enough or screamy enough to warrant rocking out in that manner, so I can only assume he was drunk. Regardless, this thing ain't half bad.(dc)
Coldfront Records PO Box 8345, Berkley, CA 94707

An-Atta / Active Minds, split 7" This is nothing short of impressive. Both bands are so incredibly rocking on this 7". There are two songs from each. Austria's Active Minds is awesome. High energy punk rock similar to early Husker Du but just a little bit rougher around the edges but this does not take anything away from the band at all. An-Atta is more of a screaEMO core band with beautiful and aggressive song structure. There is also a violinist among the ranks of this multiple vocalist band that adds so much to this already rocking unit. These boys I believe are French and sing in their natural tongues. Both bands both remember the art of writing great songs with meaningful lyrics. The lyrics have also been translated into English, French and German for the benefit of the listener. This record is limited to only 1000 and has different covers and is a benefit (?) or to inform people about Female Genital Mutilation and the need for it to stop in different cultures around the world. This is worth getting for many reasons. (DM)
Capeet Records c/o Jan Gallhuber, PO Box 256, A-1141 Vienna, Austria

Anger/Flatus – Drunk In Jersey, 7" It seems like I get a 7" like this every month. 2 fast, slightly sloppy punk bands singing about alcohol. Anger is a little poppier, with a bit of that Guttermouth sound, though not as tight, or as dumb. Not too bad. Flatus is a little more hardcore sounding with faster songs and rougher vocals. Maybe a little old Black Flag influence. 2 bands that are probably a little too sloppy for the bigger pop punk labels, but they're probably fun to see in their home town. I'm picturing a lot of drunk mayhem. (NS)
BP Distribution, P.O. Box 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377

The Anniversary - Designing a Nervous Breakdown, CD The Anniversary have created a pop masterpiece! Resembling the pop mastering of Weezer's Pinkerton, they take it to the next level. Male/female vocals are accompanied by thrashing rock and the soothing sound of moog. The lyrics take indie-pop sensibilities to the next level. Now, I have been in search of another great pop album since Pinkerton came out, and I think I have finally found it. How exciting it is to have found a new band to fall in love with! I can't wait to see them play. (FH)
Heroes & Villains/Vagrant Records PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403

The Anti-Signal – no title, 7" URU sent me four singles and all of them at least got my attention in the mountain of crappy 7"'s I get every month. The Anti Signal are hard to pin down musically, the sound has got new wave, keyboards and bull horns and more. What we find is a nice Bowie music sensibility that makes the four songs in their minimalistic (and short time wise) winners. (EA)
URU Buskvagen 28, S-611 Nykoping, Sweden ($5 ppd. world)
urupunk@hotmail.com

The Authority – On Glory's Side, CD Beginning with a sample from the movie "Patton", I could tell that this was going to be a "tough guy" release. Working class street punk from Southern California that combines the power of Oi punk with the feel of catchy rock n' roll. A lot of anthemic vocal choruses and a sound reminiscent of The Business, Dropkick Murphys, US Bombs, and even The Clash. Repetitive, boring, and uninspiring. (PB)
Outsider, PO Box 92708, Long Beach, CA 90809

Automaton Adventure Series - Furtura Transmitta, CD More emocore for the masses here. Pretty decent instrumentation that good really benefit from a punchier mix. Lots of interesting bits, but overall they could stand a little bit more ballsy performance to win me over consistently. They do toss in a couple of instrumentals, which for some odd reason, I really enjoyed. (AS)
Satellite Transmissions, PO box 4432, Boulder, CO 80306

Bauer – S/T, CD High water work pants, low top Converse, Heartattack, singer convulsing and writhing on the floor, early 90's hardcore, smelly basement shows. These are some of the things that I picture as I listen to this CD. Well played hardcore with quiet/loud dynamics, strained vocals and sociopolitical lyrics. I'm sorry for having to say that word. The singer reminds me of the guy from Shotmaker/3 Penny Opera. This came in a nice, hand-made CD case and hey, they're from Milwaukee. Pretty good stuff. I think you guys should cover a Wild Kingdom song. (NS)
Filament Records, 2619 N. Murray Ave. Upr., Milwaukee, WI 53211

Birdie Num Num and the Spirit Squad - Even Robots are Crying Part One, CD This is some slow to mid-tempo dream art rock. Real dreamy stuff here, but I find myself liking this band a lot! The songs are just catchy enough to keep you into their musical spell. Like early Genesis meets Pink Floyd in the dirty glam rock scene of the 70's. And all that on in indie label too. Sounds better when the corporations are behind it. Good stuff here, check it out. (BC)
d-90 Records 1670 Carolyn Rd. Mississauga On, L5M 2E1

Black Mollies - Publicity Stunt, 7" Sludgy groove rock with both spoken and screamed vocals. There's fuzz bass at times on both songs, and someone plays bells. Reminds me of Nirvana a bit. I kind of like it. (BJM)
Moodswing Records, 3833 Roswell Road, suite 104, Atlanta GA 30342

The Blacks – Just Like Home, CD This is the Chicago band originally called The Black Family. The Blacks' debut record, "Dolly Horrorshow," was an avant-garde romp through alternative country hell and it was positively fresh. Put another way, at their club shows you'll feel as comfortable in drag as in cowboy boots and a big Blue Ribbon belt buckle. As on the first record, Gina Black's vocals haunt with one of the most unique styles going. Danny Black's croon stands on it's own unique ground and they complement each other perfectly on songs like "Fake Out Jesus" and "Valentine's Day." James Emmenegger smacks the drums. Their dark, punk-western, cabaret and carnival sounds include trumpet, upright bass, bowed bass, piano, banjo, Hammond M3, lap steel, saw, drums, electric and acoustic guitars, and fishnet stockings. Unforgettable. (DJK)
Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618

Bob Drake - Medallion Animal Carpet, CD Strange experimental release with a major bluegrass influence. Creepy bits of vocals pop up here and there, and there seems to be some hidden instruments not listed on the sleeve. I didn't mind this, probably 'cuz it's oddly accessible despite its experimental nature. Think you're open-minded about music? Test yourself with this one. (AE)
ReR Megacorp, 79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 8JG, UK

Bob Tilton - The Leading Hotels of the World, CD This band plays what I would call "post-emo indie rock." It is usually slow, with clean guitars, but there are also some loud, distorted parts with octaves. It also has the characteristic choppy drum rhythm. It's very shoe-gazer at times, if you're a dorky indie rocker and that's your thing. Oh, and the horns on the title track are cool. Bands like this should do that more often; it really adds a lot to this kind of music. (BJM)
Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago IL 60657

Bombshell Rocks - Underground Radio, CD Unlike being from England or America, being from Sweden does automatically make your band cool. Swedish people are not only more intelligent, attractive, and creative but they all have great names with lots of consonants and funny little dots and dashes. This isn't anything more than rancid (clash)brand chorus punk but I know I would have fun jumping up and down to it. It's like we all know Rob Base isn't the best rapper but when DJ ez rock starts to pump "it takes two to make a thing go ri-ight. it takes two to make it out of si-ight" you are out there on the dance floor trying to tear the club up and get your freak on with some honey-dipped dime. Bombshell Rocks makes me believe that the more I shake my fist the sooner the state will be smashed, and that is a-okay. (dc)
GMM Records P.O. Box 15234 Atlanta, GA 30333

The Brokedowns-S/T, CD The East Bay (Berkeley, CA) circa 1988 is brought to mind with this 5-song effort. It is fast sloppy punk rock with interesting changes, breaks and choruses. The Gruff vocals show a range of emotions and Hardcore styled melodies. I have a feeling that this will be valuable when The Brokedowns shoot up after a CD or 2. (MY)
The Pirate Party, PO Box 814, Dundee IL, 660118

Broken / React / Boiling Man – That Which Does Not Kill You..., Split CD The split CD is something of a waste, especially when it is a three-way split. With a 7" you can clearly flip the vinyl over, but a CD just isn't meant for these type of releases. Onward... Broken is a fast-paced street punk band with the typical instrumentation, at times filtered shouting, and overall generica. React play much more brutal hardcore, but the recording is so shitty that they shouldn't have even bothered releasing it. A lot of inaudible shouting and interlocking noise. Boiling Man finish off the disc with a similar sound as React, only with more screamy (but equally as inaudible) vocals. Some parts are ripped off directly from Groundwork, which is a big mistake. Broken just don't belong, Reach should find some real recording equipment, and Boiling Man should seek original guitar parts. (PB)
Elevator Music, PO Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06511

Bunjie Jambo – Potty Karate, CD Pittsburgh's Bunjie Jambo cranks off some interesting and energizing sounds with loud vocals and very prominent trumpet. With song titles like "Gimme A Dollar (So I Can Put It In That Stripper's Underwear" and "Loser Losers His Shoes" they've got their tongue sticking out in fun. But it's the fierce trumpet blowing that sets this band apart from others that mix elements of punk, hardcore and ska. If you like lots of brass, dig in. (DJK)
Grappler 5000 Euclid Avenue, ste 211, Cleveland, OH 44103

The Busted Lives - Leave Me Where I Lay, CD These guys remind me of Furious George, except worse. Simple, three chord punk. Terrible guitar sound. Dumb, poorly sung lyrics. Bad production overall. I sense a theme here. Maybe that's what these guys are going for. (BJM)
Blueball Records, 6517 Farallon Way, Oakland CA 94611

The Busy Signals - Baby's First Beats, CD The drug scene of the 70's and flowers and the feel of theme songs from the TV shows of that era all on one disc with some electro beats to move it. It is decent. I could see myself hating this stuff, but for some reason I just can't. Like Beck on even more happy pills. I guess the word "Punk" in Punk Planet now means we will take anything that isn't on a dumb major label. Sounds cool to me. This guy has to be a wacko. Maybe the police should check him out. (BC)
Sugar Free P.O. Box 14166 Chicago, IL. 60614

Capital Capital-Antarctica, CD Droning mid-paced Indie Punk. The guitars have a winding, layered, grandiosity not unlike early Butthole Surfers. The guitars are very dominant, heavy and repetitive. The singer has a snotty, whiny tone that goes against the guitars to good affect. These 6 tracks seem unusually long; as soon as you expect a song to end the first verse is repeated. This is a solid CD that is hard to knock. Capital Capital is oddly memorable-I can hear the guitars now without the music on. (MY)
No Address: capitalcapital@hotmail.com

Our review policy is very simple: Is your record on an independent label or self-released? We review it. However, that doesn't mean that it gets a good review. If a reviewer likes your record, you get a good review. If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congradulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

THE CAPITOL CITY DUSTERS/AINA - FALL 1999 EUROPEAN TOUR SPLIT, 7" Aina is one of the best-known bands from Barcelona, especially since their prior split with Rhythm Collision. They play melodic hardcore with a big emo influence. Their song is a bit tedious, but competent. The Capitol City Dusters play a lot of shows, are from D.C., and sing a fun song about not killing anyone. Not bad. (AE)
BCore Disc, P.O. Box 35221, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

CATARACT – WAR ANTHEMS, 7" This is top notch Hardcore with a metal influence from Switzerland. This stuff makes bands like Earth Crises and Another Victim sound weak and new. These guys seem straightedge but the lyrics do not provide much info. This is a heavy double bass assault with anguished vocals similar to what John of Negative Approach would sound like on the toilet constipated. The second song is titled "You did something I do not understand, You must die now" weird.... (MY)
Team Player Records C/O Marco Walzel, Altottingerstr 6a, 81673 Munchen Germany

CATARSIS – NO TITLE, CD With the unlisted extra tracks (Why?), contains about twelve songs of what I today consider to be emocore. Kinda of like a less urgent Fugazi. It has light and heavy parts sometimes pushing the band to their musical limits. As the label is from Argentina, I believe that the lyrics are in Spanish, or is that Portuguese, so I couldn't make much of them. As far as I know, all of the songs are about how much I suck shit. But this could be great fun for anyone currently studying a foreign language as the production is really clear. (AS)
Sniffing Recording Industries, CC 3288 (1000) Buenos Aires, Argentina

CHICK MAGNETS - LOW BUDGET SUPERHEROS, CD Examining the moronic photos and general art aesthetic, I was pretty prepared to not like this very much. But I have to admit, it has tapped a long-forgotten hankering I have for stupid pop songs about girls. It works because it's rather easy to believe that they probably do have quite a problem getting the ladies (unlike that blinking band that would have you believe they're losers). That, and the music is pretty strong. These guys really are morons, though. They're not going to change anything in this world, but at least they're trying to give it a sense of humor. (RB)
Crusty P.O. Box 59, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V5N 4A6

CHILDREN - IMPEDIMENTA, CD When I first looked at this, the packaging reminded me of all that horrible psycho/rap metal stuff that is all over the TV. right now. I was kind of scared to put it in, but I managed to break past my fears and give it shot. I was delightfully surprised. What came through the speakers of y stereo was not the current mainstream version of shit rock, but rather a pretty good hardcore/metal band. I liked this band a lot they really knew their chops. To make things even better, they're from France! (FH)
Overcome Distribution B.P. 7548/35075 Rennes Cedex 3/France

CHOCOLATE KISS – LES BOOM BOOM, CDEP This is definitely my favorite record out of the bunch I was sent this time. Someone told me that this band's first album was really good, and this is the follow up EP to it. Indie-rock that just seems to make sense. They really know how to put a good song together. At times the singer sounds a little like Davey from the Promise Ring and sometimes he sounds nothing like him at all. Musically they have a real mellow that feels like this band has roots somewhere in emo. There's something about it that doesn't sound truly indie or pop. Chocolate Kiss get my recommendation this time around. Definitely pick this up if you want a good solid EP. (RE)
Moodswing Records, 4710 Lou Ivy Road, Atlanta, GA 30096

CHRIS CUTLER AND THOMAS DIMUZIO - QUAKE, CD Lots of noise, lots of silence. This weird experimental release is a pain in the ass. Fans of Faust might be happy, but I wasn't. It sounds like an advanced version of a slasher film score. (AE)
ReR Megacorp, 79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 8JG, UK

COALESCE/BOY SETS FIRE - SPLIT, CD CD version of the vinyl release, with two bonus tracks (how rude!). I think the reason these bands are so popular is that they both have uncommonly distinct-sounding vocals. In the grand scheme of punk, this will probably someday be considered a highly influential release by two highly influential bands. For now, it's just six solid songs from two solid hardcore bands. (AE)
Hydra Head Records, P.O. Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199

CODESEVEN - DIVISION OF LABOR, CD BARK! BARK! BARK! Those are the wild dogs that you would have threaten me with to make me listen to this CD again. "OH MY GODS THE DOGS ARE EATING MY FACE!!!, OH WELL AT LEAST I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO CODESEVEN ANYMORE!!" But that is just my opinion. Since some of you probably dig hardcore, I will give this a review that even Metal Blade would be jealous of, here you go: This shit isn't bad, it is bad asssss!! It beats melodic emo until its bloody and limping, then digs floor-punching hardcore out of the grave and fucks its dead body. Imagine (IF YOU CAN!!!) a band that has all of the glamour of Faith No More and all the force of Cannibal Corpse.(BRUTAL!!!) These guys probably chew nails, spit fire, gargle with piss, and still smooth talk women and read poetry. Plus they have two singers, so as the little one kneels down behind your back, the big one charges at you like a deranged rhino and knocks you on your musical ass. Codeseven guitar riffs are so sharp you could use a solo to shave your face, but one you listen to this shit, you aren't even going to want to shave. You aren't going to want to eat, you aren't going to want to sleep, you aren't even going to know where you are, you are just going to fucking DESTROY!!!! (dc)
The Music Cartel, 106 W. 32nd 3rd floor. NY, NY, 10001

COOL KIDS NEVER DIE – NO TITLE, 7" It may be Swedish, but URU makes thick records that are pressed in the Czech republic and I have to find out what it would cost to get em to press sand ship to the US. Cool Kids Never Die are all over the place, thick a younger, more chaotic Nation Of Ulysses. The winning title of the four has to be, "C'mon Baby (wash my hair)". This is another record that is on the top of my listen list lately. Check out this cool label at urupunk.cjb.net and throw $20 in the mail to get all of the first four releases from URU. (EA)
URU Buskvagen 28, S-611 Nykoping, Sweden ($5 ppd. world) urupunk@hotmail.com

CRIB - FORWARD BACK, CD Minimalist crap for artistic audiophiles who wear black. Hey, that rhymes! Here's how you recreate this album: plug in a bass, turn on the amp, leave the bass lying on the floor and hum and feed back for about an hour. Yeah yeah yeah, I'm sure there's a lot more to it than that, I'm sure this guy's (yes, one man [and one note, really]) a computer genius blah blah blah; but lets face it, about twelve people out there think this is worthwhile. They are: Thurston Moore, various physics geeks who study waves. (RB)
winrecords

DEALS GONE BAD – OVERBOARD, CD I'm not a huge fan of ska, but I enjoy this band because they are one of the more inventive combos on the scene. With their ska they expertly mix reggae and rock with a bit of soul and lounge. Although they're reportedly favorites with the skinhead/scooter crowd, this album exhibits a mature band with broader horizons. They've opened for everyone from Toots & The Maytals and the Skatalites to Justin Hinds and Yellowman and here sound ripe enough for larger stages all their own. Recorded in Chicago and produced by Chris Bauer and Deals Gone Bad. (DJK)
Jump Up! Records, P.O. Box 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

THE DISHES – NO TITLE, CD Very excellent girl band. This is a CD that I guarentee will get a lot of play around our house. Very reminiscent of Slant 6 or the Red Aunts. Nice stripped down rock and roll. Now since I just told you that this is a great, CD worth your purchase I must tell you when I first looked at the back I thought I saw covers of: Punch Drunk (Husker Du), Remote Control (Clash), Can't Explain (the Who), Bad (M. Jackson) and I'm a Bug (Urinals). Okay only the last was a cover, and the titles of songs really are running out aren't they? (EA)
No. 89 Records PO Box 220472 Chicago, IL 60622

DIVIDE + CONQUER - THE NEED TO AMPUTATE, 7" YES!!! AMAZING! This is the kind of record I swear I saw all the time ten years ago and I thought it was a dead art-raw, fast, catchy, smart, funny, creative punk rock from some band in the middle-of-nowhere(okay, Scotland). Six songs about not pissing on the toilet seat, how dogs feel at loud punk shows (lyrics written in the same type as Nausea's LP!), marauding armies of bicyclists reeking havoc on cities and more-serious fare, as well. Superb artwork all over with a cool cartoon for each song, big-ass foldout poster sleeve, tons of contact addresses for people doing good things all over the world and samples from 'An American Werewolf In London'!!! BUY THIS GODDAMNED FUCKING RECORD!!!!! Email em at GingerLib@usa.net(RP)
Ginger Liberation 6 Rue De La Manutention No. 38 Dijon 21000 France

DIVIT - LATEST ISSUE, CD Hey, Divit. I got to review these fools last time. Lets see how they have progressed. Okay, you know how if you were in a pop influenced melod-

ic punk band two or three years ago, and you aren't big enough to have kept that sound like say NOFX or Lagwagon, you had to move with the mass musical tides and push your bands sound into a more emoish slot? well Divit hasn't done that, so that's a check for going against the grain (against the grain, just like Bad Religion). They have also made a vast improvement in their layout which this time is on that nice thick rough paper that feels so lovely to touch, so that's another check. As far as actual musical progression, song structure, or lyrical content, Divit gets a big fat frowney face. "driving home late at night. trying to justify that this was a mistake" — c'mon, divit that doesn't even make sense. You aren't deep intellectuals with real thoughts and relevant issues just because you print your liner notes on card stock with a big heart on the cover. You're still that same Face to Face brand rip offs from before, only now instead of wearing hoodies with your skate shoes you wear sweaters and button down plaid shirts to cover up for the fact that your music is so boring. PS . Tom Petty told me to tell you not to cover his songs anymore because you make them sound worse than the damn original. (dc)
Coldfront Records PO Box 8345 Berkley, CA 94707

DO MAKE SAY THINK - GOODBYE ENEMY AIRSHIP THE LANDLORD IS DEAD, CD Seven tracks, all instrumental. The songs are long and slow, with minimal parts for all the instruments. They typically start off with not much going on and build up after a few minutes. This stuff will put you to sleep, but I do have two positive things to say about it: the horns are cool, and at least it doesn't have any pretentious vocals. (BJM)
Constellation, PO Box 42002, Montreal Canada H2W 2T3

DOCTOR MANETTE – THE SAME THING OVER & OVER, CD Doctor Manette is a Chicago-based quintet that plays ska with pure pop swagger. Yet it's the slowest song, "Under Over" that comes off the best. Fans of Less Than Jake, MU330 and Reel Big Fish will like Doctor Manette. They've appeared on several compilation records ("Skamageddon III" and "Delinquents" among others) and seem geared to college radio. With lots of melodic hooks and snappy arrangements the band sounds eager and ready to capture the present-day ska genre's crown. (DJK)
Jump Up! Records, P.O. Box 13189, Chicago, IL 60613

DONFANGO – S/T, 7" The sheet that came with this 7" says that the popping noise on the first side is there for artistic effect. It just sounds annoying to me. With that said, this is Shellac sounding post hardcore from the Chilean band Donfango. There are driving parts with guitar fiddling interspersed, and multiple vocals that go from speaking to singing to yelling. Kind of like Kerosene 454 or other similar DC influenced bands. The lyrics are in Spanish and there aren't any lyrics included, so I'm not sure what they're singing about. It's good, but they probably won't break into the U.S. scene anytime soon. (NS)
Sweet Filth Records c/o Josh Pierce, 22 Grandview Ave., Essex Junction, VT 0545

DUMBSTRUCK – IF IT AIN'T BROKE ... DON'T FIX IT, 7" Some traditional 80s hardcore do alright on this platter. It contains the standard "the world is shit" type lyrics along with a notice that they aren't sorry about the swearing in their songs. This is just bad. (RE)
Blind Destruction Records, Box 29, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB UK

EARLIMART - FILTHY DOORWAYS, CD Terrible, mostly mellow acoustic country/alternative vomit. Two songs contain the word 'punk' in the title and apparently Exene Cervenka makes an appearance but to hell with judging a book by it's cover and come to think of it, I don't like self-referencing punk rock AND Exene hasn't done shit in the last what? Eighteen years? Fuck it. (RP)
Devil In The Woods PO Box 6217 Albany, CA 94706

EMPEROR PENGUIN – MYSTERIOUS PONY, CD I could listen to Emperor Penguin every day, and most recently I have. And though I'm easily distracted, theirs is perhaps the only music I can listen to while working. But it also fits a multitude of moods or situations – perfect for a party, late night/early morning wind-down, or a long drive in the car. On "Mysterious Pony" they deliver more mind-expanding, electronic samples and rhythms to sweep you away. It's a very good drug. (DJK)
My Pal God Records, PO Box 13335, Chicago, IL 60613

EMPEROR PENGUIN – MYSTERIOUS PONY, CD This release is very interesting to say the least. This is an instrumental release with a lot of samples. The music has a real 70's smooth appeal to it with a lot of keyboard and synthesizer action. Emperor Penguin is a kind of tongue in cheek type of release. Someone could really enjoy this and yet someone else may find it kind of hokey. I say people who dig Beck, Luscious Jackson, Delta 72, or Isaac Hayes should enjoy this a lot. (DM)
My Pal God Records, PO Box 13335, Chicago, IL 60613

FISHSTICKS – DISKO, CD When I was born (into the Punk Rock) we had an amazing series of HC compilations called "We Got Power!" These had like 40 bands in 30 minutes. Everyone (who wasn't Black Flag or DK'S) would turn up on them: Day Go Abortions, Ill Repute, Dr. Know, White Flag, 7 seconds etc. Well this CD is JUST LIKE THAT! This features fast, snotty, short blasts of Hardcore Punk. This is a collection of the Fishsticks' EP's and comp. Tracks. When a new "recording" starts, it seems like a new band. Lyrics are silly in the same manner as FYP, or Adrenaline OD, so don't expect the profound. 31 songs-Highly Recommended! (MY)
Theologian, PO BOX 1070, Hermosa Beach, 90254

FIVE EIGHT / CLEMENTE - THE KIDS WANNA ROCK REVIVAL SPLIT, 7" Five Eight play rocking pop with semi-geeky vocals. Clemente play pop with more of a straight punk style, but they seem a bit too serious about it. Five Eight are definitely the better side. I'd like to hear more from them. (BJM)
Moodswing Records, 3833 Roswell Road, suite 104, Atlanta GA 30342

FIVE IRON FRENZY - PROOF THAT THE YOUTH ARE REVOLTING (LIVE),CD Christian 3rd wave ska played live in front of a large flock of sheep. They endorse Jansport bags and Never Summer Snowboards. This IS revolting-fuck you and fuck god, too. BAA-A-A. (RP)
FIF PO Box 2771 Denver, CO 80201

THE FRUSTRATORS - BORED IN THE USA, CD I'm such a bad punk, I was about to give this a positive review before I noticed that Mike Dirnt is in the band. What a fucking sellout piece of shit, oh man I want to kick that guys ass, way to ruin the scene poser. Oh I wonder how the Frustrators got their album put out? hmmm, maybe it was mister fucking MTV money bags. When did you put this shit out, on your off day between stabbing a scene in the back and playing fucking Woodstock? huh ? I oughta rip you a new one for even trying to send this to PUNK PLANET, you hear that PUNK planet, not fucking Rolling Stone or Spin or fucking Tiger Beat or whatever it is you read, Daddy Warbucks. Shouldn't you be writing the theme music for a Hollywood blockbuster or swimming in your vault full of gold deblunes instead of wasting my damn time ...hehehe . No I'm just joshing ya. This is okay. Without the silly song content it would be a lot better, but it has a fast twangy rock feel and sounds nothing like Green Day. (dc)
I can't find the address, maybe Mike Dirnt sold it to MTV... just kidding again, really though I can't find it, check out www.frustrators.com I suppose they would have it.

GRAND NATIONAL – NO TITLE, 7" The graphics screamed 'D.C.' as soon as I saw it. Two slow, boring experiments in indie-unrock-induced aggravation and torture for yours truly. The band members and producer were in other horrible 90's D.C. embarrassments which I won't be mentioning because I don't want to give you any reason whatsoever to buy this record. On day-old-piss colored vinyl! (RP)
Hellfire PO Box 21782 Washington DC 20009

H. CHINASKI – SMALLER-SIZED JAR WITH AN IDEA, CD Well, these guys are nowhere near as impressive as an old, out of shape, drunk guy who can bed as many women as Hank. This is listless indie/emo stuff with occasional yelling and keyboard noise. Music that would put you to sleep if witnessed live. Imagine Midwest emo without the poppiness. I'm sure some people would like this, but I'm just not one of them. Just not enough energy for me. There are other bands like this, but I'm at a loss for comparisons now. I'm sure Henry Chinaski (the literary figure) would compare this band to his limp turkey-neck though. (NS)
DPG, P.O. Box 18721, Minneapolis, MN 55418

HABLAN POR LA ESPALDA – MUSICA PARA LOS SANOS Y NO TAN SANAS, 7" This is an intense record. Oh my word. This is so good. This is a S. American version of the Swing Kids or At The Drive In (almost). The passion behind these guys is great along with excellent song writing. I almost feel ashamed that I have to read the translations to this. There are the lyrics and the reason behind them for the four songs on this 7", one part yearning for change, one part political. This is also on solid yellow vinyl too. (DM)
Sniffing Recording Industries, CC 3288 (1000) Bs As Argentina

HELL NO - WEIRD WEIRDO, CD I didn't get much info on this one. It is packaged in cool wraparound cardboard that is numbered. I am curious if this is the (NY) Hell No from years past; regardless Weird Weirdo is way better. This is frenetic intense Hardcore with (great!) growled/screamed unintelligible vocals. This is what Unsane may sound like if they were mixed with Murder/Suicide Pact. Recommended. (MY)
Hell No C/O Reel Life, 209 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn NY, 11211

HENRY FIAT'S OPEN SORE – GNARLY, 7" Dirty, Muddy, Sloppy, Unprofessional, Tuneless, Awful! This sounds like it was recorded in a urinal with a bunch of drunks yelling randomly. Do You remember The Festering Rinyanons on Bovine records?. I like this; you should buy it! Recommended Hardcore-6 songs. (MY)
Wrench Records, BCM Box 4049, London WC1N 3XX

HILLARY STEP - THE SECOND TIME MEANS NOTHING, CD Hillary Step isn't taking a first lady-like step with a big old cheese ass; it's an intense emo trio. They mix it up a little on "Damn the Luck" which is a good thing for the disc. Cool song structures blended in with some good vocals. I am not big on the whole singing soft and then scream over some bad guitar tones emo-thang, but this band packs enough punch to be something more than that. (BC)
Urine Records 6 East 220 St., Belton, MO. 64012

HOT LITTLE NUMBER – HOT LITTLE HITS, CD Apparently this band has the bassist from Kepone (who also played in Gwar!). There are some cool bass parts on this CD, but that doesn't save this band from being pretty mediocre. Most of this just sounds like an average punk band that plays at your local bar. There's one song with a guy on lead vocals that's not too bad, but the female vocalist doesn't do too much for me. I'm not the biggest fan of female rock vocalists though. This seems to be their first effort though, so we'll have to see how this Hot Little Number develops. Feel free to insert breast joke here. (NS)
Porcelain P.O. Box 9933, Richmond, VA 23228

HUDSON FALCONS – DESPERATION AND REVOLUTION, CD This CD has gotten better after a few listens. Slightly English sounding punk, almost like Leatherface's first album. Working class punk with lyrics about working class politics. Songs about worker revolution, sweatshop conditions and discarded veterans. It's good to see bands with meaningful lyrics, even though I'm a rich businessman and can't identify with this at all. GMM seems to put out like-minded bands, so I'm sure some of you know where these guys are at. Come home after a long day at the factory, kick off your boots and throw this CD on. Then fall asleep in front of the TV with your hand down your pants. (NS)
GMM Records, P.O. Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

HUMANBODYFLAWED/JANMICHAELVINCENTCARCRASH - S/T, 7" This split 7" contains this month's award for hell-fire vocals and it goes to Humanbodyflawed. And there's not much to differentiate that from the hardcore of Janmichaelvincentcarcrash, except the latter provides two demonstrations in sound. On black vinyl at 33 rpm. (DJK)
Obtuse Mule, 180 High Street, #14, Portland, ME 04101

ILLUMINATI - LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT, CD Three songs on this homemade CD, which looks like a demo or something. This sounds like wimpy British punk from the early 80s. The first song is especially wimpy; the next two are only slightly more rocking. Not very entertaining overall. (BJM)
Black Helicopters (no address given)

INTEG2000 - PROJECT REGENESIS, CD The back cover as well as the inside pages feature human and animal skulls. And track 5 is a cover of "South of Heaven." If I need go on...then this is fast hard core with metal guitars. Musically ok, but probably the worse voice I've heard this year. Kinda' funny though. (BC)
www.holyterror.com

INTERNATIONAL STRIKE FORCE – S/T, 7" Have the Human League gone punk? That's what comes to mind as I listen to this English band. It's poppy and slightly 80's sounding, with the occasional spurt of anger. The music has a cool, thick guitar/bass sound while the female vocalists mostly recite the lyrics in a speaking tone. They have a garagey sound as well, but not in a thin, under-produced way. It's catchy, bouncey and fun for the most part, so if that sounds good to you, then have at 'er. (NS)
Slampt, P.O. Box 54, Heaton, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE6 5YW, UK

THE KIDS OF WIDNEY HIGH - LET'S GET BUSY, CD I am honored to be reviewing this! The original Widney High release from the 80's changed my life forever. I can never take out garbage without singing the song "Throw Away the Trash!" The Kids are back, and this is even better than the famous older record. For those who don't know, The Kids of Widney High are mentally retarded schoolchildren who make sweet, feel-good music. The songs are upbeat pop with lyrics about celebrating being special. And these kids sure are special. "Cowboy Brown" and "Pretty Girls" are total classics. Great release. (AE)
Ipecac Recordings, P.O. Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501

KILARA - SOUTHERN FRIED METAL, CD These guys were awesome! There is nothing I love better than hardcore/metal with dueling vocals. To make things even better, they took their brand of rock to the next level. By throwing in a harmonica and a banjo occasionally they live up to the title of their album easily. The power that this band demonstrates is almost inspiring. They come across like wild animals, and I bet their live show demonstrates that. Drop whatever it is you're doing and go get this. (FH)
Slave: PO Box 10093, Greensboro, NC 27404 / Crimethinc: 2695 Rangewood Dr, Atlanta, GA 30345

KILL YOUR IDOLS/FULL SPEED AHEAD - SPLIT, 7" A good argument can be made that sxe hardcore killed NY and NJ. Remember when edge bands played fast, though? Both of these bands sure do, 'cuz this is a fantastic release! This is old school with a capital "O." 6 great songs, including a Slapshot cover. May this new label put out many more gems like this one... (AE)
Hell Bent P.O. Box 1529, Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742

KIND OF LIKE SPITTING – NOTHING MAKES SENSE WITHOUT IT, CD There are 3 tolerable bands on this new label and they send me the one stinker. Droning, "pretty" music that can promote narcolepsy. I keep waiting for the songs to pick up a little speed, energy, intensity, anything, but they don't. This reminds me of slow Promise Ring stuff at times, but without anything peppy to balance it out. Like H. Chinaski, this is well-played, but too slow and boring for my tastes. I was going to say that they should change their name to Kind of Like Shitting, but that wouldn't be accurate, since shitting can be so much more enjoyable. (NS)
New American Dream, P.O. Box 245, Balboa Island, CA 92662

KING OF THE COMMANDOS – INSTRO SOLIDARITY, 7" By the title you won't be surprised that this is an all instro record. Besides the Ventures, Dick Dale, Man or Astroman?, that Mono Men 10" and various garage bands of the last few decades I have never been too fond of instrumentals. This very thick slab of Swedish vinyl fits in that category. Nice analogue airwaves here. Some extra samples make an otherwise obvious record interesting. The whole records motif is that of a secret society of instro underground network. Though its been done, its still cool to see some thought put into the whole package. (EA)
URU, Buskvagen 28, S-611 45 Nykoping, Sweden ($5 ppd. world) urupunk@hotmail.com

LA FORESTA DELLA MORTE - THE ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK, CD "The Deadly Forrest" movie soundtrack is perfect for those who prefer a great deal of variety on their mix tapes. There are all varieties of underground/alternative music to be found here. Noise, Techno, Punk, Blues, Garage Rock, Death Metal-it is all here and most of it is damn good. My favorites included Melt Banana, Euphone, Armatron, Joan of Arc, Impaled and Transitional. I found nothing on this to be bad or irritating! Most of this music would be considered ambient- it is quite obvious that the music is secondary to the action taking place. I am now very eager to learn anything about this movie...(MY)
ToYo Records, PMB 421, 564 Mission Street, San Francisco CA, 94105

THE LETTER E - S/T, CD This instrumental release is dedicated to an artists' space in Brooklyn that burned down. It's a mix of rock and jazz that's not the slightest bit punk and is way out of my league. Someone somewhere might like it, but I didn't get it. It features Sean Meadows from June of 44 and Lungfish on guitars if that helps. (AE)
BCore Disc, P.O. Box 35221, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

LIFTER PULLER – FIESTAS FIASCOS, CD Tripped-out, electronic, rhythmic, rap rock. While the Beasties come to mind it's also more spacey than that. The music contrasts and complements the vocals quite well and I especially enjoyed "Space Humping $19.99." The only real problem are the white-on-yellow liner notes so small you need a magnifying glass and ultraviolet light to discern. This record is devoted to the memory of hunting with Greg. (DJK)
Frenchkiss Records, PMB 229, 111 E. 14th Street, New York, NY 10003

THE LITTLE DEATHS - DESTINATION: SEXY, CD For those of you keeping score this band has 3 girls and 2 boys. Gee it's so nice to see the sexes getting along and playing nice together in San Fran these days. Little Deaths get that dark pop/rock sound of early Urge Overkill. That's my take on this whole thing. Not a lot of bands can do that. So there. If you want more info, well the disc has 10 songs on it. So there again! (BC)
Heartcore Records c/o Ernesto Forondo, Columbia U. Station, P.O. Box 250636 New York, NY 10025

LOS INFERNOS - MEIRDA VIEJA (OLD STUFF & OUTTAKES), CD This EP of crowd favorites and old 1995 recordings is way overdue. Los Infernos fuckin' rule. They play straight-forward punk with Biafra-esque vocals and fun aggressive lyrics. You'll dance to this one for sure. (AE)
Giant Squid Records, PMB 240, La Sierra Ave. Suite F., Riverside, CA 92503

MACH 5 / PHP – SPLIT, CD Two Italian hardcore bands. Mach 5 play music in the vein of early 80s US hardcore. PHP are a little less straightforward; they have elements of both schools (new and old). This isn't my thing, but there are three decent things about it: it's not metal, there aren't too many breakdowns, and the singers actually sing. In Italian, that is. (BJM)
Riot Records, Viale monza 26 20127 Milan Italy

M.I.J. - THE RADIO GOODNIGHT, CD First off, this comes in one of those lame promotional only, black and white covers, so it automatically guarantees it a bad review. Basically, it's an alternarock snooze fest. Maybe I should review things in the morning, when I'm generally more awake, but jeez, I thought that music was supposed to make people lift off the couch, not melt into it. This just falls into that genre that I believe is essentially wrong with music today. Here it is in a nutshell, slow, semi upbeat parts with tight, cognitive musicianship, etc. Just buy it, let me know what the cover art looks like. I can't wait for my new fantasy double bill at the local pub, m.i.j and the Angry Somoans (any era)! Please kiss me! (AS)
Caulfield Records, PO Box 84323, Lincoln, NE 68501

MILEMARKER/YELLOW ROAD PRIEST - SPLIT 7" Milemarker lays down some dark, distorted noise and talks about pathetic people over it. This is virtually nothing like the other CD's of theirs I've heard. Their side later finds its way into a free-flowing jazz groove. It ends there and you feel a little empty. Artistic and eerie. Flip it over and glimpse the insanity that is Yellow Road Priest. I think I heard the blood from the singer's tonsils hit the microphone at one point. I hope it's a nice place where they live and the nurses are nice to them. (RB)
Nightrain, P.O. Box 6347, Evanston, IL, 60204

MILKY WIMPSHAKE - DIALING TONE, 7" Geeky mod-pop from the UK. If you like a good melody you might like this. The lyrics are a little dorky, but in a good way. Sample lyric: "I wanna call you when I come home drunk / Maybe I should become a monk." This is the first decent thing I have gotten to review this time around. (BJM)
Ferric Mordant Records, PO Box 54, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5YW UK

MINIM – DEMO, CD This 4 track is very arty and mellow. The female singer brings to mind a lounge singer sounding sensual or romantic. The music is danceable in a slow repetitive manner. The second song is sung in French. The third is sung by a man who sounds like a radio announcer. He sings "I like monkeys, they're funny. I like midgets too and ice cream." This is definitely not my thing! (MY)
PO BOX 744, Evanston IL, 60204-0744

MONEYSHOT – ...TO THE GRILL, CD Loud and fast rock 'n' roll with plenty of grit, spit, power chords and guitar riffs. It's also full of simple song structures and juvenile themes ("Born To Fuck"). They're probably best heard live in a filthy, beer-soaked, hot pants filled club. (DJK)
Dirty Fonzie Records, 147 West San Bruno Ave. San Bruno, CA 94066

THE MONSTERS – JUNGLE NOISE, CD "Psych-Out With Me" kicks off this set of Pistols-style punk and never lets go through 19 songs. Throw in lots of fuzz, garage, psychobilly and a dash of Hasil Adkins and you've got a recipe for a monster. Good, loud fun in recorded in "simulated stereo" in Bern, Switzerland. (DJK)
Voodoo Rhythm Productions, Effingerstr., 56, 3008 Bern, Switzerland

NEUROTONES, THE - MY BABY HOWLS, CD Rockapunkabilly. Aspiring social distorters with more twang in the vocals. It's got one of those eerie surf/Cramps beats under a lot of it, too. Grab the Jim Beam, slick back the hair, and throw the Neurotones on the stereo. (RB)
Sonictone, PO Box 264, Newport Beach, CA, 92662

THE NEW 1-2 - IN CASE OF EMERGENCE, CD Damn my nipples are hard! It's so hard to figure out these band names, song titles, and record labels these days. Let's try to be a little more straight forward...I mean even Led Zeppelin waited to the forth album to drop the band name from the cover. The New 1-2 play that slowed down emo core, I suppose, which is at least supposedly popular with bands that put out CDs. This is a good attempt but I would like to hear something a little be more passionate. Remember when bands, or good art for that matter, made you actually feel something, whatever that something was. There are some stand out songs amongst the nine, like "in petro" and "shitside story". And why is it that these bands can't comprehend capital letters or is it the shift key that gives them difficulty. (AS)
Sloth Records, #1A 1304 - 4 St SW Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2R

NEW RADIANT STORM KING – SINGULAR ~ NO ARTICLE, CD This record opens with a great mellow indie guitar riff. Mellow vocals, very indie. But NRSK isn't playing anything new. At best they are playing very mediocre indie-rock that occasionally sounds like music Pavement rejected because they weren't very good songs. From the guitar tracks to the singer and the drums, there isn't anything that sticks out as very good on this album. "The Correct Liar" is a good song and a good opener, but it all flatlines from there. Every once in a while they open with a good guitar track and it sounds like they might turn it into a good song, like on "Miranda", but then a minute and a half after it starts, it is over...just another instrumental track. (RE)
Poster Girl Records, 123 Queen St. West, Box 146 Toronto, ON M5H 3M9 Canada

NOBODY CARES/JUMPIN LAND MINES – SPLIT, 7" JLM are from the UK and are hit & miss. The first song is an upbeat catchy number with gruff vocals and a solid brit-punk jab a bit like better era UK Subs. The second track is all slowed down, tired & drunk sounding. Nobody Cares is great quick Hardcore that taps the same source as The Beastie Boys- Pollywog stew 7". They are really sloppy, fucked up and soon to be classic. (MY)
Napalm Ape, PO BOX 2510, Pt. Charlotte FL, 33949

NOBODYS/BEAUTYS - HUGH, CD This duo disc features the Nobodys with their classic Nobodys fun punk rock sound. And of course Indiana's own The Beautys with their powerful rock sound. Great songs from each band. Plenty of rock and damn of the Beautys don't sound like a female fronted Didjits. (Remember them? On touch and Go Records from Chicago?) Anyhow, some of the proceeds go to help fight cancer. Get it. (The disc not cancer) (BC)
Sub City P.O. Box 7495 Van Nuys, CA. 91409

THE NO-NO'S – DAMAGE DONE, 7" Pop with a slight Go-Go's feel to it. In that sense the girl's voice feels very 80's. "The Damage Done" is a pretty decent song, but nothing special. Power chords and rock styling are all over the place. The vocals get on my nerves because they don't really stand out and feel forced. The guitar solo on "I Deserve Someone Nice" is wanky and doesn't fit with the short song at all. One more mediocre cover rounds out (HA!) this 7". (RE)
Chromosome Records, 1529 SE Hawthorne Blvd. #205, Portland, OR 97214

OFF TARGET - HAVING AN OFF DAY, CD Question: "Hey we're from England doesn't that automatically make us different and better than horrible scratchy American post punk?" Answer: "Nope." (dc)
Off Target 43 weavers hill fullerslade milton keyne mk11 2bn England

ONEXMORE – THEY SAY THAT YOU SOLD OUT, 7" I'm not a fan of all these youth crew bands coming out today, but I still enjoy it once in a while when it's not so formulaic. Like these guys. OneXMore is a youth crew type band from the Netherlands that makes this type of music seem decent. It's fast and it has breakdowns, but it's more pissed off and urgent sounding than most of the cookie cutter bands in this genre. The songs deal with issues other than friends' betrayal and selling out, and the vocalist belts out the lyrics without the addition of token gang backup vocals. It's pissed off, energetic and honest sounding. I'd like to see that in more U.S. bands doing this. (NS)
Commitment Records, Klein Muiden 38, 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

ONYAS - THREE MORE HITS FROM..., 7" I say that this is the cover art of the year. Anyway, these Australians play some rock like New Bomb and all those rocking dudes do. I guess for them its Croc-rock. So you get 3 hits here. Guitar, guitar, guitar, ...yeah baby! (BC)
Junk Records PO Box 1474 Cypress, CA 90630

OPERATION: CLIFF CLAVIN – WHEN EVERYTHING'S BEEN SAID, 2XCD Operation: Cliff Clavin were a punk band from Indiana that released When Everything's Been Said as a lazy effort to get their old, out of print stuff on the market. This isn't a discography, but with 78 songs it gives you plenty to get the idea across. Anthemic, heartfelt, and catchy, Operation: Cliff Clavin carry the feeling of Crimpshrine and Fifteen but with alternating male-female vocals. The positive attitudes are there and even though this stuff is played in a garage in every city across America, at least Operation: Cliff Clavin are decent and sincere. The two CDs are also accompanied by a 32 page zine that explains lyrics and outlines the band history. A good release for fans of the East Bay punk sound. (PB)
Traffic Violation, Box 772, East Setauket, NY 11733

PAL – AMA ME FIDELITER, CD Aggressive pop punk music by duo Tory Minovich and Gregor Kramer from Chicago. Sounding a bit like Exene Cervenka backed by The Runaways the band delivers catchy tunes at speedy tempos. Produced by PAL and Andy Gerber, all music and words on record are credited to Minovich and Kramer. (DJK)
Heybaby Records, P.O. Box 8487, Chicago, IL 60640

PALOMAR – S/T, CD When it comes to pop music, most of the time it is the vocals that tend to make me pay attention. Especially with a band that plays pretty standard indie-pop, the vocals need to be the most un-pop or really catchy for me to get into the band. Palomar has pretty good vocals working for them, but the music is lacking. The album starts off with catchy, but fairly normal pop tunes and a girl with a voice that for the most part is yelled with some kind of tune here and there. It's funny, because while this band isn't punk at all, the girl's vocals on track one remind me of the kind of vocals that come from the Toy Dolls, kind of snotty and cute at the same time. The stand out tracks for me are "Washington" and "angel". (RE)
No Address

PALPATINE - S/T, 7" FUCK!!! The cheesy band photo on the back of this 7" prepared me for the worst, but Palpatine are brutal in the best sense of the term. It's a great mix of hardcore, punk, and emo that reminds me of Dis Sucks or Antischism at their stranger moments. If you like it fast, but not Spazz-fast, this is for you. (AE)
Here We Are Records, 6050 Lindo Paseo Box 317, San Diego, CA 92115

PANIC - MOVERS AND SHAKERS, CD Panic seems to be a solid guitar driven English punk rock trio. I always thought Panic was Screeching Weasel's drummer. Oh well, I am getting old I guess. Both the guitarist and the bass player sing the tunes here. Some of them like "Her name is toxic" and "I/m not a good guy anymore" are pop punk treats. But others like "Strange Blowout" and "Glass on the Dancefloor" is simply snotty punk at its best. This is worth a good listening too. Those wacky Brits are always up to something. (BC)
Your ILLEGAL Recording Co. P.O. Box 208- Nottingham-NG7 6EN, UK.

PAUL NEWMAN - MACHINE IS NOT BROKEN, CD Melodic, atmospheric, ambient, mostly instrumental goodness from Austin. This is exceptional music to read, meditate or simply relax to. It is very floaty and filled with pleasant vibes. Lovers of good music (regardless of genre) and fans of Euphone will want to check into this. Hardcore adherents to Punk Rock will want to run far far away. (MY)
My Pal God Records, PO BOX 13335, Chicago IL, 60613

PINHEAD CIRCUS – FALL IN LOVE ALL OVER AGAIN, CD Not necessarily a new release, Fall In Love contains an out of print album, seven-inch, and nine unreleased tracks from this Colorado punk group. Raw, rough, and loud – Pinhead Circus are a punk band adapted for the Nineties. You know, the fast and snotty brand of punk that is filled with catchy hooks, pounding drums, and youthful vocals. An infectious album, but this stuff is much more striking live. (PB)
Soda Jerk, PO Box 4056, Boulder, CO 80306

POCKET CHANGE – GOLDEN, CD Poppy punk with a depressing "emo" edge to it. The lyrics and vocals are both a little sappy at times. This is the kind of band that sensitive high school guys and their girlfriends might like. From writing a lot of these reviews, it seems to me that every band who releases a CD decides to cover a well-known song for some reason. In this case, it's "Hey Joe." Don't ask me. (BJM)
Resurrection A.D Records, PO Box 763, Red Bank NJ 07701

POLLEN – CHIP, CD In Pollen I hear the influence of the Replacements, Nirvana, Toad The Wet Sprocket and a hundred other rock bands past and present. The playing is tight and the songwriting good, but the problem is there's nothing on this record that distinguishes the band in such a way that one could identify a Pollen tune during playback. They're from Tempe, Arizona. (DJK)
Fueled By Ramen. PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

POP A WHEELIE - 2000 LIGHT BEERS FROM HOME, CD This EP has a really shitty title but is anything but shitty. Distorted vocals can be a bad plan, but the singer of Pop A Wheelie uses the gimmick well. I think the relationship gone awry lyrical theme is supposed to be sarcastic. Let's hope so. Way above average. (AE)
Pop A Wheelie, P.O. Box 1212, Northampton, MA 01060

POSTSCRIPT - S/T, CD 43 grindcore noise songs, samples, answering machines, and goofiness about why Microsoft sucks. It's a fairly funny concept I suppose if you like computer humor,(and who doesn't!?!? am I right? am I right?) They obviously burned the CD themselves so I would like to think that they didn't spend too much time or effort putting it out. But whatever, it's a joke CD, I can't really recommend it or anything. And I could care less about computer brands. It's all gibberish to me.(I'm a crotchety old man who is scared by newfangled inventions) It would be funnier if the CD put a virus into your computer or something, I would laugh at that maybe. (dc)
Mac A Ham Records PO box 770372 Lakewood, OH 44107

PRIME – KID'S STORIES, CD My gosh, what the hell is this? Since I am not a resident of Portugal or is familiar with what's going on there musically, I'm not sure if this is their idea of a punk band. To me this looks like a major label band in disguise. Tour management, a record label without a listed address, a "Parental Advisory" label...oh well. Anyway, these guys sound all right. Kind of reminds me of a not as thick Sepultura or Deftones with the exception of about 4 songs sounding like a bad version of the Dickies. These guys may be big overseas, but by my standards, these guys are quite mediocre. (DM)
Recital Records, Portugal

PRODUCT X - WHO MAKES THE HEROES, 7" Straightedge Hardcore from the Netherlands on Commitment Records. This label has all the energy that Revelation had in the late '80s. Their roster boasts various Straightedge bands from Europe & get this: all of them are good! Product X gives us a flawless 5 song EP-it is melodic and angry and fast and tight and damned hard to pigeonhole. The singer is higher pitched than most Hardcore bands- at times he screeches-(to the bands benefit)! There are moments of acoustic guitar but it doesn't detract from the overall heaviness of this release. Commitment sent us 5 new releases-I wish I got more than one! (MY)
Commitment, Klein Muiden 38, 1393 RL Nigtevecht, The Netherlands

RADAR MERCURY - THANKYOU, GOODNIGHT, CD High pitched nasal pop with a slight twinge of what the kids are calling "emotional rock." Sure it's okay music but is listening to this really worth getting beaten up by your punk rock friends with all their spikes and chains and mohawks and leather and such , I think not. (dc)
Doghouse Records PO Box 8946 Toledo, OH 43623

RAINY DAY REGATTA – THE MUSIC IS ON, CD The mostly static opener song kind of sets the wrong mood, but as soon as the second song kicks in, this record really begins to make sense. I like this album a lot because I can hear the music being played hard. I can see these kids plugging in their instruments and really rocking, but instead they've chosen for the quiet outlet. Really interesting dual guitar and parts that really don't feel like they are acoustic and wimpy make this album better than most acoustic albums. The packaging is really nice as well. Opting for a flimsy plastic packaging over a disposable jewel case, makes this record come across as a present, instead of a product. Good job all over. (RE)
Harlan Records, 7205 Geronimo, N. Little Rock, AR 72116

THE REFORMED – THE DAYS OF OUR YOUTH, CD The Reformed are living in the past, taking the influences of their inspirators and resurrecting a played-out sound. The hardcore-influenced Oi sound of The Trouble is here, as well as the pissy, obnoxious vocals of Kill Your Idols and the fast, catchy hardcore punk of H2O. Also present are the melodies and back-ups of Agnostic Front and other NYHC groups. Fairly monotonous and well-trodden ground, though. (PB)
Elevator Music, PO Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06505

THE RETARDOS – NO TITLE, CD Just like Seattle about ten years ago, now that the Scandinavian scene is bubbling, labels are scraping the barrel in attempts to cash in. The Retardos play thick necked rock and roll in the same vein as Glucifer or the Hellacopters but in somehow an even less memorable manner. Take note: thick guitars do not necessarily make a good record. Passable until the two covers made me weep in memorial to the originals. God bless GG and Gang Green. (AS)
Scooch Pooch Records, 5850 West 3rd St., Suite 209, Los Angeles, CA 90036

RIGHT 4 LIFE - GIVE US LIGHT FOR TRUTH, CDEP Very good Straightedge Hardcore from France. The vocals make this a very distinctive band. They are enunciated in a French accent that goes well with the crunchy bits. The music is Cro Mags (Age of Quarrel) like with cool intros and heavy guitars. This is a 3 song effort with one of those being a Youth Of Today cover. The lyrics/graphics do not appear militant or religious despite the name. (MY)
The Age of Venus, PO Box 7548, Cedex 3, France

ROB MCGREGOR - VALENTINE, CD I don't know who this McGregor character is, but he probably suffers from schizophrenia. The first song sounds like Jawbreaker, others are country-influenced, and the rest are fairly bland pop exercises. Pick a style and run with it, man! Of the 16 songs here, about a third are memorable. This experiment needed a few more days in the lab. (AE)
Goldentone P.O. Box 12694, Gainesville, FL 32604

ROD/AS IT STANDS - SPLIT, 7" The liner notes for Sicko's new CD explain that the band broke up 'cuz they felt that pop-punk had played itself out. Guess they didn't hear these bands. One's from OH and one's from FL. Both play poppy punk with an emphasis on the punk. Remember when it was okay to indulge in a bit of poppiness? This great split will remind you of that era. (AE)
Napalm Ape P.O. Box 2510, Port Charlotte, FL 33949

SCREECHING WEASEL – THANK YOU VERY LITTLE, 2XCD You already own this by the time this review comes out. I can honestly say I own no Screeching Weasel post "How to Make Enemies...." except for the Probe single. I just stopped caring, it seemed to lose its charm. I guess I was getting old – or maybe we all were. This double CD is sorta a companion to Kill the Musicians, the great singles, oddballs collection done a few years back. Yes, you get Ben rambling through a giant gatefold CD layout. It is a good read though. Disc one includes about 2./3rds material from Wiggle and beyond. I liked the songs that I didn't own more than I would have thought and feel kind of stupid for not paying more attention. Disc two is a live show from 1993 and honestly even is you have all the singles and rarities, this live show makes this worth the purchase. They are always emulated, but never quite duplicated – its Screeching Weasel. (EA)
Panic Button / Lookout! Records

SCREECHING WEASEL – JESUS HATES YOU, 7" This is a great covers 7". Not only do you get some great Probe model on this picture disc, but three cool covers. We get Ben and Co.'s versions of the Subhuman's "Fuck You", Stiff Little Fingers "Suspect Device" and The Stooges "Dirt". You should know all of the songs and frankly you probably already know SW. The first two songs are included on the Thank You Very Little 2XCD. (EA)
Probe Records

SECADORA - S/T, CDEP Five slick rock tunes with noodly-type slow guitar work that builds up to mid-tempo power chorus's. Paying attention, the lyrics don't exactly sound...good. I think this sounds like the Mongoloid offspring of Discount and Garbage. Not exactly a good combination now that I look back at the comparison typed up on the screen. Oh well. (RB)
(looks to be self-released)

THE SEXUAL ABOMINATIONS - ROCK'N'ROLL MEAT HOOK, 7" 4 tunes of disturbing keyboard rock. I tell you all those Brits are wacky! The penis/hammer cover drawing is a tad different. It would have been better if the vocals were up higher in the final mix down. But what do I know, I am just a drummer. (BC)
Wrench Records: BCM Box 4049, London WC 1N 3XX

SHOGUN - ENTER THE EQUATION, 7" You steal Return of the Jedi lines and give no credit whatsoever?! "You will pay the price for your lack of vision." I guess we all do at one point, really. One time, in 6th grade, I went to the roller rink with this one girl...Jesus, what was her name?...Oh yeah! Kelly. Well Kelly was hot stuff. What I didn't realize was that she was using me as a backup incase some hot baseball stud didn't work out. Turns out he did work out and I was left cruelly by the wayside, sipping Coke and sulking as MC Hammer blasted through the rink. So while this is going on, Renee is trying to hook me up with Angie, who later, I will learn, is also hot stuff. Ah, but I didn't see it then. My vision was blinded by my momentary hatred for Kelly. I snubbed Angie's efforts and lived to regret it when I saw her later that summer at the park with her hot basketball stud. Kelly went on to become a burnout with little to no future. Angie and her friend Renee are at college somewhere. I'm not sure, but my instincts tell me the hot studs are gay lovers. And, as for me, I write reviews for Punk Planet magazine at 1:30 a.m. on a Wednesday night. One thing you should take from all this, if you read this far, is that while I wasted a lot of time, I specifically chose to waste no time talking about actual properties of this record. (RB)
Chainsaw Safety, P.O. Box 260318, Bellrose, NY, 11426

A SILVER MT. ZION - HE HAS LEFT US ALONE, BUT SHAFTS OF LIGHT SOMETIMES GRACE THE CORNER OF OUR ROOMS..., CD Weird instrumental poop featuring piano and strings. I'll take Stravinsky over this boring CD any day. (AE)
Constellation, P.O. Box 42002, Montreal, Canada, H2W 2T3

SIXTENSPLIT - S/T, CD This band plays a mix of pop and rock, with a bit of that post-punk Dischord-type guitar thrown in. I hate saying it like this, but there's no other way: they have a female singer. She makes the melodies and songs a little more interesting. Nevertheless, none of the songs really stand out, and some of the parts sound forced. Actually, I take that back. The cover of "Rebel Yell" stands out. (BJM)
Delinquent Galaxy Music, 201 South Prospect Street, Columbia SC 29205

SMALLTOWN SUPERSTAR – LANES 23 & 24, CD It's good to hear a female fronted band for a change. In a male dominated musical world, this is quite welcomed. However, in the Smalltown Superstar's case, this isn't a complete pleasure. Vocalist, Carolyn Smalltown, doesn't seem to blend into the music for the first half of this CD. It isn't until the second half that she's more part of the complete musical picture instead of something that just doesn't seem to fit. "Lanes 23 & 24" remind me of P.J. Harvey's rock stuff. Not a bad release, but I wouldn't go out of my way unless you're a Harvey fan. (DM)
Porcelain Productions, PO Box 9933, Richmond, VA 23228

SPIT – 6 SONGS, CD Hailing from France (?) is the band Spit. This is a great sounding band. It sounds almost as if Jimmy Gestapo of Murphy's Law was "singing" for Samiam during their earlier years. As odd of a picture as that may create visually, musically it comes together quite well. This is a rad and melodic punk band that can really rock it. This is really a great release. I'm wondering if these guys will ever make it to the states and how their live show is. (DM)
Sauf Imprevu, 11. rue des Cinq Cheminas 42000 Saint-Etienne

STATE OF FEAR – S/T, 7" S.O.F. play decent hardcore punk similar to the profane existence catalog. You've got socially conscious lyrics about how screwed up our society is here as well. Nothing new on this record. I've heard it all before and it doesn't get any better with age. (RE)
Aftermath P.O. Box 872, Minneapolis, MN 55408 U$A

STRATFORD MERCENARIES – SENSE OF SOLITUDE, CD Okay, here's an English sounding punk band from England! What a concept! Something about the lyrics and some of the song structures remind me of Gang of Four, although these guys have a broader range, going from new wave sounding stuff to straight forward punk to weird, noisy stuff. The keyboard accompaniment provides a lot of the new wave feel. Some of this reminds me of Devo's "normal" sounding songs too. This is pretty good stuff if you like English punk or you're looking for something different. I'm bobbing my head to "Cheap Excitement" right now. (NS)
Southern Records, P.O. Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657

STRYDER - THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMIN'..., 7" And the boring emo-rock just keeps on coming. Their pop hooks and contrived breakdowns are in all the right spots. Sounds like some Blink-182 fans noticed that emo was getting popular, so they better start writing serious lyrics and being cryptic instead of funny. (RB)
Elkion 5385 Kingsfield, West Bloomfield, MI, 48322

TAKEN – HAVEN, 7" Oh boy. Hardcore, with screamed vocals and some metal/grind parts. It also has those softer parts, so maybe it's "screamo." Do I really need to explain this any further? (BJM)
Here We Are Records, 10 Giverny, Newport Beach CA 92657

THEORY OF RUIN - S/T, 7" Three hardcore songs at 45 rpm. It's without liner notes but contains the message "This place is fucked. I'll kill you." Contents include abstract tunes titled "Outfit," "Target," and "Johnny." (DJK)
Theory Of Ruin, P.O. Box 192306, San Francisco, CA 94142

THREE YEARS DOWN – TEXAS: CONFIDENTIAL, CD You want aggro punk? Do you like rock? Are you tired of overly polished releases that tend to make a band sound as if they are just a studio band and can't play for shit when they play out? These boys from Oakland know how to rock it. There's a bit of gruff vocals on top of a thick, fast paced, good old fashioned punk rock band. However, these guys may tend to blend into the whole "rock" punk rock thing, but Three Years Down is worth a listen. (DM)
Off Time Records, PO Box 479176, Chicago, IL 60647

THE TIGHT BROS. FROM WAY BACK WHEN/THE CHAMPS – SPLIT, 7" The Tight Bros. deliver two songs of AC/DC fused with Slade rock and roll. This stuff is pretty catchy and rockin' with a chorus along the lines of "Fire, Fire, everyone's getting higher" so you get the idea. Fun but not enlightening. The Champs, definitely not the surf band of the same name, serve up one track, "Summer Knights", whose riff seems swings precariously close to a Thin Lizzy song. Two bands to look for if you like your punk with a mid seventies hard rock twist. (AS)
Ace-Fu Records, PO box 3388, Hoboken, NJ 07030

TIME HAS COME – S/T, 7" Youth crew hardcore with vibrant guitars, manic shouting, and aggressive back-ups. Blistering speed that is relentless, a very hyper version of its predecessors. This whole genre is still alive, but the progression seems slow. Time Has Come may be heavier, faster, and louder than, say, Wide Awake, but not drastically enough to keep it from all sounding the same. (PB)
CI Recordings, 739 Manor Street, Lancaster, PA 17603

TOMORROW - BUILD A BRAND NEW SKY, CD Ugh. The vocals on this record make me cringe. They are sung clearly, but they sound forced and pretentious. I guess this would be classified as emo. The songs are all slow and sound the same, with textured guitars, light distortion, and that drum style to which the kids can rock their entire upper bodies (arms folded) back and forth at the shows as they feel the funk. No, wait, feel the soul. No, wait, this isn't soul. Feel the "emo." (BJM)
Schematics Records, PO Box 16521, Tampa FL 33687

ULTRAMAGG - SUMMER'S NOT OVER, CD Coffeehouse indie rock from Houston-harmonic chords and Peter-Brady-verge-of-pubescence vocals up-the-fucking-ass. The cover art is close up photos of Astroturf-I wonder if you can get the blood of slain indie rock pussies out of Astroturf or if it stains permanently? Perhaps one day I'll visit Houston and find out for myself. The biggest disappointment here is that this is on the same label that released the great Girl Crazy comp a couple years ago-WHAT HAPPENED??? (RP)
Remedial Records PO Box 66403 Houston, TX 77266

THE UPSKIRTS – RADIATION ROMEOS, 7" "Radiation Romeos", the A-side of this single is a rather straight forward rocker that has enough energy to make these Swedes show us what rock and roll is about. My guess is that they own a Nomads record or two. "Panda Stomp", the B-side is more pop, but a nice track with some cool female vocals to back up. Nothing earth-shattering, but worth your 3-4 bucks for sure. (EA)
RocknRoll Blitzkreg PO Box 11906 Berkeley, CA 94712

UZIGATO - DOES NOT REQUIRE., CD Huh. sounds like Mudhoney with pretty monotone female vocals doing hard rock-I love their thick and gnarly sound, but the songs themselves don't cut it at all. Too bad. (RP)
Uzigato 5507 1/2 Reiger Dallas, TX 75214

WALLRIDE - WILL LAST FOREVER, CD Judging by their shirts in the photos and their cover choices, 7 Seconds, Gorilla Biscuits, and Cocksparrer, I was expecting this Spanish band to bust out the NY style hardcore. But instead I got treated to more of that Fat records melodic hardcore sound that is way to prevalent today. At over seventeen songs, this throaty female fronted band could use a little more diversity in sound to get me won over. Anyhow it's still refreshing to hear what is coming out of distant lands. Where is Throbbing Gristle when you need them? (AS)
Bronco Bullfrog Records, Apdo. de Correos 1474, 07800 IBIZA (Balearaes) Spain

WINTERBRIEF - COMPLAINTS FROM THE BEAUTY CLASS, CD I sacrifice sleep to listen to this CD. Who needs it? *This* can fuel me. Imagine the best possible music described by the phrase "synthesizer pop duo with female vocals." You are imagining this album. If you're sad, it will make you happy. If you're already happy, it will make you happier. It's art. It's practical. They took that Gang of Four influence and ran to a perfect sunny place with it. They'll take you there, too. They're *inviting* you there. No RSVP necessary, just a stereo. (RB)
Hub City P.O. Box 1223, Greenbelt, MD, 20768-1223

YEAH! / SOVIAC – SPLIT, 7" Yeah! the band hailing from my mother land, Sweden are a complete hit – imagine Jon Spencer BE if they were still cool. Ultra cool fuzz and electronics make the three songs on their side an energetic journey that made me excited about music again. Soviac have a total Dischord ala Jawbox sound, but the vocals are totally wack. I love it! This has a great dual guitar sound, where one guitar is playing crushing chords and the other is giving you the melody. This is the best 7" I have heard all year so far. Two great – different – bands on one single and it comes with a cool little photo book, postcards, and the vinyl is as thick as ten American singles. How the can ship this $5 ppd. to the world and not lose money is beyond me. Upmost suggestion. (EA)
URU, Buskvagen 28, S-611 45 Nykoping, Sweden ($5 ppd. world) urupunk@hotmail.com

V/A – BOSTON AND BEYOND, CD "We were just another band out of Boston..." If I was in a band from Boston, we'd cover that song. There should be another Boston (the band) cover album by Boston bands. And a Chicago cover album by Chicago bands. And an Asia cover album by Asian bands. Anyway, here are 23 Boston area bands "from the D.I.Y. halls" as it says on the cover. A mixed bag of pop punk, hardcore and other interesting bands (interesting meaning sucky). Nothing really memorable, but maybe a nice change of pace for those who are tired of all the hyped up hardcore bands from Boston. Maybe one of these bands will hit it big one day and you'll all be out searching for their obscure track on this CD. I'll save you the trouble and sell this to you for $20 right now. How's that sound? (NS)
Nebulon Community Records, 44 Winfisky Dr., Stoughton, MA 02072

V/A - CITY OF., CD SLOVENIAN HARDCORE!!! This is cool-four bands from Eastern Europe give us moshcore (Entreat), YOT-style posithrash (Low Punch), creative melodic hc (Man In The Shadow) and very 7 Seconds-influenced stuff (Straightforward). While I don't consider any of these bands overwhelming, this is definitely a fun listen because none of it is overproduced, there's obviously a lot of dedication present and there's also the occasional weird lyrical translation like in a lot of Japanese stuff. I love hearing English yelled with thick Euro accents!!! Details inside about the growing scene trying to crawl out of the rubble of the former Soviet Eastern Bloc-get a clue and check this out instead of the next bunch of Fat-wannabe losers on some shitty American CD comp. Hvala vsem za podporo (thank you for your support). (RP)
Choose Life Records c/o Miran Rusjan Pot Na Breg 8 5250 Solkan Slovenija

V/A - DEEP ELM RECORDS FOR THE WORKING CLASS NO. 2, CD This is a $3 ppd. Deep Elm Records label sampler. I was excited by the opening track from Seven Storey Mountain, a real raucous punk number, but the remaining contents all veered towards the newer sounds of emocore. Slow and moody, but surprisingly above average. Lots of bad band names and song titles that seem unrelated to the actual song. "She's Sleeping" by Five Eight actually made me cry. (AS)
Deep Elm Records, Post Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236

V/A - LET'S HOPE THESE ARE RADIO FRIENDLY, CD 27 tunes from about 20 wacky Canadian bands. Most of the bands were new to me and that is the very reason why comps are cool. So that Brian Czarnik can hear new bands. Beer, Hockey, Girls, and much more topical songs are found on this here disc. The majority of it sounds like that melodic punk stuff the kids are still going crazy for these days. And there is some ska and other punk flavors in here too. Some stand out bands included: dbs, By a Thread, Marilyn's Vitamins, Choke, and The Retreads...ah hell, they were all good. Let's give them all a nice hand. And a donut for Tim Horton's sake! A good way to hear Canadians finest bands with out having to drive in the snow. Get it before we invade them and they all just become "the northern people of the United Sates." (BC)
Spawner Records, PO Box 93046, Langley, B.C. Canada V3A 8H2

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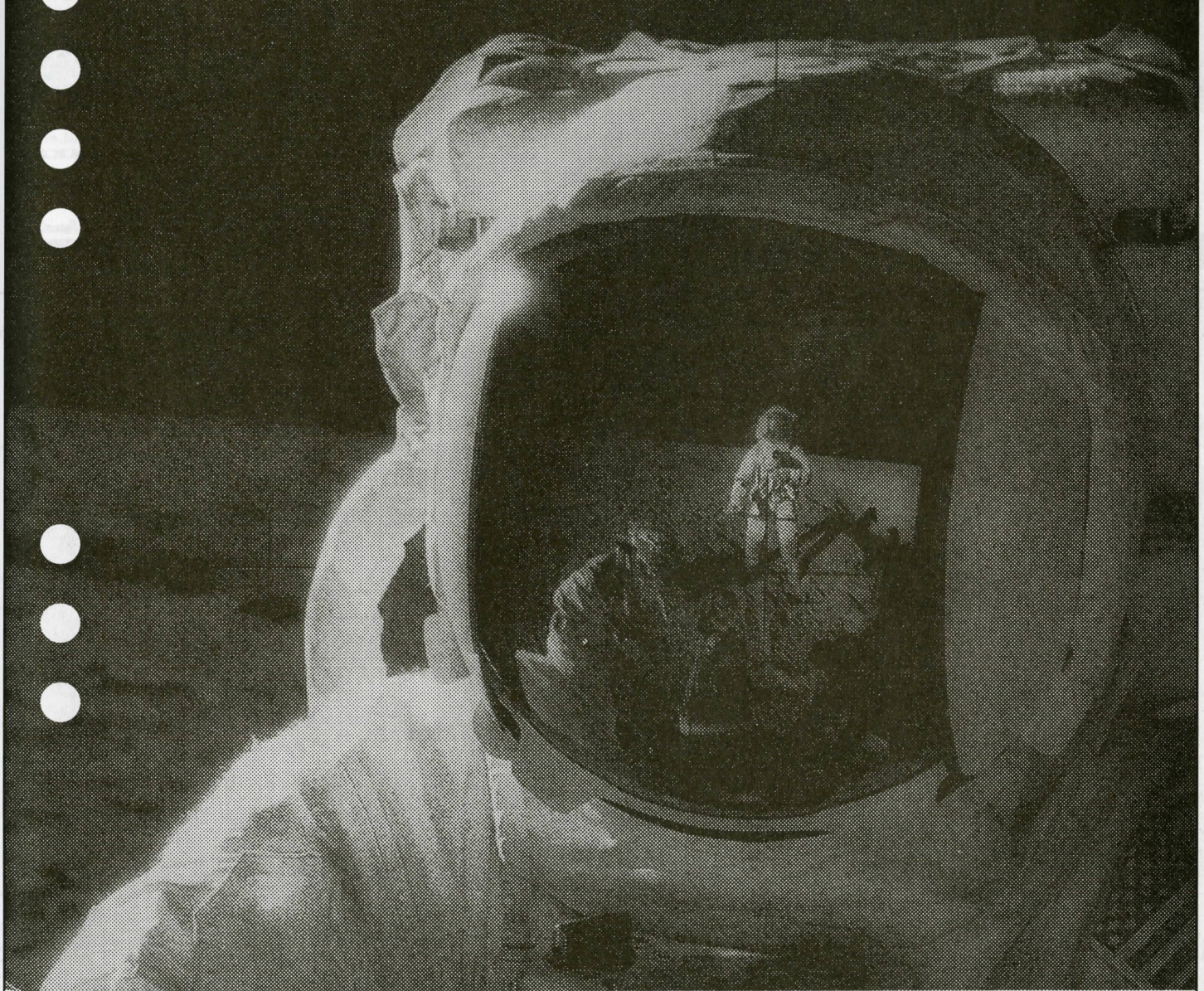

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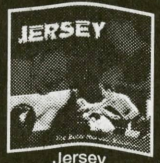

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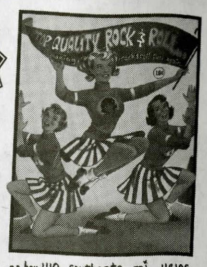

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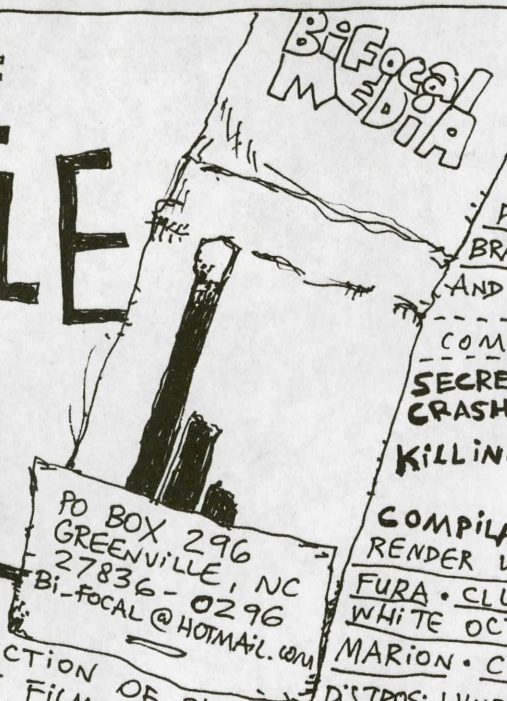

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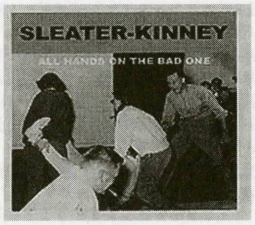

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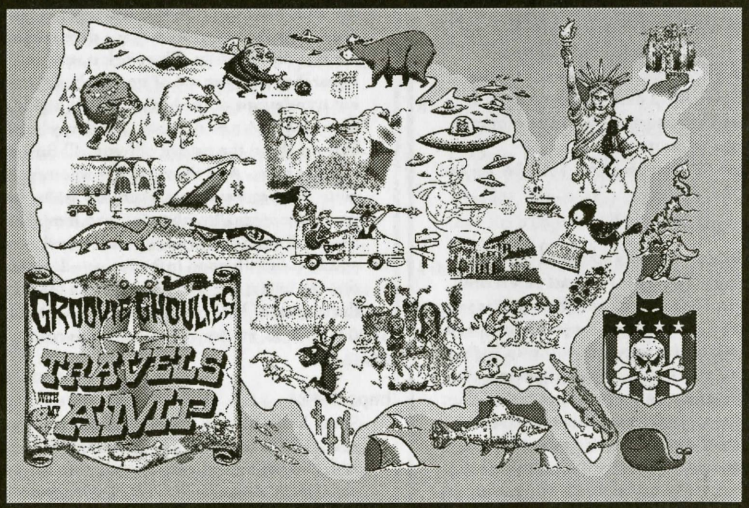

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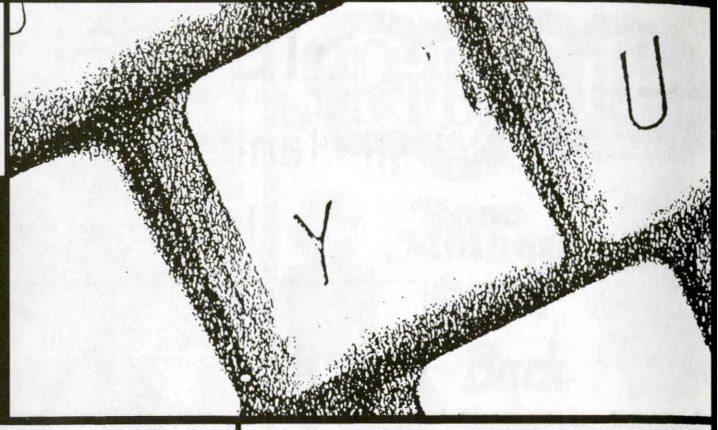

59¢ #25

This is pretty much pointless stuff, with whining about how people are idiotic - to the length that the editor published a portion of their "hate list". Other writings include an article written by a squirrel, record reviews, zine reviews, show reviews, and poetry. That is about it. The entire issue takes only minutes to read, and even then it is a waste of time. (PB)

$3, PO Box 19806, Seattle, WA 98109

816, Issue #11

This issue kicks off with a tale of lesbian love lost. It also includes a few poems filled with grace, a story about one author's love for Chicago, and two more about dating and relationships. Overall it's about peace, love and understanding. (DJK)

$1.00. Michelle, P.O. Box 479081, Chicago, IL 60647

Abus Dangereux #64

Abus Dangereux is a really nice looking magazine that I was looking forward to reading. Interviews include Fugazi, Robyn Hitchcock, Unwound, and Reiziger. However, the magazine is written in French so I was excluded from learning what all those words meant. But what I can conclude is that Abus has a fair variety of coverage, ranging from hardcore to punk to indie rock to rock n' roll. The interviews seem to be on the shorter side, but the layouts are clean and attractive and the printing is of high quality. If you speak French, check this out. (PB)

BP 15, 33031 Bordeaux Cedex, France

Anar-comics #1

Seventeen pages of one cell reprints containing various one liners, etc. from many of the newspapers' major comic strips like Beetle Bailey, Hagar, etc. While in this format many of the one liners are extremely thought provoking, the fact that it took about four minutes to read does not necessarily warrant the $2 ppd. price. I'd save that for some original comics with the same potential. Two thumbs up for the creative bootlegging though! (AS)

Satan Macnuggit, 3584 John St., Vineland Station, Ontario, Canada, LOR 2EO

Besides The Animals

Subtitled "How animal consumption affects your health, the environment and the starving," this zine targets those issues. I have severe and chronic allergies to most vegetables (really), so I'll never be a vegan. But I loved The Smiths' "Meat Is Murder" record. If you're considering veganism than this is just what the extremist ordered. (DJK)

Free. Mark Osmond, 8364 Washburn, Goodrich, MI 48438

C.H.U.N.K. 666

This is the chronicles of a group of cyclists, I presume from the Portland area, and thus of primary interest to people who can relate. It talks about how cyclists are individualists and a whole bunch of bike inventions (the Co-Operator, the Commuter, tiny bikes). To be honest, I couldn't bring myself to read most of C.H.U.N.K. 666 because I had no desire to learn about bike inventions. But if you have such a desire, this zine gets pretty detailed and so you might want to pick it up. (PB)

$2, Megulon-5, PO Box 5791, Portland, OR 97228

Dear Boy #1

An interesting little picture zine with cut and paste poetry(?) of unsent letters or journal entries to a boy in this girls life. Not a bad little emo zine that goes through the motions of make up/ break up. I really dig the craftsmanship put into this little ditty. Not bad for the price either. (DM)

1 stamp, c/o Erin 221 Moorewood Ave, Aron Lake, OH 44012

The Dung Beetle #1

This zine is a collection of drawings, stories, and personal anecdotes by a fellow named Shane and his friends. Surprisingly thick, most of the stories weren't more than a page long. They were mostly very intriguing and sincere or just plain weird and ludicrous. I had a really good time reading and it was a zine that I picked up over and over when I should have been moving on to the others I was supposed to review.

$1 or trade Bottom "S" Press c/o Shane 2010 SW 7th Ave. Largo, FL. 33770

Eat Your Idols #7

Eat Your Idols is a pretty standard cut-and-paste fanzine. The writer at least references that she is in high school, which is nice to know simply because the subject matter is centered around topics we worry about in high school. Reviews, lyrics, writings, poetry, et cetera. The one nice thing is that rather than solely focus on boy/girl sensitivity issues, there is a lot of stuff on the writer's personal musical interests such as show reviews and favorite lists. I never really understood why people try to distribute these type of personal high school 'zine attempts, but at least Eat Your Idols shows that kids are still interested in the medium. (PB)

PMB 278, 6523 California Avenue SW, Seattle, WA 98136

Eyes On The Street December 1999

Social and geographical commentary on urban American is a focus here, and articles on the topic that start and end this issue are captivating. As interesting, and humorous, is a historical look at social attitudes on female body hair. This issue also includes articles on political activism and local government conspiracy theory in Minneapolis, and several book discussions ("Outlaw Country," "Jazz," "The Old Neighborhood" and more). 32 pages; offset. (DJK)

$1.00. Amanda O&X, Eyes On The Street, 1536 LaSalle Ave., #303, Minneapolis, MN 55403

The Hand Of Doom - Volume 2 1999

Companion zine to Chris' radio show of the same name at Cleveland State University. Short but sweet listing set lists from his show, record and live show reviews from the hard, fast and heavy side of hardcore/thrash/metal- excellent taste so check it out, it's free! (RP)

The Hand Of Doom PO Box 14157 Cleveland, OH 44114

The Hardcore/Punk Guide To Christianity by Robin Banks

The author of this pamphlet is convinced that Christianity is in direct conflict to the Punk/Hardcore Lifestyle. The author turns to the bible itself to prove that Christianity is a cruel, contradictory, man made slave religion. He is really effective. This work is very well researched with the use of no less than 5 different translations of the bible. This is highly recommended to new Atheists. Readers who are curious about the nature of Jesus will find much of value here. Also those readers who seek religious perspectives on such subjects as sex, tattoos, homosexuality, abortion and feminism will benefit from Robin's work. This is well written and loaded with good information. It appears that the letters pages in Heart Attack Mag. and the success of MXPX brought this on. (MY)

$3.00 to AK Press, PO Box 40682, San Francisco CA, 94140-0682

Impact #24

Some heavy hitting material inside this here zine. Two Death Row inmates write in, as well as an in-dept article about racism in American colleges. A decent editorial on the power of purchasing. And a very heated letters section.

This is a zine to be checked out. Nice to see that Orlando has something to offer us besides Disney. (BC)

$2.00 PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817

The Inner Swine V5. #4

A day in the life at Jeff's job. n interview with an angry man. A look at talk radio, and so much more. The Inner Swine is packed with interesting reading material. And don't forget to read everyone's comic hero "Mr. Mute." If you like it be sure to get the rad-as cheap subscription rate. (Is rad-ass a word in intelligent places or just in California?) (BC)

$2. Inner swine 293 Griffith St. #9, Jersey City, NJ. 07307

The Inner Swine #4

The Inner Swine is a rather small half-size fanzine that rubs me the wrong way, mostly because it talks about moving up to newsstand distribution and two dollars being "a frickin' bargain". The actual fanzine just doesn't seem to be in line with those claims. The theme of this issue is "time", although the editor admits in the introduction that most of the issue doesn't even touch on that theme. Most of the content is commentary, although there is a fictional piece about a new superhero, The Pork Avenger, and a short interview with Jack Twomey. If you enjoy reading miscellaneous commentary then maybe you have already seen The Inner Swine, but for the most part this fanzine just seems to be over-rating itself. (PB)

$2, 293 Griffith Street #9, Jersey City, 07307

It's Raining Truths #4

This is a zine that could have a real future. This is well written and has many collaborators with band interviews, columns, adds, reviews, etc. This European zine isn't anything I haven't seen before but they really have their shit together especially by their 4th issue. There's a lot of info in this 64 long half page (not the folded half page) style zine. Pretty Good. (DM)

$3 everywhere, c/o Pytrik, Topass 1, 5231 KL 'S-Hetrogenbosch, Nederland

Jaded In Chicago #7

Jaded In Chicago is a Chicago-based punk rock fanzine. Although the fanzine appears to only be distributed in the Chicago area, the music coverage within its pages is not merely focused on the local scene. In this issue, Jaded In Chicago includes interviews with Face to Face, Fifteen, In Truth, and the Lawrence Arms. The interviews are fairly short, but they at least go beyond the meaningless conversation that some fanzines pass off and show that the interviewer is well versed in their subject. A quick read, but interesting enough for those who can pick it up in the Chicago area. (PB)

$1, 4031 Forest Avenue, Western Springs, IL 60558

Journal Song #1

This is a story of a drunkard and an addict to be. It started about a girl he lost and a friend with a similar story... Short and to the point. It's a cut and paster. Not incredibly bad, kind of a downer though. You decide. (DM)

2 stamps Steve Gevurtz 703 NE Tillamoon St Portland, OR 97212

King-Cat #56

Comics are something that I pay very little attention to these days. Back when I was younger, there was a brief period where I got into collecting comic books. But even then I'm not sure how much I actually read the comic books, and I certainly don't read the comics in the newspaper today. But I must review. The comic is about this eleven year-old kid, John, who is insecure about girls, listens to The Beatles, gets beat up playing football, and goes trick-or-treating on Halloween with his sister. There doesn't seem to be any consistent theme or message, it is just a "day-in-the-life" type thing. The drawing is fairly simple and most the people all look the same. Like I said, my experience with comics is pretty much non-existent but this didn't seem too interesting regardless. (PB)

$2, PO Box 881, Elgin, IL 60121

Liar's Diary #22

Graphically, this zine seems to be obsessed with erotica. Textually, this zine is kind of a myth. I'm assuming this is all fiction, but much of it is very obscure, broken stories that make no sense. Some of it makes sense, since there are rather complete short stories. But, overall, this adds up to one thing: nonsense. I guess some people enjoy it, but without any organization it is just plain confusing. What is the point? (PB)

15 Slocum Street #3, Providence, RI 02909

Liquid Foundation #5

There's lots to read in this more or less political punk zine. Some lengthy essays on deception in American History and the Microsoft trial are interspersed with band photos and record reviews. An informative read. (AS)

Justin Colon, 142 Haggetts Pond Rd., Andover, MA 01810

Me Not #1

Me Not is a thin personal zine with a lot of random opinions. Most of the stuff is pretty trivial, such as rants about girls, loneliness, an unforeseen future, school, et cetera. This is the type of thing young high school kids paste together at Kinkos, but they don't really pass as a genuine zine worth showing to anyone outside your immediate group of friends. (PB)

50 cents, Kyle, 401 Colonial Drive #9, Ipswich, MA 01938

Mediareader '99.

A newspaper pullout looking zine. This one is about Pop culture and Commercialism. If this is your hot topic then get it. It's free after all. Interesting stuff in here... I hope they have copies still around from this issue for you to read. (BC)

A stamp P.O. Box 994 Chapel Hill, NC. 27514

Oppress This - #10

Graphically, this is well put together and nice-looking, but the content is just awful-rambling thoughts about stupid useless personal crap that I can't believe she thinks anyone else would be interested in a million years. This person's highlight is when her friend and her got to be in the studio audience on some MTV show-guh. (RP)

$2 or $1 and 3 stamps OT c/o Erin 221 Moorewood Ave. Avon Lake, OH 44012

Oppress This Zine #9

Complex musings from the female perspective on gods, music, and relationships at home, the office and with boys and girls. With chat rooms all the rage, this actually seems to be a more personal, and interesting, forum. In a simple format on 4" x 6" staple-bound sheets, each issue is available for a #1 and #2 stamp. (DJK)

Erin, Oppress This, 221 Moorewood Ave., Avon Lake, OH 44012

Out of Order #14

This is the only zine based solely on various types of rail transit in existence. When I say rail transit I mean trains, monorails, subways, etc. any type of train basically, and this kid loves it! Never before have I seen someone take such interest in the subject. It is basically a collection of stories of his and his friend's experiences on trains and his fascination with the location and the history of which ever transit system he happens to be on. One thing that I found most interesting about this zine was that he stopped in my hometown of Bellingham, WA and took a photo right outside of my house. That cool! Overall, the subject was a little too in depth for my tastes, but if you to are a fan of trains, then I couldn't think of a better zine for you.(FH)

Out of Order c/o Peter E. Lewis, PO Box 1402, Occidental, CA 95465-1402

Phoenix Was A Mistake #2

First off, the hand made actual cut and paste designs and logos on the cover blows me away. This is not a photocopy cover. That in it self is worth picking up. Inside, the contents are rather short, but is well written and witty (sarcastic really, but it makes a better read). There's a short story of attempted train jumping and how the writer found out he has Crohn's Disease (which my brother also has). While reading this, you can tell what this zinester is going through while also keeping some serious topics somewhat light hearted and interesting to read. Phoenix Was A Mistake is worth checking out regardless of my biased opinion. (DM)

2 stamps, Kurt Lane 300 w. 14th St., Lawrence, KS 66044

Quickdummies #13

A Maximum Rock and Roll style zine with columns and interviews with the Travoltas, Templars, Boulder, and more. Has tons of record reviews, too. A good read and a bargain at $1.50 for two zines, sticker, and a pin. (AS)

Quickdummies, 6810 Bellaire Dr., New Orleans, LA 70124

Raw Sugar

More like Raw Shit. An obviously time-consuming exercise putting this thing together but the writing is just excruciatingly boring and lame and stupid-why should I give a shit that you broke up with your boyfriend? This thing is the most emo zine I've ever seen and it makes me wanna puke-non-stop stream-of-consciousness blathering about nothing combined with repulsive teenage soap opera dialogue. The best part (i.e. the

part that gets me the most intellectually offended and psychotically infuriated) is the section called Zine Politics where she talks about how she really should be charging $4.50 for this thing because that's what it costs her to make each issue and we should support the zine 'community' and blah blah and Ani DiFranco stuck it to 'The Man' and yadda yadda yadda and the unfathomable coup-de-grace: ZINES SHOULD COST SEVEN BUCKS SO SHE CAN MAKE A LIVING OFF IT AND "BREAK THE MOLDS OF TRADITIONAL AMERICAN LIFE"- you call ripping people off and wanting something for nothing "breaking the mold"??? THAT'S AS AMERICAN AS IT FUCKING GETS, YOU COCKSUCKING MORONIC KNOW-NOTHING HYPOCRITE!!-jesusmotherfuckingchrist, just kill yourself and save us all the time and trouble, would ya? Having to read this makes me want to kill MYSELF, for fuck's sake! Fuck you. (RP)

$2 & 2 stamps Nidhi 9 Cala Moreya Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

Rivals #5

Hmmm. This is a somewhat amusing zine. Stories about heart break, cartoons, and personal journal entries from multiple contributors. Contents are brought to the reader in hard to read at times handwriting and different type which made it easier to figure out that someone else was bitching forth onto the reader. However, the second entry was about how the main person behind Rivals is "yellow trash" was quite interesting. Getting an inside look on how an Americanized child of a parent it one's way based on tradition did give an interesting introspective on something I was unfamiliar with. This is not a bad zine at all, but considering that there are others that seem to hold one's interest a bit more, I wouldn't kill myself tracking this one down. But if you come across Rivals, check it out. (DM)

1615 E. Denley St., Hacienda Heights, CA 91475

Second Guess #15

Despite the lengthy introduction/conclusion about punk rock and the music reviews, Second Guess is a thick half-size fanzine dealing mostly with thought-provoking topics presented in an intelligent way. There are interviews with Daniel Quinn, the author of Ishmael, and Rob Buccalari, an artist and kindergarten teacher - both are very lengthy and extremely probing. It is hard to fine fanzines that are willing to run interviews with seemingly unknown individuals, let alone lengthy pieces that defy the short attention span most magazines assume readers have. The music reviews and letters from readers could easily be overlooked, but the bulk of the content is worth your time. (PB)

$3.50, PO Box 9382, Reno, NV 89507

Snapshot #5

This appears to be journal excerpts from an unhappy shit job working, 20 something year old, do nothing person living in the valley of LA. First off, Jeff is an exceptional writer; he is really talented! I simply wish he would use this talent for good instead of evil. It is EVIL to leave each short story end so anticlimactically-"Got off bus and walked home." Or "Ah-I'm going to sleep" Also whenever we meet a character, we want to learn about them-Jeff tells us NOTHING! This is also EVIL! The last thing is Details! Details, details, details, this is what makes all good writers great! I am sure that this would have been great if only Jeff would have let us in. (MY)

$2.00 to Jeff Levine, 4956 Kester Ave Apt # 6, Sherman Oaks CA, 91403

Something For Nothing #46

Long time, not overbearing, but still Christian punk zine. No interviews, but rants and columns about anything from xmas specials to farting. Has some record reviews. Well done, but not my cup of piss. (AS)

55 cents in stamps, 516 Third Street NE, Massillon, OH 44646

Sore #9

Not terrible, but typical-a couple columns and stories (nothing really unusual or interesting), zine reviews and record reviews. Christ, not one mention of hometown heroes The Candy Snatchers?! Go party with them and I guarantee your zine would get a LOT more interesting. (RP)

$1 Sore Zine PO Box 68711 Va. Beach, VA 23471

The Spidder #3

26 pages filed with unusual comics and stories. This is photocopied black and white. Most of the comics are good although a bit simple. There is a fairly long piece on the tortures inflicted upon farm animals. The part I enjoyed most was a biographical tale about a country singer named Johnny Horton-The ending is really cool, but of course I can't disclose it. There is a real sense of inbred/hillbilly charm throughout this. (MY)

$1.00 to 223 Ford Court Apt # 3, Auburn AL, 36830

The Stupid Journey, Thumbing the Canadian Wasteland - Jonathon Culp

I found this oddly compelling-I had to keep reading to find out what would happen to this guy next. It is a simple story of a guy in Toronto who decides to take 3 months off to hitchhike around Canada. He goes to each coast roughly along the border. There is quite a lot to look at and read in these 120 (digest sized) pages. The only problem with this narrative is that he doesn't come across much real excitement. I am sure if he was travelling along the US/Mexico border he'd get laid or murdered or something! This comes with a 60 min. tape that consists of various people and sounds collected from his trip. This is much more of a book than a zine. (MY)

$6.00 to Satan Macnuggit, 3584 John St., Vineland Station, Ontario Canada, LOR 2EO

The Substitute Chronicles #3

A zine that lets us look into the day to day (or class to class) life of a Florida substitute teacher. Some of the writing is good and some is kinda just there. Just like our school system. The writer talks very basic but has a few interesting thoughts. I just hate school, so I could only read so much of it. (BC)

$1. 2010 7th Ave. SW Largo, FL. 33770

Throw that bottle...

This half-page 'zine starts off with the disclaimer that "this is all a lie, not a damned thing in here is true." But whether it is true or not probably doesn't matter, because this is pretty much random stories and nonsense. Although the fictional stories can be interesting at times, there is often a disjointed train of thought and poor grammar that divert your attention from the story to the writer. Where is all of this coming from? Is there supposed to be a message in each story, or do we read simply for the entertainment purpose of reading? Interesting but questionable. (PB)

223 Ford Court Apt. #3, Auburn, AL 36830

Twat #1

Very short but what I see makes me think these girls have the capability to do something really great—an accent on obnoxious fun here. They say the next one will be bigger so watch for Twat #2 if you like reading things that put a twisted smile on your face. (RP)

Twat HQ 167 Oglethorpe Ave. Athens, GA 30606

Why Not? #7

As I found out, people who read this believed that #6 was going to be the last zine of this series. Since this is my first time reading Why Not? and I have nothing else to compare this too, I have come to the conclusion that, well..., #6 should have been the last issue. This is a personal emo zine of some probably really sweet kid (who's horny) who's bad at getting with the girls and is very sensitive about his surroundings. The world needs more people like Jemuel (Why Not? creator), however we really shouldn't have to read about this. To much passion pushing his pen to write bad poetry in this mini zine. Sometimes coming straight from the heart gives a little too much information. Sorry... This may be his last issue. (DM)

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Zine Wrecker #1

What a cool name. This here is the debut issue (but over 3 years old.) The material really doesn't seem too dated, and most of it is pretty funny. Check it out for the bizarre comics. Even if you do have to send money to that place some call Canaduh. (BC)

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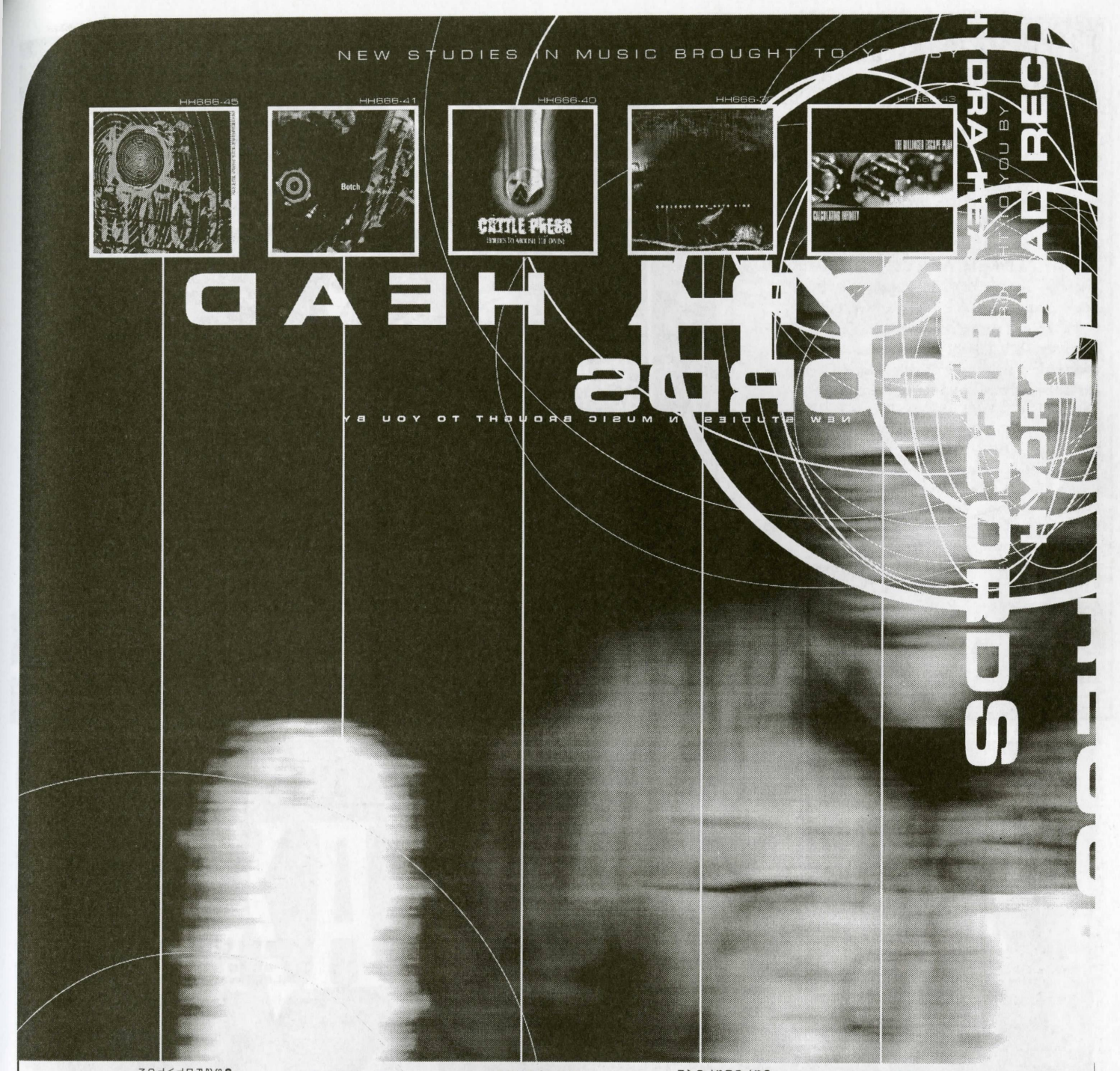

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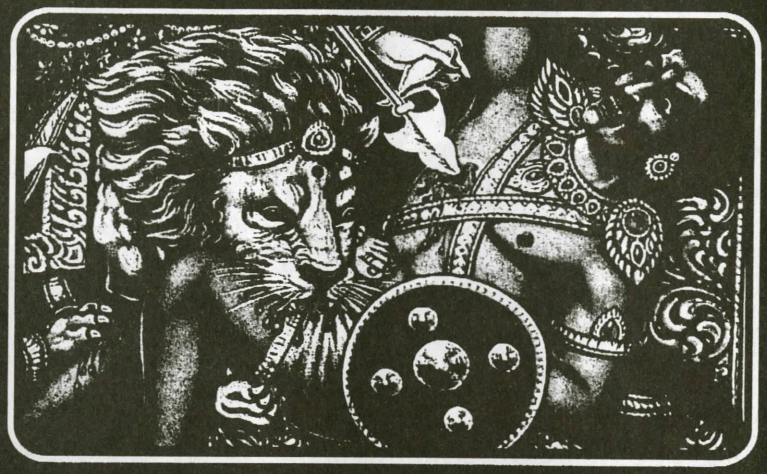

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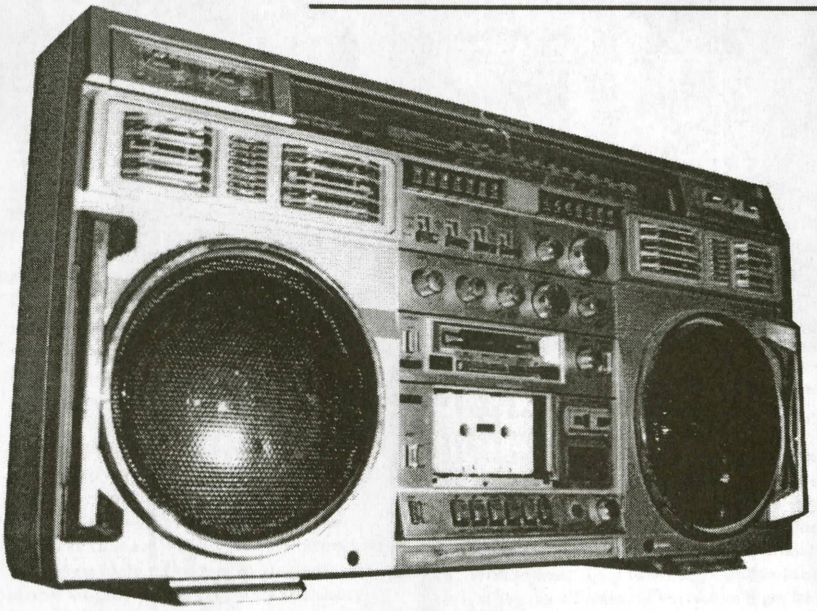

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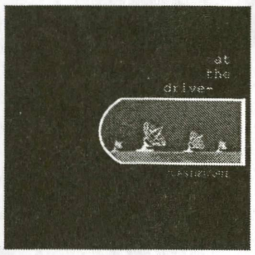

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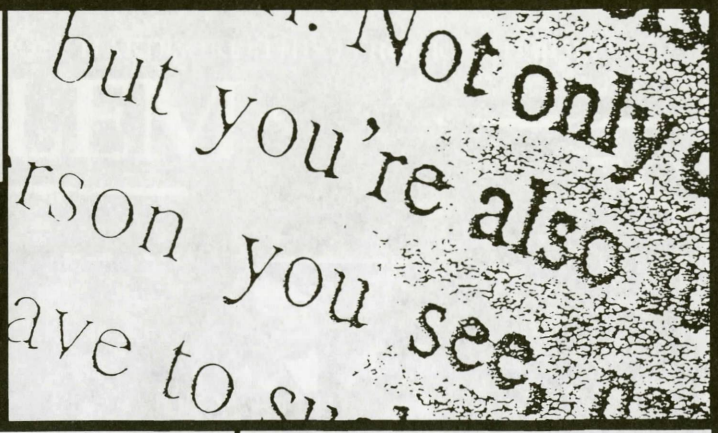

Viscera

Cara Bruce, editor
Venus or Vixen Press, 1999

Our sexual fantasies may well be the place where we are most truly ourselves. We revisit them again and again, until the landscape is so familiar that we can conjure its features with the slightest provocation: the way a shirt drapes, the pitch of a question, the gloss of a boot. And even though we may edit the scenes we play in our head, adding and subtracting characters, it is hard to leave the fundamental design behind. That's why it's so hard to write true erotica. Sure, you can string together some standard situations and drop in words like "cock" and "cunt" at regular intervals, but what you will end up with is not really erotica. Sexually stimulating, perhaps, but not erotic.

What's the difference? Pornography merely confirms your sense of sexual identity. It gives you the extra push you need to return to your tried-and-true fantasies. But it is the pornography, not those fantasies, that undergo modification in the process. You take the raw material of the pornographic text and shape it to the contours of your fantasy. The generic asshole of a B-grade porn shot becomes the one you've been imagining since a locker-room wrestling match revealed a desire you didn't know you had. The superfluous and silly "rods" and "lovesticks" and "sopping pussies" of Penthouse Forum become a particularly memorable sexual encounter with your first girlfriend or boyfriend. But although this transformation-particularly if you are male-may help you achieve your desired end, it usually feels like a poor substitute for something better, like a Hostess Ho Ho instead of your grandmother's beloved chocolate cream rolls.

Viscera is most emphatically not a Ho-Ho. It's erotica. Instead of confirming your sense of sexual identity, erotica destabilizes it. When you try to mold erotica to your favorite sexual fantasies, it resists. It's not a source of a raw material in the way pornography is, precisely because its creator has cast it in the forge of her or his personality. This is its power. It makes you look at things you wouldn't otherwise see and feel things you wouldn't otherwise feel. And the experience can be quite unpleasant. If your favorite sexual fantasies have the lazy soft-focus of a Bob Guccione photograph, the leather-and-steel precision of an S+M story may make you feel anything but sexual. At least at first. The true test of erotica is whether it can overcome your ingrained preferences and turn you on in spite of its strangeness.

That's certainly what the stories in *Viscera* aspire to do. Not all of them will succeed, but that has nothing to do with their quality. Even the best erotica can only bring you out of yourself if some small-and often repressed-part of you desires to make the trip. And it's hard to imagine a person who rates all potential destinations equally. I'd much rather visit Stockholm than Bali, but I'm surely in the minority on that score. Does that make me a pervert? My point is that it is impossible for the stories in a collection as varied as *Viscera* to provoke a uniform response. Your reaction to them will differ sharply from my own. What we can agree on is that it is *Viscera*'s very diversity that makes it good erotica.

With this important qualification in mind, I'll mention my own favorites. I've always been partial to stories which play off tensions in the teacher-student relationship, stories where the power dynamic mirrors a knowledge differential. Sade's Philosophy in the Bedroom has about the right tone. Conversely, I've never found much sexual pleasure in the genre of horror or science fiction. I can appreciate vampires in theory, but they bore me in practice. Stories in *Viscera* like "Nosferatu Meets Gamma House" and "Fingers" didn't do much for me as a consequence.

But I liked the more worldly directness of Sonia Greenfield's "A Girl on the Train," told in a speculative second person, and *Viscera* editor Cara Bruce's "Cheng," which plays off of the starving actor stereotype. And I absolutely loved Carol Queen's piece "Knife," which matter-of-factly explains how she learned to love being penetrated by a blade. I found its mixture of clinical lists with philosophical rumination exciting, even though I've never had much interest in S+M. Queen's story also featured my favorite lines in the book: "What does it mean to fear someone I trust? Is it possible to trust someone I fear?" These questions are representative of *Viscera*, in the sense that they make you think, not in opposition to your body, but in rhythm with its demands. —*Charlie Bertsch*

Canaries on the Rim: Living Downwind in the West

Chip Ward
Verso, 1999

This newest installation of the Haymarket Series was scouted by Mike Davis for Verso, and it is expectedly consistent with the best traits of his work. It is a book as much about landscape as about political action as it tells a story in which neither exists without reference to the other. Chip Ward is the Utah activist who started West Desert Healthy Environment Alliance (West Desert HEAL). He began the work that evolved into this organization in response to his growing consciousness of toxicity in the Utah desert.

Canaries on the Rim describes the step by step process Ward and his comrades undertook to wreak havoc on the military industrial complex's plans to sweep the nation's leftover Cold War poisons under the "rug" of the Utah desert. Ward starts small, by changing the schedule of the disposal of leftover missiles, and ends pretty big—targeting the nuclear waste project aimed at the Yucca Mountains.

His narrative reminds me of Judi Bari's stories of enacting radical change one small step at a time, with humor. He and his group were unhappy with the regular detonation of aging missiles at a nearby army facility, and with little previous experience as activists, they persistently appealed to the authorities by targeting rules and watching the cumulative impact of many complaints. Over time, they succeeded in getting the army to first blow up smaller loads in deeper pits to minimize the noise, then getting them to account for wind direction when picking their detonation days, then they claimed damages to property from detonations. Finally, after forty years of regular detonations that fractured plaster, woke babies from naps, and set off alarms, the army relocated the detonations project away from town.

That is just one of many actions described in the book, which includes many moving accounts of very ordinary people taking on the military-industrial complex, and winning. By the end of the book, we are in step with Ward's current battle to protect the fault-line ridden and volcanically active Yucca mountains from becoming the country's central uranium rod dump. Along the way, he describes prodding the entire state of Utah into consciousness about the health impact of numerous pollution centers, taking on the army's chemical demilitarization project which incinerates nerve gas, and bringing to its knees the giant magnesium processing plant, Magcorp. These bogeys stand large and deeply scary, yet from Ward's perspective they are human institutions built in the shadows of unaccountability that for all their scariness reveal many provable flaws when brought to the light of day, flaws that ordinary people can use as hand-holds when tearing them apart.

In recounting the incremental increase over the years in his consciousness and his activisim, he succeeds in telling the story not just of his growth as an activist, but also the growth of his own knowledge base about the Utah landscape, about the United States Government, and about the technical aspects of weapons destruction.

The most impressive aspect of his narrative is the respect with which he treats those who are at different levels of environmental awareness, both himself earlier in his life, and the many people who surround him in his community. This is one of the few books about political action that I would strongly recommend to people who I thought could stand to develop some political consciousness, because it doesn't condemn those whose lives have not been structured toward such consciousness. In fact, it is respectful of the difficult choices people must make to earn a living out in landscapes of scarcity, and therefore respectful even of those who have lived for years in silent complicity with "business as usual." To many leftists, such people are objects of scorn. Yet they are the people who most sorely need to have such ideas offered to them in ways that they can hear, and are most seriously in need of understanding just what can be done to improve their lives.

Ward contextualizes all of his stories within the intense desert landscape that has inspired so many to use it as a trash site. After having read the book, I feel as if I've had a guided tour for the blind that gave me vivid, wide-angle views from the rims of the Utah valleys whose dusty floors house our country's decomposing chemical weapons stockpile. And inseparable from the landscape are the human communities that absorb the impact of these toxins, concentrating them at the top of the food chain. Ward makes careful note of the systematic placement of toxic sites near Native American communities and other disenfranchised people. Observing the desperation of Native Americans to find some advantage for themselves in this game of "betting the ranch at the nuclear casino," he reports on communities that are divided—with some members eager for the cash payoff that would come with nuclear byproduct deposits. And Ward grasps that

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whiteness is not a simple level of entitlement, as he observes throughout the book that Mormon communities, remembering their marginalized status from the 19th century, have in the 20th century been over-eager to "prove" their patriotism by being quiet bystanders to intensive environmental contamination.

All of his observations are knitted together by his gentle and unassuming narrative style, making the book a quick read. A sad, but inspirational and deeply satisfying read. —*Megan Shaw*

The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo

Noam Chomsky
Common Courage Press, 1999

It's a wonder Noam Chomsky ever finds time to sleep, with all the writing he does. *The New Military Humanism* is the latest in a series of tracts in which he exposes the deadly hypocrisies of the United States and other "enlightened" democracies. *The New Military Humanism* is an important book. But I fear that it may not be as widely read as Chomsky would hope, precisely because it follows on the heels of so many similar works. To borrow a metaphor used frequently in the music business, Chomsky's political writing is reaching the point of market-saturation.

I have to admit that when I first picked up a copy of this book, my response was "Not another one!" I'm sure this is exactly the sort of reaction that the powers-that-be wanted me to have. The culture industry has so carefully cultivated our intellectual sweet tooth that we find it difficult to swallow the bran flakes of a Noam Chomsky. Still, I bought *The New Military Humanism* anyway. But if I hadn't spent several hours waiting around in an airport with nothing better to do, I may well have consigned it to the "I-should-read-this-but-probably-never-will" stack in my flat.

And that would have been a shame, because *The New Military Humanism* has an important message. I'm not going to tell you that it represents a departure from Chomsky's previous tracts. If you've read as many of his political exposés as I have, you will have a very good idea of his overall argument. And he's not going to win any style points. As the gravelly drone of his voice implies, this is not the sort of man who dresses either himself or his prose in paisley underwear! But unless you actually undertake the laborious task of reading the book cover to cover, you will not feel its full impact.

The premise behind *The New Military Humanism* is that self-proclaimed "humanitarian" interventions like the NATO action in Kosovo still constitute warfare. In other words, no matter how well-intentioned they may appear, they are still an excuse for killing. As Chomsky makes abundantly clear, this fundamental truth has been hidden behind a remarkably dense media smokescreen in the United States and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. If you took the mainstream press at its word, the NATO action was a rescue mission largely free of danger, except for the unfortunate half-dozen soldiers who met an untimely end at the hands of an automobile accident or stray bullet. As was also the case in the Gulf War, the carnage inflicted by US troops and their allies is disappeared in what Chomsky calls the "denial syndrome."

If you were taken in by this deception-as a great many respectable people were-you are probably wondering how Chomsky responds to the charge that NATO had no alternative but to intervene in the Kosovo conflict. This is the strongest part of *The New Military Humanism*. Chomsky freely acknowledges the "Serb atrocities in Kosovo, which are quite real, and often ghastly." But he repeatedly makes the point that the NATO action did nothing to prevent these atrocities. On the contrary, it actually seems to have furthered them. Not only did the bombing of Serbia cause the deaths of untold innocent people, it also exacerbated the conditions which occasioned those atrocities in the first place. He makes the case that "with full awareness of the likely consequences, Clinton and [British Prime Minister] Blair decided in favor of a war that led to a radical escalation of ethnic cleansing along with other deleterious effects."

In the conclusion of *The New Military Humanism*, Chomsky makes the full extent of NATO's misdeeds in Kosovo painfully clear. "Suppose you see a crime in the streets, and feel that you can't just stand by silently, so you pick up an assault rifle and kill everyone involved: criminal, victim, bystanders. Are we to understand that to be the rational and moral response?" The alternative he proposes to this sort of deadly humanitarianism is borrowed from the world of medicine, the Hippocratic principle to "do no harm." He states that, where all possible remedies have been tested, "it may sometimes be true that the search for peaceful means is at an end, and that there is 'no alternative' to doing nothing or causing vast harm." As the details in his book make clear, the Kosovo crisis met this criteria. Yet NATO persisted with its saturation bombing, for reasons that make a mockery of true humanitarianism. They are details worth taking to heart, even if it takes more dedication than your average overworked progressive is likely to muster. —*Charlie Bertsch*

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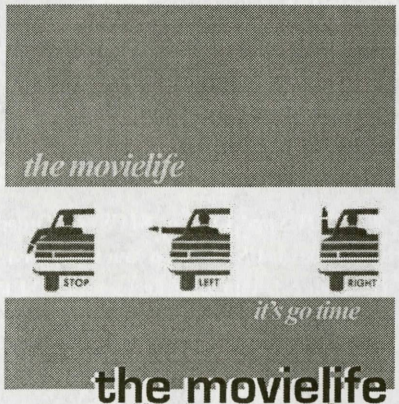

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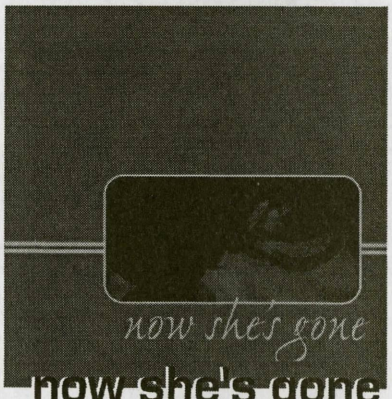

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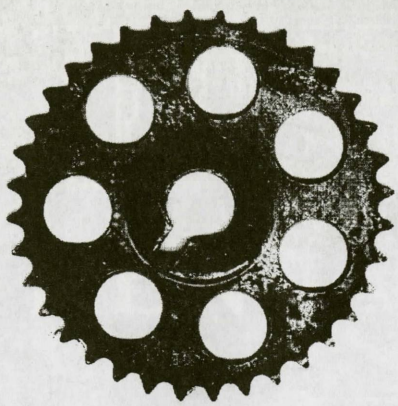

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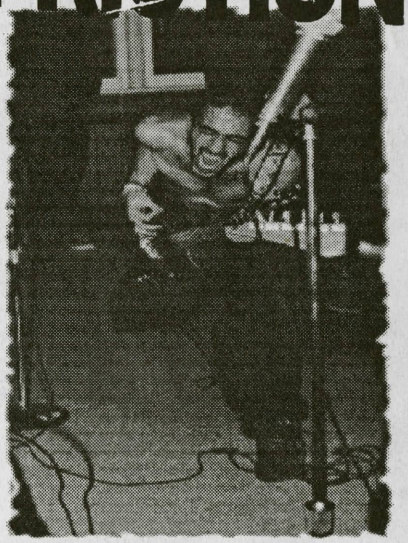

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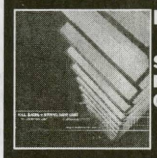

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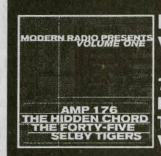

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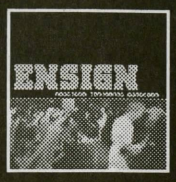

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PP24 THE ART & DESIGN ISSUE. The current state of art and punk. Interviewed in this issue are comic activist SETH TOBOKMAN, designers ART CHANTRY and HOUSE INDUSTRIES, photographers CYNTHIA CONNOLLY, CHRISSIE PIPER and PAUL DRAKE and tattoo artist KIM SAIGH. Articles about the poster art of FRANK KOZIK, STATE SUBSIDIZING OF THE ARTS, the CURRENT STATE OF RADICAL ART, and DESIGN IN THE UNDERGROUND. 164 pgs. **Art Chantry cover no longer available.**

PP25 THE GROWING GIRL SKATE UNDERGROUND Also in this issue are interviews with SPAZZ, DESOTO RECORDS, The WORLD INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, BY THE GRACE OF GOD and OUTPUNK. Articles on SPOKEN WORD & 25 YEARS OF CHOICE. Plus, PP25 looks at the REAL REASONS THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GO BACK TO IRAQ. 144 pgs

PP26 STEVE ALBINI, talks and talks. Also interviewed in PP26: AVAIL, SMART WENT CRAZY, SERVOTRON, POLYVINYL RECORDS, COMPOUND RED and RED MONKEY. Aricles include a piece about TOUCH & GO RECORDS' RECENT LAWSUIT WITH THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS, NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, the POLITICS OF WHOLE FOODS and THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GRAFFITI ARTIST TIE. Jam-packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A rare talk with Bikini Kill's KATHLEEN HANNA. Also interviewed in PP27: DISCOUNT, CHROM-TECH, ASSÜCK, the PEECHEES, and PRANK RECORDS' Ken Sanderson. Articles include a look at the GROWING HYSTERIA SURROUNDING TEEN VIOLENCE; BRINGING HUMANITARIAN AID INTO IRAQ; A COLLEGE COURSE BASED ON PUNK and TWO ANTI-RACIST SKINHEADS WERE MURDERED IN LAS VEGAS THIS JULY—Punk Planet investigates. 156 pgs

PP29 checks in with SLEATER-KINNEY on the eve of the release of their new album. In addition to S-K, PP29 features a talks with KID DYNAMITE, The Metro-shifter's K. SCOTT RICHTER, JESSICA HOPPER, publisher of HIT IT OR QUIT IT ZINE, RAINER MARIA. Articles: Kim Bae brings you aboard as LOS CRUDOS TOURS SOUTH AMERICA. Author Mimi Nguyen takes A PERSONAL LOOK AT VIETNAM—as a homeland, as a war and as a state of mind. Also featured in PP29 is a look at THE USE OF PEPPER SPRAY BY THE POLICE; a FREE BIKE PROGRAM and the GROWING UNREST IN THE KOSOVO REPUBLIC. Plus all the other goodies. 136 pgs.

PP30 THE MURDER OF IRAQ. Punk Planet #30 devotes 18 pages to coverage of the horrible destruction reaped on the Iraqi people by the US and UN's economic sanctions. Also in this issue: BRATMOBILE, TODAY IS THE DAY, THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS, SEAWEED, WICKED FARLEYS, VINYL COMMUNICATIONS and BLUETIP. Articles on JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA'S VICTORY IN MINNESOTA; the MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT, a militant group bent on ending gentrification in San Francisco; THE GREEN PARTY IN ARCATA, CALIFORNIA; and a UNION VICOTORY IN A NICARAGUAN SWEATSHOP. Plus an expanded DIY section, columns, reviews and much much more. 136 pgs.

PP31 features a much-anticipated talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TED LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and DÄLEK. Punk Planet #31 also looks at the DEAD KENNEDY'S LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former bandmates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BRIDES FROM RUSSIA and LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr, THE ETERNALZ, ASPHODEL RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and ecclectic art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept./Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING "INSTRUMENT", THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIJUN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tienanmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRAIGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR—and it ain't pretty folks. From its rampant sexism to its exploitative commercialism to sponsor Vans Shoes use of sweatshop labor, PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, an old punk rocker who achieved fame and fortune wrestling in Mexico and is now making a name for himself here in the United States. Also in this issue are interviews with MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REPLIKANTS, CADILLACA , OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—exce[t fpr reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 Punk Planet ushers in the new Millennium with the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER. The frontman of punk legends THE CLASH talks with Punk Planet's Joel Schalit about his recent solo career, helping create the London punk scene of the '70s, politics and much, much more. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE , the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE's DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. While partaking in a fight, Brian Deneke was killed by a kid driving a Cadillac. A year later, that kid, Dustin Camp was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years of probation—a killer walks the streets of Amarillo while another lies in a cemetery. The defense attourney's stragegy? To put the "punk look" on trial. He was successful. In this captivating story, Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler (PP33's "Hacktivism"), travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interveiws with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMP-WRIST and SARGE's ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

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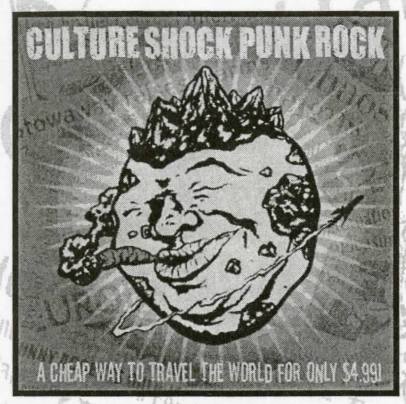

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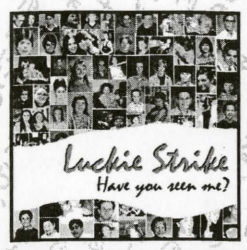

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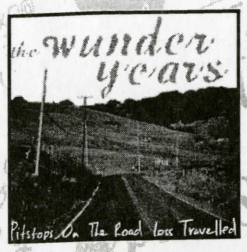

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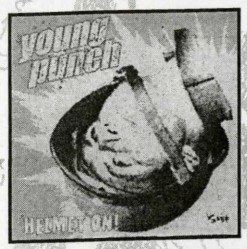

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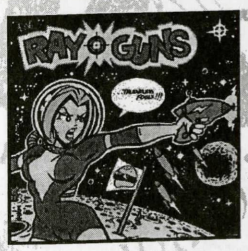

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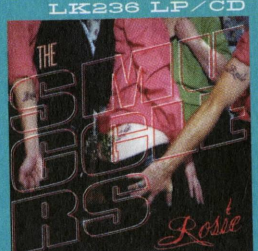

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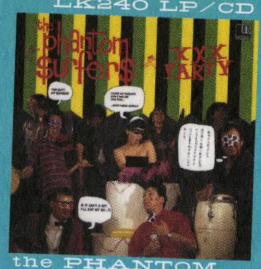

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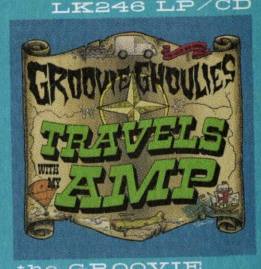

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